

**SERMONS OF WARNING
AND JUDGMENT**

**SERMONS PREACHED FROM THE FIRST CHRISTIAN
CHURCH, NORTHAMPTON, MA, AND OTHER PULPITS
ACROSS PURITAN NEW ENGLAND FROM 1731-1758.**

by

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1. THE FINAL JUDGMENT

OR, THE WORLD JUDGED RIGHTEOUSLY BY JESUS CHRIST

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” Acts 17:31

INTRODUCTION

God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ.

These words are a part of the speech which Paul made in Mars’ hill, a place of concourse of the judges and learned men of Athens. Athens was the principal city of that part of Greece which was formerly a common wealth by itself, and was the most noted place in the whole world for learning, philosophy, and human wisdom, And it continued so for many ages, till at length the Romans having conquered Greece, its renown from that time began to diminish. And Rome having borrowed learning of it, began to rival it in science, and in the polite and civil arts. However, it was still very famous in the days of Christ and the apostles, and was a place of concourse for wise and learned men.

Therefore, when Paul came thither, and began to preach concerning Jesus Christ, a man who had lately been crucified at Jerusalem (as in Acts 17:18), the philosophers thronged about him, to hear what he had to say. The strangeness of his doctrine excited their curiosity, for they spent their time in endeavouring to find out new things, and valued themselves greatly upon their being the authors of new discoveries, as we are informed in Acts 17:21. They despised his doctrine in their hearts, and esteemed it very ridiculous, calling the apostle a babbler. For the preaching of Christ crucified was to the Greeks foolishness, 1 Cor. 1:23, yet the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, two different sects, had a mind to hear what the babbler had to say.

Upon this Paul rises up in the midst of them, and makes a speech. And as he speaks to philosophers and men of learning, he speaks quite differently from his common mode of address. There is evidently, in his discourse, a greater depth of thought, more philosophical reasoning, and a more elevated style, than are to be found in his ordinary discourses to common men. His speech is such as was likely to draw the attention and gain the assent of philosophers. He shows himself to be no babbler, but a man who could offer such reason, as they, however they valued themselves upon their wisdom, were not able to gainsay. His practice here is agreeable to what he saith of himself, 1 Cor. 9:22, “that he became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.” He not only to the weak became as weak, that he might gain the weak, but to the wise he became as wise, that he might gain the wise.

In the first place, he reasons with them concerning their worship of idols. He declares to them the true God, and points out how unreasonable it is to suppose, that he delights in such superstitious worship. He begins with this, because they were most likely to hearken to it, as being so evidently agreeable to the natural light of human reason, and also agreeable to what some of their own poets and philosophers had said (Acts 17:28). He begins not immediately to tell them about Jesus Christ, his dying for

sinner, and his resurrection from the dead. But first draws their attention with that to which they were more likely to hearken. And then, having thus introduced himself, he proceeds to speak concerning Jesus Christ.

He tells them, the times of this ignorance concerning the true God, in which they had hitherto been, God winked at. He suffered the world to lie in heathenish darkness. But now the appointed time was come, when he expected *men should everywhere repent*, “because he had appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” As an enforcement to the duty of turning to God from their ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, the apostle brings in this, that God had appointed such a day of judgment. And as a proof of this he brings the resurrection Christ from the dead.

Concerning the words of the text, we may observe,

That in them the apostle speaks of the general judgment: *He will judge the WORLD*. The time when this shall be, on the appointed day: *He hath appointed a day*. How the world is to be judged: *In righteousness*. The man by whom it is to be judged: *Christ Jesus whom God raised from the dead*.

DOCTRINE

There is a day coming in which there will be a general righteous judgment of the whole world by Jesus Christ.

In speaking upon this subject, I shall show, That God is the Supreme Judge of the world. That there is a time coming, when God will, in the most public and solemn manner, judge the whole world. That the person by whom he will judge it is Jesus Christ. That the transactions of that day will be greatly interesting and truly awful. That all shall be done in righteousness. And finally, I shall take notice of those things which shall be immediately consequent upon the judgment.

SECTION I

God is the supreme judge of the world.

I. God is so by *right*. He is by right the supreme and absolute ruler and disposer of all things, both in the natural and moral world. The rational understanding part of the creation is indeed subject to a different sort of government from that to which irrational creatures are subject. God governs the sun, moon, and stars. He governs even the motes of dust which fly in the air. Not a hair of our heads falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father. God also governs the brute creatures. By his providence, he orders, according to his own decrees, all events concerning those creatures. And rational creatures are subject to the same sort of government. All their actions, ^{*1*} and all events relating to them, being ordered by superior providence, according to absolute decrees so that no event that relates to them ever happens without the disposal of God, according to his own decrees. The rule of this government is God’s wise decree, and nothing else.

But rational creatures, because they are intelligent and voluntary agents, are the subjects of another kind of government. They are so only with respect to those of their actions, in which they are *causes by counsel*, or with respect to their voluntary actions. The government of which I now speak is called *moral* government, and consists in two things, in giving laws, and in judging.

God is, with respect to this sort of government, by right the sovereign *ruler* of the world. He is possessed of this right by reason of his infinite greatness and excellency, by which he merits, and is perfectly and solely fit for, the office of supreme ruler. He that is so excellent as to be infinitely worthy of the highest respect of the creature, has thereby a right to that respect. He deserves it by a merit of condignity, so that it is injustice to deny it to him. And he that is perfectly wise and true, and is only so regarded, has a right in everything to be regarded, and to have his determinations attended to and obeyed.

God has also a right to the character of supreme ruler, by reason of the absolute dependence of every creature on him. All creatures, and rational creatures no less than other, are wholly derived from him, and every moment are wholly dependent upon him for being, and for all good, so that they are properly his possession. And as, by virtue of this, he has a right to give his creatures whatever rules of conduct he pleases, or whatever rules are agreeable to his own wisdom. So the mind and will of the creature ought to be entirely conformed to the nature and will of the Creator, and to the rules he gives, that are expressive of it.

For the same reason, he has a right to *judge* their actions and conduct, and to fulfil the sanction of his law. He who has an absolute and independent right to give laws, has evermore the same right to judge those to whom the laws are given. It is absolutely necessary that there should be a judge of reasonable creatures. And sanctions, or rewards and punishments, annexed to rules of conduct are necessary to the being of laws. A person may instruct another without sanctions, but not give laws. However, these sanctions themselves are vain, are as good as none, without a judge to determine the execution of them. As God has a right to be judge, so has he a right to be the *supreme* judge. And none has a right to reverse his judgments, to receive appeals from him, or to say to him, Why judgest thou thus?

II. God is, *in fact* the supreme judge of the world. He has power sufficient to vindicate his own right. As he has a right which can not be disputed, so he has power which can not be controlled. He is possessed of omnipotence, wherewith to maintain his dominion over the world. And he does maintain his dominion in the moral as well as the natural world. Men may refuse subjection to God as a lawgiver. They may shake off the yoke of his laws by rebellion. Yet they can not withdraw themselves from his judgment. Although they will not have God for their lawgiver, yet they shall have him for their judge. The strongest of creatures can do nothing to control God, or to avoid him while acting in his judicial capacity. He is able to bring them to his judgment-seat, and is also able to execute the sentence which he shall pronounce.

There was once a notable attempt made by opposition of power entirely to shake off the yoke of the moral government of God, both as lawgiver, and as judge. This attempt was made by the angels, the most mighty of creatures. But they miserably failed in it. God notwithstanding acted as their judge in casting those proud spirits out of heaven,

and binding them in chains of darkness unto a further judgment, and a further execution. "God is wise in heart and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" Job 9:4. Wherein the enemies of God deal proudly, he is above them. He ever has acted as judge in bestowing what rewards, and inflicting what punishments, he pleased on the children of men. And so he does still. He is daily fulfilling the promises and threatenings of the law, in disposing of the souls of the children of men, and so be evermore will act.

God acts as judge towards the children of men more especially,

First, in man's particular judgment at death. Then the sentence is executed, and the reward bestowed *in part*; which is not done without a judgment. The soul, when it departs from the body, appears before God to be disposed of by him, according to his law. But by this appearing before God, to be judged at death, we need understand no more than this, that the soul is made immediately sensible of the presence of God, God manifesting himself immediately to the soul, with the glory and majesty of a judge, that the sins of the wicked and the righteousness of the saints are brought by God to the view of their consciences, so that they know the reason of the sentence given, and their consciences are made to testify to the justice of it. And that thus the will of God for the fulfilment of the law, in their reward or punishment, is made known to them and executed. This is undoubtedly done at every man's death.

Second, in the great and general judgment, when all men shall together appear before the judgment-seat to be judged, and which judgment will be much more solemn, and the sanctions of the law will to a further degree be fulfilled. But this brings me to another branch of the subject.

SECTION II

That there is a time coming when God will, in the most public and solemn manner, judge the whole world of mankind.

The doctrine of a general judgment is not sufficiently discoverable by the light of nature. Indeed some of the heathens had some obscure notions concerning a future judgment. But the light of nature, or mere unassisted reason, was not sufficient to instruct the world of fallen men in this doctrine. It is one of the peculiar doctrines of revelation, a doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There were indeed some hints of it in the Old Testament, as in Psa. 96:13, "The Lord cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and his people with his truth." And Ecc. 12:14, "For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." And in some other such like passages. But this doctrine is with abundantly the greatest clearness revealed in the New Testament. There we have it frequently and particularly declared and described with its circumstances.

However, although it be a doctrine of revelation, and be brought to light by the gospel, the brightest and most glorious revelation that God has given to the world; yet it is a doctrine which is entirely agreeable to reason, and of which reason gives great confirmation. That there will be a time before the dissolution of the world, when the inhabitants of it shall stand before God and give an account of their conduct; and that God will in a public manner, by a general and just judgment, set all things to rights

respecting their moral behaviour, is a doctrine entirely agreeable to reason. Which I shall now endeavour to make appear. But I would premise that what we would inquire into is not whether all mankind shall be judged by God. For that is a thing that the light of nature clearly teaches, and we have already spoken something of it. But whether it be rational to think that there will be a *public* judgment of all mankind *together*. This I think will appear very rational from the following considerations.

I. Such a judgment will be a more glorious display of God's majesty and dominion. It will be more glorious because it will be more open, public, and solemn. Although God now actually exercises the most sovereign dominion over the earth, although he reigns and does all things according to his own will, ordering all events as seemeth to himself good, and although he is actually judge in the earth, continually disposing of men's souls according to their works; yet he rules after a more hidden and secret manner, insomuch that it is common among the proud sons of men to refuse acknowledging his dominion. Wicked men question the very existence of a God, who taketh care of the world, who ordereth the affairs of it, and judgeth in it. And therefore they cast off the fear of him. Many of the kings and great men of the earth do not suitably acknowledge the God who is above them, but seem to look upon themselves as supreme, and therefore tyrannise over mankind, as if they were in no wise accountable for their conduct. There have been, and now are, many atheistic persons, who acknowledge not God's moral dominion over mankind. And therefore they throw off the yoke of his laws and government. And how great a part of the world is there now, and has there always been, that has not acknowledged that the government of the world belongs to the God of Israel, or to the God of Christians, but has paid homage to other imaginary deities, as though they were their sovereign lords and supreme judges. Over how great a part of the world has Satan usurped the dominion, and set up himself for God, in opposition to the true God!

Now, how agreeable to reason is it, that God, in the winding up of things, when the present state of mankind shall come to a conclusion, should in the most open and public manner, manifest his dominion over the inhabitants of the earth, by bringing them all, high and low, rich and poor, kings and subjects, together before him to be judged with respect to all that they ever did in the world! That he should thus openly discover his dominion in this world, where his authority has been so much questioned, denied, and proudly opposed! That however God be not now visibly present upon earth, disposing and judging in that visible manner that earthly kings do. Yet at the conclusion of the world he should make his dominion visible to all, and with respect to all mankind, so that every eye shall see him, and even they who have denied him shall find, that God is supreme Lord of them, and of the whole world!

II. The end of judgment will be more fully answered by a public and general, than only by a particular and private, judgment. The end for which there is any judgment at all is to display and glorify the righteousness of God; which end is more fully accomplished by calling men to an account, bringing their actions to the trial, and determining their state according to them, the whole world, both angels and men, being present to behold, than if the same things should be done in a more private way. At the day of judgment there will be the most glorious display of the justice of God that ever was made. Then God will appear to be entirely righteous towards everyone. The justice of all his moral government will on that day be at once discovered. Then all objections

will be removed. The conscience of every man shall be satisfied. The blasphemies of the ungodly will be forever put to silence, and argument will be given for the saints and angels to praise God forever: Rev. 19:1, 2, “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power be to the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments.”

III. It is very agreeable to reason, that the irregularities which are so open and manifest in the world, should, when the world comes to an end, be publicly rectified by the supreme governor. The infinitely wise God, who made this world to be a habitation for men, and placed mankind to dwell here, and has appointed man his end and work, must take care of the order and good government for the world, which he has thus made. He is not regardless how things proceed here on earth. It would be a reproach to his wisdom, and to the perfect rectitude of his nature, to suppose so. This world is a world for confusion. It has been filled with irregularity and confusion ever since the fall. And the irregularities of it are not only private, relating to the actions of particular persons, but states, kingdoms, nations, churches, cities, and all societies of men in all ages, have been full of public irregularities. The affairs of the world, so far as they are in the hands of men, are carried on in the most irregular and confused manner.

Though justice sometimes takes place, yet how often do injustice, cruelty, and oppression prevail! How often are the righteous condemned, and the wicked acquitted and rewarded! How common is it for the virtuous and pious to be depressed, and the wicked to be advanced! How many thousands of the best men have suffered intolerable cruelties, merely for their virtue and piety, and in this world have had no help, no refuge to fly to! The world is very much ruled by the pride, covetousness, and passions of men. Solomon takes much notice of such like irregularities in the present state (in his book of Ecclesiastes), hereby he shows the vanity of the world.

Now, how reasonable is it to suppose, that God, when he shall come and put an end to the present state of mankind, will in an open, public manner, the whole world being present, rectify all these disorders! And that he will bring all things to a trial by a general judgment, in order that those who have been oppressed may be delivered; that the righteous cause may be pleaded and vindicated, and wickedness, which has been approved, honoured, and rewarded, may receive its due disgrace and punishment; that the proceedings of kings and earthly judges may be inquired into by him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire; and that the public actions of men may be publicly examined and recompensed according to their desert! How agreeable is it to divine wisdom thus to order things, and how worthy of the supreme governor of the world!

IV. By a public and general judgment, God more fully accomplishes the reward he designs for the godly, and punishment he designs for the wicked. One part of the reward which God intends for his saints, is the honour which he intends to bestow upon them. He will honour them in the most public and open manner, before the angels, before all mankind, and before them that hated them. And it is most suitable that it should be so. It is suitable that those holy, humble souls, that have been hated by wicked men, have been cruelly treated and put to shame by them, and who have been haughtily domineered over, should be openly acquitted, commended, and crowned, before all the world.

So one part of the punishment of the ungodly will be the open shame and disgrace which they shall suffer. Although many of them have proudly lifted up their heads in this world, have had a very high thought of themselves, and have obtained outward honour among men; yet God will put them to open shame, by showing all their wickedness and moral filthiness before the whole assembly of angels and men, by manifesting his abhorrence of them, in placing them upon his left hand, among devils and foul spirits, and by turning them away into the most loathsome, as well as most dreadful, pit of hell, to dwell there forever. Which ends may be much more fully accomplished in a general, than in a particular judgment.

SECTION III

The world will be judged by Jesus Christ.

The person by whom God will judge the world is Jesus Christ, God-man. The second person in the Trinity, that same person of whom we read in our Bibles, who was born of the Virgin Mary, lived in Galilee and Judea, and was at last crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, will come to judge the world both in his divine and human nature, in the same human body that was crucified, and rose again, and ascended up into heaven. Acts 1:11, "This same Jesus that is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven." It will be his human nature which will then be seen by the bodily eyes of men. However, his divine nature, which is united to the human, will then also be present. And it will be by the wisdom of that divine nature that Christ will see and judge.

Here naturally arises an inquiry, Why is Christ appointed to judge the world rather than the Father or the Holy Ghost? We can not pretend to know all the reasons of the divine dispensations. God is not obliged to give us an account of them. But so much may we learn by divine revelation, as to discover marvellous wisdom in what he determines and orders with respect to this matter. We learn,

I. That God seeth fit, that he who is in the *human nature*, should be the judge of those who are of the human nature. John 5:27, "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." Seeing there is one of the persons of the Trinity united to the human nature, God chooses, in all his transactions with mankind, to transact by him. He did so of old, in his discoveries of himself to the patriarchs, in giving the law, in leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, and in the manifestations he made of himself in the tabernacle and temple. When, although Christ was not actually incarnate, yet he was so in design, it was ordained and agreed in the covenant of redemption, that he should become incarnate. And since the incarnation of Christ, God governs both the church and the world by Christ. So he will also at the end *judge* the world by him. All men shall be judged by God, and yet at the same time by one invested with their own nature.

God seeth fit, that those who have bodies, as all mankind will have at the day of judgment, should see their judge with their bodily eyes, and hear him with their bodily ears. If one of the other persons of the Trinity had been appointed to be judge, there must have been some extraordinary outward appearance made on purpose to be a token of the divine presence, as it was of old, before Christ was incarnate. But now there is no necessity of that. Now one of the persons of the Trinity is actually

incarnate, so that God by him may appear to bodily eyes without any miraculous visionary appearance.

II. Christ has this honour of being the judge of the world given him, as a *suitable reward* for his sufferings. This is a part of Christ's exaltation. The exaltation of Christ is given him in reward for his humiliation and sufferings. This was stipulated in the covenant of redemption. And we are expressly told, it was given him in reward for his sufferings, Phil. 2:8-12, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

God seeth meet, that he who appeared in such a low estate amongst mankind, without form or comeliness, having his divine glory veiled, should appear amongst men a second time, in his own proper majesty and glory, without a veil. To the end that those who saw him here at the first, as a poor, frail man, not having where to lay his head, subject to much hardship and affliction, may see him the second time in power and great glory, invested with the glory and dignity of the absolute Lord of heaven and earth. And that he who once tabernacled with men, and was despised and rejected of them, may have the honour of arraigning all men before his throne, and judging them with respect to their eternal state! John 5:21-24.

God seeth meet that he who was once arraigned before the judgment-seat of men, and was there most vilely treated, being mocked, spitted upon, and condemned, and who was at last crucified, should be rewarded, by having those very persons brought to his tribunal, that they may see him in glory, and be confounded. And that he may have the disposal of them for all eternity. As Christ said to the high priest while arraigned before him, Mat. 26:64, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

III. It is needful that Christ should be the judge of the world, in order that he may *finish* the work of redemption. It is the will of God, that he who is the redeemer of the world should be a *complete* redeemer; and that therefore he should have the whole work of redemption left in his hands. Now, the redemption of fallen man consists not merely in the impetration of redemption, by obeying the divine law, and making atonement for sinners, or in preparing the way for their salvation, but it consists in a great measure, and is actually fulfilled, in converting sinners to the knowledge and love of the truth, in carrying them on in the way of grace and true holiness through life, and in finally raising their bodies to life, in glorifying them, in pronouncing the blessed sentence upon them, in crowning them with honour and glory in the sight of men and angels, and in completing and perfecting their reward. Now, it is necessary that Christ should do this, in order to his finishing the work which he has begun. Raising the saints from the dead, judging them, and fulfilling the sentence is part of their salvation. And therefore it was necessary that Christ should be appointed judge of the world, in order that he might *finish* his work (John 6:39, 40, chap. 5:25-31). The redemption of the bodies of the saints is part of the work of redemption; the resurrection to life is called a redemption of their bodies (Rom. 8:23).

It is the will of God, that Christ himself should have the fulfilling of that for which he died, and for which he suffered so much. Now, the end for which he suffered and died was the complete salvation of his people. And this shall be obtained at the last judgment, and not before. Therefore it was necessary that Christ be appointed judge, in order that he himself might fully accomplish the end for which he had both suffered and died. When Christ had finished his appointed sufferings, God did, as it were, put the purchased inheritance into his hands, to be kept for believers, and be bestowed upon them at the day of judgment.

IV. It was proper that he who is appointed king of the church should rule till he should have put all his enemies under his feet. In order to which, he must be the judge of his *enemies*, as well as of his people. One of the offices of Christ, as redeemer, is that of a king. He is appointed king of the church and head over all things to the church. And in order that his kingdom be complete, and design of his reign be accomplished, he must *conquer* all his enemies, and then he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father. 1 Cor. 15:24, 25, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Now, when Christ shall have brought his enemies, who had denied, opposed, and rebelled against him, to his judgment-seat, and shall have passed and executed sentence upon them, this will be a final and complete *victory* over them, a victory which shall put an end to the war. And it is proper that he who at present reigns and is carrying on the war against those who are of the opposite kingdom, should have the honour of obtaining the victory, and finishing the war.

V. It is for the abundant *comfort of the saints* that Christ is appointed to be their judge. The covenant of grace, with all its circumstances, and all those events to which it has relation, is every way so contrived of God, as to give strong consolation to believers: for God designed the gospel for a glorious manifestation of his grace to them. And therefore everything in it is so ordered, as to manifest the most grace and mercy.

Now, it is for the abundant consolation of the saints, that their own Redeemer is appointed to be their judge. That the same person who spilled his blood for them has the determination of their state left with him, so that they need not doubt but that they shall have what he was at so much cost to procure.

What matter of joy to them will it be at the last day, to lift up their eyes, and behold the person in whom they have trusted for salvation, to whom they have fled for refuge, upon whom they have built as their foundation for eternity, and whose voice they have often heard, inviting them to himself for protection and safety, coming to judge them.

VI. That Christ is appointed to be the judge of the world will be for the more abundant *conviction of the ungodly*. It will be for their conviction that they are judged and condemned by that very person whom they have rejected, by whom they might have been saved, who shed his blood to give them an *opportunity* to be saved, who was wont to offer his righteousness to them, when they were in their state of trial, and who many a time called and invited them to come to him, that they might be saved. How justly will they be condemned by him whose salvation they have rejected, whose blood they have despised, whose many calls they have refused, and whom they have pierced by their sins!

How much will it be for their conviction, when they shall hear the sentence of condemnation pronounced, to reflect with themselves, how often has this same person, who now passes sentence of condemnation upon me, called me, in his word, and by his messengers, to accept of him, and to give myself to him! How often has he knocked at the door of my heart! and had it not been for my own folly and obstinacy, how might I have had him for my *Saviour*, who is now my incensed *Judge*!

SECTION IV

Christ's coming, the resurrection, the judgment prepared, the books opened, the sentence pronounced and executed.

I. Christ Jesus will, in a most magnificent manner, descend from heaven with all the holy angels. The man Christ Jesus is now in the heaven of heavens, or, as the apostle expresses it, *far above all heavens*, Eph. 4:10. And there he has been ever since his ascension, being there enthroned in glory, in the midst of millions of angels and blessed spirits. But when the time appointed for the day of judgment shall have come, notice of it will be given in those happy regions, and Christ will descend to the earth, attended with all those heavenly hosts, in a most solemn, awful, and glorious manner. Christ will come with divine majesty, he will come in the glory of the Father, Mat. 16:27, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels.."

We can now conceive but little of the holy and awful magnificence in which Christ will appear, as he shall come in the clouds of heaven, or of the glory of his retinue. How mean and despicable, in comparison with it, is the most splendid appearance that earthly princes can make! A glorious visible light will shine round about him, and the earth, with all nature, will tremble at his presence. How vast and innumerable will that host be which will appear with him! Heaven will be for the time deserted of its inhabitants.

We may argue the glory of Christ's appearance, from his appearance at other times. When he appeared in transfiguration, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. The apostle Peter long after spoke of this appearance in magnificent terms, 2 Pet. 1:16, 17, "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory." And his appearance to St. Paul at his conversion, and to St. John, as related in Rev. 1:13 etc. were very grand and magnificent. But we may conclude, that his appearance at the day of judgment will be vastly more so than either of these, as the occasion will be so much greater. We have good reason to think, that our nature, in the present frail state, could not bear the appearance of the majesty in which he will then be seen.

We may argue the glory of his appearance, from the appearances of some of the angels to men, as of the angel that appeared at Christ's sepulchre, after his resurrection, Mat. 28:3, "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." The angels will doubtless all of them make as glorious an appearance at the of judgment, as ever any of them have made on former occasions. How glorious, then, will be the retinue of Christ, made up of so many thousands of such angels! And how much more glorious will Christ, the judge himself, appear, than those his attendants! Doubtless their God will appear immensely more glorious than they.

Christ will thus descend into our air, to such a distance from the surface of the earth, that everyone, when all shall be gathered together, shall see him, Rev. 1:7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him."

Christ will make this appearance suddenly, and to the great surprise of the inhabitants of the earth. It is therefore compared to a cry at midnight, by which men are wakened in a great surprise.

II. At the sound of the last trumpet, the dead shall rise, and the living shall be changed. As soon as Christ is descended, the last trumpet shall sound, as a notification to all mankind to appear. At which mighty sound shall the dead be immediately raised, and the living changed. 1 Cor. 15:52, "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Mat. 24:31, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet." 1 Thes. 4:16, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." There will be some great and remarkable signal given for the rising of the dead, which it seems will be some mighty sound, caused by the angels of God, who shall attend on Christ.

Upon this all the dead shall rise from their graves. All, both small and great, who shall have lived upon earth since the foundation of the world, those who died before the flood, and those who were drowned in the flood, all that have died since that time, and that shall die to the end of the world. There will be a great moving upon the face of the earth, and in the water, in bringing bone to his bone, in opening graves, and bringing together all the scattered particles of dead bodies. The earth shall give up the dead that are in it, and the sea shall give up the dead that are in it.

However the parts of the bodies of many are divided and scattered; however many have been burnt, and their bodies have been turned to ashes and smoke, and driven to the four winds; however many have been eaten of wild beasts, of the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea; however many have consumed away upon the face of the earth, and great part of their bodies have ascended in exhalations; yet the all-wise and all-powerful God can immediately bring every part to his part again.

Of this vast multitude some shall rise to life, and others to condemnation. John 5:28, 29, "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

When the bodies are prepared, the departed souls shall again enter into their bodies, and be re-united to them, never more to be separated. The souls of the wicked shall be brought up out of hell, though not out of misery, and shall very unwillingly enter into their bodies, which will be but eternal prisons to them. Rev. 20:13, "And death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them." They shall lift their eyes full of the utmost amazement and horror to see their awful Judge. And perhaps the bodies with which they shall be raised will be most filthy and loathsome, thus properly corresponding to the inward, moral turpitude of their souls.

The souls of the righteous shall descend from heaven together with Christ and his angels: 1 Thes. 4:14, "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." They

also shall be re-united to their bodies, that they may be glorified with them. They shall receive their bodies prepared by God to be mansions of pleasure to all eternity. They shall be every way fitted for the uses, the exercises, and delights of perfectly holy and glorified souls. They shall be clothed with a superlative beauty, similar to that of Christ's glorious body. Phil. 3:21, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Their bodies shall rise incorruptible, no more liable to pain or disease, and with an extraordinary vigour and vivacity, like that of those spirits that are as a flame of fire. 1 Cor. 15:43, 44, "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." With what joy will the souls and bodies of the saints meet, and with what joy will they lift their heads out of their graves to behold the glorious sight of the appearing of Christ! And it will be a glorious sight to see those saints arising out of their graves, putting off their corruption, and putting on incorruption and glory.

At the same time, those that shall then be alive upon the earth shall be changed. Their bodies shall pass through a great change, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, "Behold, I show you a great mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." The bodies of the wicked then living will be changed into such hideous things, as shall be answerable to the loathsome souls that dwell in them, and such as shall be prepared to receive and administer eternal torments without dissolution. But the bodies of the righteous shall be changed into the same glorious and immortal form in which those that shall be raised will appear.

III. They shall all be brought to appear before Christ, the godly being placed on the right hand, the wicked on the left; Mat. 25:31, 32, 33. The wicked, however unwilling, however full of fear and horror, shall be brought or driven before the judgment-seat. However they may try to hide themselves, and for this purpose creep into dens caves of the mountains, and cry to the mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Yet there shall not one escape. To the judge they must come, and stand on the left hand with devils. On the contrary, the righteous will be joyfully conducted to Jesus Christ, probably by the angels. Their joy will, as it were, give them wings to carry them thither. They will with ecstasies and raptures of delight meet their friend and Saviour, come into his presence, and stand at his right hand.

Besides the one standing on the right hand and the other on the left, there seems to be this difference between them that when the dead in Christ shall be raised, they will all be caught up into the air, where Christ shall be, and shall be there at his right hand during the judgment, never more to set their feet on this earth. Whereas the wicked shall be left standing on the earth, there to abide the judgment. 1 Thes. 4:16, 17, "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

And what a vast congregation will there be of all the men, women, and children that shall have lived upon earth from the beginning to the end of the world! Rev. 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

IV. The next thing will be that the books shall be opened. Rev. 20:12, "I saw the dead, great and small, stand before God; and the books were opened." Which books seem to be these two, the book of God's remembrance, and the book of Scripture. The former as the evidence of their deeds which are to be judged, the latter as the rule of judgment. The works both of the righteous and of the wicked will be brought forth that they may be judged according to them, and those works will be tried according to the appointed and written rule.

First, the works of both righteous and wicked will be rehearsed. The book of God's remembrance will be first opened. The various works of the children of men are, as it were, written by God in a book of remembrance. Mal. 3:16, "A book of remembrance was written before him." However ready ungodly men may be to make light of their own sins, and to forget them; yet God never forgets any of them. Neither does God forget any of the good works of the saints. If they give but a cup of cold water with a spirit of charity, God remembers it.

The evil works of the wicked shall then be brought forth to light. They must then hear of all their profaneness, their impenitence, their obstinate unbelief, their abuse of ordinances, and various other sins. The various aggravations of their sins will also be brought to view, as how this man sinned after such and such warnings, that after the receipt of such and such mercies; one after being so and so favoured with outward light, another after having been the subject of inward conviction, excited by the immediate agency of God. Concerning these sins, they shall be called to account to see what answer they can make for themselves. Mat. 12:36, "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Rom 14:12, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

The good works of the saints will also be brought forth as evidences of their sincerity, and of their interest in the righteousness of Christ. As to their evil works, they will not be brought forth against them on that day. For the guilt of them will not lie upon them, they being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Judge himself will have taken the guilt of their sins upon him. Therefore their sins will not stand against them in the book of God's remembrance. The account of them will appear to have been cancelled before that time. The account that will be found in God's book will not be of debt, but of credit. God cancels their debts, and sets down their good works, and is pleased, as it were, to make himself a debtor for them, by his own gracious act.

Both good and bad will be judged according to their works. Rev. 20:12, "And the dead were judged out of those things that were found written in the books, according to their works." And verse 13, "And they were judged every man according to their works." Though the righteous are justified by faith, and not by their works, yet they shall be judged *according to* their works. then works shall be brought forth as the evidence of their of their faith. Their faith on that great day shall be tried by its fruits. If the works of any man shall have been bad, if his life shall appear to have been unchristian, that will condemn him, without any further inquiry. But if his works, when they shall be examined, prove good and of the right sort, he shall surely be justified. They will be declared as a sure evidence of his having believed in Jesus Christ, and of his being clothed with his righteousness.

But by works we are to understand all voluntary exercises of the faculties of the soul. As for instance, the words and conversation of men, as well as what is done with their hands. Mat. 12:37, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Nor are we to understand only outward acts, or the thoughts outwardly expressed, but also the thoughts themselves, and all the inward workings of the heart. Man judgeth according to the outward appearance, but God judgeth the heart. Rev. 2:23, "I am he that searcheth the heart and the reins, and I will give unto every one of you according to his works." Nor will only positive sins be brought into judgment, but also omissions of duty, as is manifest by Mat. 25:42, etc. "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink," etc.

On that day secret and hidden *wickedness* will be brought to light. All the uncleanness, injustice, and violence, of which men have been guilty in secret, shall be manifest both to angels and men. Then it will be made to appear, how this and that man have indulged themselves in wicked imaginations, in lascivious, covetous, malicious, or impious desires and wishes. And how others have harboured in their hearts enmity against God and his law; also impenitency and unbelief, notwithstanding all the means used with them, and motives set before them, to induce them to repent, return, and live.

The *good works* of the saints also, which were done in secret, shall then be made public, and even the pious and benevolent affections and designs of their hearts, so that the real and secret characters of both saints and sinners shall then be most clearly and publicly displayed.

Second, the book of Scripture will be opened, and the works of men will be tried by that touchstone. Their works will be compared with the Word of God. That which God gave men for the rule of their action while in this life, shall then be made the rule of their judgment. God has told us beforehand, what will be the rule of judgment. We are told in the Scriptures upon what terms we shall be justified, and upon what terms we shall be condemned. That which God has given us to be our rule in our lives, he will make his own rule in judgment.

The rule of judgment will be twofold. The *primary* rule of judgment will be the law. The law ever has stood, and ever will stand in force, as a rule of judgment, for those to whom the law was given. Mat. 5:18, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The law will so far be made the rule of judgment, that not one person at that day shall by any means be justified or condemned, in a way inconsistent with that which is established by the law. As to the wicked, the law will be so far the rule of judgment respecting them, that the sentence denounced against them will be the sentence of the law. The righteous will be so far judged by the law, that although their sentence will not be the sentence of the law, yet it will by no means be such a sentence as shall be inconsistent with the law, but such as it allows. For it will be by the righteousness of the law that they shall be justified.

It will be inquired concerning everyone, both righteous and wicked, whether the law stands against him, or whether he has a fulfilment of the law to show. As to the *righteous*, they will have fulfilment to show. They will have it to plead, that the judge himself has fulfilled the law for them. That he has both satisfied for their sins, and

fulfilled the righteousness of the law for them. Rom. 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law for the righteousness to every one that believeth." But as to the wicked, when it shall be found, by the book of God's remembrance, that they have broken the law, and have no fulfilment of it to plead, the sentence of the law shall be pronounced upon them.

A *secondary* rule of judgment will be the gospel, or the covenant of grace, wherein it is said, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned:" Rom. 2:16, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." By the gospel, of covenant of grace, eternal blessedness will be adjudged to believers. When it shall be found that the law hinders not, and that the curse and condemnation of the law stands not against them, the reward of eternal life shall be given them, according to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

V. The sentence will be pronounced. Christ will say to the wicked on the left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." How dreadful will these words of the judge be to the poor, miserable, despairing wretches on the left hand! How amazing will every syllable of them be! How will they pierce them to the soul! These words show the greatest wrath and abhorrence. Christ will bid them *depart*. He will send them away from his presence, will remove them forever far out of his sight, into an everlasting separation from God, as being most loathsome, and unfit to dwell in his presence, and enjoy communion with him.

Christ will call them *cursed*. *Depart, ye cursed*, to whom everlasting wrath and ruin belong, who are by your own wickedness prepared for nothing else, but to be firebrands of hell, who are the fit objects and vessels of the vengeance and fury of the Almighty. *Into fire*. He will not send them away merely into a loathsome prison, the receptacle of the filth and rubbish of the universe. But into a furnace of fire. That must be their dwelling-place, there they must be tormented with the most racking pain and anguish. It is *everlasting* fire. There is eternity in the sentence, which infinitely aggravates the doom, and will make every word of it immensely more dreadful, sinking, and amazing to the souls that receive it. *Prepared for the devil and his angels*. This sets forth the greatness and intenseness of the torments, as the preceding part of the sentence does the duration. It shows the dreadful of that fire to which they shall be condemned, that it is the same that is prepared for the devils, those foul spirits and great enemies of God. Their condition will be the same as that of the devils, in many respects; particularly as they must burn in the fire forever.

This sentence will doubtless be pronounced in such an awful manner as shall be a terrible manifestation of the wrath of the judge. There will be divine, holy, and almighty wrath manifested in the countenance and voice of the judge. And we know not what other manifestations of anger will accompany the sentence. Perhaps it will be accompanied with thunders and lightnings, far more dreadful than were on mount Sinai at the giving of the law. Correspondent to these exhibitions of divine wrath, will be the appearances of terror and most horrible amazement in the condemned. How will all their faces look pale! How will death sit upon their countenances, when those words shall be heard! What dolorous cries, shrieks, and groans! What trembling, and wringing of hands, and gnashing of teeth, will there then be!

But with the most benign aspect, in the most endearing manner, and with the sweetest expressions of love, will Christ invite his saints on his right hand to glory; saying,

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” He will not bid them to go from him, but *to come with him*; to go where he goes; to dwell where he dwells; to enjoy him, and to partake with him. He will call them *blessed*, blessed of *his Father*, blessed by him whose blessing is infinitely the most desirable, namely, GOD. *Inherit the kingdom*. They are not only invited to go with Christ, and to dwell with him, but to inherit a kingdom with him, to sit down with him on his throne, and to receive the honour and happiness of a heavenly kingdom. “Prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” This denotes the sovereign and eternal love of God, as the source of their blessedness. He puts them in mind, that God was pleased to set his love upon them, long before they had a being, even from eternity. That therefore God made heaven on purpose for them, and fitted it for their delight and happiness.

VI. Immediately after this, the sentence will be executed, as we are informed, Mat. 25:46, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” When the words of the sentence shall have once proceeded out of the mouth of the judge, then that vast and innumerable throng of ungodly men shall go away, shall be driven away, shall be necessitated to go away with devils, and shall with dismal cries and shrieks be cast into the great furnace of fire prepared for the punishment of devils, the perpetual thunders and lightnings of the wrath of God following them. Into this furnace they must in both soul and body enter, never more to come out. Here they must spend eternal ages in wrestling with the most excruciating torments, and in crying out in the midst of the most dreadful flames, and under the most insupportable wrath.

On the other hand, the righteous shall ascend to heaven with their glorified bodies, in company with Christ, his angels, and all that host which descended with him. They shall ascend in the most joyful and triumphant manner, and shall enter with Christ into that glorious and blessed world, which had for the time been empty of its creature inhabitants. Christ having given his church that perfect beauty, and crowned it with that glory, honour, and happiness, which were stipulated in the covenant of redemption before the world was, and which he died to procure for them; and having made it a truly glorious church, every way complete, will present it before the Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Thus shall the saints be instated in everlasting glory, to dwell there with Christ, who shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water, to the full enjoyment of God, and to an eternity of the most holy, glorious, and joyful employments.

SECTION V

All will be done in righteousness.

Christ will give to every man his due, according to most righteous rule. Those who shall be condemned, will be most justly condemned, will be condemned to that punishment which they shall most justly deserve, and the justice of God in condemning them will be made most evident. Now the justice of God in punishing wicked men, and especially in the degree of their punishment, is often blasphemously called in question. But it will be made clear and apparent to all. Their own consciences will tell them that the sentence is just, and all cavils will be put to silence.

So those that shall be justified, shall be most justly adjudged to eternal life. Although they also were great sinners, and deserved eternal death; yet it will not be against justice or the law, to justify them, they will be in Christ. But the acquitting of them will be but giving the reward merited by Christ's righteousness, Rom. 3:26, "That God may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Christ will judge the world in righteousness, particularly as he will give to everyone a *due proportion* either of reward or punishment, according to the various characters of those who shall be judged. The punishments shall be duly proportioned to the number and aggravations of the sins of the wicked. And the rewards of the righteous shall be duly proportioned to the number of their holy acts and affections, and also to the degree of virtue implied in them. I would observe further,

I. That Christ can not fail of being just in judging through *mistake*. He can not take some to be sincere and godly, who are not so, nor others to be hypocrites, who are really sincere. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and he searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. He can never err in determining what is justice in particular cases, as human judges often do. Nor can he be blinded by prejudices, as human judges are very liable to be. Deu. 10:17, "He regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." It is impossible he should be deceived by the excuse, and false colours, and pleas of the wicked, as human judges very commonly are. It is equally impossible that he should err, in assigning to everyone his proper proportion of reward or punishment, according to his wickedness or good works. His knowledge being infinite, will effectually guard him against all these, and other such errors.

II. He can not fail of judging righteously through an *unrighteous* disposition. For he is infinitely just and holy in his nature. Deu. 32:4, "He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." It is not possible that an infinitely powerful, self-sufficient being should be under any temptation to injustice. Nor is it possible that an infinitely wise being, who knoweth all things, should not choose justice. For he who perfectly knows all things perfectly knows how much more amiable justice is than injustice. And therefore must choose it.

SECTION VI

Those things which will immediately follow the day of judgment.

I. After the sentence shall have been pronounced, and the saints shall have ascended with Christ into glory, this world will be dissolved by fire. The conflagration will immediately succeed the judgment. When an end shall have been put to the present state of mankind, this world, which was the place of their habitation during that state, will be destroyed, there being no further use for it. This earth which had been the stage upon which so many scenes had been acted, upon which there had been so many great and famous kingdoms and large cities, where there had been so many wars, so much trade and business carried on for so many ages, shall then be destroyed. These continents, these islands, these seas and rivers, these mountains and valleys, shall be seen no more at all. All shall be destroyed by devouring flames. This we are plainly taught in the Word of God. 2 Pet. 3:7, "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." Verse 10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in

the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.” 2 Pet. 3:12, “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.”

II. Both the misery of the wicked and the happiness of the saints will be increased beyond what shall be before the judgment. The misery of the wicked will be increased, as they will be tormented not only in their souls, but also in their bodies, which will be prepared both to receive and administer torment to their souls. There will doubtless then be the like connection between soul and body, as there is now. And therefore the pains and torments of the one will affect the other. And why may we not suppose that their torments will be increased as well as those of the devils? Concerning them we are informed (Jam. 2:19) that they believe there is one God, and tremble in the belief; expecting no doubt that he will inflict upon them, in due time more severe torments than even those which they now suffer. We are also informed that they are bound “in chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; *and* unto the judgment of the great day,” (2 Pet. 2:4, and Jude 6) which implies that their full punishment is not yet executed upon them, but that they are now reserved as prisoners in hell, to receive their just recompense on the day of judgment. Hence it was that they thought Christ was *come to torment them before the time*. Mat. 8:29. Thus the punishment neither of wicked men nor devils will be complete before the final judgment.

No more will the happiness of the saints be complete before that time. Therefore we are in the New Testament so often encouraged with promises of the resurrection of the dead, and of the day when Christ shall come the second time. These things are spoken of as the great objects of the expectation and hope of Christians. A state of separation of soul and body is to men an unnatural state. Therefore when the bodies of the saints shall be raised from the dead, and their souls shall be again united to them, as their state will be more natural, so doubtless it will be more happy. Their bodies will be *glorious* bodies, and prepared to administer as much to their happiness, as the bodies of the wicked will be to administer to their misery.

We may with good reason suppose the accession of happiness to the souls of the saints will be great, since the occasion is represented as the marriage of the church, and the Lamb. Rev. 19:7, “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” Their joy will then be increased because they will have new arguments of joy. The body of Christ will then be perfect, the church will be complete. All the parts of it will have come into existence, which will not be the case before the end of the world. No parts of it will be under sin or affliction. All the members of it will be in a perfect state. And they shall all be together by themselves, none being mixed with ungodly men. Then the church will be as a bride adorned for her husband, and therefore she will exceedingly rejoice.

Then also the Mediator will have fully accomplished his work. He will then have destroyed, and will triumph over, all his enemies. Then Christ will have fully obtained his reward, and fully accomplished the design which was in his heart from all eternity. For these reasons Christ himself will greatly rejoice with him. Then God will have obtained the end of all the great works which he has been doing from the beginning of

the world. All the designs of God will be unfolded in their events. Then his marvellous contrivance in his hidden, intricate, and inexplicable works will appear, the ends being obtained. Then the works of God being perfected, the divine glory will more abundantly appear. These things will cause a great accession of happiness to the saints, who shall behold them. Then God will have fully glorified himself, his Son, and his elect. Then he will see that all is very good, and will entirely rejoice in his own works. At the same time the saints also, viewing the works of God brought thus to perfection, will rejoice in the view, and receive from it a large accession of happiness.

Then God will make more abundant manifestations of his glory, and of the glory of his Son. Then he will more plentifully pour out his Spirit, and make answerable additions to the glory of the saints, and by means of all these will so increase the happiness of the saints, as shall be suitable to the commencement of the ultimate and most perfect state of things, and to such a joyful occasion, the completion of all things. In this glory and happiness will the saints remain forever and ever.

SECTION VII

The uses to which this doctrine is applicable.

I. THE *first use* proper to be made of this doctrine is of *instruction*. Hence many of the mysteries of Divine Providence may be unfolded. There are many things in the dealings of God towards the children of men, which appear very mysterious, if we view them without having an eye to this last judgment, which yet, if we consider this judgment, have no difficulty in them. As,

First, that God suffers the wicked to live and prosper in the world. The infinitely holy and wise Creator and Governor of the world must necessarily hate wickedness. Yet we see many wicked men spreading themselves as a green bay-tree. They live with impunity; things seem to go well with them, and the world smiles upon them. Many who have not been fit to live, who have held God and religion in the greatest contempt, who have been open enemies to all that is good, who by their wickedness have been the pests of mankind. Many cruel tyrants, whose barbarities have been such as would even fill one with horror to hear or read of them; yet have lived in great wealth and outward glory, have reigned over great and mighty kingdoms and empires, and have been honoured as a sort of earthly gods.

Now, it is very mysterious, that the holy and righteous Governor of the world, whose eye beholds all the children of men, should suffer it so to be, unless we look forward to the day of judgment. And then the mystery is unravelled. For although God for the present keeps silence, and seems to let them alone; yet then he will give suitable manifestations of his displeasure against their wickedness. They shall then receive condign punishment. The saints under the Old Testament were much stumbled at these dispensations of Providence, as you may see in Job 21, and Psa. 73, and Jer. 12. The difficulty to them was so great, because then a future state and a day of judgment were not revealed with that clearness with which they are now.

Second, God sometimes suffers some of the best of men to be in great affliction, poverty, and persecution. The *wicked* rule, while *they* are subject. The wicked are the head, and they are the tail. The wicked domineer, while they serve, and are oppressed,

yea are trampled under their feet, as the mire of the streets. These things are very common, yet they seem to imply great confusion. When the wicked are exalted to power and authority, and the godly are oppressed by them, things are quite out of joint. Pro. 25:26, "A righteous man falling down before the wicked, is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring." Sometimes one wicked man makes many hundreds, yea thousands, of precious saints a sacrifice to his lust and cruelty, or to his enmity against virtue and the truth, and puts them to death for no other reason but that for which they are especially to be esteemed and commended.

Now, if we look no further than the present state, these things appear strange and unaccountable. But we ought not to confine our views within such narrow limits. When God shall have put an end to the present state, these things shall all be brought to rights. Though God suffers things to be so for the present, yet they shall not proceed in this course always. Comparatively speaking, the present state of things is *but for a moment*. When all shall be settled and fixed by a divine judgment, the righteous shall be exalted, honoured, and rewarded, and the wicked shall be depressed and put under their feet. However the wicked now prevail against the righteous, yet the righteous shall at last have the ascendant, shall come off conquerors, and shall see the just vengeance of God executed upon those who now hate and persecute them.

Third, it is another mystery of providence, that God suffers so much public injustice to take place in the world. There are not only private wrongs, which in this state pass unsettled, but many public wrongs, wrongs done by men acting in a public character, and wrongs which affect nations, kingdoms, and other public bodies of men. Many suffer by men in public offices, from whom there is no refuge, from whose decisions there is no appeal. Now it seems a mystery that these things are tolerated, when he that is rightfully the Supreme Judge and Governor of the world is perfectly just. But at the final judgment all these wrongs shall be adjusted, as well as those of a more private nature.

II. Our *second use* of this subject shall be to apply it to the *awakening* of sinners. You that have not the fear of God before your eyes, that are not afraid to sin against him, consider seriously what you have heard concerning the day of judgment. Although these things be now future and unseen, yet they are real and certain. If you now be left to yourselves, if God keep silence, and judgment be not speedily executed, it is not because God is regardless how you live, and how you behave yourselves. Now indeed God is invisible to you, and his wrath is invisible. But at the day of judgment, you yourselves shall see him with your bodily eyes. You shall not then be able to keep out of his sight, or to avoid seeing him. Rev. 1:7, "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." You shall see him coming in the clouds of heaven. Your ears shall hear the last trumpet, that dreadful sound, the voice of the archangel. Your eyes shall see your judge sitting on the throne, they shall see those manifestations of wrath which there will be in his countenance. Your ears shall hear him pronounce the sentence.

Seriously consider, if you live in the ways of sin, and appear at that day with the guilt of it upon you, how you will be able to endure the sight or the hearing of these things, and whether horror and amazement will not be likely to seize you, when you shall see

the judge descending, and hear the trump of God. What account will you be able to give, when it shall be inquired of you, why you led such a sinful, wicked life? What will you be able to say for yourselves, when it shall be asked, why you neglected such and such particular duties, as the duty of secret prayer, for instance? Or why you have habitually practiced such and such particular sins or lusts? Although you be so careless of your conduct and manner of life, make so light of sin, and proceed in it so freely, with little or no dread or remorse; yet you must give an account of every sin that you commit, of every idle word that you speak, and of every sinful thought of your hearts. Every time you deviate from the rules of justice, of temperance, or of charity; every time you indulge any lust, whether secretly or openly, you must give an account of it. It will never be forgotten, it stands written in that book which will be opened on that day.

Consider the rule you will be judged by. It is the perfect rule of the divine law, which is exceeding strict, and exceeding broad. And how will you ever be able to answer the demands of this law? - Consider also,

First, that the judge will be your *supreme* judge. You will have no opportunity to appeal from his decision. This is often the case in this world. When we are dissatisfied with the decisions of a judge, we often may appeal to a higher, a more knowing, or a more just judicatory. But no such appeal can be made from our Divine Judge. No such indulgence will be allowed. Or if it were allowed, there is no superior judge to whom the appeal should be made. By his decision, therefore, you must abide.

Second, the judge will be *omnipotent*. Were he a mere man, like yourselves, however he might judge and determine, you might resist, and by the help of others, if not by your own strength, prevent or elude the execution of the judgment. But the judge being omnipotent, this is utterly impossible. In vain is all resistance, either by yourselves, or by whatever help you can obtain. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished," Pro. 11:21. As well might you "set the briers and thorns in battle against God," Isa. 27:4.

Third, the judge will be *inexorable*. Human judges may be prevailed upon to reverse their sentence, or at least to remit something of its severity. But in vain will be all your entreaties, all your cries and tears to this effect, with the great Judge of the world. Now indeed he inclines his ear, and is ready to hear the prayers, cries, and entreaties of all mankind. But then the day of grace will be past, and the door of mercy be shut. Then although ye spread forth your hands, yet the judge will hide his eyes from you. Yea, though ye make many prayers, he will not hear. Isa. 1:15. Then the judge will deal in fury. His eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity. And though ye cry in his ears with a loud voice, yet will he not hear you. Eze. 8:18. And you will find no place of repentance in God, though you seek it carefully with tears.

Fourth, the judge at that day will not mix mercy with justice. The time for mercy to be shown to sinners will then be past. Christ will then appear in another character than that of the merciful Saviour. Having laid aside the inviting attributes of grace and mercy, he will clothe himself with justice and vengeance. He will not only, in general, exact of sinners the demands of the law, but he will exact the whole, without any abatement. He will exact the very uttermost farthing, Mat. 5:26. Then Christ will come to fulfil that in Rev. 14:10, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God,

which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation.” The punishment threatened to ungodly men is *without any pity*. See Eze. 5:11, “Neither shall mine eye spare; neither will I have any pity.” Here all judgments have a mixture of mercy. But the wrath of God will be poured out upon the wicked without mixture, and vengeance will have its full weight.

III. I shall apply myself, *thirdly*, to several *different characters* of men.

First, to those who live in secret wickedness. Let such consider that for all these things God will bring them into judgment. Secrecy is your temptation. Promising yourselves this, you practice many things, you indulge many lusts, under the covert of darkness, and in secret corners, which you would be ashamed to do in the light of the sun, and before the world. But this temptation is entirely groundless. All your secret abominations are even now perfectly known to God, and will also hereafter be made known both to angels and men. Luke 12:2, 3, “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light: and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.”

Before human judges are brought only those things which are known. But before this judge shall be brought the most “hidden things of darkness, and even the counsels of the heart,” 1 Cor. 4:5. All your secret uncleanness, all your secret fraud and injustice, all your lascivious desires, wishes, and designs, all your inward covetousness, which is idolatry, all your malicious, envious, and revengeful thoughts and purposes, whether brought forth into practice or not, shall then be made manifest, and you shall be judged according to them. Of these things, however secret, there will be need of no other evidence than the testimony of God and of your own consciences.

Second, to such as are not just and upright in their dealings with their fellow-men. Consider, that all your dealings with men must be tried, must be brought forth into judgment, and there compared with the rules of the Word of God. All your actions must be judged according to those things which are found written in the book of the Word of God. If your ways of dealing with men shall not agree with those rules of righteousness, they will be condemned. Now, the Word of God directs us to practice entire justice. “That which is altogether just shalt thou follow,” Deu. 16:20, and to do to others as we would they would do to us. But how many are there, whose dealings with their fellow-men, if strictly tried by these rules, would not stand the test!

God has, in his word, forbidden all deceit and fraud in our dealings one with another, Lev. 11:13. He has forbidden us to oppress one another, Lev. 25:14. But how frequent are practices contrary to those rules, and which will not bear to be tried by them! How common are fraud and trickishness in trade! How will men endeavour to lead on those with whom they trade in the dark, that so they may make their advantage! Yea, lying in trading is too common a thing among us. How common are such things as that mentioned, Pro. 20:14, “It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.”

Many men will take the advantage of another’s ignorance to advance their own gain, to his wrong. Yea, they seem not to scruple such practices. Beside downright lying, men have many ways of blinding and deceiving one another in trade, which are by no means

right in the sight of God, and will appear to be very unjust, when they shall be tried by the rule of God's Word at the day of judgment. And how common a thing is oppression or extortion, in taking any advantage that men can by any means obtain, to get the utmost possible of their neighbour for what they have to dispose of, and their neighbour needs!

Let such consider, that there is a God in heaven, who beholds them, and sees how they conduct themselves in their daily traffic with one another, and that he will try their works another day. Justice shall assuredly take place at last. The righteous Governor of the world will not suffer injustice without control. He will control and rectify it by returning the injury upon the head of the injurer. Mat. 7:2, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Third, to those who plead for the lawfulness of practices generally condemned by God's people. You who do this, consider that your practices must be tried at the day of judgment. Consider, whether or no they are likely to be approved by the most holy Judge at that day. Pro. 5:21, "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord; and he pondereth all his goings." However, by your carnal reasonings, you may deceive your own hearts, yet you will not be able to deceive the judge, he will not hearken to your excuses, but will try your ways by the rule. He will know whether they be straight or crooked.

When you plead for these and those liberties which you take, let it be considered, whether they be likely to be allowed of by the judge at the last great day. Will they bear to be tried by his eyes, which are purer than to behold evil, and can not look on iniquity?

Fourth, to those who are wont to excuse their wickedness. Will the excuses which you make for yourselves be accepted at the day of judgment? If you excuse yourselves to your own consciences, by saying that you were under such and such temptations which you could not withstand, that corrupt nature prevailed, and you could not overcome it, that it would have been so and so to your damage if you had done otherwise, that if you had done such a duty, you would have brought yourselves into difficulty, would have incurred the displeasure of such and such friends, or would have been despised and laughed at. Or if you say, you did no more than it was the common custom to do, no more than many godly men have done, no more than certain persons of good reputation now practice, that if you had done otherwise, you would have been singular. If these be your excuses for the sins which you commit, or for the duties which you neglect, let me ask you, will they appear sufficient when they shall be examined at the day of judgment?

Fifth, to those who live in impenitence and unbelief. There are some persons who live in no open vice, and perhaps conscientiously avoid secret immorality, who yet live in impenitence and unbelief. They are indeed called upon *to repent and believe the gospel*, to forsake their evil ways and *thoughts*, and to return to God, that he may have mercy on them; to come unto Christ, *labouring*, and *heavy-laden with sin*, that they may obtain *rest* of him; and are assured, that if they *believe, they shall be saved*; and that if they *believe not, they shall be damned*; and all the most powerful motives are set before them, to induce them to comply with these exhortations, especially those

drawn from the eternal world. Yet they persist in sin, they remain impenitent and un-humbled. They will not come unto Christ that they may have life.

Now such men shall be brought into judgment for their conduct, as well as more gross sinners. Nor will they be any more able to stand in the judgment than the other. They resist the most powerful means of grace, go on in sin against the clear light of the gospel, refuse to hearken to the kindest calls and invitations, reject the most amiable Saviour, the judge himself, and despise the free offers of eternal life, glory, and felicity. And how will they be able to answer for these things at the tribunal of Christ?

IV. If there be a day of judgment appointed, then let all be very strict in trying their own sincerity. God on that day will discover the secrets of all hearts. The judgment of that day will be like the fire, which burns up whatsoever is not true gold. Wood, hay, stubble, and dross, shall be all consumed by the scorching fire of that day. The judge will be like a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap, which will cleanse away all filthiness, however it may be coloured over. Mal. 3:2, "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." And Mal. 4:1, "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts."

There are multitudes of men that wear the guise of saints, appear like saints, and their state, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of their neighbours, is good. They have sheep's clothing. But no disguise can hide them from the eyes of the judge of the world. His eyes are as a flame of fire. They search the hearts and try the reins of the children of men. He will see whether they be sound at heart. He will see from what principles they have acted. A fair show will in no degree deceive him, as it does men in the present state. It will signify nothing to say, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence; and in thy name have we cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works." It will signify nothing to pretend to a great deal of comfort and joy, and to the experience of great religious affections, and to your having done many things in religion and morality, unless you have some greater evidences of sincerity.

Wherefore let everyone take heed that he be not deceived concerning himself. And that he depend not on that which will not bear examination at the day of judgment. Be not contented with this, that you have the judgment of men, the judgment of godly men, or that of ministers, in your favour. Consider that they are not to be your judges at last. Take occasion frequently to compare your hearts with the Word of God. That is the rule by which you are to be finally tried and judged. And try yourselves by your works, by which also you must be tried at last. Inquire whether you lead holy Christian lives, whether you perform universal and unconditional obedience to all God's commands, and whether you do it from a truly gracious respect to God.

Also frequently beg of God, the judge, that he would search you, try you now, and discover you to yourselves, that you may see if you be insincere in religion. And that he would lead you in the way everlasting. Beg of God, that if you be not upon a good foundation, he would unsettle you, and fix you upon the sure foundation. The example of the psalmist in this is worthy of imitation. Psal. 26:1, 2, "Judge me, O Lord, examine me, and prove me; try my reins and mine heart." And Psal. 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." God will search us hereafter, and discover what we are, both to ourselves and to all the world. Let us pray that he would search us, and discover our hearts to us now. We have need of divine help in this matter; for the heart is deceitful above all things.

V. If God has appointed a day to judge the world, let us judge and condemn ourselves for our sins. This we must do, if we would not be judged and condemned for them on that day. If we would escape condemnation, we must see that we justly may be condemned. We must be so sensible of our vileness and guilt, as to see that we deserve all that condemnation and punishment which are threatened. And that we are in the hands of God, who is the sovereign disposer of us, and will do with us as seemeth to himself good. Let us therefore often reflect on our sins, confess them before God, condemn and abhor ourselves, be truly humbled, and repent in dust and ashes.

VI. If these things be so, let us by no means be forward to judge others. Some are forward to judge others, to judge their hearts both in general and upon particular occasions, to determine as to the principles, motives, and ends of their actions. But this is to assume the province of God, and to set up ourselves as lords and judges. Rom. 14:4, "Who art thou, that thou judgest another man's servant?" Jam. 4:11, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law." To be thus disposed to judge and act censoriously towards others, is the way to be judged and condemned ourselves. Mat. 7:1, 2, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

VII. This doctrine affords matter of great consolation to the godly. This day of judgment, which is so terrible to ungodly men, affords no ground of terror to you, but abundant ground of joy and satisfaction. For though you now meet with more affliction and trouble than most wicked men, yet on that day you shall be delivered from all afflictions, and from all trouble. If you be unjustly treated by wicked men, and abused by them, what a comfort is it to the injured, that they may appeal to God, who judgeth righteously. The psalmist used often to comfort himself with this.

Upon these accounts the saints have reason to love the appearing of Jesus Christ. 2 Tim. 4:8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all those that love his appearing." This is to the saints a blessed hope. Tit. 2:13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. This day may well be the object of their eager desire, and when they hear of Christ's coming to judgment, they may well say, "Even so come, Lord Jesus," Rev. 22:20. It will be the most glorious day that ever the saints saw. It will be so both to those who shall die, and whose souls shall go to heaven, and to those who shall then be found alive on earth. It will be the wedding-day of the church. Surely then in the consideration of the approach of this day, there is ground of great consolation to the saints.

2. SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD

“Their foot shall slide in due time.” Deuteronomy 32:35

In this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, who were God’s visible people, and who lived under the means of grace; but who, notwithstanding all God’s wonderful works towards them, remained (as ver. 28.) void of counsel, having no understanding in them. Under all the cultivations of heaven, they brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit; as in the two verses next preceding the text. The expression I have chosen for my text, *Their foot shall slide in due time*, seems to imply the following doings, relating to the punishment and destruction to which these wicked Israelites were exposed.

1. That they were always exposed to *destruction*; as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the manner of their destruction coming upon them, being represented by their foot sliding. The same is expressed, Psalm 73:18. “Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction.”

2. It implies, that they were always exposed to sudden unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he can not foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once without warning: Which is also expressed in Psalm 73:18, 19. “Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction: How are they brought into desolation as in a moment!”

3. Another thing implied is, that they are liable to fall *of themselves*, without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.

4. That the reason why they are not fallen already, and do not fall now, is only that God’s appointed time is not come. For it is said, that when that due time, or appointed time comes, *their foot shall slide*. Then they shall be left to fall, as they are inclined by their own weight. God will not hold them up in these slippery places any longer, but will let them go; and then at that very instant, they shall fall into destruction; as he that stands on such slippery declining ground, on the edge of a pit, he can not stand alone, when he is let go he immediately falls and is lost.

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this. “There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God.” By the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God’s mere will had in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment.

The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations.

1. There is no want of *power* in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men’s hands can not be strong when God rises up. The strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands. He is not only able to cast wicked men

into hell, but he can most easily do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty to subdue a rebel, who has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the numbers of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defense from the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in pieces. They are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so it is easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that any thing hangs by: thus easy is it for God, when he pleases, to cast his enemies down to hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?

2. They *deserve* to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way, it makes no objection against God's using his power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Luke 13:7. The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back.

3. They are already under a sentence of *condemnation* to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell. John 3:18. "He that believeth not is condemned already." So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell; that is his place; from thence he is, John 8:23. "Ye are from beneath." And thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God's word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law assign to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell. And the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with them; as he is with many miserable creatures now tormented in hell, who there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth: yea, doubtless, with many that are now in this congregation, who it may be are at ease, than he is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell.

So that it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose his hand and cut them off. God is not altogether such an one as themselves, though they may imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.

5. The *devil* stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The scripture represents them as his goods, Luke 11:12. The devils watch them; they are ever by them at their right hand; they stand waiting for

them, like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw his hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell fire. These principles are active and powerful, exceeding violent in their nature, and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruptions, the same enmity does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in scripture compared to the troubled sea, Isa. 57:20. For the present, God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further;" but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God's restraints, whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.

7. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand. It is no security to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is no visible danger in any respect in his circumstances. The manifold and continual experience of the world in all ages, shows this is no evidence, that a man is not on the very brink of eternity, and that the next step will not be into another world. The unseen, unthought-of ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noon-day; the sharpest sight can not discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending them to hell, that there is nothing to make it appear, that God had need to be at the expense of a miracle, or go out of the ordinary course of his providence, to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. All the means that there are of sinners going out of the world, are so in God's hands, and so universally and absolutely subject to his power and determination, that it does not depend at all the less on the mere will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to hell, than if means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the case.

8. Natural men's prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them a moment. To this, divine providence and universal experience do also bear testimony. There is this clear evidence that men's own wisdom

is no security to them from death; that if it were otherwise we should see some difference between the wise and politic men of the world, and others, with regard to their liableness to early and unexpected death: but how is it in fact? Eccl. 2:16. “How dieth the wise man? even as the fool.”

9. All wicked men’s pains and *contrivance* which they use to escape hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, do not secure them from hell one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do. Every one lays out matters in his own mind how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes will not fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the greater part of men that have died heretofore are gone to hell; but each one imagines that he lays out matters better for his own escape than others have done. He does not intend to come to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take effectual care, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but a shadow. The greater part of those who heretofore have lived under the same means of grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to hell; and it was not because they were not as wise as those who are now alive: it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If we could speak with them, and inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected, when alive, and when they used to hear about hell ever to be the subjects of that misery: we doubtless, should hear one and another reply, “No, I never intended to come here: I had laid out matters otherwise in my mind; I thought I should contrive well for myself: I thought my scheme good. I intended to take effectual care; but it came upon me unexpected; I did not look for it at that time, and in that manner; it came as a thief: Death outwitted me: God’s wrath was too quick for me. Oh, my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would do hereafter; and when I was saying, Peace and safety, then suddenly destruction came upon me.

10. God has laid himself under *no obligation*, by any promise to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promises of the covenant of grace who are not the children of the covenant, who do not believe in any of the promises, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant.

So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural men’s earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction.

So that, thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God, over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the

executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment; the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out: and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of, all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, un-obliged forbearance of an incensed God.

APPLICATION

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of, there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it; but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his band, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with, and do not willingly subserve to any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of him who hath subjected it in hope. There are black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment. And consider here more particularly

1. *Whose* wrath it is: it is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Prov. 20:2. "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: Whoso provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul." The subject that very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentates in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust, in comparison of the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth. It is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth, before God, are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred is to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs, as his majesty is greater. Luke 12:4, 5. "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

2. It is the *fierceness* of his wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the fury of God; as in Isaiah 59:18. "According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay fury to his adversaries." So Isaiah 66:15. "For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." And in many other places. So, Rev. 19:15, we read of "the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." The words are exceeding terrible. If it had only been said, "the wrath of God," the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful: but it is "the fierceness and wrath of God." The fury of God! the fierceness of Jehovah! Oh, how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them! But it is also "the fierceness and wrath of *Almighty* God." As though there would be a very great manifestation of his almighty power in what the fierceness of his wrath should inflict, as though omnipotence should be as it were enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. Oh! then, what will be the consequence! What will become of the poor worms that shall suffer it! Whose hands can be strong? And whose heart can endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk who shall be the subject of this!

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without

any pity. When God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind; he will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall *not suffer beyond what strict justice requires*. Nothing shall be withheld, because it is so hard for you to bear. Ezek. 8:18. "Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them." Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is past, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any regard to your welfare. God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end; for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that it is said he will only "laugh and mock," Prov. 1:25, 26, etc.

How awful are those words, Isa. 63:3, which are the words of the great God. "I will tread them in mine anger, and will trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." It is perhaps impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, *vis.* contempt, and hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favour, that instead of that, he will only tread you under foot. And though he will know that you can not bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you, in the utmost contempt: no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet to be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict to that end, that he might show what that wrath of Jehovah is. God hath had it on his heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent his love is, and also how terrible his wrath is. Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to show how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that would provoke them. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean empire, was willing to show his wrath when enraged with Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego; and accordingly gave orders that the burning fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was before; doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it. But the great God is also willing to show his wrath, and magnify his awful majesty and mighty power in the extreme sufferings of his enemies. Rom. 9:22. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endure with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" And seeing this is his design, and what he has determined, even to show how terrible the unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, he will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great

and angry God hath risen up and executed his awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of his indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold that awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. Isa. 33:12-14. "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire. Hear ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites," etc.

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness of the omnipotent God shall be magnified upon you, in the ineffable strength of your torments. You shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. Isa. 66:23, 24. "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

4. It is *everlasting* wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long for ever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: For "who knows the power of God's anger?"

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in the danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this discourse, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, in the whole congregation, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might all the rest of the congregation lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But, alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember this discourse in hell? And it would

be a wonder, if some that are now present should not be in hell in a very short time, even before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some persons, that now sit here, in some seats of this meeting-house, in health, quiet and secure, should be there before to-morrow morning. Those of you that finally continue in a natural condition, that shall keep out of hell longest will be there in a little time! your damnation does not slumber; it will come swiftly, and, in all probability, very suddenly upon many of you. You have reason to wonder that you are not already in hell. It is doubtless the case of some whom you have seen and known, that never deserved hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you. Their case is past all hope; they are crying in extreme misery and perfect despair; but here you are in the land of the living and in the house of God, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned hopeless souls give for one day's opportunity such as you now enjoy!

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are now in a happy state, with their hearts filled with love to him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Are not your souls as precious as the souls of the people at Suffield *, where they are flocking from day to day to Christ?

*A town in the neighbourhood.

Are there not many here who have lived long in the world, and are not to this day born again? and so are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and have done nothing ever since they have lived, but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? Oh, sirs, your case, in an especial manner, is extremely dangerous. Your guilt and hardness of heart is extremely great. Do you not see how generally persons of your years are passed over and left, in the present remarkable and wonderful dispensation of God's mercy? You had need to consider yourselves, and awake thoroughly out of sleep. You can not bear the fierceness and wrath of the infinite God. And you, young men, and young women, will you neglect this precious season which you now enjoy, when so many others of your age are renouncing all youthful vanities, and flocking to Christ? You especially have now an extraordinary opportunity; but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as with those persons who spent all the precious days of youth in sin, and are now come to such a dreadful pass in blindness and hardness. And you, children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, who is now angry with you every day and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many other children in the land are converted, and are become the holy and happy children of the King of kings?

And let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now

harken to the loud calls of God's word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of such great favours to some, will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others. Men's hearts harden, and their guilt increases apace at such a day as this, if they neglect their souls; and never was there so great danger of such persons being given up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. God seems now to be hastily gathering in his elect in all parts of the land; and probably the greater part of adult persons that ever shall be saved, will be brought in now in a little time, and that it will be as it was on the great out-pouring of the Spirit upon the Jews in the apostles' days; the election will obtain, and the rest will be blinded. If this should be the case with you, you will eternally curse this day, and will curse the day that ever you was born, to see such a season of the pouring out of God's Spirit, and will wish that you had died and gone to hell before you had seen it. Now undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the axe is in an extraordinary manner laid at the root of the trees, that every tree which brings not forth good fruit, may be hewn down and cast into the fire.

Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation: Let every one fly out of Sodom: "Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."

3. THE VAIN SELF-FLATTERIES OF THE SINNER

“For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.” Psalm 36:2

In the foregoing verse, David says, that the transgression of the wicked said within his heart, “that there is no fear of God before his eyes;” that is, when he saw that the wicked went on in sin, in an allowed way of wickedness, it convinced him, that he was not afraid of those terrible judgments, and of that wrath with which God hath threatened sinners. If he were afraid of these he could never go on so securely in sin, as he doth.

In our text he gives the reason why the wicked did not fear. It was a strange thing that men, who enjoyed such light as they did in the land of Israel, who read and heard those many awful threatenings which were written in the book of the law, should not be afraid to go on in sin. But saith the Psalmist, They flatter themselves in their own eyes: They have something or other which they make a foundation of encouragement, whereby they persuade themselves that they shall escape those judgments; and that makes them put far away the evil day.

In this manner he proceeds, until his iniquity be found to be hateful; that is, until he finds by experience that it is a more dreadful thing to sin against God, and break his holy commands, than he imagined. He thinks sin to be sweet, and hides it as a sweet morsel under his tongue: He loves it, and flatters himself in it, till at length he finds, by experience, that it is bitter as gall and wormwood. Though he thinks the commission of sin to be lovely, yet he will find the fruit of it to be hateful, and what he can not endure. Proverbs 23:32. “At last it will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.”

Here observe,

1. The subject spoken of is the WICKED MAN, of whom the Psalmist had been speaking in the foregoing verse.
2. His action in flattering himself in his own eyes; i.e. he makes himself and his case to appear to himself, or in his own eyes, better than it is.
3. How long he continues so to do, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. ‘Which may be taken for his sin itself, the wicked will see how odious sin is to God’, when he shall feel the effects of his hatred, and how hateful to angels and saints; or rather the cause is here put for the effect, the tree for its fruit, and he will find his iniquity to be hateful, as he will find the hatefulness and feel the terribleness of the FRUIT of his iniquity.

DOCTRINE

Wicked men generally flatter themselves with hopes of escaping punishment, till it actually comes upon them.

There are but few sinners who despair, who give up the cause and conclude with themselves, that they shall go to hell; yet there are but few who do not go to hell. It is to be feared that men go to hell every day out of this country; yet very few of them suffer themselves to believe, that they are in any great danger of that punishment. They

go on sinning and travelling in the direct road to the pit; yet by one mean or other they persuade themselves that they shall never fall into it,

In my present discourse, I shall,

1. Mention some things in confirmation of the doctrine, that sinners flatter themselves with the hope of impunity.
2. Mention some of the various ways wherein sinners flatter themselves in that hope.
3. Show that sinners generally go on flattering themselves, till punishment actually overtakes them.

I. I am to mention some things in confirmation of the doctrine, that sinners flatter themselves with the hope of future impunity.

1. We are so taught in the word of God. Beside our text, you may see, Deuteronomy 29:18, 19. “Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God. Lest there should he among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, “and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.” Where it is supposed that they whose hearts turn away from God, and are roots that bear gall and wormwood, generally bless themselves in their hearts, saying, WE SHALL HAVE PEACE.

See also Psalm 49:17,18. “When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: His glory shall not descend after him, though while he lived, he BLESSED HIS SOUL.” And Psalm 1:21. “These things thou hast done. and I kept silence: Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee.”

2. It is very evident, that sinners flatter themselves that they shall escape punishment, by this, that otherwise they would be in dreadful and continual distress. Otherwise, as long as they are in sin, they could never live and go about so cheerfully as they now do: Their lives would be filled with sorrow and mourning, and they would be in continual uneasiness and distress; as much as those that are exercised with some violent pain of body. But it is evident that it is not in fact so; it is apparent that men are careless and secure; that they are not much concerned about future punishment, and that they cheerfully pursue their business and recreations. Therefore they undoubtedly flatter themselves, that they shall not be eternally miserable in hell, as they are threatened in the word of God

3. It is evident that they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall escape punishment, as otherwise they would certainly be restrained at least from many of those sins in which they now live: They would not proceed in wilful courses of sin. The transgression of the wicked convinced the Psalmist, and is enough to convince every one, that there is no fear of God before his eyes, and that he flatters himself in his own eyes. It would be impossible for men allowedly from day to day to do those very things, which they know are threatened with everlasting destruction, if they did not some way encourage themselves, they should nevertheless escape that destruction.

II. I shall mention some of the various ways wherein sinners flatter themselves in their own eyes.

1. Some flatter themselves with a secret hope, that there is no such thing as another world. They hear a great deal of preaching, and a great deal of talk about hell, and about the eternal judgment; but those things do not seem to them to be real. They never saw any thing of them; they never saw hell, never saw the devils and damned spirits; and therefore are ready to say with themselves, How do I know that there is any such thing as another world? When the beasts die, there is an end of them, and how do I know but that it will be so with me? Perhaps all these things are nothing but the inventions of men, nothing but cunningly devised fables.

Such thoughts are apt to rise in the minds of sinners, and the devil sets in to enforce them. Such thoughts are an ease to them; therefore they wish they were true, and that makes them the more ready to think that they are indeed true. So that they are hardened in the way of sin, by infidelity and atheistic thoughts. Psalm 14:1. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Psalm 94:6, 7. "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, the Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it,"

2. Some flatter themselves that death is a great way off, and that they shall hereafter have much opportunity to seek salvation; and they think if they earnestly seek it, though it be a great while hence, they shall obtain. Although they see no reason to conclude that they shall live long, and perhaps they do not positively conclude that they shall; yet it doth not come into their minds that their lives are really uncertain, and that it is doubtful whether they will live another year. Such a thought as this doth not take any hold of them. And although they do not absolutely determine that they shall live to old age or to middle age, yet they secretly flatter themselves with such an imagination. They are disposed to believe so, and do so far believe it, that they act upon it and run the venture of it.

Men will believe that things will be as they choose to have them, without reason, and sometimes without the appearance of reason, as is most apparent in this case, Psalm 49:11. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names."

The prepossession and desire of men to have it so, is the principal thing that makes them believe so. However, there are several other things which they use as arguments to flatter themselves. Perhaps they think with themselves, that since they are at present in health, or in youth, or that since they are useful men, do a great deal of good, and both them selves and others pray for the continuance of their lives; they are not likely to be removed by death very soon.

If they shall live many years in the world, they think that it is very probable they shall be converted before they die; as they expect hereafter to have much more convenient opportunities to become converted, than they have now. And by some means or other, they think they shall get through their work before they arrive at old age.

3. Some flatter themselves that they lead moral and orderly lives, and therefore think that they shall not be damned. They think with themselves that they live not in any vice,

that they take care to wrong no man, are just and honest dealers, that they are not addicted to hard drinking, or to uncleanness, or to bad language; that they keep the Sabbath strictly, are constant attendants on the public worship, and maintain the worship of God in their families. Therefore they hope that God will not cast them into hell. They see not why God should be so angry with them as that would imply, seeing they are so orderly and regular in their walk; they see not that they have done enough to anger him to that degree. And if they have angered him, they imagine they have also done a great deal to pacify him.

If they be not as yet converted, and it be necessary that they should experience any other conversion in order to their salvation, they hope that their orderly and strict lives will move God to give them converting grace. They hope that surely God will not see those that live as they do go to hell. Thus they flatter themselves, as those we read of. Luke 18:9. "That trusted in themselves that they were righteous."

4. Some make the advantages under which they live an occasion of self flattery. They flatter themselves, because they live in a place where the gospel is powerfully preached and among a religious people, where many have been converted; and they think it will be much easier for them to be saved on that account. Thus they abuse the grace of God to their destruction; they do that which the scriptures call despising the riches of God's goodness: Romans 2:4. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

Some flatter themselves, because they are born of godly parents, who are dear to God, who have often and earnestly prayed for them, they hope that their prayers will be heard; and that encourages them to go on in the way of neglecting their souls. The Jews had great dependence upon this, that they were the children of Abraham: John 8:33. they make their boast. "We be Abraham's seed; and in verse 39. "Abraham is our father."

5. Some flatter themselves with their own intentions. They intend to neglect themselves, and give themselves liberty for a while longer, and then to reform. Though now they neglect their souls, and are going on in sin; yet they intend ere long to bestir themselves, to leave off their sins, and to set themselves to seek God. They hear that there is great encouragement for those who earnestly seek God, that they shall find him. So they intend to do; they propose to seek with a great deal of earnestness. They are told, that there are many who seek to enter the kingdom of heaven, who shall not be able; but they intend, not only to seek, but To STRIVE However, for the present they allow themselves in their ease, sloth, and pleasure, minding only earthly things.

Or if they should be seized with some mortal distemper, and should draw near to the grave, before the time which they lay out in their minds for reformation, they think how earnestly they would pray and cry to God for mercy; and as they hear God is a merciful God, who taketh no delight in the death of sinners, they hence flatter themselves that they shall move God to have pity on them.

There are but few who are sinners, and know themselves to be such, who do not encourage themselves with intentions of future repentance and reformation; but few who do not flatter themselves, that they shall in good earnest set themselves to seek God some time or other. Hell is full of GOOD INTENDERS who never proved to be

TRUE PERFORMERS: Acts 24:25. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

6. There are some who flatter themselves, that they do and have done, a great deal for their salvation, and therefore hope they shall obtain, when indeed they neither do what they ought to do, nor what they might do in their present state of unregeneracy; nor are they in any likely way to be converted They think they are striving, when they neglect many moral and some instituted duties; nor do they exert themselves as if it were for their lives; they are not violent for the kingdom of heaven.

There are doubtless many such; many are concerned, and are seeking, and do many things, and think that they are in a very fair way to obtain the kingdom of God; yet there is great danger that they will prove at last to be some of the foolish virgins, and be found without oil in their vessels.

7. Some hope by their strivings to obtain salvation of themselves. They have a secret imagination, that they shall, by degrees, work in themselves sorrow and repentance of sin, and love towards God and Jesus Christ. Their striving is not so much an earnest seeking to God, as a striving to do themselves that which is the work of God. Many who are now seeking have this imagination, and labour, read, pray, hear sermons and go to private meetings, with the view of making themselves holy, and of working in themselves holy affections.

Many, who only project and design to turn to God hereafter, are apt to think that it is an easy thing to be converted, that it is a thing which will be in their own power at any time, when they shall earnestly set themselves to it.

8. Some sinners flatter themselves that they are already converted. They sit down and rest in a false hope, persuading themselves that all their sins are pardoned; that God loves them; that they shall go to heaven when they die; and that they need trouble themselves no more: Revelation 3:17. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

III. Sinners very generally go on flattering themselves in some or other of these ways, till their punishment actually overtakes them. These are the baits by which Satan catches souls, and draws them into his snare. They are such self flatteries as these that keep men from seeing what danger they are in, and that make them go securely on in the way they are in, "as the bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

Those that flatter themselves with hopes of living a great while longer in the world, very commonly continue so to do till death comes. Death comes upon them when they expect it not; they look upon it as a great way off, when there is but a step between them and death. They thought not of dying at that time, nor at anytime near it. When they were young, they proposed to live a good while longer; and if they happen to live till middle age, they still maintain the same thought, that they are not yet near death; and so that thought goes along with them as long as they live, or till they are just about to die.

Men often have a dependence on their own righteousness, and as long as they live are never brought off from it. Multitudes uphold themselves with their own intentions, till all their prospects are dashed in pieces by death. They put off the work which they have to do till such a time; and when that comes, they put it off to another time, until death, which can not be put off, overtakes them. There are many also that hold a false hope, a persuasion that they belong to God; and as long as they live, by all the marks and signs which are given of a true convert, they never will be persuaded to let go their hope, till it is rent from them by death.

Thus men commonly uphold themselves, and make themselves easy, till hell fire makes them uneasy. Everlasting ruin comes upon them as a snare, and all their hopes are at once cut off, and turned into everlasting despair: I. Thessalonians v. 3. "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

APPLICATION

1. Hence we learn one reason why there are but few saved, and why so many perish from under the gospel. All men know that they must die, and all that sit under the light of the gospel have been told many a time, that after this there is an other world; that there are but two states in that other world, a state of eternal happiness, and a state of eternal misery; that there is but one way of escaping the misery and obtaining the blessedness of eternity, which is by obtaining an interest in Christ, through faith in him; and that this life is the only opportunity of obtaining an interest in Christ. Yet men are so much given to flatter themselves in those ways which we have mentioned, that there are but few that seasonably take care of their salvation. Indeed they can not but be in some measure concerned about their souls; yet they flatter themselves with one thing or other, so that they are kept steadily and uninterruptedly going on in the broad way to destruction.

2. Hence we learn the reason why awakening truths of scripture, and awakening sermons, make no more impression upon men. It is in itself a wonderful and surprising thing, that God's denunciations of eternal misery, and threatenings of casting sinners into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever and ever, do not affect them, do not startle them. But the truth is, they flatter themselves, by such means as we have mentioned, that this dreadful misery is not for them; that they shall escape it, though multitudes of others are involved in it. They take not these threatenings to themselves; they seem to think that they do not belong to them.

How many are there in this congregation, who, for all the awakening sermons they have heard, are yet secure in sin! And who, although they are sensible that they are in a Christless condition, and are still going on in sin, yet intend to go to heaven, and expect that by some means or other they shall arrive there. They are often told, that God is very angry with them; yet they think God is a very merciful God, and they shall be able to pacify him. If they be told how uncertain life is, that doth not awaken them, because they flatter themselves with long life. If they be told how dangerous it is to delay the business of religion, they promise themselves, that they will hereafter engage in it with more earnestness than others, and so obtain the end, the salvation of their souls. Others, when they are told that many shall seek who shall not be able to obtain, think surely, that they, having done so much for salvation, shall not be denied.

3. Let every sinner examine himself, whether he do not flatter himself in some of those ways which have been mentioned. What is it in your own minds which makes you think it is safe for you to delay turning to God? What is it that encourages you to run such a venture as you do by delaying this necessary work? Is it that you hope there is no such state as heaven or hell, and have a suspicion that there is no God? Is it this that makes you secure? Or is it that you are not much afraid but that you shall have opportunity enough a great while hence to mind such things? Is it an intention of a future seeking a more convenient season? And are you persuaded that God will hearken to you then, after you shall have so long turned a deaf ear to his commands and gracious? Are you encouraged to commit sin, because you hope to repent of it? Are you encouraged by the mercy of God to be his enemies? And do you resolve still to provoke him to anger, because you think he is easily pacified?

Or do you think that your conversion is in your own power, and that you can turn to God when you please? Is it because you have been born of godly parents that you are so secure? Or do you imagine that you are in a fair way to be converted? Do you think that what you have done in religion will engage God to pity you, and that he never can have the heart to condemn one who has lived in so orderly a manner? Or do you think that you are indeed converted already? And doth that encourage you to take a liberty in sinning? Or are you secure, because you are so stupid as to think nothing about these things? Do you let these concerns wholly alone, and scarcely ever think at all how it will be with you after you are dead?

Certainly it must be one or more of these things which keeps you in your security, and encourages you to go on in sin. Examine, therefore, and see which of them it is.

4. By the text and doctrine be persuaded to leave off thus flattering yourselves in your own eyes. You are therein informed, that those who do as you do commonly continue so doing till their punishment actually comes upon them. Thereby you may be convinced of the vanity of all such flatteries. Be afraid of that which you are sure is the devil's bait: "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird," Proverbs 1:17.

You are not only told in the scriptures, that sinners are generally thus allured to hell, but your own reason may convince you that it is so. For doubtless other sinners have as much ground to hope to escape punishment as you; and it is evident, that they generally do hope to escape. Men under the gospel almost universally think they shall not go to hell: If it were otherwise, they could have no peace or comfort in the world. Yet what multitudes have we reason to conclude go down from under the preaching of the gospel to the pit of destruction! Now, this is surely enough to convince any sober, prudent person of the folly of such flattery, and of the folly of every one that doth not immediately set about his great work with his might. If you could have access to the damned, you would hear many of them curse themselves, for thus flattering themselves while they lived in this world; and you would have the same doctrine preached to you by their wailings and yellings which is now preached to you from the pulpit.

If your temptation to security be unbelief of the fundamental doctrines of religion, such as the being of God, of another world, and an eternal judgment, you may consider, that though that makes you secure at present, yet it will not do always, it will not stand by when you come to die. The fool often in health saith, There is no God; but when he comes to die, he can not rest in any such supposition. Then he is generally so much

convinced in his own conscience, that there is a God, that he is in dreadful amazement for fear of his eternal wrath. It is folly, therefore, to flatter yourselves with any supposition now which you will not then be able to hold.

If you depend on long life, consider how many who have depended on the same thing, and had as much reason to depend on it as you, have died within your remembrance.

Is it because you are outwardly of an orderly life and conversation, that you think you shall be saved? How unreasonable is it to suppose, that God should be so obliged by those actions, which he knows are not done from the least respect or regard to him, but wholly with a private view! Is it because you are under great advantages that you are not much afraid but that you shall some time or other be converted, and therefore neglect yourselves and your spiritual interests? And were not the people of Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum, under as great advantages as you, when Christ himself preached the gospel to them, almost continually, and wrought such a multitude of miracles among them? Yet he says, that it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those cities.

Do you expect you shall be saved, however you neglect yourselves, because you were born of godly parents? hear what Christ saith, Matthew 3:9. “Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father.” Do you flatter yourselves that you shall obtain mercy, though others do not, because you intend hereafter to seek it more earnestly than others? Yet you deceive yourselves, if you think that you intend better than many of those others, or better than many who are now in hell once intended.

If you think you are in a way of earnest seeking, consider, whether or no you do not mind other things yet more? If you imagine that you have it in your own power to work yourselves up to repentance, consider, that you must assuredly give up that imagination before you can have repentance wrought in you. If you think yourselves already converted, and that encourages you to give yourselves the greater liberty in sinning, this is a certain sign that you are not converted.

Wherefore abandon all these ways of flattering yourselves; no longer follow the devil’s bait; and let nothing encourage you to go on in sin; but immediately and henceforth seek God with all your heart, and soul, and strength.

4. THE FUTURE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED UNAVOIDABLE AND INTOLERABLE

“Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.” Ezekiel 22:14

In the former part of this chapter, we have a dreadful catalogue of the sins of Jerusalem; as you may see from the first to the thirteenth verse. In the thirteenth, which is the verse preceding the text, God manifests his great displeasure and fearful wrath against them for those their iniquities. “Behold, I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.” The expression of God’s smiting his hand, signifies the greatness of his anger, and his preparing himself, as it were to execute wrath answerable to their heinous crimes. It is an allusion to what we sometimes see in men when they are surprised, by seeing or hearing of some horrid offence, or most intolerable injury, which very much stirs their spirits, and animates them with high resentment; on such an occasion they will rise up in wrath and smite their hands together, as an expression of the heat of their indignation, and full resolution to be avenged on those who have committed the injury; as in chap. 21:7. “I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the Lord have said it,”

Then, in the text, the punishment of that people is represented.

1. The nature of their punishment is more generally represented in that therein God will undertake to deal with them: God here threatens to deal with the sinners in Jerusalem. The prophets could do nothing with them. God had sent them one after another; but those sinners were too strong for them, and beat one, and killed another. Therefore now God himself undertakes to deal with them.

2. Their punishment is more particularly represented in three things, viz. The intolerableness, the remedilessness, and the unavoidableness of it.

(1.) The intolerableness of it: Can thine heart endure?

(2.) The remedilessness, or the impossibility of their doing any thing for their own relief: Can thine hands be strong?

(3.) The unavoidableness of it: I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.

DOCTRINE

Since God hath undertaken to deal with impenitent sinners, they shall neither shun the threatened misery, nor deliver themselves out of it, nor can they bear it.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

1. Show what is implied in God’s undertaking to deal with impenitent sinners.

2. That therefore they can not avoid punishment.

3. That they can not in any measure deliver themselves from it, or do any thing for their own relief under it.

4. That they can not bear it.

5. I shall answer an inquiry; and then proceed to the use.

I. I shall show what is implied in God's undertaking to deal with impenitent sinners... Others are not able to deal with them. They baffle all the means used with them by those that are appointed to teach and to rule over them. They will not yield to parents, or to the counsels, warning, or reproofs of ministers. They prove obstinate and stiff-hearted. Therefore God undertakes to deal with them This implies the following things:

1. That God will reckon with them, and take of them satisfaction to his justice. In this world God puts forth his authority to command them; and to require subjection to him. In his commands he is very positive, strictly requiring of them the performance of such and such duties, and as positively forbidding such and such things which were contrary to their duty. But they have no regard to these commands. God continues commanding, and they continue rebelling. They make nothing of God's authority. God threatens, but they despise his threatening They make nothing of dishonouring God; they care not how much their behaviour is to the dishonour of God. He offers them mercy, if they will repent and return; but they despise his mercy as well as his wrath. God calleth, but they refuse. Thus they are continually plunging themselves deeper and deeper in debt, and at the same time imagine they shall escape the payment of the debt, and design entirely to rob God of his due.

But God hath undertaken to right himself. He will reckon with them; he hath undertaken to see that the debts due to him are paid. All their sins are written in his book; not one of them is forgotten, and every one must be paid. If God be wise enough, and strong enough, he will have full satisfaction: he will exact the very uttermost farthing. He undertakes it as his part, as what belongs to him, to see himself righted, wherein he hath been wronged Deut. 22:35. "To me belongeth vengeance." Ibid. 7:10. "He will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face."

2. He hath undertaken to vindicate the honour of his Majesty. His Majesty they despise. They hear that he is a great God; but they despise his greatness; they look upon him worthy of contempt, and treat him accordingly. They hear of him by the name of a great King; but his authority they regard not, and sometimes trample upon it for years together. But God hath not left the honour of his Majesty wholly to their care. Though they now trample it in the dust, yet that is no sign that it will finally be lost. If God had left it wholly in their hands, it would indeed be lost. But God doth not leave his honour and his glory with his enemies; it is too precious in his eyes to be so neglected. He hath reserved the care of it to himself: He will see to it that his own injured Majesty is vindicated. If the honour of God, upon which sinners trample, finally lie in the dust, then it will be because he is not strong enough to vindicate himself. He hath sworn that great oath in Numbers 14:21. "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

Sinners despise his Son, and trample him under their feet. But he will see, if he can not make the glory of his Son appear, with respect to them; that all the earth may know how evil a thing it is to despise the Son of God. God intends that all men and angels, all heaven and all earth, shall see whether he be sufficient to magnify himself upon sinners who now despise him. He intends that the issue of things with respect to them shall be open, that all men may see it.

3. He hath undertaken to subdue impenitent sinners. Their hearts while in this world are very unsubdued. They lift up their heads and conduct themselves very proudly and

contemptuously, and often sin with an high hand. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongues walk through the earth. They practically say as Pharaoh did, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice." Job 21:41. "They say to God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Some, who cover their sin with specious show, who put on a face of religion, and a demure countenance and behaviour, yet have this spirit secretly reigning in their breasts. Notwithstanding all their fair show, and good external carriage, they despise God in their hearts, and have the weapons of war about them, though they are secret enemies, and carry their swords under their skirts. They have most proud, stubborn, and rebellious hearts, which are ready to rise in opposition, to contend with him, and to find fault with his dispensations. Their hearts are full of pride, enmity, stubbornness, and blasphemy, which work in them many ways, while they sit under the preaching of the word, and while the spirit of God is striving with them; and they always continue to oppose and resist God as long as they live in the world; they never lay down the weapons of their rebellion."

But God hath undertaken to deal with them and to subdue them; and those proud and stubborn hearts, which will not yield to the power of God's word, shall be broken by the power of his hand. If they will not be willing subjects to the golden sceptre, and will not yield to the attractives of his love, they shall be subject to the force of the iron rod, whether they will or no.

Them that proudly set up their own righteousness, and their own wills against God, God hath undertaken to bring down; and without doubt, it will be done. He hath undertaken to make those who are now regardless of God, regard him. They shall know that he is Jehovah. Now they will not own that he is the Lord; but they shall know it, Isa. 26:11. "Lord, when thine hand is lifted up, they will not see: But they shall see."

Now wicked men not only hate God, but they slight him; they are not afraid of him. But, he will subdue their contempt. When he shall come to take them in hand, they will hate him still; but they will not slight him; they will not make light of his power as they now do; they will see and feel too much of the infinity of his power to slight it. They are now wont to slight his wrath; but then they will slight it no more, they will be infinitely far from it, they will find by sufficient experience that his wrath is not to be slighted: They will learn this to their cost, and they never will forget it.

4. God hath undertaken to rectify their judgments. Now they will not be convinced of those things which God tells them in his word. Ministers take much pains to convince them, but all is in vain. Therefore God will undertake to convince them, and he will do it effectually. Now they will not be convinced of the truth of divine things. They have indeed convincing arguments set before them; they hear and see enough to convince them; yet so prone are they to unbelief and Atheism, that divine things never seem to them to be real. But God will hereafter make them seem real.

Now they are always doubting of the truth of the Scriptures, questioning whether they be the word of God, and whether the threatenings of Scripture be true. but God hath undertaken to convince them that those threatenings are true, and he will make them to know that they are true, so that they will never doubt any more for ever. They will be

convinced by dear experience....Now they are always questioning whether there be any such place as hell. They hear much about it, but it always seems to them like a dream. But God will make it seem otherwise than a dream....Now they are often told of the vanity of the world; but we may as well preach to the beasts, to persuade them of the vanity of earthly things. But God will undertake to convince them of this; he will hereafter give them a thorough conviction of it, so that they shall have a strong sense of the vanity of all these things.

Now ministers often tell sinners of the great importance of an interest in Christ, and that that is the one thing needful. They are also told the folly of delaying the care of their souls, and how much it concerns them to improve their opportunity. But the instructions of ministers do not convince them, therefore God will undertake to convince them.

Impenitent sinners, while in this world, hear how dreadful hell is. But they will not believe that it is so dreadful as ministers represent. They can not think that they shall to all eternity suffer such exquisite and horrible torments. But they shall be taught and convinced to purpose, that the representations ministers give of those torments, agreeable to the word of God, are no bugbears; and that the wrath of God is indeed as dreadful as they declare. Since God hath undertaken to deal with sinners, and to rectify their judgments in these matters, and he will do it thoroughly; for his work is perfect; when he undertakes to do things, he doth not do them by halves; therefore before he shall have done with sinners, he will convince them effectually, so that they shall never be in danger of relapsing into their former errors any more. He will convince them of their folly and stupidity in entertaining such notions as they now entertain.

Thus God hath undertaken to deal with obstinate unbelievers. They carry things on in great confusion; but we need not be dismayed at it: Let us wait, and we shall see that God will rectify things. Sinners will not always continue to rebel and despise with impunity. The honour of God will in due time be vindicated; and they shall be subdued and convicted, and shall give an account. There is no sin, not so much as an idle word that they shall speak, but they must give an account of it; Matt. 12:36. And their sins must be fully balanced, and recompensed, and satisfaction obtained. Because judgment against their evil works is not speedily executed, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil. Yet God is a righteous judge; he will see that judgment is executed in due time.

I come now,

II. To show, that therefore impenitent sinners shall not avoid their due punishment....God hath undertaken to inflict it; he hath engaged to do it; he takes it as his work, as what properly belongs to him, and we may expect it of him. If he hath sworn by his life, that he will do it; and if he hath power sufficient; if he is the living God, doubtless we shall see it done. And that God hath declared that he will punish impenitent sinners, is manifest from, many scriptures; as Deut. 32:41. "I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." Deut. 7:10. "He will not be slack to him that hateth him: He will repay him to his face." Exod. 34:7. "That will by no means clear the guilty." Nahum 1:3. "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. "God saith in the text, "I the Lord hath spoken it, and will do it;" which leaves no room to doubt of the actual fulfilment of the threatening in its utmost extent.... Some wicked men have flattered themselves, that

although God hath threatened very dreadful things to wicked men for their sins, yet in his heart he never intends to fulfil his threatenings, but only to terrify them, and make them afraid, while they live. But would the infinitely holy God, who is not a man that he should lie, and who speaketh no vain words, utter himself in this manner: I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it; I have not only threatened, but I will also fulfil my threatenings; when at the same time these words did not agree with his heart, but he secretly knew that though he had spoken, yet he intended not to do it? Who is he that dares to entertain such horrid blasphemy in his heart?

No; let no impenitent sinner flatter himself so vainly and foolishly. If it were indeed only a man, a being of like impotence and mutability with themselves, who had undertaken to deal with them; they might perhaps with some reason flatter themselves; that they should find some means to avoid the threatened punishment. But since an omniscient, omnipotent, immutable God hath undertaken, vain are all such hopes.

There is no hope that possibly they may steal away to heaven, though they die unconverted. There is no hope that they can deceive God by any false show of repentance and faith, and so be taken to heaven through mistake; for the eyes of God are as a flame of fire; they perfectly see through every man; the inmost closet of the heart is all open to him

There is no hope of escaping the threatened punishment by sinking into nothing at death, like brute creatures. Indeed, many wicked men upon their deathbeds wish for this. If it were so, death would be nothing to them in comparison with what it now is. But all such wishes are vain.

There is no hope of their escaping without notice, when they leave the body. There is no hope that God, by reason of the multiplicity of affairs which he hath to mind, will happen to overlook them, and not take notice of them, when they come to die; and so that their souls will slip away privately, and hide themselves in some secret corner, and so escape divine vengeance.

There is no hope that they shall be missed in a crowd at the day of judgment, and that they can have opportunity to hide themselves in some cave or den of the mountains, or in any secret hole of the earth; and that while so doing, they will not be minded, by reason of the many things which will be the objects of attention on that day.... Neither is there any hope that they will be able to crowd themselves in among the multitude of the saints at the right hand of the Judge, and so go to heaven undiscovered.... Nor is there any hope that God will alter his mind, or that he will repent of what he hath said; for he is not the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? When did God ever undertake to do any thing and fail?

I come now,

III. To show, that as impenitent sinners can not shun the threatened punishment; so neither can they do any thing to deliver themselves from it, or to relieve themselves under it. This is implied in those words of the text, Can thine hand be strong? It is with our hands that we make and accomplish things for ourselves. But the wicked in hell

will have no strength of hand to accomplish any thing at all for themselves, or to bring to pass any deliverance, or any degree of relief.

1. They will not be able in that conflict to overcome their enemy, and so to deliver themselves. God, who will then undertake to deal with them, and will gird himself with might to execute wrath, will be their enemy, and will act the part of an enemy with a witness; and they will have no strength to oppose him. Those who live negligent of their souls under the light of the gospel, act as if they supposed, that they should be able here after to make their part good with God. 1 Cor. 10:22. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? "...But they will have no power, no might to resist that omnipotence, which will be engaged against them.

2. They will have no strength in their hands to do any thing to appease God, or in the least to abate the fierceness of his wrath. They will not be able to offer any satisfaction: they will not be able to procure God's pity. Though they cry, God will not hear them. They will find no price to offer to God, in order to purchase any favour, or to pay any part of their debt.

3. They will not be able to find any to befriend them, and intercede with God for them. They had the offer of a mediator often made them in this world; but they will have no offers of such a nature in hell. None will befriend them. They will have no friend in HELL; all there will be their enemies. They will have no friend in heaven: 'None of the saints or angels will befriend them; or if they should, it would be to no purpose. There will be no creature that will have any power to deliver them, nor will any ever pity them.

4. Nor will they ever be able to make their escape. They will find no means to break prison and flee. In hell, they will be reserved in chains of darkness for ever and ever. Malefactors have often found means to break prison, and escape the hand of, civil justice. But none ever escaped out of the prison of hell, which is God's prison. It is a strong prison: it is beyond any finite power, or the united strength of all wicked men and devils, to unlock, or break open the door of that prison. Christ hath the key of hell; "he shuts and no man opens."

5. Nor will they ever be able to find any thing to relieve them in hell. They will never find any resting place there; any place of respite; any secret corner, which will be cooler than the rest, where they may have a little respite, a small abatement of the extremity of their torment. They never will be able to find any cooling stream or fountain, in any part of that world of torment; no, nor so much as a drop of water to cool their tongues. They will find no company to give them any comfort, or to do them the least good. They will find no place, where they can remain, and rest, and take breath for one minute: For they will be tormented with fire and brimstone; and will have no rest day nor night for ever and ever.

Thus impenitent sinners will be able neither to shun the punishment threatened, nor to deliver themselves from it, nor to find any relief under it.

I come now,

IV. To show, that neither will they be able to bear it. Neither will their hands be strong to deliver themselves from it, nor will their hearts be able to endure it. It is common with men, when they meet with calamities in this world, in the first place to endeavour to shun them. But if they find, that they can not shun them, then after they are come, they endeavour to deliver themselves from them as soon as they can; or at least, to order things so, as to deliver themselves in some degree. But if they find that they can by no means deliver themselves, and see that the case is so that they must bear them; then they set themselves to bear them: they fortify their spirits, and take up a resolution, that they will support themselves under them as well as they can.

But it will be utterly in vain for impenitent sinners to think to do thus with respect to the torments of hell. They will not be able to endure them, or at all to support themselves under them: the torment will be immensely beyond their strength. What will it signify for a worm, which is about to be pressed under the weight of some great rock, to be let fall with its whole weight upon it, to collect its strength, to set itself to bear up the weight of the rock, and to preserve itself from being crushed by it? Much more in vain will it be for a poor damned soul, to endeavour to support itself under the weight of the wrath of Almighty God. What is the strength of man, who is but a worm, to support himself against the power of Jehovah, and against the fierceness of his wrath? What is man's strength, when set to bear up against the exertions of infinite power? Matt. 21:44, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

When sinners hear of hell torments, they sometimes think with themselves: Well, if it shall come to that, that I must go to hell, I will bear it as well as I can: as if by clothing themselves with resolution and firmness of mind, they would be able to support themselves in some measure; when, alas! they will have no resolution, no courage at all. However they shall have prepared themselves, and collected their strength; yet as soon as they shall begin to feel that wrath, their hearts will melt and be as water. However before they may seem to harden their hearts, in order to prepare themselves to bear, yet the first moment they feel it, their hearts will become like wax before the furnace. Their courage and resolution will be all gone in an instant; it will vanish away like a shadow in the twinkling of an eye. The stoutest and most sturdy will have no more courage than the feeblest infant: let a man be an infant, or a giant, it will be all one. They will not be able to keep alive any courage, any strength, any comfort, any hope at all.

I come now as was proposed,

V. To answer an inquiry which may naturally be raised concerning these things.

Inquiry. Some may be ready to say, If this be the case, if impenitent sinners can neither shun future punishment, nor deliver themselves from it, nor bear it; then what will become of them?

Answer. They will wholly sink down into eternal death. There will be that sinking of heart, of which we now can not conceive. We see how it is with the body when in extreme pain. The nature of the body will support itself for a considerable time under very great pain, so as to keep from wholly sinking. There will be great struggles, lamentable groans and panting, and it may be convulsions. These are the strugglings of

nature to support itself under the extremity of the pain. There is, as it were, a great lothness in nature to yield to it; it can not bear wholly to sink.

But yet sometimes pain of body is so very extreme and exquisite, that the nature of the body can not support itself under it; however loth it may be to sink, yet it can not bear the pain; there are a few struggles, and throes, and pantings, and it may be a shriek or two, and then nature yields to the violence of the torments, sinks down, and the body dies. This is the death of the body. So it will be with the soul in hell; it will have no strength or power to deliver itself and its torment and horror will be so great, so mighty, so vastly disproportioned to its strength, that having no strength in the least to support itself, although it be infinitely contrary to the nature and inclination of the soul utterly to sink; yet it will sink, it will utterly and totally sink, without the least degree of remaining comfort, or strength, or courage, or hope. And though it will never be annihilated, its being and perception will never be abolished, yet such will be the infinite depth of gloominess that it will sink into, that it will be in a state of death, eternal death.

The nature of man desires happiness; it is the nature of the soul to crave and thirst after well-being; and if it be under misery, it eagerly pants after relief; and the greater the misery is, the more eagerly doth it struggle for help. But if all relief be withheld, all strength overborne, all support utterly gone; then it sinks into the darkness of death. We can conceive but little of the matter; we can not conceive what that sinking of the soul in such a case is. But to help your conception, imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven, or of a great furnace, where your pain would be as much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire, as the heat is greater. Imagine also that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an hour, all the while full of quick sense; what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace! And how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you! And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to you to think that you had it to endure the other fourteen!

But what would be the effect on your soul, if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full for twenty-four hours! And how much greater would be the effect, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year; and how vastly greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years! O then, how would your heart sink, if you thought, if you knew, that you must bear it forever and ever! That there would be no end! That after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end, than ever it was; and that you never, never should be delivered!

But your torment in hell will be immensely greater than this illustration represents. How then will the heart of a poor creature sink under it! How utterly inexpressible and inconceivable must the sinking of the soul be in such a case!

This is the death threatened in the law. This is dying in the highest sense of the word. This is to die sensibly; to die and know it; to be sensible of the gloom of death. This is to be undone; this is worthy of the name of destruction. This sinking of the soul under an infinite weight, which it can not bear, is the gloom of hell. We read in Scripture of the blackness of darkness; this is it, this is the very thing. We read in Scripture of sinners being lost, and of their losing their souls: this is the thing intended; this is to lose the soul: they that are the subjects of this are utterly lost.

APPLICATION

This subject may be applied in a use of awakening to impenitent sinners. What hath been said under this doctrine is for thee, O impenitent sinner, O poor wretch, who art in the same miserable state in which thou camest into the world, excepting that thou art loaded with vastly greater guilt by thine actual sins. These dreadful things which thou hast heard are for thee, who art yet unconverted, and still remainest an alien and stranger, without Christ and without God in the world. They are for thee, who to this day remainest an enemy to God, and a child of the devil, even in this remarkable season, when others both here and elsewhere, far and near, are flocking to Christ; for thee who hearest the noise, the fame of these things, but knowest nothing of the power of godliness in thine own heart.

Whoever thou art, whether young or old, little or great, if thou art in a Christless, unconverted state, this is the wrath, this is the death to which thou art condemned. This is the wrath that abideth on thee; this is the hell over which thou hangest, and into which thou art ready to drop every day and every night.

If thou shalt remain blind, and hard, and dead in sin a little longer, this destruction will come upon thee: God hath spoken and he will do it. It is vain for thee to flatter thyself with hopes that thou shalt avoid it, or to say in thine heart, perhaps it will not be; perhaps it will not be just so; perhaps things have been represented worse than they are. If thou wilt not be convinced by the word preached to thee by men in the name of God, God himself will undertake to convince thee, Ezekiel 14:4, 7, 8.

Doth it seem to thee not real that thou shalt suffer such a dreadful destruction, because it seems to thee that thou dost not deserve it? And because thou dost not see any thing so horrid in thyself, as to answer such a dreadful punishment? Why is it that thy wickedness doth not seem bad enough to deserve this punishment? The reason is, that thou lovest thy wickedness; thy wickedness seems good to thee; it appears lovely to thee; thou dost not see any hatefulness in it, or to be sure, any such hatefulness as to answer such misery.

But know, thou stupid, blind, hardened wretch, that God doth not see, as thou seest with thy polluted eyes: thy sins in his sight are infinitely abominable. Thou knowest that thou hast a thousand and a thousand times made light of the Majesty of God. And why should not that Majesty, which thou hast thus despised, be manifested in the greatness of thy punishment? Thou hast often heard what a great and dreadful God Jehovah is; but thou hast made so light of it, that thou hast not been afraid of him, thou hast not been afraid to sin against him, nor to go on day after day, by thy sins, to provoke him to wrath, nor to cast his commands under foot, and trample on them. Now why may not God, in the greatness of thy destruction, justly vindicate and manifest the greatness of that Majesty, which thou hast despised?

Thou hast despised the mighty power of God; thou hast not been afraid of it. Now why is it not fit that God should show the greatness of his power in thy ruin? What king is there who will not show his authority in the punishment of those subjects that despise it! And who will not vindicate his royal majesty in executing vengeance on those that rise in rebellion? And art thou such a fool as to think that the great King of heaven and earth, before whom all other kings are so many grasshoppers, will not vindicate his

kingly Majesty on such contemptuous rebels as thou art?-Thou art very much mistaken if thou thinkest so. If thou be regardless of God's Majesty, be it known to thee, God is not regardless of his own Majesty; he taketh care of the honour of it, and he will vindicate it.

Think it not strange that God should deal so severely with thee, or that the wrath which thou shalt suffer should be so great. For as great as it is, it is no greater than that love of God which thou hast despised. The love of God, and his grace, condescension, and pity to sinners in sending his Son into the world to die for them, is every whit as great and wonderful as this inexpressible wrath. This mercy hath been held forth to thee, and described in its wonderful greatness hundreds of times, and as often hath it been offered to thee; but thou wouldst not accept Christ; thou wouldst not have this great love of God; thou despisedst God's dying love; thou trampledst the benefits of it under foot. Now why shouldst thou not have wrath as great as that love and mercy which thou despisest and rejectest? Doth it seem incredible to thee, that God should so harden his heart against a poor sinner, as so to destroy him, and to bear him down with infinite power and merciless wrath? And is this a greater thing than it is for thee to harden thy heart, as thou hast done, against infinite mercy, and against the dying love of God?

Doth it seem to thee incredible, that God should be so utterly regardless of the sinner's welfare, as so to sink him into an infinite abyss of misery? Is this shocking to thee? And is it not at all shocking to thee, that thou shouldst be so utterly regardless as thou hast been of the honour and glory of the infinite God?

It arises from thy foolish stupidity and senselessness, and is because thou hast a heart of stone, that thou art so senseless of thine own wickedness as to think thou hast not deserved such a punishment, and that it is to thee incredible that it will be inflicted upon thee. But if, when all is said and done, thou be not convinced, wait but a little while, and thou wilt be convinced: God will undertake to do the work which ministers can not do. Though judgment against thine evil works be not yet executed, and God now let thee alone, yet he will soon come upon thee with his great power, and then thou shalt know what God is, and what thou art.

Flatter not thyself, that if these things shall prove true, and the worst shall come, thou wilt set thyself to bear it as well as thou canst. What will it signify to set thyself to bear, and to collect thy strength to support thyself, when thou shalt fall into the hands of that omnipotent King, Jehovah? He that made thee, can make his sword approach unto thee. His sword is not the sword of man, nor is his wrath the wrath of man. If it were, possibly stoutness might be maintained under it. But it is the fierceness of the wrath of the great God, who is able to baffle and dissipate all thy strength in a moment. He can fill thy poor soul with an ocean of wrath, a deluge of fire and brimstone; or he can make it ten thousand times fuller of torment than ever an oven was full of fire; and at the same time, can fill it with despair of ever seeing an end to its torment, or any rest from its misery: and then where will be thy strength? What will become of thy courage then? What will signify thine attempts to bear?

What art thou in the hands of the great God, who made heaven and earth by speaking a word? What art thou, when dealt with by that strength, which manages all this vast universe, holds the globe of the earth, directs all the motions of the heavenly bodies

from age to age, and, when the fixed time shall come, will shake all to pieces? There are other wicked beings a thousand times stronger than thou: there are the great leviathans, strong and proud spirits, of a gigantic stoutness and hardiness. But how little are they in the hands of the great God! They are less than weak infants; they are nothing, and less than nothing in the hands of an angry God, as will appear at the day of judgment. Their hearts will be broken; they will sink; they will have no strength nor courage left; they will be as weak as water; their souls will sink down into an infinite gloom, an abyss of death and despair. Then what will become of thee, a poor worm, when thou shalt fall into the hands of that God, when he shall come to show his wrath, and make his power known on thee?

If the strength of all the wicked men on earth, and of all the devils in hell, were united in one, and thou wert possessed of it all; and if the courage, greatness, and stoutness of all their hearts were united in thy single heart, thou wouldst be nothing in the hands of Jehovah. If it were all collected, and thou shouldst set thyself to bear as well as thou couldst, all would sink under his great wrath in an instant, and would be utterly abolished: thine hands would drop down at once and thine heart would melt as wax. The great mountains, the firm rocks, can not stand before the power of God; as fast as they stand, they are tossed hither and thither, and skip like lambs, when God appears in his anger. He can tear the earth in pieces in a moment; yea, He can shatter the whole universe, and dash it to pieces at one blow. How then will thine hands be strong, or thine heart endure?

Thou canst not stand before a lion of the forest; an angry wild beast, if stirred up, will easily tear such a one as thou art in pieces. Yea, not only so, but thou art crushed before the moth. A very little thing, a little worm or spider, or some such insect, is able to kill thee. What then canst thou do in the hands of God? It is vain to set the briers and thorns in battle array against glowing flames; the points of thorns, though sharp, do nothing to withstand the fire.

Some of you have seen buildings on fire; imagine therefore with yourselves, what a poor hand you would make at fighting with the flames, if you were in the midst of so great and fierce a fire. You have often seen a spider, or some other noisome insect, when thrown into the midst of a fierce fire, and have observed how immediately it yields to the force of the flames. There is no long struggle, no fighting against the fire, no strength exerted to oppose the heat, or to fly from it; but it immediately stretches forth itself and yields; and the fire takes possession of it, and at once it becomes full of fire. Here is a little image of what you will be the subjects of in hell, except you repent and fly to Christ. However you may think that you will fortify yourselves, and bear as well as you can; the first moment you shall be cast into hell, all your strength will sink and be utterly abolished. To encourage yourselves, that you will set yourselves to bear hell torments as well as you can, is just as if a worm, that is about to be thrown into a glowing furnace, should swell and fortify itself and prepare itself to fight the flames.

What can you do with lightnings? What doth it signify to fight with them? What an absurd figure would a poor weak man make, who, in a thunder-storm, should expect a flash of lightning on his head or his breast, and should go forth sword in hand to oppose it; when a stream of brimstone would, in an instant, drink up all his spirits and his life, and melt his sword!

Consider these things, all you enemies of God, and rejecters of Christ, whether you be old men or women, Christless heads of families, or young people and wicked children. Be assured, that if you do not hearken and repent, God intends to show his wrath, and make his power known upon you. He intends to magnify himself exceedingly in sinking you down in hell. He intends to show his great majesty at the day of judgment, before a vast assembly, in your misery; before a greater assembly many thousand fold than ever yet appeared on earth; before a vast assembly of saints, and a vast assembly of wicked men, a vast assembly of holy angels, and before all the crew of devils. God will before all these get himself honour in your destruction; you shall be tormented in the presence of them all. Then all will see that God is a great God indeed; then all will see how dreadful a thing it is to sin against such a God, and to reject such a Saviour, such love and grace, as you have rejected and despised. All will be filled with awe at the great sight, and all the saints and angels will look upon you, and adore that majesty, and that mighty power, and that holiness and justice of God, which shall appear in your ineffable destruction and misery.

It is probable that here are some, who hear me this day, who at this very moment are unawakened, and are in a great degree careless about their souls. I fear there are some among us who are most fearfully hardened: their hearts are harder than the very rocks. It is easier to make impressions upon an adamant than upon their hearts. I suppose some of you have heard all that I have said with ease and quietness: it appears to you as great big sounding words, but doth not reach your hearts. You have heard such things many times: you are old soldiers, and have been too much used to the roaring of heaven's cannon, to be frightened at it. It will therefore probably be in vain for me to say any thing further to you; I will only put you in mind that ere long God will deal with you. I can not deal with you, you despise what I say; I have no power to make you sensible of your danger and misery, and of the dreadfulfulness of the wrath of God. The attempts of men in this way have often proved vain.

However, God hath undertaken to deal with such men as you are. It is his manner commonly first to let men try their utmost strength: particularly to let ministers try, that thus he may show ministers their own weakness and impotence; and when they have done what they can, and all fails, then God takes the matter into his own hands. So it seems by your obstinacy, as if God intended to undertake to deal with you. He will undertake to subdue you; he will see if he can not cure you of your senselessness and regardlessness of his threatenings. And you will be convinced; you will be subdued effectually: your hearts will be broken with a witness; your strength will be utterly broken, your courage and hope will sink. God will surely break those who will not bow. God, having girded himself with his power and wrath, hath heretofore undertaken to deal with many hard stubborn, senseless, obstinate hearts; and he never failed, he always did his work thoroughly.

It will not be long before you will be wonderfully changed. You who now hear of hell and the wrath of the great God, and sit here in these seats so easy and quiet, and go away so careless; by and by will shake, and tremble, and cry out, and shriek, and gnash your teeth, and will be thoroughly convinced of the vast weight and importance of these great things, which you now despise.

5. THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN THE DAMNATION OF SINNERS

“That every mouth may be stopped.” Romans 3:19

The main subject of the doctrinal part of this epistle, is the free grace of God in the salvation of men by Christ Jesus; especially as it appears in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And the more clearly to evince this doctrine, and show the reason of it, the apostle, in the first place, establishes that point, that no flesh living can be justified by the deeds of the law. And to prove it, he is very large and particular in showing, that all mankind, not only the Gentiles, but Jews, are under sin, and so under the condemnation of the law; which is what he insists upon from the beginning of the epistle to this place. He first begins with the Gentiles; and in the first chapter shows that they are under sin, by setting forth the exceeding corruptions and horrid wickedness that overspread the Gentile world: and then through the second chapter, and the former part of this third chapter, to the text and following verse, he shows the same of the Jews, that they also are in the same circumstances with the Gentiles in this regard. They had a high thought of themselves, because they were God’s covenant people, and circumcised, and the children of Abraham. They despised the Gentiles as polluted, condemned, and accursed; but looked on themselves, on account of their external privileges, and ceremonial and moral righteousness, as a pure and holy people, and the children of God; as the apostle observes in the second chapter. It was therefore strange doctrine to them, that they also were unclean and guilty in God’s sight, and under the condemnation and curse of the law. The apostle does therefore, on account of their strong prejudices against such doctrine, the more particularly insists upon it, and shows that they are no better than the Gentiles; and as in the 9th verse of this chapter, “What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” And, to convince them of it, he then produces certain passages out of their own law, or the Old Testament, (to whose authority they pretend a great regard,) from the ninth verse to our text. And it may be observed, that the apostle, first, cites certain passages to prove that all mankind are corrupt, (verses 10-12.) “As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God: They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one.” Secondly, the passages he cites next, are to prove, that not only all are corrupt, but each one wholly corrupt, as it were all over unclean, from the crown of the head to the soles of his feet; and therefore several particular parts of the body are mentioned, the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth, the feet, (verses 13-15.) “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood.” And, Thirdly, he quotes other passages to show, that each one is not only all over corrupt, but corrupt to a desperate degree, by affirming the most pernicious tendency of their wickedness; “Destruction and misery are in their ways.” And then by denying all goodness or godliness in them; “And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.” And then, lest the Jews should think these passages of their law do not concern them, and only the Gentiles are intended in them, the apostle shows in the text, not only that they are not exempt, but that they especially must be understood: “Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.” By those that are under the law is

meant the Jews; and the Gentiles by those that are without law; as appears by the 12th verse of the preceding chapter. There is a special reason to understand the law, as speaking to and of them, to whom it was immediately given. And therefore the Jews would be unreasonable in exempting themselves. And if we examine the places of the Old Testament whence these passages are taken, we shall see plainly that special respect is had to the wickedness of the people of that nation, in every one of them. So that the law shuts all up in universal and desperate wickedness, that every mouth may be stopped; the mouths of the Jews, as well as of the Gentiles, notwithstanding all those privileges by which they were distinguished from the Gentiles.

The things that the law says, are sufficient to stop the mouths of all mankind, in two respects.

1. To stop them from boasting of their righteousness, as the Jews were wont to do; as the apostle observes in the 23rd verse of the preceding chapter. That the apostle has respect to stopping their mouths in this respect, appears by the 27th verse of the context, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." The law stops our mouths from making any plea for life, or the favour of God, or any positive good, from our own righteousness.

2. To stop them from making any excuse for ourselves, or objection against the execution of the sentence of the law, or the infliction of the punishment that it threatens. That it is intended, appears by the words immediately following, "That all the world may become guilty before God." That is, that they may appear to be guilty, and stand convicted before God, and justly liable to the condemnation of his law, as guilty of death, according to the Jewish way of speaking.

And thus the apostle proves, that no flesh can be justified in God's sight by the deeds of the law; as he draws the conclusion in the following verse; and so prepares the way for establishing of the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he proceeds to do in the following part of the chapter, and of the epistle.

DOCTRINE

"It is just with God eternally to cast off and destroy sinners."- For this is the punishment which the law condemns to- The truth of this doctrine may appear by the joint consideration of two things, viz. Man's sinfulness, and God's sovereignty.

I. It appears from the consideration of man's sinfulness. And that whether we consider the infinitely evil nature of all sin, or how much sin men are guilty of.

1. If we consider the infinite evil and heinousness of sin in general, it is not unjust in God to inflict what punishment is deserved; because the very notion of deserving any punishment is, that it may be justly inflicted. A deserved punishment and a just punishment are the same thing. To say that one deserves such a punishment, and yet to say that he does not justly deserve it, is a contradiction; and if he justly deserves it, then it may be justly inflicted.

Every crime or fault deserves a greater or less punishment, in proportion as the crime itself is greater or less. If any fault deserves punishment, then so much the greater the

fault, so much the greater is the punishment deserved. The faulty nature of any thing is the formal ground and reason of its desert of punishment; and therefore the more any thing hath of this nature, the more punishment it deserves. And therefore the terribleness of the degree of punishment, let it be never be so terrible, is no argument against the justice of it, if the proportion does but hold between the heinousness of the crime and the dreadfulness of the punishment; so that if there be any such thing as a fault infinitely heinous, it will follow that it is just to inflict a punishment for it that is infinitely dreadful.

A crime is more or less heinous, according as we are under greater or less obligations to the contrary. This is self-evident; because it is herein that the criminal-ness or faultiness of any thing consists, that it is contrary to what we are obliged or bound to, or what ought to be in us. So the faultiness of one being hating another, is in proportion to his obligation to love him. The crime of one being despising and casting contempt on another, is proportionably more or less heinous, as he was under greater or less obligations to honour him. The fault of disobeying another, is greater or less, as any one is under greater or less obligations to obey him. And therefore if there be any being that we are under infinite obligations to love, and honour, and obey, the contrary towards him must be infinitely faulty.

Our obligation to love, honour, and obey any being, is in proportion to his loveliness, honourable-ness, and authority; for that is the very meaning of the words. When we say any one is very lovely, it is the same as to say, that he is one very much to be loved. Or if we say such a one is more honourable than another, the meaning of the words is, that he is one that we are more obliged to honour. If we say any one has great authority over us, it is the same as to say, that he has great right to our subjection and obedience.

But God is a being infinitely lovely, because he hath infinite excellency and beauty. To have infinite excellency and beauty, is the same thing as to have infinite loveliness. He is a being of infinite greatness, majesty, and glory; and therefore he is infinitely honourable. He is infinitely exalted above the greatest potentates of the earth, and highest angels in heaven; and therefore he is infinitely more honourable than they. His authority over us is infinite; and the ground of his right to our obedience is infinitely strong; for he is infinitely worthy to be obeyed himself, and we have an absolute, universal, and infinite dependence upon him.

So that sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely heinous, and so deserving of infinite punishment. Nothing is more agreeable to the common sense of mankind, than that sins committed against any one, must be proportionably heinous to the dignity of the being offended and abused; as it is also agreeable to the word of God, I Samuel 2:25. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him;" (i.e. shall judge him, and inflict a finite punishment, such as finite judges can inflict;) "but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" This was the aggravation of sin that made Joseph afraid of it. Genesis 39:9. "How shall I commit this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This was the aggravation of David's sin, in comparison of which he esteemed all others as nothing, because they were infinitely exceeded by it. Psalm 51:4. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned."-The eternity of the punishment of ungodly men renders it infinite: and it renders it no more

than infinite; and therefore renders no more than proportionable to the heinousness of what they are guilty of.

If there be any evil or faultiness in sin against God, there is certainly infinite evil: for if it be any fault at all, it has an infinite aggravation, viz. that it is against an infinite object. If it be ever so small upon other accounts, yet if it be any thing, it has one infinite dimension; and so is an infinite evil. Which may be illustrated by this: if we suppose a thing to have infinite length, but no breadth and thickness, (a mere mathematical line,) it is nothing: but if it have any breadth and thickness, though never so small, and infinite length, the quantity of it is infinite; it exceeds the quantity of any thing, however broad, thick, and long, wherein these dimensions are all finite.

So that the objections made against the infinite punishment of sin, from the necessity, or rather previous certainty, of the futurity of sin, arising from the unavoidable original corruption of nature, if they argue any thing, argue against any faultiness at all: for if this necessity or certainty leaves any evil at all in sin, that fault must be infinite by reason of the infinite object.

But every such objector as would argue from hence, that there is no fault at all in sin, confutes himself, and shows his own insincerity in his objection. For at the same time that he objects, that men's acts are necessary, and that this kind of necessity is inconsistent with faultiness in the act, his own practice shows that he does not believe what he objects to be true: otherwise why does he at all blame men? Or why are such persons at all displeased with men, for abusive, injurious, and ungrateful acts towards them? Whatever they pretend, by this they show that indeed they do believe that there is no necessity in men's acts that is inconsistent with blame. And if their objection be this, that this previous certainty is by God's own ordering, and that where God orders an antecedent certainty of acts, he transfers all the fault from the actor on himself; their practice shows, that at the same time they do not believe this, but fully believe the contrary: for when they are abused by men, they are displeased with men, and not with God only.

The light of nature teaches all mankind, that when an injury is voluntary, it is faulty, without any consideration of what there might be previously to determine the futurity of that evil act of the will. And it really teaches this as much to those that object and cavil most as to others; as their universal practice shows. By which it appears, that such objections are insincere and perverse. Men will mention others' corrupt nature when they are injured, as a thing that aggravates their crime, and that wherein their faultiness partly consists. How common is it for persons, when they look on themselves greatly injured by another, to inveigh against him, and aggravate his baseness, by saying, "He is a man of a most perverse spirit: he is naturally of a selfish, niggardly, or proud and haughty temper: he is one of a base and vile disposition." And yet men's natural and corrupt dispositions are mentioned as an excuse for them, with respect to their sins against God, as if they rendered them blameless.

2. That it is just with God eternally to cast off wicked men, may more abundantly appear, if we consider how much sin they are guilty of. From what has been already said, it appears, that if men were guilty of sin but in one particular, that is sufficient ground of their eternal rejection and condemnation. If they are sinners, that is enough. Merely this, might be sufficient to keep them from ever lifting up their heads, and cause

them to smite on their breasts, with the publican that cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” But sinful men are full of sin; full of principles and acts of sin: their guilt is like great mountains, heaped one upon another, till the pile is grown up to heaven. They are totally corrupt, in every part, in all their faculties, and all the principles of their nature, their understandings, and wills; and in all their dispositions and affections. Their heads, their hearts, are totally depraved; all the members of their bodies are only instruments of sin; and all their senses, seeing, hearing, tasting, etc. are only inlets and outlets of sin, channels of corruption. There is nothing but sin, no good at all. Romans. 7:18. “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.” There is all manner of wickedness. There are the seeds of the greatest and blackest crimes. There are principles of all sorts of wickedness against men; and there is all wickedness against God. There is pride; there is enmity; there is contempt; there is quarrelling; there is atheism; there is blasphemy. There are these things in exceeding strength; the heart is under the power of them, is sold under sin, and is a perfect slave to it. There is hard-heartedness, hardness greater than that of a rock, or an adamant-stone. There is obstinacy and perverseness, incorrigibleness and inflexibleness in sin, that will not be overcome by threatenings or promises, by awakenings or encouragements, by judgments or mercies, neither by that which is terrifying nor that which is winning. The very blood of God our Saviour will not win the heart of a wicked man.

And there are actual wickednesses without number or measure. There are breaches of every command, in thought, word, and deed: a life full of sin; days and nights filled up with sin; mercies abused and frowns despised; mercy and justice, and all the divine perfections, trampled on; and the honour of each person in the Trinity trod in the dirt. Now if one sinful word or thought has so much evil in it, as to deserve eternal destruction, how do they deserve to be eternally cast off and destroyed, that are guilty of so much sin!

II. If with man’s sinfulness, we consider God’s sovereignty, it may serve further to clear God’s justice in the eternal rejection and condemnation of sinners, from men’s cavils and objections. I shall not now pretend to determine precisely, what things are, and what things are not, proper acts and exercises of God’s holy sovereignty; but only, that God’s sovereignty extends to the following things.

1. That such is God’s sovereign power and right, that he is originally under no obligation to keep men from sinning; but may in his providence permit and leave them to sin. He was not obliged to keep either angels or men from falling. It is unreasonable to suppose, that God should be obliged, if he makes a reasonable creature capable of knowing his will, and receiving a law from him, and being subject to his moral government, at the same time to make it impossible for him to sin, or break his law. For if God be obliged to this, it destroys all use of any commands, laws, promises, or threatenings, and the very notion of any moral government of God over those reasonable creatures. For to what purpose would it be, for God to give such and such laws, and declare his holy will to a creature, and annex promises and threatenings to move him to his duty, and make him careful to perform it, if the creature at the same time has this to think of, that God is obliged to make it impossible for him to break his laws? How can God’s threatenings move to care or watchfulness, when, at the same time, God is obliged to render it impossible that he should be exposed to the threatenings? Or, to what purpose is it for God to give a law at all? For according to

this supposition, it is God, and not the creature, that is under the law. It is the lawgiver's care, and not the subject's, to see that his law is obeyed; and this care is what the lawgiver is absolutely obliged to! If God be obliged never to permit a creature to fall, there is an end of all divine laws, or government, or authority of God over the creature; there can be no manner of use of these things.

God may permit sin, though the being of sin will certainly ensue on that permission: and so, by permission, he may dispose and order the event. If there were any such thing as chance, or mere contingency, and the very notion of it did not carry a gross absurdity, (as might easily be shown that it does,) it would have been very unfit that God should have left it to mere chance, whether man should fall or no. For chance, if there should be any such thing, is undesigning and blind. And certainly it is more fit that an event of so great importance, and that is attended with such an infinite train of great consequences, should be disposed and ordered by infinite wisdom, than that it should be left to blind chance.

If it be said, that God need not have interposed to render it impossible for man to sin, and yet not leave it to mere contingency or blind chance neither; but might have left it with man's free will, to determine whether to sin or no: I answer, if God did leave it to man's free will, without any sort of disposal, or ordering [or rather, adequate cause] in the case, whence it should be previously certain how that free will should determine, then still that first determination of the will must be merely contingent or by chance. It could not have any antecedent act of the will to determine it; for I speak now of the very first act of motion of the will, respecting the affair that may be looked upon as the prime ground and highest source of the event. To suppose this to be determined by a foregoing act is a contradiction. God's disposing this determination of the will by his permission, does not at all infringe the liberty of the creature: it is in no respect any more inconsistent with liberty, than mere chance or contingency. For if the determination of the will be from blind, undesigning chance, it is no more from the agent himself, or from the will itself, than if we suppose, in the case, a wise, divine disposal by permission.

2. It was fit that it should be at the ordering of the divine wisdom and good pleasure, whether every particular man should stand for himself, or whether the first father of mankind should be appointed as the moral and federal head and representative of the rest. If God has not liberty in this matter to determine either of these two as he pleases, it must be because determining that the first father of men should represent the rest, and not that every one should stand for himself, is injurious to mankind. For if it be not injurious, how is it unjust? But it is not injurious to mankind; for there is nothing in the nature of the case itself, that makes it better that each man should stand for himself, than that all should be represented by their common father; as the least reflection or consideration will convince any one. And if there be nothing in the nature of the thing that makes the former better for mankind than the latter, then it will follow, that they are not hurt in God's choosing and appointing the latter, rather than the former; or, which is the same thing, that it is not injurious to mankind.

3. When men are fallen, and become sinful, God by his sovereignty has a right to determine about their redemption as he pleases. He has a right to determine whether he will redeem any or not. He might, if he had pleased, have left all to perish, or might

have redeemed all. Or, he may redeem some, and leave others; and if he doth so, he may take whom he pleases, and leave whom he pleases. To suppose that all have forfeited his favour, and deserved to perish, and to suppose that he may not leave any one individual of them to perish, implies a contradiction; because it supposes that such a one has a claim to God's favour, and is not justly liable to perish; which is contrary to the supposition.

It is meet that God should order all these things according to his own pleasure. By reason of his greatness and glory, by which he is infinitely above all, he is worthy to be sovereign, and that his pleasure should in all things take place. He is worthy that he should make himself his end, and that he should make nothing but his own wisdom his rule in pursuing that end, without asking leave or counsel of any, and without giving account of any of his matters. It is fit that he who is absolutely perfect, and infinitely wise, and the Fountain of all wisdom, should determine every thing [that he effects] by his own will, even things of the greatest importance. It is meet that he should be thus sovereign, because he is the first being, the eternal being, whence all other beings are. He is the Creator of all things; and all are absolutely and universally dependent on him; and therefore it is meet that he should act as the sovereign possessor of heaven and earth.

APPLICATION

In the improvement of this doctrine, I would chiefly direct myself to sinners who are afraid of damnation, in a use of conviction. This may be matter of conviction to you, that it would be just and righteous with God eternally to reject and destroy you. This is what you are in danger of. You who are a Christless sinner are a poor condemned creature: God's wrath still abides upon you; and the sentence of condemnation lies upon you. You are in God's hands, and it is uncertain what he will do with you. You are afraid what will become of you. You are afraid that it will be your portion to suffer eternal burnings; and your fears are not without grounds; you have reason to tremble every moment. But be you never so much afraid of it, let eternal damnation be never so dreadful, yet it is just. God may nevertheless do it, and be righteous, and holy, and glorious. Though eternal damnation be what you can not bear, and how much soever your heart shrinks at the thought of it, yet God's justice may be glorious in it. The dreadfulness of the thing on your part, and the greatness of your dread of it, do not render it the less righteous on God's part. If you think otherwise, it is a sign that you do not see yourself, that you are not sensible what sin is, nor how much of it you have been guilty of. Therefore for your conviction, be directed,

First, To look over your past life: inquire at the mouth of conscience, and hear what that has to testify concerning it. Consider what you are, what light you have had, and what means you have lived under: and yet how you have behaved yourself! What have those many days and nights you have lived been filled up with? How have those years that have rolled over your heads, one after another, been spent? What has the sun shone upon you for, from day to day, while you have improved his light to serve Satan by it? What has God kept your breath in your nostrils for, and given you meat and drink, that you have spent your life and strength, supported by them, in opposing God, and rebellion against him?

How many sorts of wickedness have you not been guilty of! How manifold have been the abominations of your life! What profaneness and contempt of God has been exercised by you! How little regard have you had to the Scriptures, to the word preached, to Sabbaths, and sacraments! How profanely have you talked, many of you, about those things that are holy! After what manner have many of you kept God's holy day, not regarding the holiness of the time, not caring what you thought of in it! Yea, you have not only spent the time in worldly, vain, and unprofitable thoughts, but in immoral thoughts; pleasing yourself with the reflection on past acts of wickedness, and in contriving new acts. Have not you spent much holy time in gratifying your lusts in your imaginations; yea, not only holy time, but the very time of God's public worship, when you have appeared in God's more immediate presence? How have you not only attended to the worship, but have in the mean time been feasting your lusts, and wallowing yourself in abominable uncleanness! How many Sabbaths have you spent, one after another, in a most wretched manner! Some of you not only in worldly and wicked thoughts, but also a very wicked outward behaviour! When you on Sabbath-days have got along with your wicked companions, how has holy time been treated among you! What kind of conversation has there been! Yea, how have some of you, by a very indecent carriage, openly dishonoured and cast contempt on the sacred services of God's house, and holy day! And what you have done some of you alone, what wicked practices there have been in secret, even in holy time, God and your own consciences know.

And how have you behaved yourself in the time of family prayer! And what a trade have many of you made of absenting yourselves from the worship of the families you belong to, for the sake of vain company! And how have you continued in the neglect of secret prayer! Therein wilfully living in a known sin, going abreast against as plain a command as any in the Bible! Have you not been one that has cast off fear, and restrained prayer before God?

What wicked carriage have some of you been guilty of towards your parents! How far have you been from paying that honour to them which God has required! Have you not even harboured ill-will and malice towards them? And when they have displeased you, have wished evil to them? yea, and shown your vile spirit in your behaviour? and it is well if you have not mocked them behind their backs; and, like the cursed Ham and Canaan, as it were, derided your parents' nakedness instead of covering it, and hiding your eyes from it. Have not some of you often disobeyed your parents, yea, and refused to be subject to them? Is it not a wonder of mercy and forbearance, that the proverb has not before now been accomplished on you, Proverbs 30:17. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

What revenge and malice have you been guilty of towards your neighbours! How have you indulged this spirit of the devil, hating others, and wishing evil to them, rejoicing when evil befell them, and grieving at others' prosperity, and lived in such a way for a long time! Have not some of you allowed a passionate furious spirit, and behaved yourselves in your anger more like wild beasts than like Christians?

What covetousness has been in many of you! Such has been your inordinate love of the world, and care about the things of it, that it has taken up your heart; you have allowed

no room for God and religion; you have minded the world more than your eternal salvation. For the vanities of the world you have neglected reading, praying and meditation; for the things of the world, you have broken the Sabbath: for the world you have spent a great deal of your time in quarrelling. For the world you have envied and hated your neighbour; for the world you have cast God, and Christ, and heaven, behind your back; for the world you have sold your own soul. You have as it were drowned your soul in worldly cares and desires; you have been a mere earth-worm, that is never in its element but when grovelling and buried in the earth.

How much of a spirit of pride has appeared in you, which is in a peculiar manner the spirit and condemnation of the devil! How have some of you vaunted yourselves in your apparel! others in their riches! others in their knowledge and abilities! How has it galled you to see others above you! How much has it gone against the grain for you to give others their due honour! And how have you shown your pride by setting up your wills and in opposing others, and stirring up and promoting division, and a party spirit in public affairs.

How sensual have you been! Are there not some here that have debased themselves below the dignity of human nature, by wallowing in sensual filthiness, as swine in the mire, or as filthy vermin feeding with delight on rotten carrion? What intemperance have some of you been guilty of! How much of your precious time have you spent at the tavern, and in drinking companies, when you ought to have been at home seeking God and your salvation in your families and closets!

And what abominable lasciviousness have some of you been guilty of! How have you indulged yourself from day to day, and from night to night, in all manner of unclean imaginations! Has not your soul been filled with them, till it has become a hold of foul spirits, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird? What foul-mouthed persons have some of you been, often in lewd and lascivious talk and unclean songs, wherein were things not fit to be spoken! And such company, where such conversation has been carried on, has been your delight. And with what unclean acts and practices have you defiled yourself! God and your own consciences know what abominable lasciviousness you have practised in things not fit to be named, when you have been alone; when you ought to have been reading, or meditating, or on your knees before God in secret prayer. And how have you corrupted others, as well as polluted yourselves! What vile uncleanness have you practised in company! What abominations have you been guilty of in the dark! Such as the apostle doubtless had respect to in Ephesians 5:12. "For it is a shame even to speak of those things that are done of them in secret." Some of you have corrupted others, and done what in you lay to undo their souls, (if you have not actually done it;) and by your vile practices and example have made room for Satan, invited his presence, and established his interest, in the town where you have lived. What lying have some of you been guilty of, especially in your childhood! And have not your heart and lips often disagreed since you came to riper years? What fraud, and deceit, and unfaithfulness, have many of you practised in your own dealings with your neighbours, of which your own heart is conscious, if you have not been noted by others.

And how have some of you behaved yourselves in your family relations! How have you neglected your children's souls! And not only so, but have corrupted their minds by

your bad examples; and instead of training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, have rather brought them up in the devil's service!

How have some of you attended that sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper without any manner of serious preparation, and in a careless slighty frame of spirits, and chiefly to comply with custom! Have you not ventured to put the sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ into your mouth, while at the same time you lived in ways of known sins, and intended no other than still to go on in the same wicked practices? And, it may be, have sat at the Lord's table with rancour in your heart against some of your brethren that you have sat there with. You have come even to that holy feast of love among God's children, with the leaven of malice and envy in your heart; and so have eaten and drank judgment to yourself.

What stupidity and sottishness has attended your course of wickedness: which has appeared in your obstinacy under awakening dispensations of God's word and providence. And how have some of you backslidden after you have set out in religion, and quenched God's Spirit after he had been striving with you! And what unsteadiness, and slothfulness, and long mis-improvement of God's strivings with you, have you been chargeable with!

Now, can you think when you have thus behaved yourself, that God is obliged to show you mercy? Are you not after all this ashamed to talk of its being hard with God to cast you off? Does it become one who has lived such a life to open his mouth to excuse himself, to object against God's justice in his condemnation, or to complain of it as hard in God not to give him converting and pardoning grace, and make him his child, and bestow on him eternal life? Or to talk of his duties and great pains in religion, as if such performances were worthy to be accepted, and to draw God's heart to such a creature? If this has been your manner, does it not show how little you have considered yourself, and how little a sense you have had of your own sinfulness?

Secondly, Be directed to consider, if God should eternally reject and destroy you, what an agreeableness and exact mutual answerableness there would be between God so dealing with you, and your spirit and behaviour. There would not only be an equality, but a similitude. God declares, that his dealings with men shall be suitable to their disposition and practice. Psalm 18:25, 26. "With the merciful man, thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man, thou wilt show thyself upright; with the pure, thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward, thou wilt show thyself froward." How much soever you dread damnation, and are affrighted and concerned at the thoughts of it; yet if God should indeed eternally damn you, you would be met with but in your own way; you would be dealt with exactly according to your own dealing. Surely it is but fair that you should be made to buy in the same measure in which you sell.

Here I would particularly show, - 1. That if God should eternally destroy you, it would be agreeable to your treatment of God. 2. That it would be agreeable to your treatment of Jesus Christ. 3. That it would be agreeable to your behaviour towards your neighbours. 4. That it would be according to your own foolish behaviour towards yourself.

I. If God should for ever cast you off, it would be exactly agreeable to your treatment of him. That you may be sensible of this, consider,

1. You never have exercised the least degree of love to God; and therefore it would be agreeable to your treatment of him, if he should never express any love to you. When God converts and saves a sinner, it is a wonderful and unspeakable manifestation of divine love. When a poor lost soul is brought home to Christ, and has all his sins forgiven him, and is made a child of God, it will take up a whole eternity to express and declare the greatness of that love. And why should God be obliged to express such wonderful love to you, who never exercised the least degree of love to him in all your life? You never have loved God, who is infinitely glorious and lovely; and why then is God under obligation to love you, who are all over deformed and loathsome as a filthy worm, or rather a hateful viper? You have no benevolence in your heart towards God; you never rejoiced in God's happiness; if he had been miserable, and that had been possible, you would have liked it as well as if he were happy; you would not have cared how miserable he was, nor mourned for it, any more than you now do for the devil's being miserable. And why then should God be looked upon as obliged to take so much care for your happiness, as to do such great things for it, as he doth for those that are saved? Or why should God be called hard, in case he should not be careful to save you from misery? You care not what becomes of God's glory; you are not distressed how much soever his honour seems to suffer in the world: and why should God care any more for your welfare? Has it not been so, that if you could but promote your private interest, and gratify your own lusts, you cared not how much the glory of God suffered? And why may not God advance his own glory in the ruin of your welfare, not caring how much your interest suffers by it? You never so much as stirred one step, sincerely making the glory of God your end, or acting from real respect to him: and why then is it hard if God doth not do such great things for you, as the changing of your nature, raising you from spiritual death to life, conquering the powers of darkness for you, translating you out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, delivering you from eternal misery, and bestowing upon you eternal glory? You were not willing to deny yourself for God; you never cared to put yourself out of your way for Christ; whenever any thing cross or difficult came in your way, that the glory of God was concerned in, it has been your manner to shun it, and excuse yourself from it. You did not care to hurt yourself for Christ, whom you did not see worthy of it; and why then must it be looked upon as a hard and cruel thing, if Christ has not been pleased to spill his blood and be tormented to death for such a sinner.

2. You have slighted God; and why then may not God justly slight you? When sinners are sensible in some measure of their misery, they are ready to think it hard that God will take no notice of them; that he will see them in such a lamentable distressed condition, beholding their burdens and tears, and seem to slight it, and manifest no pity to them. Their souls they think are precious: it would be a dreadful thing if they should perish, and burn in hell for ever. They do not see through it, that God should make so light of their salvation. But then, ought they not to consider, that as their souls are precious, so is God's honour precious? The honour of the infinite God, the great King of heaven and earth, is a thing of as great importance, (and surely may justly be so esteemed by God,) as the happiness of you, a poor little worm. But yet you have slighted that honour of God, and valued it no more than the dirt under your feet. You have been told that such and such things were contrary to the will of a holy God, and

against his honour; but you cared not for that. God called upon you, and exhorted you to be more tender of his honour; but you went on without regarding him. Thus have you slighted God! And yet, is it hard that God should slight you? Are you more honourable than God, that he must be obliged to make much of you, how light soever you make of him and his glory?

And you have not only slighted God in time past, but you slight him still. You indeed now make a pretence and show of honouring him in your prayers, and attendance on other external duties, and by sober countenance, and seeming devoutness in your words and behaviour; but it is all mere dissembling. That downcast look and seeming reverence, is not from any honour you have to God in your heart, though you would have God take it so. You who have not believed in Christ, have not the least jot of honour to God; that show of it is merely forced, and what you are driven to by fear, like those mentioned in Psalm 66:3. "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves to thee." In the original it is, "shall lie unto thee;" that is, yield feigned submission, and dissemble respect and honour to thee. There is a rod held over you that makes you seem to pay such respect to God. This religion and devotion, even the very appearance of it, would soon be gone, and all vanish away, if that were removed. Sometimes it may be you weep in your prayers, and in your hearing sermons, and hope God will take notice of it, and take it for some honour; but he sees it to be all hypocrisy. You weep for yourself; you are afraid of hell; and do you think that is worthy of God to take much notice of you, because you can cry when you are in danger of being damned; when at the same time you indeed care nothing for God's honour.

Seeing you thus disregard so great a God, is it a heinous thing for God to slight you, a little, wretched, despicable creature; a worm, a mere nothing, and less than nothing; a vile insect, that has risen up in contempt against the Majesty of heaven and earth?

3. Why should God be looked upon as obliged to bestow salvation upon you, when you have been so ungrateful for the mercies he has bestowed upon you already? God has tried you with a great deal of kindness, and he never has sincerely been thanked by you for any of it. God has watched over you, and preserved you, and provided for you, and followed you with mercy all your days; and yet you have continued sinning against him. He has given you food and raiment, but you have improved both in the service of sin. He has preserved you while you slept; but when you awoke, it was to return to the old trade of sinning. God, notwithstanding this ingratitude, has still continued his mercy; but his kindness has never won your heart, or brought you to a more grateful behaviour towards him. It may be you have received many remarkable mercies, recoveries from sickness, or preservations of your life when exposed by accidents, when if you had died, you would have gone directly to hell; but you never had any true thankfulness for any of these mercies. God has kept you out of hell, and continued your day of grace, and the offers of salvation, so long a time; while you did not regard your own salvation so much as in secret to ask God for it. And now God has greatly added to his mercy to you, by giving you the strivings of his Spirit, whereby a most precious opportunity for your salvation is in your hands. But what thanks has God received for it? What kind of returns have you made for all this kindness? As God has multiplied mercies, so have you multiplied provocations.

And yet now are you ready to quarrel for mercy, and to find fault with God, not only that he does not bestow more mercy, but to contend with him, because he does not bestow infinite mercy upon you, heaven with all it contains, and even himself, for your eternal portion. What ideas have you of yourself, that you think God is obliged to do so much for you, though you treat him ever so ungratefully for his kindness wherewith you have been followed all the days of your life.

4. You have voluntarily chosen to be with Satan in his enmity and opposition to God; how justly therefore might you be with him in his punishment! You did not choose to be on God's side, but rather chose to side with the devil, and have obstinately continued in it, against God's often repeated calls and counsels. You have chosen rather to hearken to Satan than to God, and would be with him in his work. You have given yourself up to him, to be subject to his power and government, in opposition to God; how justly therefore may God also give you up to him, and leave you in his power, to accomplish your ruin! Seeing you have yielded yourself to his will, to do as he would have you, surely God may leave you in his hands to execute his will upon you. If men will be with God's enemy, and on his side, why is God obliged to redeem them out of his hands, when they have done his work? Doubtless you would be glad to serve the devil, and be God's enemy while you live, and then to have God your friend, and deliver you from the devil, when you come to die. But will God be unjust if he deals otherwise by you? No, surely! It will be altogether and perfectly just, that you should have your portion with him with whom you have chosen to work; and that you should be in his possession to whose dominion you have yielded yourself; and if you cry to God for deliverance, he may most justly give you that answer. Judges 10:14. "Go to the gods which you have chosen."

5. Consider how often you have refused to hear God's calls to you, and how just it would therefore be, if he should refuse to hear you when you call upon him. You are ready, it may be, to complain that you have often prayed, and earnestly begged of God to show you mercy, and yet have no answer of prayer: One says, I have been constant in prayer for so many years, and God has not heard me. Another says, I have done what I can; I have prayed as earnestly as I am able; I do not see how I can do more; and it will seem hard if after all I am denied. But do you consider how often God has called, and you have denied him? God has called earnestly, and for a long time; he has called and called again in his word, and in his providence, and you have refused. You was not uneasy for fear you should not show regard enough to his calls. You let him call as loud and as long as he would; for your part, you had no leisure to attend to what he said; you had other business to mind; you had these and those lusts to gratify and please, and worldly concerns to attend; you could not afford to stand considering of what God had to say to you. When the ministers of Christ have stood and pleaded with you, in his name, Sabbath after Sabbath, and have even spent their strength in it, how little was you moved! It did not alter you, but you went on still as you used to do; when you went away, you returned again to your sins, to your lasciviousness, to your vain mirth, to your covetousness, to your intemperance, and that has been the language of your heart and practice, Exodus 5:2. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Was it no crime for you to refuse to hear when God called? And yet is it now very hard that God does not hear your earnest calls, and that though your calling on God be not from any respect to him, but merely from self-love? The devil would beg as earnestly as you, if he had any hope to get salvation by it, and a thousand times as

earnestly, and yet be as much of a devil as he is now. Are your calls more worthy to be heard than God's? Or is God more obliged to regard what you say to him, than you to regard his commands, counsels, and invitations to you? What can be more justice than this, Proverbs 1:24, etc. "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

6. Have you not taken encouragement to sin against God, on that very presumption, that God would show you mercy when you sought it? And may not God justly refuse you that mercy that you have so presumed upon? You have flattered yourself, that though you did so, yet God would show you mercy when you cried earnestly to him for it: how righteous therefore would it be in God, to disappoint such a wicked presumption! It was upon that very hope that you dared to affront the majesty of heaven so dreadfully as you have done; and can you now be so sottish as to think that God is obliged not to frustrate that hope?

When a sinner takes encouragement to neglect secret prayer which God has commanded, to gratify his lusts, to live a carnal vain life, to thwart God, to run upon him, and contemn him to his face, thinking with himself, "If I do so, God would not damn me; he is a merciful God, and therefore when I seek his mercy he will bestow it upon me;" must God be accounted hard because he will not do according to such a sinner's presumption?

Can not he be excused from showing such a sinner mercy when he is pleased to seek it, without incurring the charge of being unjust; if this be the case, God has no liberty to vindicate his own honour and majesty; but must lay himself open to all manner of affronts, and yield himself up to the abuse of vile men, though they disobey, despise, and dishonour him, as much as they will; and when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace must not be in his own power and at his own disposal, but he must be obliged to dispense it at their call. He must take these bold and vile contemnners of his majesty, when it suits them to ask it, and must forgive all their sins, and not only so, but must adopt them into his family, and make them his children, and bestow eternal glory upon them. What mean, low, and strange thoughts have such men of God, who think thus of him! Consider, that you have injured God the more, and have been the worse enemy to him, for his being a merciful God. So have you treated that attribute of God's mercy! How just is it therefore that you never should have any benefit of that attribute!

There is something peculiarly heinous in sinning against the mercy of God more than other attributes. There is such base and horrid ingratitude, in being the worse to God because he is a being of infinite goodness and grace, that it above all things renders wickedness vile and detestable. This ought to win us, and engage us to serve God better; but instead of that, to sin against him the more, has something inexpressibly bad in it, and does in a peculiar manner enhance guilt, and incense wrath; as seems to be intimated, Romans 2:4, 5. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to

repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

The greater the mercy of God is, the more should you be engaged to love him, and live to his glory. But it has been contrariwise with you; the consideration of the mercies of God being so exceeding great, is the thing wherewith you have encouraged yourself in sin. You have heard that the mercy of God was without bounds, that it was sufficient to pardon the greatest sinner, and you have upon that very account ventured to be a very great sinner. Though it was very offensive to God, though you heard that God infinitely hated sin, and that such practices as you went on in were exceeding contrary to his nature, will, and glory, yet that did not make you uneasy; you heard that he was a very merciful God, and had grace enough to pardon you, and so cared not how offensive your sins were to him. How long have some of you gone on in sin, and what great sins have some of you been guilty of, on that presumption! Your own conscience can give testimony to it, that this has made you refuse God’s calls, and has made you regardless of his repeated commands. Now, how righteous would it be if God should swear in his wrath, that you should never be the better for his being infinitely merciful!

Your ingratitude has been the greater, that you have not only abused the attribute of God’s mercy, taking encouragement from it to continue in sin, but you have also presumed that God would exercise infinite mercy to you in particular; which consideration should have especially endeared God to you. You have taken encouragement to sin the more, from that consideration, that Christ came into the world and died to save sinners; such thanks has Christ had from you, for enduring such a tormenting death for his enemies! Now, how justly might God refuse that you should ever be the better for his Son’s laying down his life! It was because of these things that you put off seeking salvation. You would take the pleasures of sin still longer, hardening yourself because mercy was infinite, and it would not be too late, if you sought it afterwards; now, how justly may God disappoint you in this, and so order it that it shall be too late!

7. How have some of you risen up against God, and in the frame of your minds opposed him in his sovereign dispensations! And how justly upon that account might God oppose you, and set himself against you! You never yet would submit to God; never willingly comply, that God should have dominion over the world, and that he should govern it for his own glory, according to his own wisdom. You, a poor worm, a potsherd, a broken piece of an earthen vessel, have dared to find fault and quarrel with God. Isaiah 16:9. “Woe to him that striveth with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth: shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou?” But yet you have ventured to do it. Romans 9:20. “Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?” But yet you have thought you was big enough; you have taken upon you to call God to an account, why he does thus and thus; you have said to Jehovah, What dost thou?

If you have been restrained by fear from openly venting your opposition and enmity of heart against God’s government, yet it has been in you; you have not been quiet in the frame of your mind; you have had the heart of a viper within, and have been ready to spit your venom at God. It is well if sometimes you have not actually done it, by tolerating blasphemous thoughts and malignant risings of heart against him; yea, and

the frame of your heart in some measure appeared in impatient and fretful behaviour. Now, seeing you have thus opposed God, how just is it that God should oppose you! Or is it because you are so much better, and so much greater than God, that it is a crime for him to make that opposition against you which you make against him? Do you think that the liberty of making opposition is your exclusive prerogative, so that you may be an enemy to God, but God must by no means be an enemy to you, but must be looked upon under obligation nevertheless to help you, and save you by his blood, and bestow his best blessings upon you?

Consider how in the frame of your mind you have thwarted God in those very exercises of mercy towards others that you are seeking for yourself. God exercising his infinite grace towards your neighbours, has put you into an ill frame, and it may be, set you into a tumult of mind. How justly therefore may God refuse ever to exercise that mercy towards you! Have you not thus opposed God showing mercy to others, even at the very time when you pretended to be earnest with God for pity and help for yourself? Yea, and while you was endeavouring to get something wherewith to recommend yourself to God? And will you look to God still with a challenge of mercy, and contend with him for it notwithstanding? Can you who have such a heart, and have thus behaved yourself, come to God for any other than mere sovereign mercy?

II. If you should for ever be cast off by God, it would be agreeable to your treatment of Jesus Christ. It would have been just with God if he had cast you off for ever, without ever making you the offer of a Saviour. But God hath not done that; he has provided a Saviour for sinners, and offered him to you, even his own Son Jesus Christ, who is the only Saviour of men. All that are not for ever cast off are saved by him. God offers men salvation through him, and has promised us, that if we come to him, we shall not be cast off. But if you have treated, and still treat, this Saviour after such a manner, that if you should be eternally cast off by God, it would be most agreeable to your behaviour towards him; which appears by this, viz. "That you reject Christ, and will not have him for your Saviour."

If God offers you a Saviour from deserved punishment, and you will not receive him, then surely it is just that you should go without a Saviour. Or is God obliged, because you do not like this Saviour, to provide you another? He has given an infinitely honourable and glorious person, even his only begotten Son, to be a sacrifice for sin, and so provided salvation; and this Saviour is offered to you: now if you refuse to accept him, is God therefore unjust if he does not save you? Is he obliged to save you in a way of your own choosing, because you do not like the way of his choosing? Or will you charge Christ with injustice because he does not become your Saviour, when at the same time you will not have him when he offers himself to you, and beseeches you to accept of him as your Saviour?

I am sensible that by this time many persons are ready to object against this. If all should speak what they now think, we should hear a murmuring all over the meeting-house, and one and another would say, "I can not see how this can be, that I am not willing that Christ should be my Saviour, when I would give all the world that he was my Saviour: how is it possible that I should not be willing to have Christ for my Saviour when this is what I am seeking after, and praying for, and striving for, as for my life?"

Here therefore I would endeavour to convince you, that you are under a gross mistake in this matter. And, First, I would endeavour to show the grounds of your mistake. And Secondly, To demonstrate to you, that you have rejected, and do wilfully reject, Jesus Christ.

First, That you may see the weak grounds of your mistake, consider,

1. There is a great deal of difference between a willingness not to be damned, and a being willing to receive Christ for your Saviour. You have the former; there is no doubt of that: nobody supposes that you love misery so as to choose an eternity of it; and so doubtless you are willing to be saved from eternal misery. But that is a very different thing from being willing to come to Christ: persons very commonly mistake the one for the other, but they are quite two things. You may love the deliverance, but hate the deliverer. You tell of a willingness; but consider what is the object of that willingness. It does not respect Christ; the way of salvation by him is not at all the object of it; but it is wholly terminated on your escape from misery. The inclination of your will goes no further than self, it never reaches Christ. You are willing not to be miserable; that is, you love yourself, and there your will and choice terminate. And it is but a vain pretence and delusion to say or think, that you are willing to accept of Christ.

2. There is certainly a great deal of difference between a forced compliance and a free willingness. Force and freedom can not consist together. Now that willingness, whereby you think you are willing to have Christ for a Saviour, is merely a forced thing. Your heart does not go out after Christ of itself, but you are forced and driven to seek an interest in him. Christ has no share at all in your heart; there is no manner of closing of the heart with him. This forced compliance is not what Christ seeks of you; he seeks a free and willing acceptance, Psalm 110:3. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." He seeks not that you should receive him against your will, but with a free will. He seeks entertainment in your heart and choice. And if you refuse thus to receive Christ, how just is it that Christ should refuse to receive you? How reasonable are Christ's terms, who offers to save all those that willingly, or with a good will, accept of him for their Saviour! Who can rationally expect that Christ should force himself upon any man to be his Saviour? Or what can be looked for more reasonable, than that all who would be saved by Christ, should heartily and freely entertain him? And surely it would be very dishonourable for Christ to offer himself upon lower terms. But I would now proceed,

Secondly, To show that you are not willing to have Christ for a Saviour. To convince you of it, consider,

1. How it is possible that you should be willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour from the desert of a punishment that you are not sensible you have deserved. If you are truly willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour, it must be as a sacrifice to make atonement for your guilt. Christ came into the world on this errand, to offer himself as an atonement, to answer for our desert of punishment. But how can you be willing to have Christ for a Saviour from a desert of hell, if you be not sensible that you have a desert of hell? If you have not really deserved everlasting burnings in hell, then the very offer of an atonement for such a desert is an imposition upon you. If you have no such guilt upon you, then the very offer of a satisfaction for that guilt is an injury, because it implies in

it a charge of guilt that you are free from. Now therefore it is impossible that a man who is not convinced of his guilt can be willing to accept of such an offer; because he can not be willing to accept the charge which the offer implies. A man who is not convinced that he has deserved so dreadful a punishment, can not willingly submit to be charged with it. If he thinks he is willing, it is but a mere forced, feigned business; because in his heart he looks upon himself greatly injured; and therefore he can not freely accept of Christ, under that notion of a Saviour from the desert of such a punishment; for such an acceptance is an implicit owning that he does deserve such a punishment.

I do not say, but that men may be willing to be saved from an undeserved punishment; they may rather not suffer it, than suffer it. But a man can not be willing to accept one at God's hands, under the notion of a Saviour from a punishment deserved from him which he thinks he has not deserved; it is impossible that any one should freely allow a Saviour under that notion. Such an one can not like the way of salvation by Christ; for if he thinks he has not deserved hell, then he will think that freedom from hell is a debt; and therefore can not willingly and heartily receive it as a free gift. If a king should condemn a man to some tormenting death, which the condemned person thought himself not deserving of, but looked upon the sentence as unjust and cruel, and the king, when the time of execution drew nigh, should offer him his pardon, under the notion of a very great act of grace and clemency, the condemned person never could willingly and heartily allow it under that notion, because he judged himself unjustly condemned.

Now by this it is evident that you are not willing to accept of Christ as your Saviour; because you never yet had such a sense of your own sinfulness, and such a conviction of your great guilt in God's sight, as to be indeed convinced that you lay justly condemned to the punishment of hell. You never was convinced that you had forfeited all favour, and was in God's hands, and at his sovereign and arbitrary disposal, to be either destroyed or saved, just as he pleased. You never yet was convinced of the sovereignty of God. Hence are there so many objections arising against the justice of your punishment from original sin, and from God's decree, from mercy shown to others, and the like.

2. That you are not sincerely willing to accept of Christ as your Saviour, appears by this, That you never have been convinced that he is sufficient for the work of your salvation. You never had a sight or sense of any such excellency or worthiness in Christ, as should give such great value to his blood and his mediation with God, as that it was sufficient to be accepted for such exceeding guilty creatures, who have so provoked God, and exposed themselves to such amazing wrath. Saying it is so and allowing it be as others say, is a very different thing from being really convinced of it, and a being made sensible of it in your own heart. The sufficiency of Christ depends upon, or rather consists in his excellency. It is because he is so excellent a person that his blood is of sufficient value to atone for sin, and it is hence that his obedience is so worthy in God's sight; it is also hence that his intercession is so prevalent; and therefore those that never had any spiritual sight or sense of Christ's excellency, can not be sensible of his sufficiency.

And that sinners are not convinced that Christ is sufficient for the work he has undertaken, appears most manifestly when they are under great convictions of their sin, and danger of God's wrath. Though it may be before they thought they could allow Christ to be sufficient, (for it is easy to allow any one to be sufficient for our defense at a time when we see no danger) yet when they come to be sensible of their guilt and God's wrath, what discouraging thoughts do they entertain! How are they ready to draw towards despair, as if there were no hope or help for such wicked creatures as they! The reason is, They have no apprehension or sense of any other way that God's majesty can be vindicated, but only in their misery. To tell them of the blood of Christ signifies nothing, it does not relieve their sinking, despairing hearts. This makes it most evident that they are not convinced that Christ is sufficient to be their Mediator. And as long as they are unconvinced of this, it is impossible they should be willing to accept of him as their Mediator and Saviour. A man in distressing fear will not willingly betake himself to a fort that he judges not sufficient to defend him from the enemy. A man will not willingly venture out into the ocean in a ship that he suspects is leaky, and will sink before he gets through his voyage.

3. It is evident that you are not willing to have Christ for your Saviour, because you have so mean an opinion of him, that you durst not trust his faithfulness. One that undertakes to be the Saviour of souls had need be faithful; for if he fails in such a trust, how great is the loss! But you are not convinced of Christ's faithfulness; as is evident, because at such times as when you are in a considerable measure sensible of your guilt and God's anger, you can not be convinced that Christ is willing to accept of you, or that he stands ready to receive you, if you should come to him, though Christ so much invites you to come to him, and has so fully declared that he will not reject you, if you do come; as particularly, John 6:37. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Now, there is no man can be heartily willing to trust his eternal welfare in the hands of an unfaithful person, or one whose faithfulness he suspects.

4. You are not willing to be saved in that way by Christ, as is evident, because you are not willing that your own goodness should be set at nought. In the way of salvation by Christ men's own goodness is wholly set at nought; there is no account at all made of it. Now you can not be willing to be saved in a way wherein your own goodness is set at nought, as is evident, since you make much of it yourself. You make much of your prayers and pains in religion, and are often thinking of them; how considerable do they appear to you, when you look back upon them! And some of you are thinking how much more you have done than others, and expecting some respect or regard that God should manifest to what you do. Now, if you make so much of what you do yourself, it is impossible that you should be freely willing that God should make nothing of it. As we may see in other things; if a man is proud of a great estate, or if he values himself much upon his honourable office, or his great abilities, it is impossible that he should like it, and heartily approve of it, that others should make light of these things and despise them.

Seeing therefore it is so evident, that you refuse to accept of Christ as your Saviour, why is Christ to be blamed that he does not save you? Christ has offered himself to you, to be your Saviour in time past, and he continues offering himself still, and you continue to reject him, and yet complain that he does not save you. So strangely unreasonable, and inconsistent with themselves, are gospel sinners!

But I expect there are many of you that still object. Such an objection as this, is probably now in the hearts of many here present.

Objection. If I am not willing to have Christ for my Saviour, I can not make myself willing. But I would give an answer to this objection by laying down two things, that must be acknowledged to be exceeding evident.

1. It is no excuse, that you can not receive Christ of yourself, unless you would if you could. This is so evident of itself, that it scarce needs any proof. Certainly if persons would not if they could, it is just the same thing as to the blame that lies upon them, whether they can or can not. If you were willing, and then found that you could not, your being unable would alter the case, and might be some excuse; because then the defect would not be in your will, but only in your ability. But as long as you will not, it is no matter, whether you have ability or no ability.

If you are not willing to accept of Christ, it follows that you have no sincere willingness to be willing; because the will always necessarily approves of and rests in its own acts. To suppose the contrary, would be to suppose a contradiction; it would be to suppose that a man's will is contrary to itself, or that he wills contrary to what he himself wills. As you are not willing to come to Christ, and can not make yourself willing, so you have no sincere desire to be willing; and therefore may most justly perish without a Saviour. There is no excuse at all for you; for say what you will about your inability, the seat of your blame lies in your perverse will, that is an enemy to the Saviour. It is in vain for you to tell of your want of power, as long as your will is found defective. If a man should hate you, and smite you in the face, but should tell you at the same time, that he hated you so much, that he could not help choosing and willing so to do, would you take it the more patiently for that? Would not your indignation be rather stirred up the more?

2. If you would be willing if you could, that is no excuse, unless your unwillingness to be willing be sincere. That which is hypocritical, and does not come from the heart, but is merely forced, ought wholly to be set aside, as worthy of no consideration; because common sense teaches, that what is not hearty, but hypocritical is indeed nothing, being only a show of what is not; but that which is good for nothing, ought to go for nothing. But if you set aside all that is not free, and call nothing a willingness, but a free hearty willingness, then see how the case stands, and whether or no you have not lost all your excuse for standing out against the calls of the gospel. You say you would make yourself willing to accept if you could; but it is not from any good principle that you are willing for that. It is not from any free inclination, or true respect to Christ, or any love to your duty, or any spirit of obedience. It is not from the influence of any real respect, or tendency in your heart, towards any thing good, or from any other principle than such as is in the hearts of devils, and would make them have the same sort of willingness in the same circumstances. It is therefore evident, that there can be no goodness in that would be willing to come to Christ: and that which has no goodness, can not be an excuse for any badness. If there be no good in it, then it signifies nothing, and weighs nothing, when put into the scales to counterbalance that which is bad.

Sinners therefore spend their time in foolish arguing and objecting, making much of that which is good for nothing, making those excuses that are not worth offering. It is in vain to keep making objection. You stand justly condemned. The blame lies at your

door: Thrust it off from you as often as you will, it will return upon you. Sew fig-leaves as long as you will, your nakedness will appear. You continue wilfully and wickedly rejecting Jesus Christ, and will not have him for your Saviour, and therefore it is sottish madness in you to charge Christ with injustice that he does not save you.

Here is the sin of unbelief! Thus the guilt of that great sin lies upon you! If you never had thus treated a Saviour, you might most justly have been damned to all eternity: it would but be exactly agreeable to your treatment of God. But besides this, when God, notwithstanding, has offered you his own dear Son, to save you from this endless misery you had deserved, and not only so, but to make you happy eternally in the enjoyment of himself, you have refused him, and would not have him for your Saviour, and still refuse to comply with the offers of the gospel; what can render any person more inexcusable? If you should now perish for ever, what can you have to say?

Hereby the justice of God in your destruction appears in two respects:

1. It is more abundantly manifest that it is just that you should be destroyed. Justice never appears so conspicuous as it does after refused and abused mercy. Justice in damnation appears abundantly the more clear and bright, after a wilful rejection of offered salvation. What can an offended prince do more than freely offer pardon to a condemned malefactor? And if he refuses to accept of it, will any one say that his execution is unjust?

2. God's justice will appear in your greater destruction. Besides the guilt that you would have had if a Saviour never had been offered, you bring that great additional guilt upon you, of most ungratefully refusing offered deliverance. What more base and vile treatment of God can there be, than for you, when justly condemned to eternal misery, and ready to be executed, and God graciously sends his own Son, who comes and knocks at your door with a pardon in his hand, and not only a pardon, but a deed of eternal glory; I say, what can be worse, than for you, out of dislike and enmity against God and his Son, to refuse to accept those benefits at his hands? How justly may the anger of God be greatly incensed and increased by it! When a sinner thus ungratefully rejects mercy, his last error is worse than the first; this is more heinous than all his former rebellion, and may justly bring down more fearful wrath upon him.

The heinousness of this sin of rejecting a Saviour especially appears in two things:

1. The greatness of the benefits offered: which appears in the greatness of the deliverance, which is from inexpressible degrees of corruption and wickedness of heart and life, the least degree of which is infinitely evil; and from misery that is everlasting; and in the greatness and glory of the inheritance purchased and offered. Hebrews 2:3. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation."

2. The wonderfulness of the way in which these benefits are procured and offered. That God should lay help on his own Son, when our case was so deplorable that help could be had in no mere creature; and that he should undertake for us, and should come into the world, and take upon him our nature, and should not only appear in a low state of life, but should die such a death, and endure such torments and contempt for sinners while enemies, how wonderful is it! And what tongue or pen can set forth the greatness of the ingratitude, baseness, and perverseness there is in it, when a

perishing sinner that is in the most extreme necessity of salvation, rejects it, after it is procured in such a way as this! That so glorious a person should be thus treated, and that when he comes on so gracious an errand! That he should stand so long offering himself and calling and inviting, as he has done to many of you, and all to no purpose, but all the while be set at nought! Surely you might justly be cast into hell without one more offer of a Saviour! Yea, and thrust down into the lowest hell! Herein you have exceeded the very devils; for they never rejected the offers of such glorious mercy; no, nor of any mercy at all. This will be the distinguishing condemnation of gospel-sinners, John 3:18. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."- That outward smoothness of your carriage towards Christ, that appearance of respect to him in your looks, your speeches, and gestures, do not argue but that you set him at nought in your heart. There may be much of these outward shows of respect, and yet you be like Judas, that betrayed the Son of man with a kiss; and like those mockers that bowed the knee before him, and at the same time spit in his face.

III. If God should for ever cast you off and destroy you, it would be agreeable to your treatment of others. It would be no other than what would be exactly answerable to your behaviour towards your fellow-creatures, that have the same human nature, and are naturally in the same circumstances with you, and that you ought to love as yourself. And that appears especially in two things.

1. You have many of you been opposite in your spirit to the salvation of others. There are several ways that natural men manifest a spirit of opposition against the salvation of souls. It sometimes appears by a fear that their companions, acquaintances, and equals, will obtain mercy, and so become unspeakably happier than they. It is sometimes manifested by an uneasiness at the news of what others have hopefully obtained. It appears when persons envy others for it, and dislike them the more, and disrelish their talk, and avoid their company, and can not bear to hear their religious discourse, and especially to receive warnings and counsels from them. And it oftentimes appears by their backwardness to entertain charitable thoughts of them, and by their being brought with difficulty to believe that they have obtained mercy, and a forwardness to listen to any thing that seems to contradict it. The devil hated to own Job's sincerity, Job 1:7, etc. and chapter 2, verses 3, 4, 5. There appears very often much of this spirit of the devil in natural men. Sometimes they are ready to make a ridicule of others' pretended godliness; they speak of the ground of others' hopes, as the enemies of the Jews did of the wall that they built. Nehemiah 4:3. "Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, That which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." There are many that join with Sanballat and Tobiah, and are of the same spirit with them. There always was, and always will be, an enmity betwixt the seed of the serpent and the seed of the women. It appeared in Cain, who hated his brother, because he was more acceptable to God than himself; and it appears still in these times, and in this place. There are many that are like the elder brother, who could not bear that the prodigal when he returned should be received with such joy and good entertainment, and was put into a fret by it, both against his brother that had returned, and his father that had made him so welcome. Luke 15.

Thus have many of you been opposite to the salvation of others, who stand in as great necessity of it as you. You have been against their being delivered from everlasting

misery, who can bear it no better than you; not because their salvation would do you any hurt, or their damnation help you, any otherwise than as it would gratify that vile spirit that is so much like the spirit of the devil, who, because he is miserable himself, is unwilling that others should be happy. How just therefore is it that God should be opposite to your salvation! If you have so little love or mercy in you as to begrudge your neighbour's salvation, whom you have no cause to hate, but the law of God and nature requires you to love, why is God bound to exercise such infinite love and mercy to you, as to save you at the price of his own blood? you, whom he is no way bound to love, but who have deserved his hatred a thousand and a thousand times? You are not willing that others should be converted, who have behaved themselves injuriously towards you; and yet, will you count it hard if God does not bestow converting grace upon you that have deserved ten thousand times as ill of God, as ever any of your neighbours have of you? You are opposite to God's showing mercy to those that you think have been vicious persons, and are very unworthy of such mercy. Is others' unworthiness a just reason why God should not bestow mercy on them? And yet will God be hard, if, notwithstanding all your unworthiness, and the abominableness of your spirit and practice in his sight, he does not show you mercy? You would have God bestow liberally on you, and upbraid not; but yet when he shows mercy to others, you are ready to upbraid as soon as you hear of it; you immediately are thinking with yourself how ill they have behaved themselves; and it may be your mouths on this occasion are open, enumerating and aggravating the sins they have been guilty of. You would have God bury all your faults, and wholly blot out all your transgressions; but yet if he bestows mercy on others, it may be you will take that occasion to rake up all their old faults that you can think of. You do not much reflect on and condemn yourself for your baseness and unjust spirit towards others, in your opposition to their salvation; you do not quarrel with yourself, and condemn yourself for this; but yet you in your heart will quarrel with God, and fret at his dispensations, because you think he seems opposite to showing mercy to you. One would think that the consideration of these things should for ever stop your mouth.

2. Consider how you have promoted others' damnation. Many of you, by the bad examples you have set, by corrupting the minds of others, by your sinful conversation, by leading them into or strengthening them in sin, and by the mischief you have done in human society other ways that might be mentioned, have been guilty of those things that have tended to others' damnation. You have heretofore appeared on the side of sin and Satan, and have strengthened their interest, and have been many ways accessory to others' sins, have hardened their hearts, and thereby have done what has tended to the ruin of their souls. Without doubt there are those here present who have been in a great measure the means of others' damnation. One man may really be a means of others' damnation as well as salvation. Christ charges the scribes and Pharisees with this, Matthew 23:13. "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in." We have no reason to think that this congregation has none in it who are cursed from day to day by poor souls that are roaring out in hell, whose damnation they have been the means of, or have greatly contributed to. There are many who contribute to their own children's damnation, by neglecting their education, by setting them bad examples, and bringing them up in sinful ways. They take some care of their bodies, but take little care of their poor souls; they provide for them bread to eat, but deny them the bread of life, that their famishing souls stand in need of. And are there no such parents here who

have thus treated their children? If their children be not gone to hell, no thanks to them; it is not because they have not done what has tended to their destruction. Seeing therefore you have had no more regard to others' salvation, and have promoted their damnation, how justly might God leave you to perish yourself!

IV. If God should eternally cast you off, it would but be agreeable to your own behaviour towards yourself; and that in two respects:

1. In being so careless of your own salvation. You have refused to take care for your salvation, as God has counselled and commanded you from time to time; and why may not God neglect it, now you seek it of him? Is God obliged to be more careful of your happiness, than you are either of your own happiness or his glory? Is God bound to take that care for you, out of love to you, that you will not take for yourself, either from love to yourself, or regard to his authority? How long, and how greatly, have you neglected the welfare of your precious soul, refusing to take pains and deny yourself, or put yourself a little out of your way for your salvation, while God has been calling upon you! Neither your duty to God, nor love to your own soul, were enough to induce you to do little things for your own eternal welfare; and yet do you now expect that God should do great things, putting forth almighty power, and exercising infinite mercy for it? You was urged to take care for your salvation, and not to put it off. You was told that was the best time before you grew older, and that it might be, if you would put it off, God would not hear you afterwards; but yet you would not hearken; you would run the venture of it. Now how justly might God order it so, that it should be too late, leaving you to seek in vain! You was told, that you would repent of it if you delayed; but you would not hear: how justly therefore may God give you cause to repent of it, by refusing to show you mercy now! If God sees you going on in ways contrary to his commands and his glory, and requires you to forsake them, and tells you that they tend to the destruction of your own soul, and therefore counsels you to avoid them, and you refuse; how just would it be if God should be provoked by it, henceforward to be as careless of the good of your soul as you are yourself!

2. You have not only neglected your salvation, but you have wilfully taken direct courses to undo yourself. You have gone on in those ways and practices which have directly tended to your damnation, and have been perverse and obstinate in it. You can not plead ignorance; you had all the light set before you that you could desire. God told you that you was undoing yourself; but yet you would do it. He told you that the path you was going in led to destruction, and counselled you to avoid it; but you would not hearken. How justly therefore may God leave you to be undone! You have obstinately persisted to travel in the way that leads to hell for a long time, contrary to God's continual counsels and commands, till it may be at length you are got almost to your journey's end, and are come near to hell's gate, and so begin to be sensible of your danger and misery; and not account it unjust and hard if God will not deliver you! You have destroyed yourself, and destroyed yourself wilfully, contrary to God's repeated counsels, yea, and destroyed yourself in fighting against God. Now therefore, why do you blame any but yourself if you are destroyed? If you will undo yourself in opposing God, and while God opposes you by his calls and counsels, and, it may be too, by the convictions of his Spirit, what can you object against it, if God now leaves you to be undone? You would have your own way, and did not like that God should oppose you in it, and your way was to ruin your own soul; how just therefore is it, if,

now at length, God ceases to oppose you, and falls in with you, and lets your soul be ruined; and as you would destroy yourself, so should put to his hand to destroy you too! The ways you went on in had a natural tendency to your misery: if you would drink poison in opposition to God, and in contempt of him and his advice, who can you blame but yourself if you are poisoned, and so perish? If you would run into the fire against all restraints both of God's mercy and authority, you must even blame yourself if you are burnt.

Thus I have proposed some things to your consideration, which, if you are not exceeding blind, senseless, and perverse, will stop your mouth, and convince you that you stand justly condemned before God; and that he would in no wise deal hardly with you, but altogether justly, in denying you any mercy, and in refusing to hear your prayers, though you pray never so earnestly, and never so often, and continue in it never so long. God may utterly disregard your tears and moans, your heavy heart, your earnest desires, and great endeavours; and he may cast you into eternal destruction, without any regard to your welfare, denying you converting grace, and giving you over to Satan, and at last cast you into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, to be there to eternity, having no rest day or night, for ever glorifying his justice upon you in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.

Objection. But here many may still object, (for I am sensible it is a hard thing to stop sinners' mouths) "God shows mercy to others that have done these things as well as I, yea, that have done a great deal worse than I."

Answer. 1. That does not prove that God is any way bound to show mercy to you, or them either. If God bestows it on others, he does not so because he is bound to bestow it: he might if he had pleased, with glorious justice, have denied it them. If God bestows it on some, that does not prove that he is bound to bestow it on any; and if he is bound to bestow it on none, then he is not bound to bestow it on you. God is in debt to none; and if he gives to some that he is not in debt to, because it is his pleasure, that does not bring him into debt to others. It alters not the case as to you, whether others have it, or have it not: you do not deserve damnation the less, than if mercy never had been bestowed on any at all. Matthew 20:15. "Is thine eye evil, because mine is good?"

2. If this objection be good, then the exercise of God's mercy is not in his own right, and his grace is not his own to give. That which God may not dispose of as he pleases, is not his own; for that which is one's own, is at his own disposal: but if it be not God's own, then he is not capable of making a gift or present of it to any one; it is impossible to give what is a debt. What is it that you would make of God? Must the great God be tied up, that he must not use his own pleasure in bestowing his own gifts, but if he bestows them on one, must be looked upon obliged to bestow them on another? Is not God worthy to have the same right, with respect to the gifts of his grace, that a man has to his money or goods? Is it because God is not so great, and should be more in subjection than man, that this can not be allowed him? If any of you see cause to show kindness to a neighbour, do all the rest of your neighbours come to you, and tell you, that you owe them so much as you have given to such a man? But this is the way that you deal with God, as though God were not worthy to have as absolute a property in his goods, as you have in yours.

At this rate God can not make a present of any thing; he has nothing of his own to bestow: if he has a mind to show peculiar favour to some, or to lay some particular persons under peculiar obligations to him, he can not do it; because he has no special gift at his own disposal. If this be the case, why do you pray to God to bestow saving grace upon you? If God does not do fairly to deny it you, because he bestows it on others, then it is not worth your while to pray for it, but you may go and tell him that he has bestowed it on others as bad or worse than you, and so demand it of him as a debt. And at this rate persons never need to thank God for salvation, when it is bestowed; for what occasion is there to thank God for that which was not at his own disposal, and that he could not fairly have denied? The thing at bottom is, that men have low thoughts of God, and high thoughts of themselves; and therefore it is that they look upon God as having so little right, and they so much. Matthew 20:15. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

3. God may justly show greater respect to others than to you, for you have shown greater respect to others than to God. You have rather chosen to offend God than men. God only shows a greater respect to others, who are by nature your equals, than to you; but you have shown a greater respect to those that are infinitely inferior to God than to him. You have shown a greater regard to wicked men than to God; you have honoured them more, loved them better, and adhered to them rather than to him. Yea, you have honoured the devil, in many respects, more than God: you have chosen his will and his interest, rather than God's will and his glory: you have chosen a little worldly pelf, rather than God: you have set more by a vile lust than by him: you have chosen these things, and rejected God. You have set your heart on these things, and cast God behind your back: and where is the injustice if God is pleased to show greater respect to others than to you, or if he chooses others and rejects you? You have shown greater respect to vile and worthless things, and no respect to God's glory; and why may not God set his love on others, and have no respect to your happiness? You have shown great respect to others, and not to God, whom you are laid under infinite obligations to respect above all; and why may not God show respect to others, and not to you, who never have laid him under the least obligation?

And will you not be ashamed, notwithstanding all these things, still to open your mouth, to object and cavil about the decrees of God, and other things that you can not fully understand. Let the decrees of God be what they will, that alters not the case as to your liberty, any more than if God had only foreknown. And why is God to blame for decreeing things? Especially since he decrees nothing but good. How unbecoming an infinitely wise Being would it have been to have made a world, and let things run at random, without disposing events, or fore-ordering how they should come to pass? And what is that to you, how God has fore-ordered things, as long as your constant experience teaches you, that it does not hinder your doing what you choose to do. This you know, and your daily practice and behaviour amongst men declares that you are fully sensible of it with respect to yourself and others. Still to object, because there are some things in God's dispensations above your understanding, is exceedingly unreasonable. Your own conscience charges you with great guilt, and with those things that have been mentioned, let the secret things of God be what they will. Your conscience charges you with those vile dispositions, and that base behaviour towards God, that you would at any time most highly resent in your neighbour towards you, and that not a whit the less for any concern those secret counsels and mysterious

dispensations of God may have in the matter. It is in vain for you to exalt yourself against an infinitely great, and holy, and just God. If you continue in it, it will be to your eternal shame and confusion, when hereafter you shall see at whose door all the blame of your misery lies.

I will finish what I have to say to natural men in the application of this doctrine, with a caution not to improve the doctrine to discouragement. For though it would be righteous in God for ever to cast you off, and destroy you, yet it would also be just in God to save you, in and through Christ, who has made complete satisfaction for all sin. Romans 3:25, 26. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Yea, God may, through this Mediator, not only justly, but honourably, show you mercy. The blood of Christ is so precious, that it is fully sufficient to pay the debt you have contracted, and perfectly to vindicate the Divine Majesty from all the dishonour cast upon it, by these many great sins of yours that have been mentioned. It was as great, and indeed a much greater thing, for Christ to die, than it would have been for you and all mankind to have burnt in hell to all eternity. Of such dignity and excellency is Christ in the eyes of God, that, seeing he has suffered so much for poor sinners, God is willing to be at peace with them, however vile and unworthy they have been, and on how many accounts soever the punishment would be just. So that you need not be at all discouraged from seeking mercy, for there is enough in Christ.

Indeed it would not become the glory of God's majesty to show mercy to you, so sinful and vile a creature, for any thing that you have done; for such worthless and despicable things as your prayers, and other religious performances. It would be very dishonourable and unworthy of God so to do, and it is in vain to expect it. He will show mercy only on Christ's account; and that, according to his sovereign pleasure, on whom he pleases, when he pleases, and in what manner he pleases. You can not bring him under obligation by your works; do what you will, he will not look on himself obliged. But if it be his pleasure, he can honourably show mercy through Christ to any sinner of you all, not one in this congregation excepted. Therefore here is encouragement for you still to seek and wait, notwithstanding all your wickedness; agreeable to Samuel's speech to the children of Israel, when they were terrified with the thunder and rain that God sent, and when guilt stared them in the face, 1 Samuel 12:20. "Fear not; ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart."

I would conclude this discourse by putting the godly in mind of the freeness and wonderfulness of the grace of God towards them. For such were the same of you. The case was just so with you as you have heard; you had such a wicked heart, you lived such a wicked life, and it would have been most just with God for ever to have cast you off: but he has had mercy upon you; he hath made his glorious grace appear in your everlasting salvation. You had no love to God; but yet he has exercised unspeakable love to you. You have contemned God, and set light by him: but so great a value has God's grace set on you and your happiness, that you have been redeemed at the price of the blood of his own Son. You chose to be with Satan in his service; but yet God hath made you a joint heir with Christ of his glory. You was ungrateful for

past mercies; yet God not only continued those mercies, but bestowed unspeakably greater mercies upon you. You refused to hear when God called; yet God heard you when you called. You abused the infiniteness of God's mercy to encourage yourself in sin against him; yet God has manifested the infiniteness of that mercy, in the exercises of it towards you. You have rejected Christ, and set him at nought; and yet he is become your Saviour. You have neglected your own salvation; but God has not neglected it. You have destroyed yourself; but yet in God has been your help. God has magnified his free grace towards you, and not to others; because he has chosen you, and it hath pleased him to set his love upon you.

O! what cause is here for praise! What obligations you are under to bless the Lord who hath dealt bountifully with you, and magnify his holy name! What cause for you to praise God in humility, to walk humbly before him. Ezekiel 16:63. "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God!" You shall never open your mouth in boasting, or self-justification; but lie the lower before God for his mercy to you. You have reason, the more abundantly, to open your mouth in God's praises, that they may be continually in your mouth, both here and to all eternity, for his rich, unspeakable, and sovereign mercy to you, whereby he, and he alone, hath made you to differ from others.

6. WICKED MEN USEFUL IN THEIR DESTRUCTION ONLY

“Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree? Or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; The fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burnt: Is it meet for any work?” - Ezekiel 15:2-4

The visible church of God is here compared to the vine tree, as is evident by God’s own explanation of the allegory, in verses 6, 7, and 8. “Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem,” etc. And it may be understood of mankind in general. We find man often in scripture compared to a vine. So in chapter 32 of Deuteronomy, “Their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of gall.” And Psalm 53:8. “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt;” verse 14. “Look down from heaven, behold, and visit this vine.” And Song of Solomon 2:15. “The foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.” Isaiah v. at the beginning, “My beloved hath a vineyard, and he planted it with the choicest vine.” Jeremiah 2:21. “I had planted thee a noble vine.” Hosea 10:1. “Israel is an empty vine.” So in chapter 15 of John, visible Christians are compared to the branches of a vine.

Man is very fitly represented by the vine. The weakness and dependence of the vine on other things which support it, well represents to us what a poor, feeble, dependent creature man is, and how, if left to himself, he must fall into mischief, and can not help himself. The visible people of God are fitly compared to a vine, because of the care and cultivation of the husbandman, or vine dresser. The business of husbandmen in the land of Israel was very much in their vineyards, about vines; and the care they exercised to fence them, to defend them, to prune them, to prop them up, and to cultivate them, well represented that merciful care which God exercises towards his visible people; and this latter is often in scripture expressly compared to the former.

In the words now read is represented,

1. How wholly useless and unprofitable, even beyond other trees, a vine is, in case of unfruitfulness: “What is a vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?” i.e. if it do not bear fruit. Men make much more of a vine than of other trees; they take great care of it, to wall it in, to dig about it, to prune it, and the like. It is much more highly esteemed than any one of the trees of the forest; they are despised in comparison with it. And if it bear fruit, it is indeed much preferable to other trees; for the fruit of it yields a noble liquor; as it is said in Jotham’s parable, Judges 9:13. “And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man?”

But if it bear no fruit, it is more unprofitable than the trees of the forest; for the wood of them is good for timber; but the wood of the vine is fit for no work; as in the text, “Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?”

2. The only thing for which a vine is useful, in case of barrenness, viz. for fuel: "Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel." It is wholly consumed; no part of it is worth a saving, to make any instrument of it, for any work.

DOCTRINE.

If men bring forth no fruit to God, they are wholly useless, unless in their destruction. For the proof of this doctrine, I shall show,

1. That it is very evident, that there can be but two ways in which man can be useful, viz. either in acting, or in being acted upon, and disposed of.
2. That man can no otherwise be useful actively than by bringing forth fruit to God.
3. That if he bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which he can be passively useful, but in being destroyed.
4. In that way he may be useful without bearing fruit.

I. There are but two ways in which man can be useful, viz. either in acting or being acted upon. If man be an useful sort of creature, he must be so either actively or passively: There is no medium. If he be useful to any purpose, he must be so either in acting himself, or else in being disposed of by some other; either in doing something himself to that purpose, or else in having something done upon him by some other to that purpose. What can be more plain, than that if man do nothing himself, and nothing be done with him or upon him by any other, he can not be any way at all useful? If man do nothing himself to promote the end of his existence, and no other being do any thing with him to promote this end, then nothing will be done to promote this end; and so man must be wholly useless. So that there are but two ways in which man can be useful to any purpose, viz. either actively or passively, either in doing something himself, or in being the subject of something done to him.

II. Man can not be useful actively, any otherwise than in bringing forth fruit to God, than in serving God, and living to his glory. This is the only way wherein he can be useful in doing; and that for this reason, that the glory of God is the very thing for which man was made, and to which all other ends are subordinate. Man is not an independent being, but he derives his being from another; and therefore hath his end assigned him by that other: And he that gave him his being, made him for the end now mentioned. This was the very design and aim of the Author of man, this was the work for which he made him, viz. to serve and glorify his Maker.

Other creatures are made for inferior purposes. Inferior creatures were made for inferior purposes. But it is to be observed, that man is the creature that is highest, and nearest to God, of any in this lower world; and therefore his business is with God, although other creatures are made for lower ends. There may be observed a kind of gradation, or gradual ascent, in the order of the different kinds of creatures, from the meanest clod of earth to man, who hath a rational and immortal soul. A plant, an herb, or tree, is superior in nature to a stone or clod, because it hath a vegetable life. The brute creatures are a degree higher still; for they have sensitive life. But man, having a rational soul, is the highest of this lower creation, and is next to God; therefore his business is with God.

Things without life, as earth, water, etc. are subservient to things above them, as the grass, herbs and trees. These vegetables are subservient to that order of creatures which is next above them, the brute creation; they are for food to them. Brute creatures, again, are made for the use and service of the order above them; they are made for the service of mankind. But man being the highest of this lower creation, the next step from him is to God. He therefore is made for the service and glory of God. This is the whole work and business of man; it is his highest end, to which all other ends are subordinate.

If it had not been for this end, there never would have been any such sort of creature as man; there would have been no occasion for it. Other inferior ends may be answered as well, without any such creature as man. There would have been no sort of occasion for making so noble a creature, and endowing him with such faculties, only to enjoy earthly good, to eat, and to drink, and to enjoy sensual things. Brute creatures, without reason, are capable of these things, as well as man; Yea, if no higher end be aimed at than to enjoy sensitive good, reason is rather an hindrance than an help. It doth but render man the more capable of afflicting himself with care, and fears of death, and other future evils, and of vexing himself with many anxieties, from which brute creatures are wholly free, and therefore can gratify their senses with less molestation. Besides, reason doth but make men more capable of molesting and impeding one another in the gratification of their senses. If man have no other end to seek but to gratify his senses, reason is nothing but an impediment.

Therefore if man be not made to serve and glorify his Creator, it is wholly to no purpose that such a creature is made. Doubtless then the all wise God, who doth all things in infinite wisdom, hath made man for this end. And this is agreeable to what he hath taught us in many places in the scriptures. This is the great end for which man was made, and for which he was made such a creature as he is, having a body and soul, bodily senses, and rational powers. For this is he placed in such circumstances as he is, and the earth is given him for a possession. For this he hath dominion given him over the rest of the creatures of this world. For this the sun shines on him, and the moon and stars are for signs and seasons to him, and the rain falls on him, and the earth yields him her increase.

All other ends of man are subordinate to this. There are inferior ends for which man was made. Men were made for one another; made for their friends and neighbours, and for the good of the public. But all these inferior ends are designed to be subordinate to the higher end of glorifying God; and therefore man can not be actively useful, or actively answer any purpose, otherwise than by actively glorifying God, or bringing forth fruit to God. Because,

1. That is not actively useful which doth not actively answer its end. That which doth not answer its end is in vain; for that is the meaning of the proposition, that any thing is in vain. So that which doth not actively answer its end, is, as to its own activity, in vain.

2. That is as to its own activity altogether useless which actively answers only subordinate ends, without answering the ultimate end; and that because the ultimate end is the end of subordinate ends. The notion of a supreme end is, that it is the end of all inferior ends. Subordinate ends are to no purpose, only as they stand related to the

highest end. The very notion of a subordinate end is, that it is in order to a further end. Therefore these inferior ends are good for nothing though they be obtained, unless they also obtain their end. Inferior ends are not aimed at for their own sake, but only for the sake of the ultimate end. Therefore he that fails of his great end of all, doth as much altogether fail of his end, and is as much to no purpose, as if he did not obtain his subordinate end.

I will illustrate this by two or three examples. The subordinate end of the underpinning of an house is to support the house; and the subordinate end of the windows is to let in the light. But the ultimate end of the whole is the benefit of the inhabitants. Therefore, if the house be never inhabited, the whole is in vain. The underpinning is in vain, though it be ever so strong and support the building ever so well. The windows also are wholly in vain, though they be ever so large and clear, and though they obtain the subordinate end of letting in the light: They are as much in vain, as if they let in no light.

So the subordinate end of the husbandman in ploughing and sowing, and well manuring his field is, that it may bring forth a crop. But his more ultimate end is, that food may be provided for him and his family. Therefore though his inferior end be obtained, and his field bring forth ever so good a crop, yet if after all it be consumed by fire, or otherwise destroyed, he ploughed and sowed his field as much in vain, as if the seed had never sprung up.

So if man obtain his subordinate ends ever so fully; yet if he altogether fail of his ultimate end, he is wholly an useless creature. Thus if men be very useful in temporal things to their families, or greatly promote the temporal interest of the neighbourhood, or of the public; yet if no glory be brought to God by it, they are altogether useless. If men actively bring no glory to God, they are, as to their own activity, altogether useless, how much soever they may promote the benefit of one another. How much soever one part of mankind may subserve another; yet if the end of the whole be not answered, every part is useless.

Thus if the parts of a clock subserve ever so well one to another, mutually to assist each other in their motions; one wheel moving another ever so regularly; yet if the motion never reach the hand or the hammer, it is altogether in vain, as much as if it stood still. As in a clock one wheel moves another, and that another, till at last the motion comes to the hand and hammer, which immediately respect the eye and the ear, otherwise all the motions are in vain; so it is in the world, one man was made to be useful to another, and one part of mankind to another; but the use of the whole is to bring glory to God the maker or else all is in vain; and however a man may serve among his fellow creatures, in a private or public capacity, upon the whole he is in vain.

It may perhaps be objected, that a wicked man may, by being serviceable to the public, be useful to many who do bring forth fruit to God, and thus glorify him.

Answer 1. If he be so, he is no further useful than he brings glory to God. It all hath an ultimate respect to that glory that is brought to God, and is useful no further; as the motion of no one wheel of a clock is any further useful, than as it finally respects the right pointing of the hand, and striking of the hammer.

Answer 2. When it is thus, wicked men are useful only accidentally, and not designedly. Although a wicked man may, by being serviceable to good men, do what will be an advantage to them to their bringing forth fruit to God; yet that serviceableness is not what he aims at; this is not his end; he doth not look so far for an ultimate end. And how ever this end be obtained, no thanks are due to him; it is as to him accidental. He is only the occasion, and not the designing cause of it. That fruit which is brought forth to the glory of God, is not brought forth by him, but by others. The usefulness of such a man, being not designed, is not to be attributed to him as though it were his fruit. He is not useful as a man, or as a rational creature, because he is not so designedly. He is useful as things without life may be. Things without life may be useful to put the godly under advantages to bring forth fruit, as the timber and stones with which his house is built, the wool and flax with which he is clothed; but the fruit which is brought forth to God's glory, can not be said for all that to be the fruit of these lifeless things, but of the godly man who makes use of them. So it is when wicked men put the godly under advantages to glorify God, as Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, and others have done.

III. If men bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which they can be useful passively, but in being destroyed. They are fit for nothing else.

1. They are not fit to be suffered to continue always in this world. God suffers them to live for the present, but it is only for a certain season. They are here in a transitory state. It is not fit that this world should be the constant abode of those who bring forth no fruit to God. It is not fit that the barren tree should be allowed always to stand in the vineyard. The husbandman lets it stand for a while, till he digs about it, dungs it, and proves it to be incurable, or till a convenient time to cut it down come; but it is not fit that such a tree should stand here always. It is not fit that they who bring forth no fruit to God, should be suffered to live always in a world which is so full of the goodness of God, or that his goodness should be spent upon them forever.

This world, though it is fallen, and is under a curse, and is a miserable place to what it once was, yet is full of the streams of divine goodness. But it is not fit that those who bring forth no fruit to God, should always be continued in partaking of these streams. There are these three different states; a state wherein is nothing but good, which is the state of the blessed in heaven; a state wherein is a mixture of good and evil, which is the earthly state; and a state wherein is nothing but evil, which is the state of eternal destruction and damnation. Now they that bring forth no fruit to God, are not fit for either of the former; it is not fit that they should be continued in the enjoyment of any of the goodness of God.

It is not fit that an unprofitable, unfruitful creature, who will not glorify his Creator, should always live here to devour the fruits of the earth, and consume the fruits of divine bounty; to have the good things of this life, as God's wool and his flax, his corn, and wine, and oil, spent with him in vain. While a man lives in this world, the other creatures of the world are subjected to him. The brute creatures serve him with their labour and with their lives. The sun, moon, and stars, the clouds, fields and trees, all serve him. But it is not fit that these creatures should always be made to serve him, who brings forth no fruit to the Creator. Why should God always keep his creatures in subjection to that man, who will not be subject to him? Why should the creation be

always kept in such bondage, as to be subject to wicked men? The creatures are made subject to vanity for a little time; God hath subjected them to wicked men, and given them for their use. This however he would not have done, but as it is only for a little while; and the creatures can bear it through the hope of approaching deliverance; and otherwise it would have been intolerable. Romans 8:20. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope."

The creature doth, as it were, groan by reason of this subjection to wicked men, although it be but for a while. Romans 8:22. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now." Therefore surely it would be no way fit that wicked men, who do no good, and bring forth no fruit to God, should live here always, to have the various creatures subservient to them, as they are now. The earth can scarcely bear wicked men during that short time for which they stay here, but is ready to spew thee out. It is no way fit, therefore, that it should be forced to bear them always.

Men who bring forth no fruit to God are cumberers of the ground. Luke 13:7 "And it is not meet that they should be suffered to cumber the ground always." God can not be glorified in this way of disposing of unfruitful persons. If such men should be suffered to live always in such a state as this, it would be so far from being to the glory of God, that it would be to the disparagement of the wisdom of God, to continue them in a state so unsuitable for them, forever spending the fruits of his bounty in vain upon them. It would also be a disparagement to his justice; for this is a world where, "all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." If there were no other state but this for wicked men to be in, justice could not possibly take place. It would also reflect upon the holiness of God. Forever to uphold this world for an habitation of such persons, and forever to continue the communications of his bounty and goodness to them, would appear as though he were disposed to countenance and encourage sin and wickedness.

2. If men do not bring forth fruit to God, they are not fit to be disposed of in heaven. Heaven, above all others, is the most improper place for them. Every thing appertaining to that state is unsuitable for them. The company is most unsuitable. The original inhabitants of that world are the angels. But what a disagreeable union would that be, to unite wicked men and angels in the same society? The employments of that world are unsuitable. The employments are serving and glorifying God. How unsuitable then would it be to plant barren trees in that heavenly paradise, trees that would bring forth no fruit to the divine glory? The enjoyments of heaven are unsuitable. The enjoyments are holy and spiritual enjoyments, the happiness of beholding the glory of God, and praising his name, and the like. But these enjoyments are as unsuitable as can be to the carnal earthly minds of wicked men. They would be no enjoyments to them; but on the contrary would be most disagreeable, and what they can not relish, but entirely nauseate.

The design of heaven is unsuitable to them. The design of God in making heaven was, that it might be a place of holy habitation, for the reward of the righteous, and not an habitation for wicked men. It would greatly reflect on the wisdom of God to dispose of wicked men there; for it would be the greatest confusion. But God is not the author of

confusion, I Corinthians 14:33. It would be contrary to the holiness of God, to take wicked men so near to himself into his glorious presence, to dwell forever in that part of the creation which is, as it were, his own palace, and to sit at his table. We read in Psalm 5:4. "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee." Therefore it would doubtless be impossible that the end of the existence of wicked men should be in any wise answered by the placing of them in heaven.

IV. Men who bring forth no fruit to God, yet in suffering destruction may be useful. Although they be not useful actively, or by any thing which they do; yet they may be useful in what they may suffer; just as a barren tree, which is no way useful standing in the vineyard, yet may be good fuel, and be very useful in the fire. God can find use for the most wicked men; he hath his use for vessels of wrath as well as for vessels of mercy; as in an house there is use for vessels unto dishonour, as well as for vessels unto honour. 2 Timothy 2:0. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." Proverbs 16:4. "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." I shall briefly take notice of what ends God accomplishes by it.

1. Unfruitful persons are of use in their destruction for the glory of God's justice. It was the will of God to glorify his justice, as well as his mercy, on his creatures. The vindictive justice of God is a glorious attribute, as well as his mercy; and the glory of this attribute appears in the everlasting destruction and ruin of the barren and unfruitful.

The glory of divine justice in the perdition of ungodly men appears wonderful and glorious in the eyes of the saints and angels in heaven. Hence we have an account, that they sing praises to God, and extol his justice at the sight of the awful judgments which he inflicts on wicked men. Revelation 16:5, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art and wast, and art to come, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy:" And Revelation 19:1, 2: "And after these things I heard a great voice, saying, Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

2. Unfruitful persons in their destruction are of use for God to glorify his majesty upon them. The awful majesty of God remarkably appears in those dreadful and amazing punishments which he inflicts on those who rise up against him, and contemn him. A sense of the majesty of an earthly prince is supported very much by a sense of its being a dreadful thing to affront him. God glorifies his own majesty in the destruction of wicked men; and herein he appears infinitely great, in that it appears to be an infinitely dreadful thing to offend him. How awful doth the majesty of God appear in the dreadfulfulness of his anger! This we may learn to be one end of the damnation of the wicked, from Romans 9:22. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?"

It is often spoken of God, that he is a terrible God. It is a part of the majesty and glory of God, that he is a terrible God. God tells Pharaoh, that for this cause he raised him

up, that he might show his power in him, and that his name might be declared through all the earth, in his destruction. Exodus 9:15, 16; and again, chapter 14:17: "I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

3. The destruction of the unfruitful is of use, to give the saints a greater sense of their happiness, and of God's grace to them. The wicked will be destroyed and tormented in the view of the saints, and other inhabitants of heaven. This we are taught in Revelation 14:10. "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And in Isaiah 66:24. "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

When the saints in heaven shall look upon the damned in hell, it will serve to give them a greater sense of their own happiness, seeing how vastly different their case is from their own. The view of the doleful condition of the damned will make them the more prize their own blessedness. When they shall see how dreadful the anger of God is, it will make them the more prize his love. They will rejoice so much the more that they are not the objects of God's anger, but of his favour; that they are not the subjects of his dreadful wrath, but are treated as his children, are taken near to him, to dwell in the everlasting embraces of his love.

When they shall see the misery of the damned, it will give them a greater sense of the distinguishing grace and love of God to them, that God should from all eternity set his love on them, and make so great a difference between them and others who are of the same species with them, are no worse by nature than they, and have deserved no worse of God than they. When they shall look upon the misery of the damned, and consider how different their own state is from theirs, and that it is only free and sovereign grace that makes the difference, what a great sense will this give them of the wonderful grace of God to them! And how will it heighten their praises! With how much greater admiration and exultation of soul will they sing of the free and sovereign grace of God to them!

When they shall look upon the damned, and see their misery, how will heaven ring with the praises of God's justice towards the wicked, and his grace towards the saints! And with how much greater enlargement of heart will they praise Jesus Christ their Redeemer, that ever he was pleased to set his love upon them, his dying love! And that he should so distinguish them as to spill his blood, and make his soul an offering, to redeem them from that so great misery, and to bring them to such exceeding happiness!

With what love and ecstasy will they sing that song in Revelation 5:9. 10. "Thou art worthy: For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every tongue, and kindred, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." One end which the apostle mentions why God appointed vessels of wrath, is the more to make known the wonderfulness of his mercy towards the saints. In Romans 9:22, 23. there are two ends mentioned: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of

wrath fitted to destruction?” That is one end, then another is mentioned immediately after: “And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?”

APPLICATION

I. Hence we may learn, how just and righteous God is in the destruction of those who bring forth no fruit to God. Seeing there is no other way in which they can be useful, or in which the end of their being can be obtained, certainly it is most just that God should thus dispose of them. Why should God be frustrated of his end through their perverseness? If men will not do the work for which he hath made and fitted them; if they, through a spirit of opposition and rebellion against God, refuse; yet why should God suffer himself to be disappointed of his end in making them? It doth not become the infinite greatness and majesty of God, to suffer himself to be disappointed and frustrated by the wickedness and perverseness of sinful worms of the dust. If God should suffer this, it would seem to argue, either a want of wisdom in God to fix upon a good end, or a want of power to accomplish it.

God made all men that they might be useful; and if they will not be useful in their conduct and actions, how just is it that God should make them useful in their sufferings! God made all men for his own glory; and if they, contrary to the revealed will of God, refuse to glorify him actively and willingly, how just is it that God should glorify himself upon them in what he doth with them!

It hath been shown, that there is no other way wherein this can be done, but by their destruction. Surely, therefore, it must be just and righteous that God should destroy them.

Men are under no natural necessity of being put to this use of glorifying God in their sufferings. God gives them opportunity of glorifying him in doing, in bringing forth fruit, puts them under advantages for it, and uses many means to bring them to it. But if they will not be useful this way, it is very just that God should make them useful in the only remaining way in which they can be useful, viz. in their destruction. God is not forward to put them to this use. He tells us, that he hath “no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live;” Ezekiel 33:11. God represents the destruction of sinners as a work to which he is backward; yet it is meet that they should be destroyed, rather than that they should be suffered to frustrate God of the end of their being. Who can blame the husbandman for cutting down and burning a barren tree, after he hath digged about it, and dunged it, and used all proper means to make it fruitful?

Let those among us consider this, who have lived all their lives hitherto unprofitably, and never have brought forth any fruit to God’s glory, notwithstanding all the means that have been used with them. Consider how just it would be if God should utterly destroy you, and glorify himself upon you in that way; and what a wonder of patience it is, that God hath not done it before now.

II. This subject ought to put you upon examining yourselves, whether you be not wholly useless creatures. You have now heard, that those who bring forth no fruit to God, are, as to any good they do, wholly useless. Inquire, therefore, whether you have

ever in your lives brought forth any fruit to God. Have you ever done any thing from a gracious respect to God, or out of love to God? By only seeking your worldly interest, you do not bring forth fruit to God. It is toot bringing forth fruit to God, for you to come to public worship on the Sabbath, to pray in your families, and other such like things, merely in compliance with the general custom. It is not to bring forth fruit to God, that you be sober, moral and religious, only to be seen of men, or out of respect to your own credit and honour. How is that for God which is only for the sake of custom, or the esteem of men?

It is not to bring forth fruit to God, for men to pray, and read, and hear, and to be strict and diligent in religious and moral duties, merely from the fear of hell. What thanks are due to you for not loving your own misery, and for being willing to take some pains to escape burning in hell to all eternity? There is ne'er a devil in hell but would gladly do the same. Hosea 10:1. "Israel is an empty vine; he bringeth forth fruit unto himself."

There is no fruit brought forth to God, where there is nothing done in any wise from love to God, or from any true respect to him. God looketh at the heart. He doth not stand in need of our services, neither is he benefited by any thing that we can do. He doth not receive any thing of us, because it benefits him, but only as a suitable testimony of our love and respect to him. This is the fruit that he seeks. Men themselves will not accept of those shows of friendship, which they think are hypocritical, and come not from the heart. How much less should God, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men! John 4:23. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Inquire, therefore, whether you ever in your lives did the least thing out of love to God. Have you not done all for yourselves? Zechariah 7:5, 6. "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? "

III. Another use of this subject may be of conviction and humiliation to those who never have brought forth any fruit to God. If, upon examination, you find that you have never in all your lives done any thing out of a true respect to God, then it hath been demonstrated, that, as to any thing which you do, you are altogether useless creatures. And consider, what a shameful thing it is for such rational beings as you are, and placed under such advantages for usefulness, yet to be wholly useless, and to live in the world to no purpose!

We esteem it a very mean character in any person, that he is a worthless, insignificant person; and to be called so is taken as a great reproach. But consider seriously, whether you can clear yourselves of this character. Set reason to work; can you rationally suppose, that you do in any measure answer the end for which God gave you your being, and made you of a nature superior to the beasts? But that you may be sensible what cause you have to be ashamed of your unprofitable-ess, consider the following things.

1. How much God hath bestowed upon you, in the endowments of your nature. God hath made you rational, intelligent creatures, hath endowed you with noble powers, those endowments wherein the natural image of God consists. You are vastly exalted

in your nature above other kinds of creatures here below. You are capable of a thousand times as much as any of the brute creatures. He hath given you a power of understanding, which is capable of vastly extending itself, of looking back to the beginning of time, and of considering what was before the world was, and of looking forward beyond the end of time. It is capable of extending beyond the utmost limits of the universe; and is a faculty whereby you are akin to angels, and are capable even of knowing God, of contemplating the divine Being, and his glorious perfections, manifested in his works and in his word. You have souls capable of being the habitation of the Holy Spirit of God, and his divine grace. You are capable of the noble employments of angels.

How lamentable and shameful it is, that such a creature should be altogether useless, and live in vain! How lamentable that such a noble and excellent piece of divine workmanship should fail of its end, and be to no purpose! Was it ever worth while for God to make you such a creature, with such a noble nature, and so much above other kinds of creatures, only to eat, and drink, and gratify your sensual appetites? How lamentable and shameful to you, that such a noble tree should be more useless than any tree of the forest; that man, whom God hath thus set in honour, should make himself more worthless than the beasts that perish!

2. How much God hath done for you in the creation of the world. He made the earth, and seas, and all the fullness of them, for the use of man, and hath given them to him. Psalm 115:16. "The earth hath he given to the children of men." He made the vast variety of creatures for man's use and service. Genesis 1:28. "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." For the same purpose he made all the plants, and herbs, and trees of the field. Genesis 1:29. "I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree, yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." He made the sun in the heavens, that glorious luminary, that wonderful globe of light, to give light to man, and to constitute the difference between day and night. He also made the moon, and the vast multitude of stars, for the use of man, to be to him for signs and seasons.

What great provision hath God made for man! What a vast variety of good things for food, and otherwise to be for his convenience, to put him under advantages to be useful! How lamentable is it, that after all these things he should be an useless creature in the world!

3. How much is done for you in the course of God's common providence! Consider how nature is continually labouring for you. The sun is, at it were, in a ferment for mankind, unweariedly running his course from year to year, and from day to day, and spending his rays upon man, to put him under advantage to be useful; every day giving him light that he may have opportunity to behold the glorious wisdom of God, and to see and serve God. The winds and clouds are continually labouring for you, and the waters are going in a constant circulation, ascending in the air from the seas, descending in rain, gathering in streams and rivers, returning to the sea, and again ascending and descending, for you. The earth is continually labouring to bring forth her fruit for your support. The trees of the field are labouring and spending their strength for you. And how many of the poor brute creatures are continually labouring for you,

and spending their strength for you! How much of the earth is spent upon you! How many of God's creatures are devoured by you! How many of the lives of the living creatures of God are destroyed for your sake, for your support and comfort!

Now, how lamentable will it be, if, after all, you be altogether useless, and live to no purpose! What mere cumberers of the ground will you be! Agreeably to Luke 13:7. Nature, which thus continually labours for you, will be burdened with you. This seems to be what the apostle means, Romans 7:20, 21, 22, where he tells us, that the creation is made subject to vanity, and brought into the bondage of corruption; and that the whole creation groans, and travails in pain, under this bondage.

4. How much is done for you in the use of the means of grace. How much hath God done to provide you with suitable means and advantages for usefulness! How many prophets hath God sent into the world, in different ages, inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and enabling them to work many miracles to confirm their word, whereby you now have the written word of God to instruct you!

How great a thing hath God done for you, to give you opportunity and advantage to be useful, in that he hath sent his own Son into the world! He who is really and truly God, united himself to the human nature, and became a man, to be a prophet an teacher to you and other sinners. Yea, he laid down his life to make atonement for sin, that you might have encouragement to serve God with hopes of acceptance.

How many ordinances have been instituted for you! How much of the labour of the ministers of God hath been spent upon you! Is not that true concerning you which is written in Isaiah 5 at the beginning, concerning the vineyard planted in a very fruitful hill, and fenced and cultivated with peculiar care and pains, which yet proved unfruitful? How much hath the dresser of the vineyard digged about the barren tree, and dunged it, and yet it remains barren!

Consider what a shame it is that you should live in vain, when all the other creatures, that are inferior to you, do glorify their Creator, according to their nature. You who are so highly exalted in the world, are more useless than the brute creation; yea, than the meanest worms, or things without life, as earth and stones: For they all do answer their end, in the way in which nature hath fitted them for it; none of them fail of it. They are all useful in their places, all render their proper tribute of praise to their Creator; while you are mere nuisances in the creation, and burdens to the earth; as any tree of the forest is more useful than the vine, if it bear not fruit.

IV. Let me, in a farther application of this doctrine, exhort you by all means to bring forth fruit to God. Let it be your constant endeavour to be in this way actively useful in the world. Here consider three things.

1. What an honour it will be to such poor creatures as you are, to bring forth fruit to the divine glory. What is such a poor worm as man, that he should be enabled to bring forth any fruit to God! It is the greatest honour of the nature of man, that God hath given him a capacity of glorifying the great Creator. It is what no other creature in this lower world can do, in the same manner as man. There is no creature in the visible world that is capable of actively glorifying God, but man.

2. In bringing forth fruit to God, you will be so profitable to none as to yourselves; you can not thereby be profitable to God. Job 22:2. "Can a man be profitable to God?" You may thereby be profitable to your fellow creatures; yet not so much as to yourselves. The fruit which you bring forth to God will be a greater benefit to yourselves than to any one living. You will be more useful to yourselves than to any one else.

Although you are under a natural obligation to bring forth fruit to God, yet God doth not require it of you without a reward. He will richly reward you for it. In requiring you to bring forth fruit to him, he doth but require you to bring forth fruit to your own happiness. You will taste the sweetness of your own fruit. It will be most profitable for you in this world to bring forth fruit to God; it will be exceedingly to your benefit while here. It will be pleasant to you to lead a fruitful and holy life; the pleasure will be beyond the labour. Beside this, God hath promised to such a life everlasting rewards, unspeakable, infinite benefits. So that by it you will infinitely advance your own interest.

3. If you remain thus unprofitable, and be not actively useful, surely God will obtain his end of you, in your destruction. He will say concerning the barren tree, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Christ, in John 15:6, tells us, "if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This is spoken of the barren branches in the vine. How would you yourselves do in such a case with a barren tree in an orchard, or with weeds and tares in your fields? Doubtless, it were in your power, you would utterly destroy them.

God will have his end; he will accomplish it. Though all men and devils unite their endeavours, they can not frustrate God in any thing; and "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished;" Proverbs 11:1. God hath sworn by his great name, that he will have his glory of men, whether they will actively glorify him or no. Numbers 14:21, 22, 23. "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me, see it."

"The ax lieth at the root of the trees; and every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire;" Matthew 3:10. The end of those men who bring forth nothing but briars and thorns is to be burned, as in Hebrews 6:7, 8. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." So we read of the tares, Matthew 13:30. "Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them;" and in verses 40, 41, 42, "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

So it is said of the chaff, Matthew 3:12. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

If you continue not to bring forth any fruit to the divine glory, as you have hitherto done, hell will be the only fit place for you. It is a place prepared on purpose to be a receptacle of such persons. In hell nature ceases to labour any more for sinners: The sun doth not run his course to shine upon them, the earth doth not bring forth her fruit to be consumed upon them there. There they will have no opportunity to consume the fruits of divine goodness on their lusts. In hell they can prejudice or encumber nothing, upon which God sets any value. There the faithful servants and ministers of God will no longer spend their strength in vain upon them. When the barren tree is in the fire, the servants of the husbandman are freed from any further labour or toil in digging about it, and manuring it.

In hell they will no more have opportunity to clog and discourage the flourishing of religion, and to destroy much good, as they often do in this world. In hell they will no more have opportunity to corrupt others by their ill example. In hell they will no more have it in their power to offend the godly; they may hurt and torment one another; but the godly will be out of their reach. In hell there will be no ordinances, no Sabbaths, no sacraments, no sacred things, for them to profane and defile by their careless and hypocritical attendance.

Hell, therefore, if you remain unfruitful and cumberers of the ground, will be the fittest place for you, and there you will surely have your portion assigned you. There God will get himself honour upon you; there he will magnify himself in your ruin, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and will be praised upon that account by the saints, at the day of judgment; and by all the host of heaven throughout everlasting ages.

7. THE END OF THE WICKED CONTEMPLATED BY THE RIGHTEOUS

OR, THE TORMENTS OF THE WICKED IN HELL, NO
OCCASION OF GRIEF TO THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

*“Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets;
for God hath avenged you on her.”* Revelation 18:20

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we have a very particular account of the fall of Babylon, or the antichristian church, and of the vengeance of God executed upon her. Here it is proclaimed that Babylon the great is fallen, and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird; that her sins had reached unto heaven, and that God had remembered her iniquity that God gave commandment to reward her, as she had rewarded others, to double unto her double according to her works; in the cup she had filled, to fill to her double, and how much she had glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow to give her. And it is declared, that these plagues are come upon her in one day, death, mourning, and famine; and that she should be utterly burnt with fire; because strong is the Lord who judgeth her.

These things have respect partly to the overthrow of the antichristian church this world, and partly to the vengeance of God upon her in the world to come. There is no necessity to suppose, that such extreme torments as are here mentioned will ever be executed upon papists, or upon the antichristian church, in this world. There will indeed be a dreadful and visible overthrow of that idolatrous church in this world. But we are not to understand the plagues here mentioned as exclusive of the vengeance which God will execute on the wicked upholders and promoters of antichristianism, and on the cruel antichristian persecutors, in another world.

This is evident by ver. 3, of the next chapter, where, with reference to the same destruction of antichrist which is spoken of in this chapter, it is said, “Her smoke rose up forever and ever;” in which words the eternal punishment of antichrist is evidently spoken of. Antichrist is here represented as being cast into hell, and there remaining forever after; he hath no place anywhere else but in hell. This is evident by ver. 20 of the next chapter, where, concerning the destruction of antichrist, it is said, “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

Not but that the wicked antichristians have in all ages gone to hell as they died, and not merely at the fall of antichrist; but then the wrath of God against antichrist, of which damnation is the fruit, will be made eminently visible here on earth, by many remarkable tokens. Then antichrist will be confined to hell, and will have no more place here on earth; much after the same manner as the devil is said at the beginning of Christ’s thousand years’ reign on earth, to be cast into the bottomless pit, as you may see in the beginning of the twentieth chapter. Not but that he had his place in the bottomless pit before; he was cast down to hell when he fell at first: 2 Peter 2:4, “Cast

them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness.” But now, when he shall be suffered to deceive the nations no more, his kingdom will be confined to hell.

In this text is contained part of what John heard uttered upon this occasion; and in these words we may observe,

1. To whom this voice is directed, viz., to the holy prophets and apostles and the rest of the inhabitants of the heavenly world. When God shall pour out his wrath upon the antichristian church, it will be seen, and taken notice of, by all the inhabitants of heaven, even by holy prophets and apostles. Neither will they see as unconcerned spectators.

2. What they are called upon by the voice to do, viz. to rejoice over Babylon now destroyed, and lying under the wrath of God. They are not directed to rejoice over her in prosperity, but in flames, and beholding the smoke of her burning ascending up for ever and ever.

3. A reason given: for God hath avenged YOU ON HER; i.e., God hath executed just vengeance upon her, for shedding your blood, and cruelly persecuting you. For thus the matter is represented, that antichrist had been guilty of shedding the blood of the holy prophets and apostles, as in chap. 16:6, “For they have shed the blood of saints and of prophets.” And in ver. 24 of this context, “In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all them that were slain on the earth.” Not that antichrist had literally shed the blood, of the prophets and apostles; but he had shed the blood of those who were their followers, who were of the same spirit, and of the same church, and same mystical body. The prophets and apostles in heaven are nearly related and united to the saints on earth; they live, as it were, in true Christians in all ages. So that by slaying these, persecutors show that they would slay the prophets and apostles, if they could; and they indeed do it as much as in them lies.

On the same account, Christ says of the Jews in his time, Luke 11:50, “That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.” So Christ himself is said to have been crucified in the antichristian church, chap. 11:8: “And their dead; bodies shall lie in the street of the great City, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” So all the inhabitants of heaven, all the saints from the beginning of the world, and the angels also, are called upon to rejoice over Babylon, because of God’s vengeance upon her, wherein he avenges them: they all of them had in effect been injured and persecuted by antichrist. Indeed they are not called upon to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but in seeing justice executed, and in seeing the love and tenderness of God towards them, manifested in his severity towards their enemies.

SECTION I

When the saints in glory shall see the wrath of God executed on ungodly men, it will be no occasion of grief to them, but of rejoicing.

It is not only the sight of God's wrath executed on those wicked men who are of the antichristian church, which will be occasion of rejoicing to the saints in glory; but also the sight of the destruction of all God's enemies: whether they have been the followers of antichrist or not, that alters not the case, if they have been the enemies of God, and of Jesus Christ. All wicked men will at last be destroyed together, as being united in the same cause and interest, as being all of Satan's army. They will all stand together at the day of judgment, as being all of the same company.

And if we understand the text to have respect only to a temporal execution of God's wrath on his enemies, that will not alter the case. The thing they are called upon to rejoice at, is the execution of God's wrath upon his and their enemies. And if it be matter of rejoicing to them to see justice executed in part upon them, or to see the beginning of the execution of it in this world; for the same reason will they rejoice with greater joy, in beholding it fully executed. For the thing here mentioned as the foundation of their joy, is the execution of just vengeance: Rejoice, for God hath avenged you on her.

Prop. I. The glorified saints will see the wrath of God executed upon ungodly men. This the Scriptures plainly teach us, that the righteous and the wicked in the other world see each other's state. Thus the rich man in hell, and Lazarus and Abraham in heaven, are represented as seeing each other's opposite states, in the 16th chap. of Luke. The wicked in their misery will see the saints in the kingdom of heaven. Luke 13:28, 29, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

So the saints in glory will see the misery of the wicked under the wrath of God. Isa. 64:24, "And they shall go forth and look on the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." And Rev. 14:9, 10, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." The saints are not here mentioned, being included in Christ, as his members. The church is the fullness of Christ, and is called Christ, I Cor. 12:12+ So in the 19th chapter, ver. 2, 3, the smoke of Babylon's torment is represented as rising up forever and ever, in the sight of the heavenly inhabitants.

At the day of judgment, the saints in glory at Christ's right hand, will see the wicked at the left hand in their amazement and horror, will hear the judge pronounce sentence upon them, saying, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" and will see them go away into everlasting punishment. But the Scripture seems to hold forth to us, that the saints will not only see the misery of the wicked at the day of judgment, but the fore-mentioned texts imply, that the state of the damned

in hell will be in the view of the heavenly inhabitants; that the two worlds of happiness and misery will be in view of each other. Though we know not by what means, nor after what manner, it will be; yet the Scriptures certainly lead us to think, that they will some way or other have a direct and immediate apprehension of each other's state. The saints in glory will see how the damned are tormented; they will see God's threatenings fulfilled, and his wrath executed upon them.

Prop. II. When they shall see it, it will be no occasion of grief to them. The miseries of the damned in hell will be inconceivably great. When they shall come to bear the wrath of the Almighty poured out upon them without mixture, and executed upon them without pity or restraint, or any mitigation; it will doubtless cause anguish, and horror, and amazement vastly beyond all the sufferings and torments that ever any man endured in this world; yea, beyond all extent of our words or thoughts. For God in executing wrath upon ungodly men will act like an Almighty God. The Scripture calls this wrath, God's and the fierceness of his wrath; and we are told that this is to show God's wrath, and to make his power known; or to make known how dreadful his wrath is, and how great his power.

The saints in glory will see this, and be far more sensible of it than now we can possibly be. They will be far more sensible how dreadful the wrath of God is, and will better understand how terrible the sufferings of the damned are; yet this will be no occasion of grief to them. They will not be sorry for the damned; it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them; but on the contrary, when they have this sight, it will excite them to joyful praises. These two things are evidences of it:

1. That the seeing of the wrath of God executed upon the damned, should cause grief in the saints in glory, is inconsistent with that state of perfect happiness in which they are. There can no such thing as grief enter, to be an alloy to the happiness and joy of that world of blessedness. Grief is an utter stranger in that world. God hath promised that he will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow. Rev. 20:4, and chap. 7:17.

2. The saints in heaven possess all things as their own, and therefore all things contribute to their joy and happiness. The Scriptures teach that the saints in glory inherit all things. This God said in John's hearing, when he had the vision of the New Jerusalem, Rev. 21:7. And the Scriptures teach us to understand this absolutely of all the works of creation and providence. 1, Cor. 3:21, 22, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours. Here the apostle teaches, that all things in the world to come, or in the future and eternal world, are the saints; not only life, but death; men, and angels, and devils, heaven and hell, are theirs, to contribute to their joy and happiness. Therefore the damned and their misery, their sufferings and the wrath of God poured out upon them, will be an occasion of joy to them. If there were any thing whatsoever that did not contribute to their joy, but caused grief, then there would be something which would not be theirs.

That the torments of the damned are no matter of grief, but of joy, to the inhabitants of heaven, is very clearly expressed in several passages of this book of Revelation; particularly by chap. 16:57, and chap. 19 at the beginning.

SECTION II

Why the sufferings of the wicked will not be cause of grief to the righteous, but the contrary.

1. Negatively; it will not be because the saints in heaven are the subjects of any ill disposition; but on the contrary, this rejoicing of theirs will be the fruit of an amiable and excellent disposition: it will be the fruit of a perfect holiness and conformity to Christ, the holy Lamb of God. The devil delights in the misery of men from cruelty, and from envy and revenge, and because he delights in misery, for its own sake, from a malicious disposition.

It will be from exceedingly different principles, and for quite other reasons, that the just damnation of the wicked will be an occasion of rejoicing to the saints in glory. It will not be because they delight in seeing the misery of others absolutely considered. The damned suffering divine vengeance will be no occasion of joy to the saints merely as it is the misery of others, or because it is pleasant to them to behold the misery of others merely for its own sake. The rejoicing of the saints on this occasion is no argument, that they are not of a most amiable and excellent spirit, or that there is any defect on that account, that there is any thing wanting, which would render them of a more amiable disposition. It is no argument that they have not a spirit of goodness and love reigning in them in absolute perfection, or that herein they do not excel the greatest instances of it on earth, as much as the stars are higher than the earth, or the sun brighter than a glow-worm.

And whereas the heavenly inhabitants are in the text called upon to rejoice over Babylon, because God had avenged them on her; it is not to be understood that they are to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but to rejoice, in seeing the justice of God executed, and in seeing his love to them in executing it on his enemies.

2. Positively; the sufferings of the damned will be no occasion of grief to the heavenly inhabitants, as they will have no love nor pity to the damned as such. It will be no argument of want of a spirit of love in them, that they do not love the damned; for the heavenly inhabitants will know that it is not fit that they should love them, because they will know then, that God has no love to them, nor pity for them; but that they are the objects of God's eternal hatred. And they will then be perfectly conformed to God in their wills and affections. They will love what God loves, and that only. However the saints in heaven may have loved the damned while here, especially those of them who were near and dear to them in this world, they will have no love to them hereafter.

It will be an occasion of their rejoicing, as the glory of God will appear in it. The glory of God appears in all his works: and therefore there is no work of God which the saints in glory shall behold and contemplate but what will be an occasion of rejoicing to them. God glorifies himself in the eternal damnation of the ungodly men. God glorifies himself in all that he doth; but he glorifies himself principally in, his eternal disposal of his intelligent creatures, some are appointed to everlasting life, and others left to everlasting death.

The saints in heaven will be perfect in their love to God: their hearts will be all a flame of love to God, and therefore they will greatly value the glory of God, and will

exceedingly delight in seeing him glorified. The saints highly value the glory of God here in this, but how much more will they so do in the world to come. They will therefore greatly rejoice in all that contributes to that glory. The glory of God will in their esteem be of greater consequence, than the welfare of thousands and millions of souls. Particularly,

(1.) They will rejoice in seeing the justice of God glorified in the sufferings of the damned. The misery of the damned, dreadful as it is, is but what justice requires. They in heaven will see and know it much more clearly, than any of us do here. They will see how perfectly just and righteous their punishment is, and therefore how properly inflicted by the supreme Governor of the world. They will greatly rejoice to see justice take place, to see that all the sin and wickedness that have been committed in the world is remembered of God, and has its due punishment. The sight of this strict and immutable justice of God will render him amiable and adorable in their eyes. They will rejoice when they see him who is their Father and eternal portion so glorious in his justice.

Then there will be no remaining difficulties about the justice of God, about the absolute decrees of God, or any thing pertaining to the dispensations of God towards men. But divine justice in the destruction of the wicked will then appear as light without darkness, and will shine as the sun without clouds, and on this account will they sing joyful songs of praise to God, as we see the saints and angels do, when God pours the vials of his wrath upon antichrist; Rev. 16:57 They sing joyfully to God on this account, that true and righteous are his judgments, Rev. 19:16. They seeing God so strictly just will make them value his love the more. Mercy and grace are more valuable on this account. The more they shall see of the justice of God the more will they prize and rejoice in his love.

(2.) They will rejoice in it, as it will be a glorious manifestation of the power and majesty of God. God will show his own greatness in executing vengeance on ungodly men. This is mentioned as one end of the destruction the ungodly: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" God will hereby show how much he is above his enemies. There are many now in the world, who proudly lift up themselves against God. There are many open opposers of the cause and interest of Christ. "They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth." Then God will show his glorious power in destroying these enemies.

The power of God is sometimes spoken of as very glorious, as appearing in the temporal destruction of his enemies: Exod. 15:6, "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." But how much more glorious will it appear in his triumphing over, and dashing in pieces at once, all his enemies, wicked men and devils together, all his haughty foes! The power of God will gloriously appear in dashing to pieces his enemies as a potter's vessel. Moses rejoiced and sang when he saw God glorify his power in the destruction of Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea. But how much more will the saints in glory rejoice when they shall see God gloriously triumphing over all his enemies in their eternal ruin! Then it will appear how dreadful God is, and how dreadful a thing it is to disobey and condemn him. It is often mentioned as a part of the glory of God, that he is a terrible

God. To see the majesty, and greatness, and terribleness of God, appearing in the destruction of his enemies, will cause the saints to rejoice; and when they shall see how great and terrible a being God is, how will they prize his favour! How will they rejoice that they are the objects of his love! How will they praise him the more joyfully, that he should choose them to be his children, and to live in the enjoyment of him!

It will occasion rejoicing in them, as they will have the greater sense their own happiness, by seeing the contrary misery. It is the nature of pleasure and pain, of happiness and misery, greatly to heighten the sense of each other. Thus the seeing of the happiness of others tends to make men more sensible of their own calamities; and the seeing of the calamities of others tends to heighten the sense of our own enjoyments.

When the saints in glory, therefore, shall see the doleful state of the damned, how will this heighten their sense of the blessedness of their own state, so exceedingly different from it! When they shall see how miserable others of their fellow-creatures are, who were naturally in the same circumstances with themselves; when they shall see the smoke of their torment, and the raging of the flames of their burning, and hear their dolorous shrieks and cries, and consider that they in the mean time are in the most blissful state, and shall surely be in it to all eternity; how will they rejoice!

This will give them a joyful sense of the grace and love of God to them; because hereby they will see how great a benefit they have by it. When they, shall see the dreadful miseries of the damned, and consider that they deserved, the same misery, and that it was sovereign grace, and nothing else, which made them so much to differ from the damned, that, if it had not been for that, they would have been in the same condition; but that God from all eternity was pleased to set his love upon them, that Christ hath laid down his life for them, and hath made them thus gloriously happy forever, O how will they admire that dying love of Christ, which has redeemed them from so great a misery, and purchased for them so great happiness, and has so distinguished them from others of their fellow-creatures! How joyfully will they sing to God and the Lamb, when they behold this!

SECTION III

An objection answered.

The objection is, "If we are apprehensive of the damnation of others now, it in no wise becomes us to rejoice at it, but to lament it. If we see others in imminent danger of going to hell, it is accounted a very sorrowful thing, and it is looked upon as an argument of a senseless and wicked spirit, to look upon it otherwise. When it is a very dead time with respect to religion, and a very degenerate and corrupt time among a people, it is accounted a thing greatly to be lamented; and on this account, that at such times there are but few converted and saved, and many perish. Paul tells us, that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, because so many of the Jews were in a perishing state: Rom. 9:1, 2, 3, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience so bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." And if a neighbour die, and his death be attended with circumstances which look darkly as to the state of his soul, we account it a

sorrowful thing, because he has left us no more comfortable grounds to hope for his salvation.

Why is it not then an unbecoming thing in the saints in glory to rejoice when they see the damnation of the ungodly?

Answer 1. It is now our duty to love all men, though they are wicked; but it will not be a duty to love wicked men hereafter. Christ, by many precepts in his word, hath made it our duty to love all men. We are commanded to love wicked men, and our enemies and persecutors. But this command doth not extend to the saints in glory, with respect to the damned in hell. Nor is there the same reason that it should. We ought now to love all, and even wicked men; we know not but that God loves them. However wicked any man is, yet we know not but that he is one whom God loved from eternity, we know not but that Christ loved him with a dying love, had his name upon his heart before the world was, and had respect to him when he endured those bitter agonies on the cross. We know not but that he is to be our companion in glory to all eternity.

But this is not the case in another world. The saints in glory will know, concerning the damned in hell, that God never loved them, but that he hates them, and will be forever hated of God. This hatred of God will be fully declared to them; they will see it, and will see the fruits of it in their misery. Therefore, when God has thus declared his hatred of the damned, and the saints see it, it will be no way becoming in the saints to love them, nor to mourn over them. It becomes the saints fully and perfectly to consent to what God doth, without any reluctance or opposition of spirit; yea, it becomes them to rejoice in every thing that God sees meet to be done.

Answer 2. We ought now to seek and be concerned for the salvation of wicked men, because now they are capable subjects of it. Wicked men, though they may be very wicked, yet are capable subjects of mercy. It is yet a day of grace with them, and they have the offers of salvation. Christ is as yet seeking their salvation; he is calling upon them, inviting and wooing them, he stands at the door and knocks. He is using many means with them, is calling them, saying, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? The day of his patience is yet continued to them; and if Christ is seeking their salvation, surely we ought to seek it.

God is wont now to make men the means of one another's salvation; yea, it is his ordinary way so to do. He makes the concern and endeavours of his people the means of bringing home many to Christ. Therefore they ought to be concerned for and endeavour it. But it will not be so in another world; there wicked men will be no longer capable subjects of mercy. The saints will know, that it is the will of God the wicked should be miserable to all eternity. It will therefore cease to be their duty any more to seek their salvation, or to be concerned about their misery. On the other hand, it will be their duty to rejoice in the will and glory of God. It is not our duty to be sorry that God hath executed just vengeance on the devils, concerning whom the will of God in their eternal state is already known to us.

Answer 3. Rejoicing at the calamities of others now, rests not on the same grounds as that of the saints in glory. The evil of rejoicing at others' calamity now, consists in our envy, or revenge, or some such disposition is gratified therein: and not that God is glorified, that the majesty and justice of God gloriously shine forth.

Answer 4. The different circumstances of our nature now, from what will be hereafter, make that a virtue now which will be no virtue then. For instance, if a man be of a virtuous disposition, the circumstances of our nature now are such, that it will necessarily, show itself by natural affection, and to be without natural affection is a very vicious disposition; and is so mentioned in Rom. 1:31. But natural affection is no virtue in the saints in glory. Their virtue will exercise itself in a higher manner.

Answer 5. The vengeance inflicted on many of the wicked will be a manifestation of God's love to the saints. One way whereby God shows his love to the saints, is by destroying their enemies. God hath said, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." And it is often mentioned in Scripture, as instance of the great love of God to his people, that his wrath is so awakened, when they are wronged and injured. Thus Christ hath promised that God will avenge his own elect, Luke 18:7, and hath said, that "if any man offend one of his little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea," Matt. 18:6.

So the saints in glory will see the great love of God to them, in the dreadful vengeance which he shall inflict on those who have injured and persecuted them; and the view of this love of God to them will be just cause of their rejoicing. Thus, in the text, heaven and the holy apostles and prophets are called to rejoice over their enemies, because God hath avenged them of them.

SECTION IV

The ungodly warned.

I shall apply this subject only in one use, viz., of warning to ungodly men. And in order to this, I desire such to consider,

1. How destitute of any comforting consideration your condition will be, if you perish at last. You will have none to pity you. Look which way you will, before or behind, on the right hand or left, look up to heaven, or look about you in hell, and you will see none to condole your case, or to exercise any pity towards you, in your dreadful condition. You must bear these flames, you must bear that torment and amazement, day and night, forever, and never have the comfort of considering, that there is so much as one that pities your case; there never will one tear be dropped for you.

(1.) You have now been taught that you will have no pity from the created inhabitants of heaven. If you shall look to them, you will see them all rejoicing at the sight of the glory of God's justice, power, and terrible majesty, manifested in your torment. You will see them in a blissful and glorious state: you will see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God; you will see many come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sit down in that glorious kingdom; and, will see them all with one voice, and with united joy, praising God for glorifying himself in your destruction. You will wail and gnash your teeth under your own torments, and with envy of their happiness; but they will rejoice and sing: Isa. 65:13, 14, "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."

(2.) God will exercise no pity towards you. If you might have his pity in any degree, that would be of more worth to you than thousands of worlds. That would make your case to be not without comfort and hope. But God will exercise no pity towards you. He hath often said concerning wicked men, that his eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity, Ezek. 5:11, and 7:4, 9, and 8:18. He will cast upon you, and not spare; you will see nothing in God, and receive nothing from him, but perfect hatred, and the fierceness of his wrath; nothing but the mighty falls or outpourings of wrath upon you every moment; and no cries will avail to move God to any pity, or in the least to move him to lighten his hand, or assuage the fierceness and abate the power of your torments.

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, will have no pity on you. Though he had so much love to sinners, as to be willing to lay down his life for them, and offers you the benefits of his blood, while you are in this world, and often calls upon you to accept them; yet then he will have no pity upon you. You never will hear any more instructions from him; he will utterly refuse to be your instructor: on the contrary, he will be your judge, to pronounce sentence against you.

3. You will find none that will pity you in hell. The devils will not pity you, but will be your tormentors, as roaring lions or hellhounds to tear you in pieces continually. And other wicked men who shall be there will be like devils; they will have no pity on you, but will hate, and curse, and torment you. And you yourselves will be like devils; you will be like devils to yourselves, and will be your own tormentors.

2. Consider what an aggravation what you have heard under this doctrine will be to your misery. Consider how it will be at the day of judgment, when you shall see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, when you shall begin to wail and cry, as knowing that you are those who are to be condemned; and perhaps you will be ready to fly to some of your godly friends; but you will obtain no help from them: you will see them unconcerned for you, with joyful countenances ascending to meet the Lord, and not the less joyful for the horror in which they see you. And when you shall stand before the tribunal at the left hand, among devils, trembling and astonished, and shall have the dreadful sentence passed upon you, you will at the same time see the blessed company of saints and angels at the right hand rejoicing, and shall hear them shout forth the praises of God, while they hear your sentence pronounced. You will then see those godly people, with whom you shall have been acquainted, and who shall have been your neighbours, and with whom you now often converse, rejoicing at the pronounciation and execution of your sentence.

Perhaps there are now some godly people, to whom you are near and dear, who are tenderly concerned for you, are ready to pity you under all calamities, and willing to help you; and particularly are tenderly concerned for your poor soul, and have put up many fervent prayers for you. How will you bear to hear these singing for joy of heart, while you are crying for sorrow of heart and howling for vexation of spirit, and even singing the more joyful for the glorious justice of God which they behold in your eternal condemnation!

You that have godly parents, who in this world have tenderly loved you, who were wont to look upon your welfare as their own, and were wont to be grieved for you when any thing calamitous befell you in this world, and especially were greatly

concerned for the good of your souls, industriously sought, and earnestly prayed for their salvation; how will you bear to see them in the kingdom of God, crowned with glory? Or how will you bear to see them receiving the blessed sentence, and going up with shouts and songs, to enter with Christ into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, while you are amongst a company of devils, and are turned away with the most bitter cries, to enter into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels? How will you bear to see your parents, who in this life had so dear an affection for you, now without any love to you, approving the sentence of condemnation, when Christ shall with indignation bid you depart, wretched, cursed creatures, into eternal burnings? How will you bear to see and hear them praising the Judge, for his justice exercised in pronouncing this sentence, and hearing it with holy joy in their countenances, and shouting forth the praises and hallelujahs of God and Christ on that account?

When they shall see what manifestations of amazement there will be in you, at the hearing of this dreadful sentence, and that every syllable of it pierces you like a thunderbolt, and sinks you into the lowest depths of horror and despair; when they shall behold you with a frightened, amazed countenance, trembling and astonished, and shall hear you groan and gnash your teeth; these things will not move them at all to pity you, but you will see them with a holy joyfulness in their countenances, and with songs in their mouths. When they shall see you turned away and beginning to enter into the great furnace, and shall see how you shrink at it, and hear how you shriek and cry out; yet they will not be at all grieved for you, but at the same time you will hear from them renewed praises and hallelujahs for the true and righteous judgments of God, in so dealing with you.

Then you will doubtless remember how those your glorified parents seemed to be concerned for your salvation, while you were here in this world; you will remember how they were wont to counsel and warn you, and how little you regarded their counsels, and how they seemed to be concerned and grieved, that there appeared no more effect of their endeavours for the good of your souls. You will then see them praising God for executing just vengeance on you, for setting so light by their counsels and reproofs. However here they loved you, and were concerned for you, now they will rise up in judgment against you, and will declare how your sins are aggravated by the endeavours which they to no purpose used with you, to bring you to forsake sin and practice virtue, and to seek and serve God; but you were obstinate under all, and would not hearken to them. They will declare how inexcusable you are upon this account. And the Judge shall execute the more terrible wrath upon you on this account, that you have made no better improvement of your parents' instructions, they will joyfully praise God for it. After they shall have seen you lie in hell thousands of years, and your torment shall yet continue without any rest, day or night; they will not begin to pity you then; they will praise God, that his justice appears in the eternity of your misery.

You that have godly husbands, or wives, or brethren, or sisters, with whom you have been wont to dwell under the same roof, and to eat at the same table, consider how it will be with you, when you shall come to part with them, when they shall be taken and you left: Luke 17:34, 35, 36, "I tell you, in that night, there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together

the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left.” However you may wail and lament, when you see them parted from you, they being taken and you left, you will see in them no signs of sorrow, that you are not taken with them; that you ascend not with them to meet the Lord in the air, but are left below to be consumed with the world, which is reserved unto fire, against the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

Those wicked men, who shall go to hell from under the labours of pious and faithful ministers, will see those ministers rejoicing and praising God upon the occasion of their destruction. Consider, ye that have long lived under Mr. Stoddard’s ministry, and are yet in a natural condition, how dreadful it will be to you to see him who was so tenderly concerned for the good of your souls while he was here, and so earnestly sought your salvation, to see him rising up in judgment against you, declaring your inexcusableness, declaring how often he warned you; how plainly he set your danger before you, and told you of the opportunity that you had; how fully he set forth the miserable condition in which you were, and the necessity there was that you should obtain an interest in Christ; how movingly and earnestly he exhorted you to get into a better state, and how regardless you were; how little you minded all that he said to you; how you went on still in your trespasses, hardened your necks, and made your hearts as an adamant, and refused to return! How dreadful will it be to you to hear him declaring how inexcusable you are upon these accounts! How will you be cut to the heart, when you shall see him approving the sentence of condemnation, which the Judge shall pronounce against you, and judging and sentencing you with Christ, as an assessor in judgment; for the saints shall judge the world (1 Cor. 6:2); and when you shall see him rejoicing in the execution of justice upon you for all your unprofitableness under his ministry!

3. Consider what a happy opportunity you have in your hands now. Now your case is very different from the case of wicked men in another world, of which you have now heard; and particularly in the following respects.

(1.) God makes it the duty of all the godly now to be concerned for your salvation. As to those who are damned in hell, the saints in glory are not concerned for their welfare, and have no love nor pity towards them; and if you perish hereafter, it will be an occasion of joy to all the godly. But now God makes it the duty of all the godly, to love you with a sincere good-will and earnest affection. God doth not excuse men from loving you, nor your ill qualities: though you are wicked and undeserving, yet God makes it the duty of all sincerely to wish well to you; and it is a heinous sin in the sight of God for any to hate you. He requires all to be concerned for your salvation, and by all means to seek it. It is their duty now to lament your danger, and to pray for mercy to you, that you may be converted and brought home to Christ.

Now the godly who know you, desire your salvation, and are ready to seek, and pray for it. If you be now in distress about the condition of your souls, you are not in such a forsaken, helpless condition, as those that are damned; but you may find many to pray for you, many who are willing to assist you by their advice and counsels, and all with a tender concern, and with hearty wishes that your souls may prosper. Now some of you have godly friends who are near and dear to you; you are beloved of those who have a great interest in heaven, and who have power with God by their prayer’s: you have the

blessing of living under the same roof with them. Some of you have godly parents to pray for you, and to counsel and instruct you, who you may be sure will do it with sincere love and concern for you. And there is not only the command of God, God hath not only made it the duty of others to seek your salvation, but hath given encouragement to others to seek it. He gives encouragement that they may obtain help for you by their prayers, and that they may be instrumental of your spiritual good. God reveals it to be his manner, to make our sincere endeavours a mean of each other's good. How different is the case with you from what it is with those that are already damned! And how happy an opportunity have you in your hands, if you would but improve it!

(2.) Now you live where there is a certain order of men appointed to make it the business of their lives to seek your salvation. Now you have ministers, not to rise up in judgment against you; but in Christ's stead, to beseech you to be reconciled to God, 2 Cor. 5:20. God hath not only made it the duty of all to wish well to your souls, and occasionally to endeavour to promote your spiritual interests, but he hath set apart certain persons, to make it their whole work, in which they should spend their days and their strength.

(3.) Christ himself is now seeking your salvation. He seeks it by the fore-mentioned means, by appointing men to make it their business to seek it; he seeks it by them; they are his instruments, and they beseech you in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. He seeks it in commanding our neighbours to seek it. Christ is represented in Scripture, as wooing the souls of sinner's. He uses means to persuade them to choose and accept of their own salvation. He often invites them to come to him that they may have life, that they may find rest to their souls; to come and take of the water of life freely. He stands at the door and knocks; and ceases not, although sinners for a long time refuse him. He bears repeated repulses from them, and yet mercifully continues knocking, Saying, "Open to me, that I may come in and sup with you, and you with me." At the doors of many sinners he stands thus knocking for many years together. Christ is become a most importunate suitor to sinners, that he may become their sovereign. He is often setting before them the need they have of him, the miserable condition in which they are, and the great provision that is made for the good of their souls and he invites them to accept of this provision, and promises it shall be theirs upon their mere acceptance.

Thus how earnestly did Christ seek the salvation of Jerusalem, and he wept over it when they refused: Luke 19:41, 42, "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." And Matt. 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Thus Christ is now seeking your salvation; such an opportunity have you now in your hands. Consider therefore how many means Christ is using with you, to bring you to salvation.

Besides those things which have been now mentioned, some of you have a degree of the inward strivings and influences of the Spirit, which makes your opportunity much greater. You have Christ's internal calls and knockings. All the persons of the Trinity

are now seeking your salvation. God the Father hath sent his Son, who hath made way for your salvation, and removed all difficulties, except those which are with your own heart. And he is waiting to be gracious to you; the door of his mercy stands open to you; he hath set a fountain open for you to wash in from sin and uncleanness. Christ is calling, inviting, and wooing you; and the Holy Ghost is striving with you by his internal motions and influences.

4. If you now repent, before it be too late, the saints and angels in glory will rejoice at your repentance. If you repent not till it is too late, they will, as you have heard, rejoice in seeing justice executed upon you. But if you now repent, they will rejoice at your welfare, that you who were lost, are found; that you who were dead, are alive again. They will rejoice that you are come to so happy a state already, and that you are in due time to inherit eternal happiness, Luke 15:10. So that if now you will improve your opportunity, there will be a very different occasion of joy in heaven concerning you, than that of which the doctrine speaks; not a rejoicing on occasion of your misery, but on occasion of your unspeakable blessedness.

5. If you repent before it is too late, you yourselves shall be of that joyful company. They will be so far from rejoicing on occasion of your ruin, that you yourselves will be of that glorious company, who will rejoice in all the works of God, who will have all tears wiped away from their eyes, to whom there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, and from whom sorrow and sighing shall flee away. You yourselves will be of those who will rejoice at the glorious display of God's majesty and justice in his wrath on his enemies. You will be of those that shall sing for joy of heart at the day of judgment, while others mourn for sorrow of heart, and bowl for vexation of spirit; and you will enter into the joy of your Lord, and there shall never be any end or abatement of our joy.

8. WICKED MEN OF THE PAST ARE STILL IN HELL

Dated June, 1749.

“By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ...” - 1 Peter 3:19-20

Two things it is my present purpose to observe concerning the spirits or souls of those wicked men that Noah preached to...

1. How long ago they lived.
2. How those souls are here spoken [of] as to their present state, “spirits in prison.”

DOCTRINE

Those wicked men who lived before the flood, and went to Hell in Noah’s time, are there still.

1. I would give some reasons why they have remained in Hell so long.
2. Observe in some respects in what circumstances they remain there all this while.

I. Give some reasons.

Negatively

1. ‘Tis not because Hell has been tolerable to ‘em.
2. ‘Tis not because they ben’t convinced of their former folly...That they have not yet been brought to their right mind or to their judgment of things.
3. ‘Tis not because they are careless about their own welfare and ease, and not willing to be at any possible labours or cost in order to escape, if there were any hope of deliverance. Not because they don’t wish and long... not thoroughly overwhelmed... not because they ben’t in earnest... that they ben’t thoroughly engaged in their spirits... not yet disposed to own that the courses that they went on going weren’t good... not disposed to attend to any offer of mercy... because they begrudge... would be unwilling to lay out themselves... not because they are covetous... not willing to be shown...
4. ‘Tis not because they were weaker than the generality of men. Many of them were giants.
5. Not because there is not a great number of those who are disposed to unite their strength to burst prison.

Affirmatively

1. Their souls are immortal... made for eternity... of a nature agreeable to this design...

Though they desire it, they can’t return to nothing. “Seek death and can not find it.” Extreme torment, but no tendency to annihilate the soul... tendency to sink it, but not to reduce it to nothing. ‘Tis not with the soul as ‘tis with the body in its present mortal state... extreme oppression tends to destroy it.

2. They are not in a state of probation.
3. Their debt is what they can't pay...Great debt to Divine justice. Have not wherewith... Nothing to pay... Cast into prison till they should pay the last mite...
4. THERE IS NOT GOSPEL PREACHED IN HELL. Christ did not die for the damned... had no respect to that world... to those in this state... any more than to the devil. No means of grace Means of grace not accommodated to that state. No manner of provision made in any respect for their relief. No aid. Preaching of the Word don't reach them. The prayers of saints, of godly friends, don't reach them.
5. The place and state they are in was never designed for the exercise of mercy.

God is infinitely merciful; but the exercises of mercy are not for ever... Limited by Wisdom in various respects: has declared what the purposes of His wisdom are with respect to the exercises of His mercy. As to the kind of beings; fallen men and not angels... His declarations are according to truth... His purposes are not altered...

Hence no mercy in Hell... Though their pain is extreme... God don't pity 'em. Though their wishes for deliverance are great... though their cries are loud... though long continued... though it be exceeding intolerable.

6. By being longer in Hell, they have not become any more fit for any other state... don't make 'em better... although indeed their judgments are convinced, yet their hearts are the same. No change in their dispositions. There are no conversions in Hell. he wrath makes a great change indeed; but no saving change. The wicked in Noah's days were most of them very wicked on earth, yet, in some respects, they become worse when they went to Hell. Not fit for Heaven. Not fit to come and live in this world. Fit for no other place. hat is the place provided and fitted for such.

7. The prison is strong that holds them. Delivered up into the hands of Satan... against whom they have no strength. And his cruelty is as strong as his power. And what is much more than devils, God confines them... irreversible sentence binds them. Omniscience opposes them. No escape by subtlety unobserved. Often here, in this world, persons break prison by stealth... get away by night, when no one observes them... And God's Almighty power holds 'em down. And God ever lives. He is unchangeable. He never will alter His purpose... never will forget His own Son... never will forget His righteous sentence...

II. Observe, in several things, in what circumstances they have been in , all this so long a time.

1. They have not been in a state of insensibility. "The Rich man." Not less their sensibility by long-continued torment and misery... hence not been deprived of the use of reason.
2. Have had no time of respite all this while. No rest. Rev. 14:11 - "No rest day nor night." Both day and night are mentioned, because the night in this world is a time of rest. Have never been asleep... never find any resting-place. Never find out any

assuaging medicines... any cool shadows... cooling green... never found a drop of water... never found any expedient for mitigating their torment.

They have had much to goad 'em, in exercising their invention. Necessity is the mother of invention. But their inventions have not saved them... have had nothing to divert them.... no amusement to take off their attention....

3. Have not forgotten things that were so long ago, or when they were on earth. "Son, remember."... Will remember over all at the Day of Judgment. Have not forgotten pleasant circumstances they lived in... swam in delights... their lives were long... the wickedness they committed... the opportunities they had... the warnings... Noah's preaching... their folly... the thoughts they had concerning God and His testimony.

4. Their misery is not grown more tolerable by their being so long used to it.

5. The great additions that have been made to the numbers from their time has been no comfort to 'em.

6. They have had no hope all this while... have none now... though their torments have been so long continued.

This is verified concerning all that go down to the pit of Hell. (Isa. 38:17-19) - "They that go down to the pit can not hope for Thy truth."

USE

May be of warning: Let sinners in these days take warning. Those that now live in unbelief and impenitence are in danger of the same.

1. Let me call upon [you] seriously to consider how long a time those who have been spoken of have already worn out [themselves] in Hell: they have been there 4000 years. How many ages? How many and great changes, and successions, and transactions? How many generations have passed? How many successions of those who had come into being, gradually grown up, and grown old, and then died?

Not only have many generations gradually come upon the stage and have died; but many great and populous nations have come into being, and have flourished, and made a great figure in the world for many ages, and then by degrees have dwindled and wasted, swallowed up by other nations and come to nothing, and nothing of them now know but by history. And some of them very ancient and powerful, so that even the very history of them is almost come to nothing and vanished; and all since they have been suffering the flames of Hell, without any cessation or rest. The world has been peopled... subdued... many mighty princes have appeared and made a good bustle, and none... whose memory is now almost forgotten... Very great and magnificent cities... and not 'tis hardly to be known where they stood. Many kingdoms, yea, many great monarchies.. Those four monarchies of the world. How many things have worn out! The strongest fortunes.... strongest empires... most durable monuments.... pillars of brass... monuments of marble stone... Languages used as the common speech of large countries. Such things have gradually perished, and length of time worn 'em out; but

yet the torments of the “spirits in prison” yet remains... not come to nothing... are as fresh and lively and in as great vigour as the first moment.

The souls who are the subjects of these miseries were sinners, and their miseries immortal. Since they have been in Hell there has been a long series of wonderful dispensations of God towards His Church and the whole world. After the flood, the nations degenerated... fell off to idolatry... Abraham was ‘called’... children of Jacob became a great nation... Christ was foretold of old, from time to time.. anciently prefigured... and in the fullness of time Christ actually came into the world... all these ancient prophecies and ancient types were fulfilled... the Jews, God’s ancient people, rejected... Gentiles called... prophecies were given... a mighty change made in the Roman kingdom... Antichrist arose... reigned for long time... but at length the Reformation came... During all those mighty changes on earth those souls spoken of in the doctrine, continued without ease day or night or one minute’s respite, wrestling with the mighty torments of Hell; and so they continue still... torment not abated. These great and mighty changes on earth have not affected them to cause any change there. There have been many good times on earth: days of great good; but...

2. How we may suppose the things which they remember of their past lives now affects them... their worldly enjoyments... the length of the time of their past ease and pleasures... they lived long lives... their past opportunities... their long warnings... the preaching they had... their folly and stupidity... obstinacy...

3. How many since have followed their steps and have gone to Hell in like manner. ‘Tis not the manner of men to take warning by those that perish before them... Those that are gone before can see the folly of those that come after, whom it will do no good. The rich man in Hell. Those that went to Hell in Noah’s day, see the folly of those that come to ‘em from generation to generation. But those that follow after don’t see the folly of those who went before, and so they follow them...

4. They that have worn out so many ages in Hell, are never the nearer any end of their misery. The time is very long that they have suffered.... many tedious days... tedious years... and tedious ages one after another... They must wear out another space of time as long as this in Hell flames, and another after that... Soon the time will come when they will actually have worn out a million such as... yea, a million and millions... God foresees the time... knows the particular passage of the day. Yea, as many such ages as there are particles of dust on the globe of the earth... And even then NO MERCY. It will be without end. FOR EVER, YEA, FOREVER. Therefore take warning. If you neglect to take warning you will go to Hell... and the time will come when you will have been as long as they now have been... and you must also be there millions of millions... and you will be your wishes, and cries, and strength, and entreaties will be in vain. You in like manner will reflect on and curse your folly.

5. The torment that those spoken of in the doctrine have endured for so long a time, is but an imprisonment in order to execution. “Spirits *in prison*.” “Chains of darkness.” There is another day. Their misery is great now. We learn by the parable of Dives and Lazarus... I know nothing by which it can be determined that the misery will not be a thousand times as great... They ‘tremble.’ The chains are strong. There is not hope... no relief to them.

6. The means and opportunities they enjoyed were nothing to yours. Little revelation of a future state.

7. God has an appointed time to wait on you. 'The Spirit will not always strive.'

8. Consider the sudden, unexpected manner in which they were destroyed (Luke 17:26, 27)... You will probably be surprised as they were. They had as much reason to flatter themselves as you, (Job 27:20). "A tempest stealeth him away in the night."

DIRECTIONS

1. Avoid those things by which the men that went to Hell in Noah's time undid themselves... particularly sensuality, (Gen. 6; Luke 17:27)... So it was with Sodom. Violence. "Evil imagination." They would not hearken. They grew hardened to long-continued calls and warnings... habitually made light. Is their not reason to apprehend that this is the case with many here? You must reform your life... thorough reformation...

2. You must in this respect be as Noah was in the generation of those souls that are "castaways;" particularly

1. You must avoid those liberties of young people that are customary.

2. Another thing that is apparently become customary, and doubtless is very provoking to God, is pride and extravagance in apparel. Not that I condemn all adorning the body. 'Tis evident by Scripture that some moderate degree of this is lawful. Oil that makes his face to shine, (Ecc. 9:8; Mat. 6:17; Pro. 31:21, 22; Exo. 3:22). But ye 'tis apparent that there is a most sinful extravagance in this kind, (1 Tim. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:3, 4; Isa. 3:16, 18 etc.). Appears to be very provoking to God... when persons go beyond their rank. One end of apparel seems to be to distinguish. (Pro. 31:22, 23). Common people to show an affectation to be like those of high rank; country towns to affect to be like the metropolis. When they go beyond their estate, disable themselves from paying their debts; deprive themselves of other things more necessary and more profitable; disable themselves much from deeds of charity. An affection to distinguish themselves in imitating the fashions of the more gay part of the world. Complying with the general customs of a country in clothing is not vulgar. On the contrary, 'tis not decent to be singular. But some fashions in themselves are ill... extravagance... very costly... immodest...

All this care, and pains, and cost to adorn themselves shows persons to much affect outward ornament... seem to show that they make much of themselves... all that which tends to encourage a general excess. Such things as these have been condemned by wise men of all nations.

'Tis a time when the nations here have got to a vast excess. The land is become exceeding extravagant. More so than in England in proportion to our ability and ranks. Prevents great good that might be done... is continually running in debt. The main thing that brings our greatest national calamities.. particularly the present state the country is in with regard to a medium. ^{*2*} And is the main source of that general injustice that has been so long complained of... keeps the country in constant distress...

maintains constant injustice... threatens us with ruin... We in this town ^{*3*} are evidently got to a great excess. Boston is extravagant beyond London. And we, considering all things, I think beyond them... how far below we fall short in rank... state... education and our situation in the world... far beyond them.

I had occasion to observe the people at Portsmouth, in both the congregations in that place. That is a place very much famed for politeness, and is a city much like Boston in many respects. I judged the apparel of our congregation was fully as costly. Many things that might make it proper for them to go beyond us.

Such excess in gaiety and coastlines of apparel is a manifestation of great vanity of mind. It seems to show a great senselessness of our own vileness... becomes us to go modestly... modest apparel would better become such sinful creatures. Do not consider the end for which clothing was given... to hide our shame... that deformity that is the first of sin... senselessness of what our bodies are coming to... shows vanity of mind, as it shows the heart to be set on that which is exceeding vain and empty... great want of a sense of the worth of those spiritual ornaments that are infinitely more valuable.

If persons had a proper concern for their soul, there surely would not appear very much affectation to...

If religion should greatly revive it would undoubtedly make a great alteration.

This is one thing, among others, that tends to prevent its reviving.

God has of late awfully testified His displeasure for the extravagance of the country's manner of living.

3. You must not only seek, but strive. You must make it a business... main business... thorough... How plain the necessity of it! How often the Word of God! How plain by experience! On many accounts necessary... How much you have had to convince you of the necessity! And are you, after all, in any sense awake? And how can you excuse this folly?

4. Be seasonable.

The sinners of the old world perished by the Flood because they were not seasonable. They doubtless, many of them, used means afterwards. Had need to make haste... So we are directed from time to time. "Haste"... "escape for thy LIFE." On many accounts necessary. How many have we reason to think perish through delay!

5. Not only engage in but go through that great work that is necessary in order to your escaping eternal damnation.

Do in this respect as Noah did for the saving himself and his house from the Flood.

6. Don't waste time in halting between two opinions.

How there seem to be some things that give special encouragement.

Isa. 55:6, 7.

9. THE PORTION OF THE WICKED

Dated November, 1735.

“But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.” Romans 2:8-9

Subject: Indignation, wrath, and misery and anguish of soul is the portion that God has allotted to wicked men.

It is the drift of the apostle in the three first chapters of this epistle, to show that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin, and therefore can not be justified by works of law, but only by faith in Christ. In the first chapter he had shown that the Gentiles were under sin. In this he shows that the Jews also are under sin, and that however severe they were in their censures upon the Gentiles, yet they themselves did the same things, for which the apostle very much blames them. “Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same things.” And he warns them not to go on in such a way, by forewarning them of the misery to which they will expose themselves by it, and by giving them to understand, that instead of their misery being less than that of the Gentiles, it would be the greater, for God’s distinguishing goodness to them above the Gentiles. The Jews thought that they should be exempted from future wrath because God had chosen them to be his peculiar people. But the apostle informs them that there should be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man, not only to the Gentiles, but to every soul and to the Jews first and chiefly, when they did evil, because their sins were more aggravated.

In the text we find,

I. A description of wicked men, in which may be observed those qualifications of wicked men which have the nature of a cause, and those which have the nature of an effect.

Those qualifications of wicked men here mentioned that have the nature of a cause, are their being *contentious*, and *not obeying the truth*, but *obeying unrighteousness*. By their being contentious, is meant their being contentious against the truth, their quarrelling with the gospel, their finding fault with its declarations and offers. Unbelievers find many things in the ways of God at which they stumble, and by which they are offended. They are always quarrelling and finding fault with one thing or another, whereby they are kept from believing the truth and yielding to it. Christ is to them a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence. They do not obey the truth, that is, they do not yield to it, they do not receive it with faith. That yielding to the truth and embracing it, which there is in saving faith, is called *obeying*, in Scripture. Rom. 6:17, “But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” Heb. 5:9, “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” Rom. 1:5, “By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name.” But they obey unrighteousness instead of yielding to

the gospel, they are under the power and dominion of sin, and are slaves to their lusts and corruptions.

It is in those qualifications of wicked men that their wickedness radically consists. Their unbelief and opposition to the truth, and their slavish subjection to lust, are the foundation of all wickedness.

Those qualifications of wicked men, which have the nature of an effect, are their doing evil. This is the least of their opposition against the gospel, and of their slavish subjection to their lusts, that they do evil. Those wicked principles are the foundation, and their wicked practice is the superstructure. Those were the root, and this is the fruit.

II. The punishment of wicked men, in which may be also noticed the cause and the effect.

Those things mentioned in their punishment that have the nature of a cause, are *indignation* and *wrath*; *i.e.* the indignation and wrath of God. It is the anger of God that will render wicked men miserable. They will be the subjects of divine wrath, and hence will arise their whole punishment.

Those things in their punishment that have the nature of an effect, are *tribulation* and *anguish*. Indignation and wrath in God, will work extreme sorrow, trouble, and anguish of heart, in them.

Doctrine. Indignation, wrath, misery, and anguish of soul, are the portion that God has allotted to wicked men.

Everyone of mankind must have the portion that belongs to him. God allots to each one his portion. And the portion of the wicked is nothing but wrath, and distress, and anguish of soul. Though they may enjoy a few empty and vain pleasures and delights, for a few days while they stay in this world, yet that which is allotted to them by the Possessor and Governor of all things to be their portion, is only indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. This is not the portion that wicked men choose. The portion that they choose is worldly happiness, yet it is the portion that God carves out for them. It is the portion that they in effect choose for themselves. For they choose those things that naturally and necessarily lead to it, and those that they are plainly told, times without number, will issue in it. Pro. 8:36, "But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death." But whether they choose it or not, this will and must be the portion to all eternity of all who live and die wicked men. Indignation and wrath shall pursue them as long as they live in this world, shall drive them out of the world, and shall follow them into another world. And there wrath and misery shall abide upon them throughout eternity.

The method that I shall take in treating this subject, is to describe the wrath and misery of which wicked men shall be the subjects, both here and hereafter, in the successive parts and periods of it, according to the order of time.

I. I shall describe the wrath that often pursues wicked men in this life. Indignation and wrath often being with them here.

First, God oftentimes in wrath leaves them to themselves. They are left in their sins, and left to undo themselves, and work out their own ruin. He lets them alone in sin. Hos. 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone." He often leaves them to go great lengths in sin, and does not afford them that restraining grace that he does to others. He leaves them to their own blindness, so that they always remain ignorant of God and Christ, and of the things that belong to their peace. They are sometimes left to hardness of heart, to be stupid and senseless, so that nothing will ever thoroughly awaken them. They are left to their own hearts' lusts, to continue in some wicked practices all their days. Some are left to their covetousness, some to drunkenness, some to uncleanness, some to a proud, contentious, and envious spirit, and some to a spirit of finding fault and quarrelling with God. God leaves them to their folly, to act exceedingly foolishly, to delay and put off the concerns of their souls from time to time, never to think the present time the best, but always to keep it at a distance, and foolishly to continue flattering themselves with hopes of long life, and to put far away the evil day, and to bless themselves in their hearts, and say, "I shall have peace, though I add drunkenness to thirst." Some are so left that they are miserably hardened and senseless, when others all around them are awakened, and greatly concerned, and inquire what they shall do to be saved.

Sometimes God leaves men to a fatal backsliding for a mis-improvement of the strivings of his Spirit. They are let alone, to backslide perpetually. Dreadful is the life and condition of those who are thus left of God. We have instances of the misery of such in God's holy word, particularly of Saul and Judas. Such are, sometimes, very much left to the power of Satan to tempt them, to hurry them on in wicked courses, and exceedingly to aggravate their own guilt and misery.

Second, indignation and wrath are sometimes exercised towards them in this world, by their being cursed in all that concerns them, They have this curse of God following them in everything. They are cursed in all their enjoyments. If they are in prosperity, it is cursed to them. If they possess riches, if they have honour, if they enjoy pleasure, there is the curse of God that attends it. Psal. 92:7, "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they may be destroyed forever."

There is a curse of God that attends their ordinary food. Every morsel of bread which they eat, and every drop of water which they drink. Psal. 69:22, "Let their table become a snare before them; and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap." They are cursed in all their employments, in whatsoever they put their hands to: when they go into the field to labour, or are at work at their respective trades. Deut. 28:16, "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field." The curse of God remains in the houses where they dwell, and brimstone is scattered in their habitations. Job 18:15. The curse of God attends them in the afflictions which they meet with, whereas the afflictions that good men meet with, are fatherly corrections, and are sent in mercy. The afflictions which wicked men meet with are in wrath, and come from God as an enemy, and are the foretaste of their everlasting punishment. The curse of God attends them also in their spiritual enjoyments and opportunities, and it would have been better for them not to have been born in a land of light. Their having the Bible and the Sabbath, is only to aggravate their guilt and misery. The Word of God when preached to them is a savour of death unto death.

Better would it be for them, if Christ had never come into the world, if there had never been any offer of a Saviour. Life itself is a curse to them. They live only to fill up the measure of their sins. What they seek in all the enjoyments, and employments, and concerns of life is their own happiness, but they never obtain it. They never obtain any true comfort, all the comforts which they have are worthless and unsatisfying. If they lived a hundred years with never so much of the world in their possession, their life is all filled up with vanity. All that they have is vanity of vanities, they find no true rest for their souls, they do but feed on the east wind, they have no real contentment. Whatever outward pleasures they may have, their souls are starving. They have no true peace of conscience, they have nothing of the favour of God. Whatever they do, they live in vain, and to no purpose. They are useless in the creation of God, they do not answer the end of their being. They live without God, and have not the presence of God, nor any communion with him. But on the contrary, all that they have and all that they do, does but contribute to their own misery, and render their future and everlasting state the more dreadful. The best of wicked men live but miserable and wretched lives, with all their prosperity. Their lives are most undesirable, and whatever they have, the wrath of God abides upon them.

Third, after a time they must die. Ecc. 9:3, “This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.”

Death is a far different thing when it befalls wicked men, from what it is when it befalls good men. To the wicked it is in execution of the curse of the law, and of the wrath of God. When a wicked man dies, God cuts him off in wrath, he is taken away as by a tempest of wrath, he is driven away in his wickedness. Pro. 14:32, “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.” Job 18:18, “He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world.” Job 27:21, “The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, and as a storm, hurleth him out of his place.” Though wicked men, while they live, may live in worldly prosperity, yet they can not live here always, but they must die. The place that knoweth him shall know him no more, and the eye that hath seen him shall see him no more in the land of the living.

Their bounds are unchangeably set, and when they are come to those bounds they must go, and must leave all their worldly good things. If they have lived in outward glory their glory shall not descend after them. They get nothing while they live that they can carry away. Ecc. 5:15, “As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.” He must leave all his substance unto others. If they are at ease and quietness, death will put an end to their quietness, will spoil all their carnal mirth, and will strip them of all their glory. As they came naked into the world, so naked must they return, and go as they came. If they have laid up much goods for many years, if they have laid in stores, as they hope, for great comfort and pleasure, death will cut them off from all. Luke 12:16-20, “And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? and he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my

goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided." If they have many designs and projects in their breasts for promoting their outward prosperity and worldly advantage, when death comes, it cuts all off at one blow. Psa. 146:4, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." And so whatever diligence they have had in seeking their salvation, death will disappoint all such diligence, it will not wait for them to accomplish their designs and fulfil their schemes. If they have pleased, and pampered, and adorned their bodies, death will spoil all their pleasure and their glory. It will change their countenances to a pale and ghastly aspect. Instead of their gay apparel and beautiful ornaments, they shall have only a winding-sheet. Their house must be the dark and silent grave; and that body which they deified, shall turn to loathsome rottenness, shall be eaten of worms, and turn to dust. Some wicked men die in youth, wrath pursues them, and soon overtakes them. They are not suffered to live out half their days. Job 36:14, "They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean." Psa. 55:23, "But thou, O God, shall bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." They are sometimes overtaken in the very midst of their sin and vanity, and death puts a sudden end to all their youthful pleasures. They are often stopped in the midst of a career in sin, and then if their hearts cleave ever so fast to those things, they must be rent from them. They have no other good but outward good, but then they must eternally forsake it. They must close their eyes forever on all that has been dear and pleasant to them here.

Fourth, wicked men are oftentimes the subjects of much tribulation and anguish of heart on their death-beds. Sometimes the pains of body are very extreme and dreadful, and what they endure in those agonies and struggles for life, after they are past speaking, and when body and soul are rending asunder, none can know. Hezekiah had an awful sense of it. He compares it to a lion's breaking all his bones. Isa. 38:12, 13, "Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off as a weaver my life; he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me." But this is but little to what is sometimes undergone by wicked men in their souls when they are on their death-beds. Death appears sometimes with an exceedingly terrible aspect to them. When it comes and stares them in the face, they can not bear to behold it. It is always so, if the wicked men have notice of the approach of death, and have reason and conscience in exercise, and are not either stupid or distracted. When this king of terrors comes to show himself to them, and they are called forth to meet him, O how do they dread the conflict! But meet him they must. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it." Death comes to them with all his dreadful armour, and his sting not taken away. And it is enough to fill their souls with torment that can not be expressed. It is an awful thing for a person to be lying on a sick bed, to be given over by physicians, to have friends stand weeping round the bed as expecting to part with him, and in such circumstances as those, to have no hope, to be without an interest in Christ, and to have the guilt of his sins lying on his soul, to be going out of the world without his peace being made with God, to stand before his holy judgment-seat in all his sins without anything to

plead or answer, and to see the only opportunity to prepare for eternity coming immediately to an end, after which there shall be no more time of probation. But his case will be unalterably fixed, and there never will be another offer of a Saviour: for the soul to come just to the very edge of the boundless gulf of eternity, and insensibly to launch forth into it, without any God or Saviour to take care of it, to be brought to the edge of the precipice, and to see himself falling down into the lake of fire and brimstone, and to feel that he has no power to stop himself. Who can tell the shrinkings and misgivings of heart in such a case? How does he endeavour to hang back, but yet he must go on. It is in vain to wish for further opportunity! O how happy does he think those that stand about him, who may yet live, may have their lives continued longer, when he must go immediately into an endless eternity! How does he wish it might be with him as with those who have a longer time to prepare for their trial! But it must not be so. Death, sent on purpose to summon him, will give him no release nor respite. He must go before the holy judgment-seat of God as he is, to have his everlasting state determined according to his works. To such persons, how differently do things appear from what they did in the time of health, and when they looked at death as at a distance! How differently does sin look to them now, those sins which they used to make light of! How dreadful is it now to look back and consider how they have spent their time, how foolish they have been, how they have gratified and indulged their lusts, and lived in ways of wickedness. How careless they have been, and how they have neglected their opportunities and advantages, how they have refused to hearken to counsel, and have not repented in spite of all the warnings that were given! Pro. 5:11, 12, 13, “And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!”

How differently does the world appear to them now! They used to set much by it, and have their hearts taken up with it, but what does it avail them now? How insignificant are all their riches! Pro. 11:4, “Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.” What different thoughts have they now of God, and of his wrath! They used to make light of the wrath of God, but how terrible does it now appear! How does their heart shrink at the thoughts of appearing before such a God! How different are their thoughts of time! Now time appears precious. O what would they not give for a little more time! Some have in such circumstances been brought to cry out, O, a thousand worlds for an hour, for a *moment*! And how differently does eternity now appear! Now it is awful indeed. Some have been brought on a death-bed to cry out, O that word Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! What a dismal gulf does it appear to them, when they come to the very brink! They often at such times cry for mercy, and cry in vain. God called, and they would not hear. “They set at nought his counsels, and would none of his reproofs. Now also he laughs at their calamity, and mocks when their fear cometh.” They beseech others to pray for them, they send for ministers, but all often fails them. They draw nearer and nearer to death, and eternity comes more and more immediately in view. And who can express their horror, when they feel themselves clasped in the cold arms of death, when their breath fails more and more, and their eyes begin to be fixed and grow dim! That which is then felt by them, can not be told nor conceived. Some wicked men have much of the horror and despair of hell in their last sickness. Ecc. 5:17, “All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.”

II. I shall describe the wrath that attends wicked men hereafter.

First, the soul, when it is separated from the body, shall be cast down into hell. There is without doubt a particular judgment by which every man is tried at death, beside the general judgment. For the soul, as soon as it departs from the body, appears before God to be judged. Ecc. 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." That is, to be judged and disposed of by him. Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." But this particular judgment is probably no such solemn transaction as that which will be at the day of judgment. The soul must appear before God, but not in the manner that men shall appear at the end of the world. The souls of wicked men shall not go to heaven to appear before God. Neither shall Christ descend from heaven for the soul to appear before him. Neither is it to be supposed, that the soul shall be carried to any place where there is some special symbol of the divine presence, in order to be judged. But as God is everywhere present, so the soul shall be made immediately sensible of his presence. Souls in a separate state shall be sensible of the presence of God and of his operations in another manner than we now are. All separate spirits may be said to be before God. The saints are in his glorious presence, and the wicked in hell are in his dreadful presence. They are said to be tormented in the presence of the Lamb. Rev. 14:10, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." So the soul of a wicked man, at its departure from the body, will be made immediately sensible that it is before an infinitely holy and dreadful God and his own final Judge. And will then see how terrible a God he is, he will see how holy a God he is, how infinitely he hates sin. He will be sensible of the greatness of God's anger against sin, and how dreadful is his displeasure. Then will he be sensible of the dreadful majesty and power of God, and how fearful a thing it is to fall into his hands. Then the soul shall come naked with all its guilt, and in all its filthiness, a vile, loathsome, abominable creature, an enemy to God, a rebel against him, with the guilt of all its rebellion and disregard of God's commands, and contempt of his authority, and slight of the glorious gospel, before God as its Judge. This will fill the soul with horror and amazement. It is not to be supposed that this judgment will be attended with any voice or any such outward transactions as the judgment at the end of the world. But God shall manifest himself in his strict justice inwardly, to the immediate view of the soul, and to the sense and apprehension of the conscience. This particular judgment probably will not hinder, but that the soul shall be cast into hell immediately when it goes from the body. As soon as ever the soul departs from the body, the soul shall know what its state and condition are to be all eternity. As long as there is life, there is hope. The man, while he lived, though his case was exceedingly dreadful, yet had some hope. When he lay dying, there was a possibility of salvation. But when once the union between soul and body is broken, then that moment the case becomes desperate, and there remains no hope, no possibility. On their death-beds, perhaps, they had some hope that God would pity them and hear their cries, or that he would hear the prayers of their pious friends for them. They were ready to lay hold on something which they had at some time met with, some religious affection or some change in their external conduct, and to flatter themselves that they were then converted. They were able to indulge some degree of hope from the moral lives that they had lived, that God would have respect to them and save them, but as soon as ever the soul parts from the body, from that moment the

case will be absolutely determined, there will then be an end forever to all hope, to everything that men hang upon in this life. The soul then shall know certainly that it is to be miserable to all eternity, without any remedy. It shall see that God is its enemy. It shall see its Judge clothed in his wrath and vengeance. Then its misery will begin, it will that moment be swallowed up in despair. The great gulf will be fixed between it and happiness, the door of mercy will be forever shut up, the irrevocable sentence will be passed. Then shall the wicked know what is before them. Before, the soul was in distress for fear how it would be. But now, all its fears shall come upon it. It shall come upon it as a mighty flood, and there will be no escaping. The soul was full of amazement before through fear. But now, who can conceive the amazement that fills it that moment when all hope is cut off, and it knows that there never will be any difference!

When a good man dies, his soul is conducted by holy angels to heaven. Luke 16:22, "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried." So we may well suppose that when a wicked man dies, his soul is seized by wicked angels, that they are round his bed ready to seize the miserable soul as soon as it is parted from the body. And with what fierceness and fury do those cruel spirits fly upon their prey, and the soul shall be left in their hands. There shall be no good angels to guard and defend it. God will take no merciful care of it. There is nothing to help it against those cruel spirits that shall lay hold of it to carry it to hell, there to torment it forever. God will leave it wholly in their hands, and will give it up to their possession, when it comes to die. It shall be carried down into hell, to the abode of devils and damned spirits. If the fear of hell on a death-bed sometimes fills the wicked with amazement, how will they be overwhelmed when they feel its torments, when they shall find them not only as great but far greater than their fears! They shall find them far beyond what they could conceive of before they felt them, for none know the power of God's anger, but they that experience it. Psa. 90:11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath."

Departed spirits of wicked men are doubtless carried to some particular place in the universe, which God has prepared to be the receptacle of his wicked, rebellious, and miserable subjects, a place where God's avenging justice shall be glorified, a place built to be the prison, and where devils and wicked men are reserved till the day of judgment.

Second, here the souls of wicked men shall suffer extreme and amazing misery in a separate state, until the resurrection. This misery is not indeed their full punishment, nor is the happiness of the saints before the day of judgment their full happiness. It is with the souls of wicked men as it is with devils. Though the devils suffer extreme torment now, yet they do not suffer their complete punishment, and therefore it is said, that they are cast down to hell, and bound in chains. 2 Pet. 2:4, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Jude 6, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." They are reserved in the state they are in, and for what are they reserved, but for a greater degree of punishment? And therefore they are said to tremble for fear. Jam. 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one

God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble.” Hence when Christ was on earth, the devils were greatly afraid that Christ was come to torment them. Mat. 8:29, “And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” Mark 5:7, “And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.”

But yet they are there in extreme and inconceivable misery, they are there deprived of all good, they have no rest nor comfort, and they are subject to the wrath of God. God there executes wrath on them without mercy, and they are swallowed up in wrath. Luke 16:24, “And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me; and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” Here we are being told that, when the rich man died, he lift up his eyes being in torment, and he tells Abraham that he is tormented in a flame. It seems that the flame was not only about him, but in him. He therefore asks for a drop of water to cool his tongue. This doubtless is to represent to us that they are full of the wrath of God as it were with fire, and they shall there be tormented in the midst of devils and damned spirits. And they shall have inexpressible torment from their own consciences. God’s wrath is the fire that never shall be quenched, and conscience is the worm that never dies. How much do men suffer from horror of conscience sometimes in this world, but how much more in hell! What bitter and tormenting reflections will they have concerning the folly they have been guilty of in their lives, in so neglecting their souls, when they had such an opportunity for repentance; that they went on so foolishly to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, to add to the record of their sins from day to day, to make their misery yet greater and greater. How they have kindled the fires of hell for themselves, and spent their lives in gathering the fuel! They will not be able to help revolving such thoughts in their minds. And how tormenting will they be! And those who go to hell, never can escape thence. There they remain imprisoned till the day of judgment, and their torments remain continually. Those wicked men who died many years ago, their souls went to hell, and there they are still. Those who went to hell in former ages of the world, have been in hell ever since, all the while suffering torment. They have nothing else to spend their time in there, but to suffer torment, they are kept in being for no other purpose. And though they have many companions in hell, yet they are no comfort to them, for there is no friend, no love, no pity, no quietness, no prospect, no hope.

Third, the separate souls of the wicked, besides the present misery that they suffer, shall be in amazing fear of their more full punishment at the day of judgment. Though their punishment in their separate state be exceedingly dreadful, and far more than they can bear, though it be so great as to sink and crush them, yet this is not all. They are reserved for a much greater and more dreadful punishment at the day of judgment. Their torment will then be vastly augmented, and continue in that augmentation to all eternity. Their punishment will be so much greater then, that their misery in this separate state is but as an imprisonment before an execution. They, as well as the devils, are bound in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day. Separate spirits are called “spirits in prison.” 1 Pet. 3:19, “By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” And if the imprisonment be so dreadful, how dreadful indeed will be the execution! When we are under any great pain of body at any time, how do we dread the least addition to it! Its continuance is greatly dreaded, much

more its increase. How much more will those separate spirits that suffer the torments of hell, dread that augmentation and completing of their torment which there will be at the day of judgment, when what they feel already is vastly more than they can support themselves, when they shall be as it were begging for one drop of water to cool their tongues, and when they would give ten thousand worlds for the least abatement of their misery! How sinking will it be to think that instead of that the day is coming when God shall come forth out of heaven to sentence them to a far more dreadful degree of misery, and to continue them under it forever! What experience they have of the dreadfulness of God's wrath convinces them fully how terrible a thing his wrath is. They will therefore be exceedingly afraid of that full wrath which he will execute at the day of judgment. They will have no hope of escaping it, they will know assuredly that it will come.

The fear of this makes the devils, those mighty, proud, and stubborn spirits, to tremble. They believe what is threatened, and therefore tremble. If this fear overcomes them, how much more will it overwhelm the souls of wicked men! All hell trembles at the thoughts of the day of judgment.

Fourth, when the day of judgment comes they shall rise to the resurrection of damnation. When that day comes, all mankind that have died from off the face of the earth shall arise; not only the righteous, but also the wicked. Dan. 12:2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Rev. 20:13, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged, every man according to his works." The damned in hell know not the time when the day of judgment will be, but when the time comes it will be made known, and it will be the most dreadful news that ever was told in that world of misery. It is always a doleful time in hell. The world of darkness is always full of shrieks and doleful cries. But when the news is heard, that the day appointed for the judgment is come, hell will be filled with louder shrieks and more dreadful cries than ever before. When Christ comes in the clouds of heaven to judgment, the news of it will fill both earth and hell with mourning and bitter crying. We read that all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him, and so shall all the inhabitants of hell, and then must the souls of the wicked come up to be united to their bodies, and stand before the Judge. They shall not come willingly, but shall be dragged forth as a malefactor is dragged out of his dungeon to execution. They were unwilling when they died to leave the earth to go to hell, but now they will be much more unwilling to come out of hell to go to the last judgment. It will be no deliverance to them, it will only be a coming forth to their execution. They will hang back, but must come. The devils and damned spirits must come up together. The last trumpet will then be heard, this will be the most terrible sound to wicked men and devils that ever was heard. And not only the wicked, that shall then be found dwelling on the earth, shall hear it, but also those that are in their graves. John 5:28, 29, "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." And then must the souls of the wicked enter their bodies again, which will be prepared only to be organs of torment and misery. It will be a dreadful sight to them when they come to their bodies again, those bodies which were formerly used by them as the organs and instruments of sin and wickedness, and whose appetites and lusts

they indulged and gratified. The parting of soul and body was dreadful to them when they died, but their meeting again at the resurrection will be more dreadful. They shall receive their bodies loathsome and hideous, agreeably to that shame and everlasting contempt to which they shall arise. As the bodies of the saints shall arise more glorious than when on earth, and shall be like unto Christ's glorious body, so we may well suppose that the bodies of the wicked will arise proportionably more deformed and hideous. Oftentimes in this world a polluted soul is hid in a fine and comely body, but it will not be so then when things shall appear as they are. The form and aspect of the body shall appear as they are, and the form and aspect of the body shall be answerable to the hellish deformity of the soul. Thus shall they rise out of their graves, and shall lift up their eyes, and see the Son of God in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels with him. Then shall they see their Judge in his awful majesty, which will be the most amazing sight to them that ever they saw, and will still add new horrors. That awful and terrible majesty in which he will appear, and the manifestation of his infinite holiness, will pierce their souls. They shall come forth out of their graves all trembling and astonished: fearfulness shall surprise them.

Fifth, then must they appear before their Judge to give up their account. They will find no mountains or rocks to fall upon them, that can cover them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Many of them will see others at that time, who were formerly their acquaintance, who shall appear with glorious bodies, and with joyful countenances and songs of praise, and mounting up as with wings to meet the Lord in the air, while they are left behind. Many shall see their former neighbours and acquaintance, their companions, their brothers, and their wives taken and they left. They shall be summoned to go and appear before the judgment-seat, and go they must, however unwilling. They must stand at Christ's left hand, in the midst of devils and wicked men. This shall again add still further amazement, and will cause their horror still to be in a further degree than ever. With what horror will that company come together! And then shall they be called to their account; then shall be brought to light the hidden things of darkness; then shall all the wickedness of their hearts be made know; then shall be declared the actual wickedness they have been guilty of; then shall appear their secret sins that they have kept hid from the eye of the world; then shall be manifested in their true light those sins that they used to plead for, and to excuse and justify. And then shall all their sins be set forth in all their dreadful aggravations, all their filthiness will be brought to light to their everlasting shame and contempt. Then it shall appear how heinous many of those things were that they in their lifetime made light of; then will it appear how dreadful their guilt is in thus ill-treating so glorious and blessed a Saviour. And all the world shall see it, and many shall rise up in judgment against them and condemn them. Their companions whom they tempted to wickedness, others whom they have hardened in sin by their example, shall rise up against many of them; and the heathen that have had no advantages in comparison of them, and many of whom have yet lived better lives than they, shall rise up against them, and they shall be called to a special account. The Judge will reckon with them. They shall be speechless, they shall be struck dumb, their own consciences bearing testimony against them, and shall cry aloud against them, for they shall then see how great and terrible a God he is, against whom they have sinned. Then shall they stand at the left hand, while they see others whom they knew on earth sitting at the right hand of Christ in glory, shining forth as the sun, accepted of Christ, and sitting with him to judge and condemn them.

Sixth, then the sentence of condemnation shall be pronounced by the Judge upon them. Mat. 25:41, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This sentence will be pronounced with awful majesty, and there shall be great indignation, and dreadful wrath shall then appear in the Judge, and in his voice, with which he shall pronounce the sentence. What a horror and amazement will these words strike into the hearts of the wicked, on whom they shall be pronounced! Every word and syllable shall be like the most amazing thunder to them, and shall pierce their souls like the fiercest lightning. The Judge will bid them depart from him. He will drive them from his presence, as exceedingly abominable to him, and he shall give them the epithet *accursed*. They shall be an accursed company, and he will not only bid them depart from his presence, but into everlasting fire, to dwell there as their only fit habitation. And what shows the dreadful nature of the fire, is, that it is prepared for the devil and his angels. They shall lie forever in the same fire in which the devils, those grand enemies of God, shall be tormented. When this sentence shall be pronounced, there shall be in the vast company at the left hand, tremblings and mourning, and crying, and gnashing of teeth, in a new manner, beyond all that ever was before. If the devils, those proud and lofty spirits, tremble many ages beforehand at the bare thoughts of this sentence, how ill they tremble when it comes to be pronounced! And how, alas, will wicked men tremble! Their anguish will be aggravated by hearing that blessed sentence pronounced on those who shall be at the right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Seventh, then the sentence shall be executed. When the Judge bids them depart, they must go; however loth, yet they must go. Immediately upon the finishing of the judgment and the pronouncing of the sentence, will come the end of the world. The frame of this world shall be dissolved. The pronouncing of that sentence will probably be followed with amazing thunders, that shall rend the heavens, and shake the earth out of its place. 2 Pet. 3:10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." Then shall the sea and the waves roar, and the rocks shall be thrown down, and the mountains shall rend asunder, and there shall be one universal wreck of this great world. Then shall the heavens be dissolved, and then the earth shall be set on fire. As God in wrath once destroyed the world by a flood of water, so now shall he cause it to be all drowned in a deluge of fire; and the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, 2 Pet. 3:10, and that great company of devils and wicked men must then enter into those everlasting burnings to which they are sentenced.

Eighth, in this condition they shall remain throughout the never-ending ages of eternity. Their punishment shall be then complete, and it shall remain in this completion forever. Now shall all that come upon them which they so long trembled for fear of, while their souls were in a separate state. They will dwell in a fire that never shall be quenched, and here they must wear out eternity. Here they must wear out one thousand years after another, and that without end. There is no reckoning up the millions of years or millions of ages. All arithmetic here fails, no rules of multiplication can reach the amount, for there is no end. They shall have nothing to do to pass away their eternity, but to conflict with those torments. This will be their work forever and

ever. God shall have no other use or employment for them. This is the way that they must answer the end of their being. And they never shall have any rest, nor any atonement, but their torments will hold up to their height, and shall never grow any easier by their being accustomed to them. Time will seem long to them, every moment shall seem long to them, but they shall never have done with the ages of their torment.

APPLICATION

I. Hence what need have we to take care that our foundation for eternity be sure! They who build on a false foundation, are not secure from this misery. They who build up a refuge of lies, will find that their refuge must fail them. Their wall that they have daubed with untempered mortar will fall. The more dreadful the misery is, the more need have we to see that we are safe from it. It will be dreadful indeed to be disappointed in such a case. To please ourselves with dreams and vain imaginations of our being the children of God, and of going to heaven, and at last to awake in hell, to see our refuge swept away, and our hope eternally gone, and to find ourselves swallowed up in flames, and to see an endless duration of it before us. How dreadful will this be!

There will be many that will be thus disappointed. Many shall come to the door and shall find it shut, who expected to find it open, and shall knock, but Christ will tell them that he knows them not, and he will bid them depart, and it will be in vain for them to tell Christ what affections they have had, and how religious they were, and how well they were accounted of on earth. They shall have no other answer but, "Depart from me, I know you not, ye that work iniquity." Let us all consider this, and give all diligence, to see that we build sure if by any means we may at last be found in Christ. Let us see to it that we are indeed well secured from this dreadful misery. What will it avail us to please ourselves with a notion of being converted, and being beloved of God. And what will it avail us to have the good opinion of our neighbours for a few days, if we must at last be cast into hell, and appear at the day of judgment at the left hand, and have our eternal portion with unbelievers? A false hope can not profit us, it is a thousand times worse than none. And who are more miserable than those who think that God has pardoned their sins, and who expect to have a portion with the righteous hereafter, but are all the while going headlong down into this dreadful misery? What case can be more awful than the case of those who are thus led blindfold to the slaughter, promising themselves a happiness that is never like to come, but on the contrary are sinking into endless tribulation and anguish!

Let everyone therefore, who entertains hope of his own state, see to it, that he be well built; and let him not rest in past attainment, but reach forth towards those things that are before with all his might.

II. Hence we derive an argument for the awakening of ungodly men. This indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, is the portion allotted to you if you continue in your present condition. Thou art the man spoken of; it is to thee that all this misery is assigned by the threatening of God's holy word. It is on thee that this wrath of God abides. Thou art now in a state of condemnation to this misery. John 3:18, "He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." It is not already executed upon you, but you are already condemned to it; you are not merely exposed to condemnation, but you are under the

actual sentence of condemnation. This is the portion that is already allotted to you by the law and not under grace. This misery is the misery into which you are everyday in danger of dropping, you are not safe from it one hour. How soon it may come upon you, you know not; you hang over it by a thread, that is continually growing more and more feeble. This dreadful misery in all its successive parts belongs to you, and is your due. Your friends and your neighbours, and all around you, if they knew what your condition was, might well lift up a loud and bitter cry over you, whenever they behold you, and say, Here is an unhappy being condemned to be given up eternally into the hands of devils to be tormented by them. Here is a miserable man who is in danger every day of being swallowed up in the bottomless gulf of woe and misery. Here is a wretched undone creature condemned to lie down forever in unquenchable fire, and to dwell in everlasting burnings; and he has no interest in a Saviour, he has nothing to defend him, he has nothing wherewith to appease the wrath of an offended God. Here consider two things.

First, you have no reason to question whether those future miseries and torments which are threatened in God's Word are realities. Do not flatter yourself with thinking that it may not be so. Say not, How do I know that there is any such misery to be inflicted in another world; how do I know but all is a fable, and that when I come to die there will be an end of me, and that it will be with me as it is with the beasts. Do not say, How do I know but that all those things are only bugbears of man's inventing. How do I know that the Scriptures, that threaten those things, are the Word of God; or if he has threatened those things, it may be it is only to frighten men to keep them to their duty, it may be he never intends to do as he threatens.

I say that there is no ground for any such suspicion, neither is there any reason for it; for that there should be no future punishment is not only contrary to Scripture, but reason. It is a most unreasonable thing to suppose that there should be no future punishment, to suppose that God, who had made man a rational creature, able to know his duty, and sensible that he is deserving punishment when he does it not; should let man alone, and let him live as he will, and never punish him for his sins, and never make any difference between the good and the bad; that he should make the world of mankind and then let it alone, and let men live all their days in wickedness, in adultery, murder, robbery, and persecution, and the like, and suffer them to live in prosperity, and never punish them; that he should suffer them to prosper in the world far beyond many good men, and never punish them hereafter. How unreasonable is it to suppose, that he who made the world, should leave things in such confusion, and never take any care of the government of his creatures, and that he should never judge his reasonable creatures! Reason teaches that there is a God, and reason teaches that if there be, he must be a wise and just God, and that he must take care to order things wisely and justly among his creatures. And therefore it is unreasonable to suppose that man dies like a beast, and that there is no future punishment. And if there be a future punishment, it is unreasonable to suppose that God has not somewhere or other given men warning of it, and revealed to them what kind of punishment they must expect. Will a wise lawgiver keep his subjects in ignorance as to what punishment they must expect for breaking his laws? And if God has revealed it, where is it to be found but in the Scripture; what revelation have we of a future state if it is not there revealed? Where does God tell mankind what kind of rewards and punishments they must expect, if not here? And it is abundantly manifest by innumerable evidences, that these

threatenings are the threatenings of God, that this awful book is his revelation. And since God has threatened, there is no room to question whether he will fulfil; for he hath said it, yea, he hath sworn it, that he will repay the wicked to his face according to threatenings, and that he will glorify himself in their destruction, and that this heaven and earth shall pass away. How foolish then is the thought that God may only threaten such punishment to frighten men, and that he never intends to execute it! For as surely as God is God, he will do as he has said. He will destroy the mountains of iniquity as he has threatened, and there shall be no escaping. How vain are the thoughts of those who flatter themselves that God will not fulfil his threatenings, and that he only frightens and deceives men in them; as though God could in no other way govern the world than by making use of fallacious tricks and deceits to delude his subjects! Those that entertain such thoughts, however they may harden themselves by them for the present, will cherish them but a little while. Their experience will soon convince them that God is a God of truth, and that his threatenings are no delusions. They will be convinced that he is a God who will by no means clear the guilty, and that his threatenings are substantial, and not mere shadows, when it will be too late to escape them. Deu. 29:18-21, "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law." Psa. 50:21, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

Second, there is no reason to suspect that possibly ministers set forth this matter beyond what it really is, that possibly it is not so dreadful and terrible as is pretended, and that ministers strain the description of it beyond just bounds. Some may be ready to think so, because it seems to them incredible that there should be so dreadful a misery to any creature. But there is no reason for any such thoughts as these, if we consider,

1. How great a punishment the sins of wicked men deserve. The Scripture teaches us that anyone sin deserves eternal death. Rom. 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." And that it deserves the eternal curse of God. Deu. 27:26, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them: and all the people shall say, Amen." Gal 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Which things imply that the least sin deserves total and eternal destruction. Eternal death, in the least degree of it, amounts to such a degree of misery as is the perfect destruction of the creature, the loss of all good, and perfect misery; and so does being accursed of God imply it. To be cursed of God, is to be devoted to perfect and

ultimate destruction. The Scripture teaches that wicked men shall be punished to their full desert, that they shall pay all the debt.

2. There is no reason to think that ministers describe the misery of the wicked beyond what it is, because the Scripture teaches us that this is one end of ungodly men, to show the dreadfulness and power of God's wrath. Rom. 9:22, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." It is often spoken of as part of the glory of God, that he is a terrible and dreadful God. Psa. 68:35, "O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places:" that he is a consuming fire. Psa. 66:3, "How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee:" and that herein one part of the glory of God is represented as consisting, that it is so dreadful a thing to injure and offend God. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion, the wrath of a man is sometimes dreadful, but the future punishment of ungodly men is to show what the wrath of God is. It is to show to the whole universe the glory of God's power. 2 Thes. 1:9, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." And therefore the punishment which we have described is not at all incredible, and there is no reason to think that it has been in the least described beyond what it really is.

3. The Scripture teaches that the wrath of God on wicked men is dreadful beyond all that we can conceive. Psa. 90:11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." As it is but little that we know of God, as we know and can conceive of but little of his power and his greatness, so it is but a little that we know or can conceive of the dreadfulness of his wrath. And therefore there is no reason to suppose that we set it forth beyond what it is. We have rather reason to suppose that after we have said our utmost and thought our utmost, all that we have said or thought is but a faint shadow of the reality.

We are taught that the reward of the saints is beyond all that can be spoken or conceived of. Eph. 3:20, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." 1 Cor. 2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And so we may rationally suppose that the punishment of the wicked will also be inconceivably dreadful.

4. There is no reason to think that we set forth the misery of hell beyond the reality, because the Scripture teaches us that the wrath of God is according to his fear. Psa. 90:11. This passage asserts that the wrath of God is according to his awful attributes; his greatness and his might, his holiness and power. The majesty of God is exceedingly great and awful, but according to his awfulness, so is his wrath. This is the meaning of the words; and therefore we must conclude that the wrath of God is indeed beyond all expressions and signification terrible. How great and awful indeed is his majesty, who has made heaven and earth, and in what majesty will he come to judge the world at the last day! He will come to take vengeance on ungodly men. The sight of this majesty will strike wicked men with apprehensions and fears of destruction.

5. The description which I have given of the tribulation and wrath of ungodly men, is not beyond the truth, for it is the very description which the Scriptures give of it. The Scriptures represent that the wicked shall be cast into a furnace of fire; not only a fire,

but a furnace. Mat. 13:42, "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Rev. 20:15, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Psa. 21:8, 9, "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger; the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them."

If, therefore, I have described this misery beyond the truth, then the Scriptures have done the same. It is evident then, that there is no reason to flatter yourselves with such imaginations. If God be true, you shall find the wrath of God, and your future misery, full as great; and not only so, but much greater. You will find that we know but little, and have said but little about it, and that all our expressions are faint in comparison of the reality.

III. Hence may be derived an argument to convince wicked men of the justice of God in allotting such a portion to them. Wicked men, when they hear it declared how awful the misery is of which they are in danger, often have their hearts lifted up against God for it. It seems to them very hard for God to deal so with any of his creatures. They can not see why God should be so very severe with wicked men, for their sin and folly for a little while in this world. And when they consider that he has threatened such punishments, they are ready to entertain blasphemous thoughts against him. I would therefore endeavour to show you how justly you lie exposed to that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, of which you have heard. Particularly I would show,

First, how just it would be in God forever to leave you to yourself. It would be most just in God to refuse to be with you, or help you.

You have embraced and refused to let go those things which God hates; you have refused to forsake your lusts, and to abandon those ways of sin that are abominable to him. When God has commanded you to forsake them, how have you refused, and still have retained them, and been obstinate in it! Neither is your heart yet to this very day diverted from sin. But it is dear to you, you allow it the best place in your heart, you place it on the throne there. Would it be any wonder therefore if God should utterly leave you, seeing you will not leave sin? God has often declared his hatred of iniquity; and is it any wonder, that he is not willing to dwell with that which is so odious to him? Is it not reasonable that God should insist that you should part with your lusts in order to your enjoying his presence; and seeing you have so long refused, how just would it be if God should utterly forsake you? You have retained and harboured God's mortal enemies, sin and Satan. How justly therefore might God stand at a distance! Is God obliged to be present with any who harbour his enemies, and refuse to forsake them? Would God be unjust, if he should leave you utterly to yourself, so long as you will not forsake your idols?

Consider how just it would be in God to let you alone, since you have let God alone. You have not sought God for his presence and help as you ought to have done; you have neglected him; and would it not therefore be just if he should neglect you? How long have many of you lived in neglecting to seek him? How long have you restrained prayer before him? Since therefore you refused so much as to seek the presence and help of God, and did not think them worth praying to him for, how justly might he forever withhold them, and so leave you wholly to yourself?

You have done what in you lies to drive God away from you, and to cause him wholly to leave you. When God in times past has not let you alone, but has been unwearied in awakening you, have you not resisted the motions and influences of his Spirit; have you not refused to be conducted by him, or to yield to him? Zec. 7:11, "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear." How justly therefore might God refuse to move or strive any more! When God has been knocking at your door, you have refused to open to him. How just is it therefore that he should go away, and knock at your door no more! When the Spirit of God has been striving with you, have you not been guilty of grieving the Holy Spirit by giving way to a quarrelling temper, and by yielding yourself a prey to lust? And have not some of you quenched the Spirit, and been guilty of backsliding? And is God obliged, notwithstanding all this, to continue the striving of his Spirit with you, to be resisted and grieved still, as long as you please? On the contrary, would it not be just if his Spirit should everlastingly leave you, and let you alone?

Second, how just it would be if you should be cursed in all your concerns in this world. It would be just if God should curse you in everything, and cause everything you enjoy, or are concerned in, to turn to your destruction.

You live here in all the concerns of life as an enemy to God; you have used all your enjoyments and possessions against God, and to his dishonour. Would it not therefore be just if God should curse you in them, and turn them all against you, and to your destruction? What temporal blessing has God given you, which you have not used in the service of your lusts, in the service of sin and Satan? If you have been in prosperity, you have made use of it to God's dishonour. When you have waxed fat, you have forgotten the God that made you. How just therefore would it be if God's curse should attend all your enjoyments! Whatsoever employments you have followed, you have not served God in them, but God's enemies. How just therefore would it be if you should be cursed in all your employments! The means of grace that you have enjoyed, you have not made use of as you ought to have done. You have made light of them, and have treated them in a careless disregardful manner; you have been the worse and not the better for them. You have so attended and used Sabbaths, and spiritual opportunities, that you have only made them occasions of manifesting your contempt of God and Christ, and divine things, by your careless and profane manner of attending them. Would it not therefore be most just that God's curse should attend your means of grace, and the opportunities which you enjoy for the salvation of your soul?

You have improved your time only to heap up provocations and add to your transgressions, in opposition to all the calls and warnings that could be given you. How just therefore would it be if God should turn life itself into a curse to you, and suffer you to live only to fill up the measure of your sins!

You have, contrary to God's counsel, made use of your own enjoyments to the hurt of your soul, and therefore if God should turn to them to the hurt and ruin of your soul, he would but deal with you as you have dealt with yourself. God has earnestly counseled you times without number to use your temporal enjoyments for your spiritual good, but you have refused to hearken to him, you have foolishly perverted them to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, you have voluntarily used what God has given you for your spiritual hurt, to increase your guilt and wound your own

soul. And therefore if Gods curse should attend them, so that they should all turn to the ruin of your soul, you would but be dealt with as you have dealt with yourself.

Third, how just would it be in God to cut you off, and put an end to your life!

You have greatly abused the patience and long-suffering of God which have already been exercised towards you. God with wonderful long-suffering has borne with you, when you have gone on in rebellion against him, and refused to turn from your evil ways. He has beheld you going on obstinately in the ways of provocation against him, and yet he has not let loose his wrath against you to destroy you, but has still waited to be gracious. He has suffered you yet to live on his earth, and breathe his air. He has upheld and preserved you, and continued still to feed you, and clothe you, and maintain you, and still to give you a space to repent; but instead of being the better for his patience, you have been the worse, instead of being melted by it, you have been hardened, and it has made you the more presumptuous in sin. Ecc. 8:11, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." You have been guilty of despising the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, instead of being led to repent by it. You can not live one day but as God maintains and provides for you; you can not draw a breath, or live a moment, unless God upholds you. For in his hand your breath is, and he holds your soul in life, and his visitation preserves your spirit. But what thanks has God had of it. How have you, instead of being turned to God, been only rendered the more fully set and dreadfully hardened in the ways of sin! How just therefore would it be if God's patience should soon be at an end, and he should cease to bear with you any longer!

You have not only abused his past patience, but have also abused his thoughts of future patience. You have flattered yourself that death was not near, and that you should live long in the world, and this has made you abundantly the more bold in sin. Since therefore such has been the use you have made of your expectation of having your life preserved, how just would it be in God to disappoint that expectation, and cut you short of that long life with which you have flattered yourself, and in the thoughts of which you have encouraged yourself in sin against him! How just would it be if your breath should soon be stopped, and that suddenly, when you think not of it, and you should be driven away in your wickedness!

As long as you live in sin you do but cumber the ground, you are wholly unprofitable, and live in vain. He that refuses to live to the glory of God, does not answer the end of his creation, and for what should he live? God made men to serve him; to this end he gave them life. And if they will not devote their lives to this end, how just would it be in God if he should refuse to continue their lives any longer! He has planted you in his vineyard, to bear fruit; and if you bring forth no fruit, why should he continue you any longer? How just would it be in him to cut you down!

As long as you live, many of the blessings of God are spent upon you from day to day; you devour the fruits of the earth and consume much of its fatness and sweetness; and all to no purpose, but to keep you alive to sin against God, and spend all in wickedness. The whole creation does as it were groan with you. The sun rises and sets to give you light, the clouds pour down rain upon you, and the earth brings forth her fruits, and labours from year to year to supply you. And you in the mean time do not

answer the end of Him who has created all things. How just therefore would it be if God should soon cut you off, and take you away, and deliver the earth from this burden, that the creation may no longer groan with you, and cast you out as an abominable branch! Luke 13:7, “Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” John 15:2, 6, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

Fourth, how just would it be if you should die in the greatest horror and amazement!

How often have you been exhorted to improve your time, to lay a foundation of peace and comfort on a death-bed; and yet you have refused to hearken! You have been many and many a time reminded that you must die, that it was very uncertain when, and that you did not know how soon, and have been told how mean and insignificant all your earthly enjoyments would then appear, and how unable to afford you any comfort on a deathbed.. You have been often told how dreadful it would be to lie on a death-bed in a Christless state, having nothing to comfort you but your worldly enjoyments. You have been often put in mind of the torment and amazement which sinners, who have misspent their precious time, are subject to when arrested by death. You have been told how infinitely you would then need to have God your friend, and to have the testimony of a good conscience, and a well-grounded hope of future blessedness. And how often have you been exhorted to take care to provide against such a day as this, and to lay up treasure in heaven, that you might have something to depend on when you parted from this world, something to hope for when all things here below fail! But remember how regardless you have been, how dull and negligent from time to time, when you have sat under the hearing of such things, and still you obstinately refuse to prepare for death, and take no care to lay a good foundation against that time. And you have not only been counselled, but you have seen others on their deathbeds in fear and distress, or have heard of them, and have not taken warning. Yea, some of you have been sick yourselves, and have been afraid that you were on your death-beds, yet God was merciful to you, and restored you, but you did not take warning to prepare for death. How justly therefore might you be the subject of that horror and amazement, of which you have heard, when you come to die!

And not only so, but how industriously have you spent your time in treasuring up matter for tribulation and anguish at that time! You have not only been negligent of laying a foundation for peace and comfort then, but have spent your time continually and unweariedly in laying a foundation for distress and horror. How have you gone on from day to day, heaping up more and more guilt; more and more wounding your own conscience, still increasing the amount of folly and wickedness for you to reflect upon! How just therefore would it be that tribulation and anguish should then come upon you!

Fifth, how just it is that you should suffer the wrath of God in another world!

Because you have wilfully provoked and stirred up that wrath. If you are not willing to suffer the anger of God, then why did you provoke him to anger? Why did you act as though you would contrive to make him angry with you? Why did you wilfully disobey

God? You know that wilful disobedience tends to provoke him who is disobeyed; it is so in an earthly king, or master, or father. If you have a servant who is wilfully disobedient, it provokes your anger. And again, if you would not suffer God's wrath, why have you so often cast a slight on God? If anyone casts a slight on men, it tends to provoke them. How much more may the Infinite Majesty of heaven be provoked, when he is contemned! You have also robbed God of his property, you have refused to give him that which is his own. It provokes men when they are deprived of their due and they are dealt injuriously by; how much more may God be provoked when you rob him!

You have also slighted the kindness of God to you, and that the greatest love and kindness of which you can conceive. You have been supremely ungrateful, and have only abused that kindness. Nothing provokes men more than to have their kindness slighted and abused. How much more may God be provoked when men requite his infinite mercy only with disobedience and ingratitude! If therefore you go on to provoke God, and to stir up his wrath, how can you expect any other than to suffer his wrath? If then you should indeed suffer the wrath of an offended God, remember it is what you have procured for yourself, it is a fire of your own kindling.

You would not accept of deliverance from God's wrath, when it has been offered to you. When God had in mercy sent his only-begotten Son into the world, you refused to admit him. You loved your sins too well to forsake them to come to Christ, and for the sake of your sins you have rejected all the offers of a Saviour, so that you have chosen death rather than life. After you have procured wrath to yourself, you clove fast to it, and would not part with it for mercy. "All they that hate me, love death."

Sixth, how just would it be that you be delivered up into the had of the devil and his angels, to be tormented by them hereafter, seeing you have voluntarily given yourself up to serve them here! You have hearkened to them rather than to God. How just therefore would it be if God leave you to them! You have followed Satan and adhered to his interest in opposition to God, and have subjected yourself to his will in this world, rather than to the will of God. How just therefore would it be if God should give you up to his will hereafter!

Seventh, how justly may your bodies be made organs of torment to you hereafter, which you have made organs and instruments of sin in this world! You have given up your bodies a sacrifice to sin and Satan. How justly therefore may God give them up a sacrifice to wrath! You have employed your bodies as servants to your vile and hateful lusts. How just therefore would it be for God hereafter to raise your bodies to be organs and instruments of misery; and to fill them as full of torment as they have been filled full of sin!

Eighth, but the greatest objection of wicked men against the justice of the future punishment which God has threatened, is from the greatness of that punishment: that God should inflict upon the finally impenitent, torments so extreme, so amazingly dreadful, to have their bodies cast into a furnace of fire of such immense heat and fierceness, there to lie unconsumed, and yet full of sense and feeling, glowing within and without; and the soul full of yet more dreadful horror and torment; and so to remain without any remedy or rest forever, and ever, and ever. And, therefore, I would

mention several things to you, to show how justly you lie exposed to so dreadful a punishment.

1. This punishment, as dreadful as it is, is not more so than the Being is great and glorious against whom you have sinned. It is true this punishment is dreadful beyond all expression or conception, and so is the greatness and gloriousness of God as much beyond all expression or conception; and yet you have continued to sin against him, yea, you have been bold and presumptuous in your sins, and have multiplied transgressions against him without end. The wrath of God that you have heard of, dreadful as it is, is not more dreadful than that Majesty which you have despised and trampled on is awful. This punishment is indeed enough to fill one with horror barely to think of it. And so it would fill you with at least equal horror to think of sinning so exceedingly against so great and glorious a God, if you conceived of it aright. Jer. 2:12, 13, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord: for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters; and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water!" God's being so infinitely great and excellent, has not influenced you not to sin against him, but you have done it boldly, and made nothing of it, thousands of times; and why should this misery, being so infinitely great and dreadful, hinder God from inflicting it on you? 1 Sam. 2:25, "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?"

2. Your nature is not more averse from such misery as you have heard of, than God's nature is averse from such sin as you have been guilty of. The nature of man is very averse from pain and torment, and especially it is exceedingly averse from such dreadful and eternal torment. But yet that does not hinder but that it is just that it should be inflicted, for men do not hate misery more than God hates sin. God is so holy, and is of so pure a nature, that he has an infinite aversion to sin. But yet you have made light of sin, and your sins have been exceedingly multiplied and enhanced. The consideration of God's hating of it has not at all hindered you from committing it. Why, therefore, should the consideration of your hating misery hinder God from bringing it upon you? God represents himself in his word as burdened and wearied with the sins of wicked men. Isa. 1:14. "Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." Mal. 2:17, "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?"

3. You have not cared how much God's honour suffered. And why should God be careful lest your misery be great? You have been told how much these and those things which you have practiced were to the dishonour of God; yet you did not care for that, but went on still multiplying transgressions. The consideration that the more you sinned, the more God was dishonoured, did not in the least restrain you. If it had not been for fear of God's displeasure, you would not have cared though you had dishonoured him ten thousand times as much as you did. As for any respect you had to God, you did not care what became of God's honour, nor of his happiness neither, no, nor of his being. Why then is God obliged to be careful how much you suffer? Why should he be careful of your welfare, or use any caution lest he should lay more on you than you can bear.

4. As great as this wrath is, it is not greater than that love of God which you have slighted and rejected. God, in infinite mercy to lost sinners, has provided a way for them to escape future misery, and to obtain eternal life. For that end he has given his only-begotten Son, a person infinitely glorious and honourable in himself - being equal with God, and infinitely near and dear to God. It was ten thousand times more than if God had given all the angels in heaven, or the whole world, for sinners. Him he gave to be incarnate, to suffer death, to be made a curse for us, and to undergo the dreadful wrath of God in our room, and thus to purchase for us eternal glory. This glorious person has been offered to you times without number, and he has stood and knocked at your door, till his hairs were with the dews of the night. But all that he has done has not won upon you. You see no form nor comeliness in him, no beauty that you should desire him. When he has thus offered himself to you as your Saviour, you never freely and heartily accept of him. This love which you have thus abused, is as great as that wrath of which you are in danger. If you would have accepted of it, you might have had the enjoyment of this love instead of enduring this terrible wrath. So that the misery you have heard of is not greater than the love you have despised, and the happiness and glory which you have rejected. How just than would it be in God to execute upon you this dreadful wrath, which is not greater than that love which you have despised! Heb. 2:3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

5. If you complain of this punishment as being too great, then why has it not been great enough to deter you from sin? As great as it is, you have made nothing of it. When God threatened to inflict it on you, you did not mind his threatenings, but were bold to disobey him, and to do those very things for which he threatened this punishment. Great as this punishment is, it has not been great enough to keep you from living a wilfully wicked life, and going on in ways that you knew were evil. When you have been told that such and such things certainly exposed you to this punishment, you did not abstain on that account, but went on from day to day in a most presumptuous manner, and God's threatening such a punishment was no effectual check upon you. Why therefore do you now complain of this punishment as too great, and quarrel against it, and say that God is unreasonable and cruel to inflict it? In so saying you are condemned out of your own mouth; for if it be so dreadful a punishment, and more than is just, then why was it not great enough at least to restrain you from wilful sinning? Luke 19:21, 22, "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man, thou takest up that thou laidest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he said unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant," You complain of this punishment as too great, but yet you have acted as if it was not great enough, and you have made light of it. If the punishment is too great, why have you gone on to make it still greater? You have gone on from day to day, to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, to add to your punishment, and increase it exceedingly. And yet now you complain of it as too great, as though God could not justly inflict so great a punishment. How absurd and self-contradictory is the conduct of such an one, who complains of God for making his punishment too great, and yet from day to day industriously gathers, and heaps up fuel, to make the fire the greater!

6. You have no cause to complain of the punishment being greater than is just; for you have many and many a time provoked God to do his worst. If you should forbid a servant to do a given thing, and threaten that if he did it you would inflict some very dreadful punishment upon him, and he should do it notwithstanding, and you should

renew your command, and warn him in the most strict manner possible not to do it, and tell him you would surely punish him if he persisted, and should declare that his punishment should be exceedingly dreadful, and he should wholly disregard you, and should disobey you again, and you should continue to repeat your commands and warnings, still setting out the dreadfulness of the punishment, and he should still, without any regard to you, go on again and again to disobey you to your face, and this immediately on your thus forbidding and threatening him: could you take it any otherwise than as daring you to do your worst? But thus have you done towards God. You have had his commands repeated, and his threatenings set before you hundreds of times, and have been most solemnly warned. Yet have you notwithstanding gone on in ways which you knew were sinful, and have done the very things which he has forbidden, directly before his face. Job 15:25, 26, “For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler.” You have thus bid defiance to the Almighty, even when you saw the sword of his vindictive wrath uplifted, that it might fall upon your head. Will it, therefore, be any wonder if he shall make you know how terrible that wrath is, in your utter destruction?

10. WHEN THE WICKED SHALL HAVE FILLED UP THE MEASURE OF THEIR SIN, WRATH WILL COME UPON THEM TO THE UTTERMOST

Dated May, 1735.

“To fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” 1 Thessalonians 2:16

Subject: When those that continue in sin have filled up the measure of their sins, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost.

In verse 14, the apostle commends the Christian Thessalonians that they became the followers of the churches of God in Judea, both in faith and in sufferings. In *faith*, in that they received the Word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the Word of God. In *sufferings*, in that they had suffered like things of their own countrymen, as *they* had of the Jews. Upon which the apostle sets forth the persecuting, cruel, and perverse wickedness of that people, “who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have,” says he, “persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved.” Then come in the words of the text; “To fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.”

In these words we may observe two things:

1. To what effect was the heinous wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews, *viz. to fill up their sins*. God hath set bounds to every man’s wickedness. He suffers men to live, and to go on in sin, till they have filled up their measure, and then cuts them off. To this effect was the wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews. They were exceedingly wicked, and thereby filled up the measure of their sins a great pace. And the reason why they were permitted to be so obstinate under the preaching and miracles of Christ, and of the apostles, and under all the means used with them, was, that they might fill up the measure of their sins. This is agreeable to what Christ said, Mat. 23:31, 32, “Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.”

2. The punishment of their wickedness. “The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” There is a connection between the measure of men’s sin, and the measure of punishment. When they have filled up the measure of their sin, then is filled up the measure of God’s wrath.

The degree of their punishment, is the *uttermost* degree. This may respect both a national and personal punishment. If we take it as a *national* punishment, a little after the time when the epistle was written, wrath came upon the nation of the Jews to the uttermost, in their terrible destruction by the Romans; when, as Christ said, “was great tribulation, such as never was since the beginning of the world to that time,” Mat. 24:21. That nation had before suffered many of the fruits of divine wrath for their sins; but this was beyond all, this was their highest degree of punishment as a nation. If we take it as a *personal* punishment, then it respects their punishment in hell. God often punishes men very dreadfully in this world; but in hell “wrath comes on them to the

uttermost.” By this expression is also denoted the *certainty* of this punishment. For though the punishment was then future, yet it is spoken of as present: “The wrath *is* come upon them to the uttermost.” It was as certain as if it had already taken place. God, who knows all things, speaks of things that are not as though they were; for things present and things future are equally certain with him. It also denotes the *near approach* of it. *The wrath IS come; i.e.* it is just at hand; it is at the door; as it proved with respect to that nation; their terrible destruction by the Romans was soon after the apostle wrote this epistle.

DOCTRINE

When those that continue in sin shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost.

I. PROP. There is a *certain measure* that God hath set to the sin of every wicked man. God says concerning the sin of man, as he says to the raging waves of the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further. The measure of some is much greater than of others. Some reprobates commit but a little sin in comparison with others, and so are to endure proportionably a smaller punishment. There are many vessels of wrath; but some are smaller and others greater vessels. Some will contain comparatively but little wrath, others a greater measure of it. Sometimes, when we see men go to dreadful lengths, and become very heinously wicked, we are ready to wonder that God lets them alone. He sees them go on in such audacious wickedness, and keeps silence, nor does anything to interrupt them, but they go smoothly on, and meet with no hurt. But sometimes the reason why God lets them alone is because they have not filled up the measure of their sins. When they live in dreadful wickedness, they are but filling up the measure which God hath *limited* for them. This is sometimes why God suffers very wicked men to live so long; because their iniquity is not full, Gen. 15:16, “The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” For this reason also God sometimes suffers them to live in prosperity. Their prosperity is a snare to them, and an occasion of their sinning a great deal more. Wherefore God suffers them to have such a snare, because he suffers them to fill up a larger measure. So, for this cause, he sometimes suffers them to live under great light, and great means and advantages, at the same time to neglect and mis-improve all. Everyone shall live till he hath filled up his measure.

II. PROP. While men continue in sin, they are filling the measure set them. This is the work in which they spend their whole lives. They begin in their childhood; and if they live to grow old in sin, they still go on with this work. It is the work with which every day is filled up. They may alter their business in other respects. They may sometimes be about one thing and sometimes about another, but they never change from this work of filling up the measure of their sins. Whatever they put their hands to, they are still employed in this work. This is the first thing that they set themselves about when they awake in the morning, and the last thing they do at night. They are all the while treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It is a gross mistake of some natural men, who think that when they read and pray they do not add to their sins. But on the contrary, [they] think they diminish their guilt by these exercises. They think, that instead of adding to their sins, they do something to satisfy for their past offences. But instead of that, they do but

add to the measure by their best prayers, and by those services with which they themselves are most pleased.

III. PROP. When once the measure of their sins is filled up, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost. God will then wait no longer upon them. Wicked men think that God is altogether such a one as themselves, because, when they commit such wickedness, he keeps silence. "Because judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the children of men is fully set in them to do evil." But when once they shall have filled up the measure of their sins, judgment will be executed; God will not bear with them any longer. Now is the day of grace, and the day of patience, which they spend in filling up their sins. But when their sins shall be full, then will come the day of wrath, the day of the fierce anger of God. God often executes his wrath on ungodly men, in a less degree, in this world. He sometimes brings afflictions upon them, and that in wrath. Sometimes he expresses his wrath in very sore judgments. Sometimes he appears in a terrible manner, not only outwardly, but also in the inward expressions of it on their consciences. Some, before they died, have had the wrath of God inflicted on their souls in degrees that have been intolerable. But these things are only forerunners of their punishment, only slight foretastes of wrath. God never stirs up all his wrath against wicked men while in this world. But when once wicked men shall have filled up the measure of their sins, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost; and that in the following respects:

1. Wrath will come upon them without any *restraint* or moderation in the degree of it. God doth always lay, as it were, a restraint upon himself. He doth not stir up his wrath. He stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind. He lets not his arm light down on wicked men with its full weight. But when sinners shall have filled up the measure of their sins, there will be no caution, no restraint. His rough wind will not be stayed nor moderated. The wrath of God will be poured out like fire. He will come forth, not only in anger, but in the fierceness of his anger; he will execute wrath with power, so as to show what his wrath is, and make his power known. There will be nothing to alleviate his wrath. His heavy wrath will lie on them, without anything to lighten the burden, or to keep off, in any measure, the full weight of it from pressing the soul. His eye will not spare, neither will he regard the sinner's cries and lamentations, however loud and bitter. Then shall wicked men know that God is the Lord. They shall know how great that majesty is which they have despised, and how dreadful that threatened wrath is which they have so little regarded. Then shall come on wicked men that punishment which they deserve. God will exact of them the uttermost farthing. Their iniquities are marked before him; they are all written in his book. And in the future world he will reckon with them, and they must pay all the debt. Their sins are laid up in store with God. They are sealed up among his treasures; and them he will recompense, even recompense into their bosoms. The consummate degree of punishment will not be executed till the day of judgment. But the wicked are sealed over to this consummate punishment immediately after death; they are cast into hell, and there bound in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day; and they know that the highest degree of punishment is coming upon them. Final wrath will be executed without any mixture. All mercy [and] all enjoyments will be taken away. God sometimes expresses his wrath in this world. But here good things and evil are mixed together. In the future there will be only evil things.

2. Wrath will then be executed without any *merciful* circumstances. The judgments which God executes on ungodly men in this world are attended with many merciful circumstances. There is much patience and long-suffering, together with judgment. Judgments are joined with continuance of opportunity to seek mercy. But in hell there will be no more exercises of divine patience. The judgments which God exercises on ungodly men in this world are warnings to them to avoid greater punishments. But the wrath which will come upon them, when they shall have filled up the measure of their sin, will not be of the nature of warnings. Indeed they will be effectually awakened, and made thoroughly sensible, by what they shall suffer. Yet their being awakened and made sensible will do them no good. Many a wicked man hath suffered very awful things from God in this world, which have been a means of saving good. But that wrath which sinners shall suffer after death will be no way for their good. God will have no merciful design in it. Neither will it be possible that they should get any good by that or by anything else.

3. Wrath will be so executed, as to perfect the work to which wrath tends, *viz. utterly to undo* the subject of it. Wrath is often so executed in this life, as greatly to distress persons, and bring them into great calamity. Yet not so as to complete the ruin of those who suffer it. But in another world, it will be so executed, as to finish their destruction, and render them utterly and perfectly undone. It will take away all comfort, all hope, and all support. The soul will be, as it were, utterly crushed; the wrath will be wholly intolerable. It must sink, and will utterly sink, and will have no more strength to keep itself from sinking than a worm would have to keep itself from being crushed under the weight of a mountain. The wrath will be so great, so mighty and powerful, as wholly to abolish all manner of welfare, Mat. 21:44, "But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

4. When persons shall have filled up the measure of their sin, that wrath will come upon them which is *eternal*. Though men may suffer very terrible and awful judgments in this world, yet those judgments have an end. They may be long continued, yet they commonly admit of relief. Temporal distresses and sorrows have intermissions and respite, and commonly by degrees abate and wear off. But the wrath that shall be executed, when the measure of sin shall have been filled up, will have no end. Thus it will be to the uttermost as to its duration. It will be of so long continuance, that it will be impossible it should be longer. Nothing can be longer than eternity.

5. When persons shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost of what is *threatened*. Sin is an infinite evil; and the punishment which God hath threatened against it is very dreadful. The threatenings of God against the workers of iniquity are very awful; but these threatenings are never fully accomplished in this world. However dreadful things some men may suffer in this life, yet God never fully executes his threatenings for so much as one sin, till they have filled up the whole measure. The threatenings of the law are never answered by anything that any man suffers here. The most awful judgment in this life doth not answer God's threatenings, either in degree, or in circumstances, or in duration. If the greatest sufferings that ever are endured in this life should be eternal, it would not answer the threatening. Indeed temporal judgments *belong* to the threatenings of the law; but these are not *answered* by them; they are but foretastes of the punishment. "The wages of sin is death." No expression of wrath that are suffered before men have

filled up the measure of their sin are its full wages. But *then*, God will reckon with them, and will recompense into their bosoms the full deserved sum.

APPLICATION

The use I would make of this doctrine is, of warning to natural men, to rest no longer in sin, and to make haste to flee from it. The things which have been said, under this doctrine, may well be awakening, awful considerations to you. It is awful to consider whose wrath it is that abides upon you, and of what wrath you are in danger. It is impossible to express the misery of a natural condition. It is like being in Sodom, with a dreadful storm of fire and brimstone hanging over it, just ready to break forth, and to be poured down upon it. The clouds of divine vengeance are full, and just ready to burst. Here let those who yet continue in sin, in this town, consider particularly,

1. Under what *great means* and advantages you continue in sin. God is now favouring us with very great and extraordinary means and advantages, in that we have such extraordinary tokens of the presence of God among us. His Spirit is so remarkably poured out, and multitudes of all ages, and all sorts, are converted and brought home to Christ. God appears among us in the most extraordinary manner, perhaps, that ever he did in New England. The children of Israel saw many mighty works of God, when he brought them out of Egypt. But we at this day see works more mighty, and of a more glorious nature.

We who live under such light, have had loud calls; but now above all. Now is a day of salvation. The fountain hath been set open among us in an extraordinary manner, and hath stood open for a considerable time. Yet you continue in sin, and the calls that you have hitherto had have not brought you to be washed in it. What extraordinary advantages have you lately enjoyed to stir you up! How hath everything in the town, of late, been of tendency! Those things which used to be the greatest hindrances have been removed. You have not the ill examples of immoral persons to be a temptation to you. There is not now that vain worldly talk, and ill company, to divert you, and to be a hindrance to you, which there used to be. Now you have multitudes of good examples set before you. There are many now all around you, who, instead of diverting and hindering you, are earnestly desirous of your salvation, and willing to do all that they can to move you to flee to Christ. They have a thirsting desire for it. The chief talk in the town has of late been about the things of religion, and has been such as hath tended to promote, and not to hinder, your souls' good. Everything all around you hath tended to stir you up; and will you yet continue in sin?

Some of you have continued in sin till you are far advanced in life. You were warned when you were children; and some of you had awakenings then. However, the time went away. You became men and women; and then you stirred up again, you had the strivings of God's Spirit. And some of you have fixed the times when you would make thorough work of seeking salvation. Some of you perhaps determined to do it when you should be married and settled in the world; others when you should have finished such a business, and when your circumstances should be so and so altered. Now these times have come, and are past; yet you continue in sin.

Many of you have had remarkable warnings of providence. Some of you have been warned by the deaths of near *relations*. You have stood by, and seen others die and go

into eternity; yet this hath not been effectual. Some of you have been near death *yourselves*, have been brought nigh the grave in sore sickness, and were full of your promises how you would behave yourselves, if it should please God to spare your lives. Some of you have very narrowly escaped death by dangerous accidents; but God was pleased to spare you, to give you a further space to repent; yet you continue in sin.

Some of you have seen times of remarkable outpourings of the Spirit of God, in this town, in times past; but it had no good effect on you. *You* had the strivings of the Spirit of God too, as well as others. God did not so pass by your door, but that he came and knocked; yet you stood it out. Now God hath come again in a more remarkable manner than ever before, and hath been pouring out his Spirit for some months, in its most gracious influence; yet you remain in sin until now. In the beginning of this awakening, you were warned to flee from wrath and to forsake your sins. You were told what a wide door there was open, what an accepted time it was, and were urged to press into the kingdom of God. And many did press in; they forsook their sins, and believed in Christ. *But you, when you had seen it, repented not, that you might believe him.*

Then you were warned again, and still others have been pressing and thronging into the kingdom of God. Many have fled for refuge, and have laid hold on Christ; yet you continue in sin and unbelief. You have seen multitudes of all sorts, of all ages, young and old, flocking to Christ, and many of about your age and your circumstances. But you still are in the same miserable condition in which you used to be. You have seen persons daily flocking to Christ, as doves to their windows. God hath not only poured out his Spirit on this town, but also on other towns around us, and they are flocking in there, as well as here. This blessing spreads further and further; many, far and near, seem to be setting their faces Zion-ward. Yet you who live here, where this work first began, continue behind still; you have no lot or portion in this matter.

2. How *dreadful* the wrath of God is, when it is executed to the uttermost. To make you in some measure sensible of that, I desire you to consider whose wrath it is. The wrath of a king is the roaring of a lion; but this is the wrath of Jehovah, the Lord God Omnipotent. Let us consider, what can we rationally think of it? How dreadful must be the wrath of such a Being, when it comes upon a person to the uttermost, without any pity, or moderation, or merciful circumstances! What must be the uttermost of his wrath, who made heaven and earth by the word of his power; who spake, and it was done, who commanded, and it stood fast! What must his wrath be, who commandeth the sun, and it rises not, and sealeth up the stars! What must his wrath be, who shaketh the earth out of its place, and causeth the pillars of heaven to tremble! What must his wrath be, who rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, who removeth the mountains out of their places, and overturneth them in his anger! What must his wrath be, whose majesty is so awful, that no man could live in the sight of it! What must the wrath of such a Being be, when it comes to the uttermost, when he makes his majesty appear and shine bright in the misery of wicked men! And what is a worm of the dust before the fury and under the weight of this wrath, which the stoutest devils can not bear, but utterly sink, and are crushed under it. Consider how dreadful the wrath of God is sometimes in this world, only in a little taste or view of it. Sometimes, when God only enlightens conscience, to have some sense of his wrath, it causes the stout-hearted to cry out. Nature is ready to sink under it, when indeed it is but a little glimpse of divine wrath

that is seen. This hath been observed in many cases. But if a slight taste and apprehension of wrath be so dreadful and intolerable, what must it be, when it comes upon persons to the uttermost! When a few drops or little sprinkling of wrath is so distressing and overbearing to the soul, how must it be when God opens the flood-gates, and lets the mighty deluge of his wrath come pouring down upon men's guilty heads, and brings in all his waves and billows upon their souls! How little of God's wrath will sink them! Psa. 2:12, "When his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

3. Consider, you know not what wrath God may be about to execute upon wicked men in *this world*. Wrath may, in some sense, be coming upon them, in the present life, to the uttermost, for ought we know. When it is said of the Jews, "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," respect is had, not only to the execution of divine wrath on that people in hell, but that terrible destruction of Judea and Jerusalem, which was then near approaching, by the Romans. We know not but the wrath is now coming, in some peculiarly awful manner, on the wicked world. God seems, by the things which he is doing among us, to be coming forth for some great thing. The work which hath been lately wrought among us is no ordinary thing. He doth not work in his usual way, but in a way very extraordinary; and it is probable, that it is a forerunner of some very great revolution. We must not pretend to say what is in the womb of providence, or what is in the book of God's secret decrees; yet we may and ought to discern the signs of these times.

Though God be now about to do glorious things for his church and people, yet it is probable that they will be accompanied with dreadful things to his enemies. It is the manner of God, when he brings about any glorious revolution for his people, at the same time to execute very awful judgments on his enemies, Deu. 32:43, "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people." Isa. 3:10, 11, "Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Isa. 65:13, 14, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." We find in Scripture, that where glorious times are prophesied to God's people, there are at the same time awful judgments foretold to his enemies. What God is now about to do, we know not. But this we may know, that there will be no safety to any but those who are in the ark. Therefore it behooves all to haste and flee for their lives, to get into a safe condition, to get into Christ. Then they need not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof: for God will be their refuge and strength; they need not be afraid of evil tidings; their hearts may be fixed, trusting in the Lord.

11. WICKED MEN INCONSISTENT WITH THEMSELVES

Dated December, 1738.

“But where-unto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.” Matthew 11:16-19

Subject: Wicked men are inconsistent with themselves.

The occasion of this discourse was John’s sending to Christ two of his disciples, saying, “Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?” When the messengers had gone back, Christ enters into a discourse with the multitude concerning John, of which the verses read are a part, in which Christ reproves the unreasonableness of the Jews in rejecting God’s messengers. We may observe in the words the following things:

I. The messengers of God that are here instanced in that they had been rejected, *viz.* John the Baptist and Christ. The former is spoken of in the context as being on some accounts the greatest of all the prophets that ever came before Christ, as you may see, verses 9-11, “But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” The latter, even Christ, was the great prophet of God, the Head and Lord of the prophets, God’s only-begotten Son.

II. In what the unreasonableness of their rejecting these messengers of God appears, *viz.* in their inconsistency with themselves in those objections which they made against them. And here we may observe,

First, the nature of their objections against these two messengers of God. They objected against their manner of living with respect to their meat and drink.

Second, the different manner of living of those two messengers of God. Christ came eating and drinking, but John came neither eating nor drinking, *i.e.* John lived on a very coarse and spare diet, as we read, Mat. 3:4, “And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.” He carefully abstained from that free use of pleasant meats and drinks that others allowed themselves in. But Christ came eating and drinking, *i.e.* freely using the comforts and enjoyments of life, taking indifferently all kinds of food or drink that were wholesome, comfortable, and lawful. This diverse manner of living of John the Baptist and Christ was agreeable to the diverse errands that they came upon. John’s errand was to call men to repentance, to awaken them to a sense of their sin and misery, to bring them to mourn for their sins, and humble themselves before God for them, that they might be prepared for the comforts and blessings of the kingdom of heaven that were to be introduced by Jesus Christ. A life of abstinence from the

pleasant things of this world was agreeable to the purpose of awakening the soul and of leading it to mourning and humiliation for sin, which it was especially John's business to preach and set an example of.

But after John had thus prepared the way with awakenings and repentance, then Christ came to administer comfort to those that were thus prepared for it, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort those that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. Isa. 61:1-3. And freely eating and drinking, and enjoying the comforts and pleasant things of life, [were] agreeable to such an errand as this, and therefore Christ, in his first beginning of his public ministry which succeeded John's, declares this to be the business he was come upon. Luke 4:16-19, "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias: and when he had opened the book he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Third, their unreasonableness appears in the fact that though the way of living of these two persons was in this respect so diverse, yet they objected against both. John came neither eating nor drinking. And for that they objected against him, and reviled him, as though he was one that was very odd and strange, and beside himself, and under the influence of a diabolical spirit. This objection seemed to manifest a dislike of such a way of living, as though it was their opinion that a man ought not to live thus abstemiously, but should eat and drink freely as other people did. But yet when Christ came and did that, then they objected against that too, and bitterly reproached him for that, and called him a glutton, and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. So that there was no escaping their reproaches. If a man of God lived a life of trial and abstinence, they spoke of it as matter of great reproach, and yet if he did not so, they made that a matter of no less reproach. It was a crime with them for a prophet to eat and drink, and it was also a crime to let it alone. So inconsistent were they with themselves that there was not such thing as a prophet's suiting them. They condemned the doing of that which at the same time they condemned the not doing of, and both they condemned with great bitterness, and virulent and contemptuous reproaches. This plainly showed that their objections against John the Baptist and Christ were but vain pretences, and that the true reason why they disliked them was not the manner of living of either of them with respect to eating and drinking, but because they hated their persons and the business they came upon. When men have a prejudice against other persons they will be ready to find fault with everything in them, they will find out bad names for their virtues, and will reproach those things in them which they will approve of and commend in others to whose persons they have a liking.

III. The thing to which Christ compares their inconsistency with themselves, to wit, to children who meet their companions in the streets or market-places, and endeavour to

aid them in their play, in things of a diverse and contrary nature. For it they pipe unto them with notes manifesting cheerfulness and mirth, that does not suit them. They refuse to fall in with this, as though they did not like such cheerfulness, and as though mourning would suit them better. And then, when they see that they took a contrary course, they mourned with them, but yet neither do they fall in with that, they do not lament with the. So that they comfort them in nothing, neither mirth nor mourning.

So John the Baptist preaching repentance came with tokens of sorrow and mourning, and mean apparel, with a garment of camel's hair, and with a leathern girdle about his loins, and with great abstinence. But Christ when he comes, comes eating and drinking with tokens of comfort and joy. But neither of them suited them. From the text thus explained we shall derive the following.

Doctrine. Wicked men are very inconsistent with themselves. They are so in the following respects:

- I. The dictates of their darkened understandings are inconsistent with themselves.
- II. Their wills are inconsistent with their reason.
- III. Their wills are inconsistent with themselves.
- IV. Their outward show is inconsistent with their hearts.
- V. Their profession is inconsistent with their practice.
- VI. Their practice is inconsistent with their hopes.
- VII. Their practice is inconsistent with itself.

I. Their understandings are inconsistent with themselves. I do not mean that the faculty of reason and understanding is inconsistent with itself. For the faculty of understanding with which God has endowed man is wholly good and right. It is that wherein the natural image of God consists, and is the excellency of man's nature. And if the faculty of reason be duly improved, it will lead men right. Light is never inconsistent with itself. But the understandings of natural men are perverted and blinded by sin, and are inconsistent with themselves in two ways:

First, their practical judgment is inconsistent with their own reason. By their practical judgment, I mean that judgment which they make of things that prevail, so as to determine their actions and govern their practice. This in wicked men is in innumerable things contrary to their own reason. For, in forming their judgment of things by which they govern themselves, they do not inquire at the mouth of reason, but at the mouth of their inclinations. Their lusts have a far greater hand in the judgments that they make of things, and by which they govern themselves, than their reason. As for instance, their practical judgment is that the things of this fading world, the enjoyments of this short life, are things of greater importance than the things of the eternal world; and yet if they inquire at the mouth of their own reason, that tells them the contrary. Their reason tells them that it is most plain and evident that eternal things, things that are to last forever, are of vastly greater importance than the things of time.

So their reason tells them that it must needs be the part of wisdom and prudence to improve the present time with the utmost diligence and earnestness, and to make ready for death. And yet they are not convinced of it, but their governing opinion is, that it is best to neglect the business of religion for the present, and to enjoy their ease, and sloth, and lusts awhile longer.

Their reason tells them, that it is well worth the while for every man to deny himself outward pleasure for the good of his soul. But their governing opinion or judgment is contrary, *viz.* that it is not best. and that pleasures and the gratification of their lusts are worth more than any benefit they would obtain by seeking their salvation.

The reason of young people tells them that it is their true wisdom to improve the time of youth. Reason tells them that life is very uncertain. But when such persons hear ministers preach concerning the infinite importance of eternal things. the uncertainty of life, the peace and comfort that will be found in a state of happier existence with God, are told how light a thing the difficulty and sufferings of a holy life are in comparison, their reason assents to all this, but their practical judgments are the contrary. When a person has lately died, either in extreme terror and amazement, under a sense of the guilt of a misspent life, or full of joy and comfort, in consequence of a life of holy walking with God, their reason tells them that it would be well worth their while to labour and deny themselves all their lifetime to be ready for death, and to have a solid foundation of peace and comfort laid up against such an hour. But yet their practice is directly the reverse.

Second, some of their judgments of things are inconsistent with others. For instance, in temporal things, they judge that the good which is of long continuance is to be preferred before that which is of short continuance, and that a long-continued calamity is more to be dreaded and avoided than a short one. Their governing judgment is thus in these things, but yet it is the reverse in spiritual things.

Again, such arguments as they judge to furnish good and clear evidence with them in those things that are agreeable to their sinful inclination, they think not to have any evidence in those things that are contrary to them. In temporal things they think it to be their wisdom to improve times of special advantage, and to watch against that which might ensnare them, or endanger their welfare, but in other things they think the reverse. In these things, and many more that might be mentioned, their judgments are inconsistent with themselves.

II. Their wills are inconsistent with their reason. This inconsistency is a consequence of the foregoing. For if their practical judgment be contrary to their own reason, it will follow that their wills are contrary to their reason. For the will ever follows the dictate of the practical judgment.

Their wills are contrary to their reason in two respects.

First, they will those things which their reason tells them are inconsistent with their duty. And so they are inconsistent with themselves, as their wills are inconsistent with their consciences. Conscience is a principle implanted in the heart of every man, and is as essential to his nature as the faculty of reason, for it is a natural and necessary attendant of that faculty. But the wills of wicked men are contrary to it, and

inconsistent with it. They choose those things which they know to be evil, and ought not to be chosen. They choose that which their own reason tells them is unreasonable and vile, and unbecoming men, and justly provoking to their Maker, and contrary to the end for which they are made.

Hence arises an inward war in their own minds. Their wills and their consciences warring one against another. There is no true peace in their hearts, for they are at war with themselves, and therefore they are like the troubled sea that can not rest, unless by a course of horrible violations of the dictates of their own conscience, they have proceeded so far in their war against their own consciences as to stupefy conscience, and lay it as it were dead, which is the case of some persons.

Second, they will those things which their reason tells them are contrary to their own interest, yea, those things which their own reason tells them are the way to their ruin and misery. At the very same time that wicked men are tempted to commit some sin, and their reason then tells them that it will expose them to the eternal wrath of God, and that it will therefore be a dreadful folly for them to do it, yet they will do it. Or when their reason tells them that the course in which they are going leads to destruction, and represents to them that it is the greatest folly, yet they will go on in it, and run the venture of being everlastingly undone.

So inconsistent are they with themselves, that they do and allow that of which they hope to repent, they choose that now for choosing which at the same time they expect and hope hereafter to charge themselves with great folly, and to be convinced that it is folly, and to lament and bewail it. Nay, they would not do it if they did not expect hereafter to see that it is very foolish in them so to do, and heartily to mourn for it.

In this respect they are so inconsistent with themselves that they are their own worst enemies. They are inconsistent with themselves, as two mortal enemies can not consist together, or walk together. By choosing those things which their own reason tells them is contrary to their own interest, and tends to their own undoing, they may be said to hate their own souls, and to love their own ruin. Pro. 8:36, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death."

III. Their wills and dispositions are inconsistent with their wills. The Jews would neither have a prophet to come eating and drinking, nor would they have him otherwise. They knew not what they would have themselves, there was no pleasing them. To eat and drink did not please them; that they reproached as drunkenness, and gluttony. Nor did it please them any more not to eat nor drink. This they reproached no less virulently, as though it were an argument that a man was out of his wits, and possessed by the devil. The inconsistency of wicked men's wills with themselves appears in the following things:

First, they do, in some respects, choose and refuse the same things.

I shall mention some instances.

1. In some respects, many of them wish to be converted from sin to God. They think that they should be ready to give almost all that they have in the world to be converted, and they pray to God to convert them, and seek for conversion, and take advice to that

end, and use a great deal of labour for it. But yet if it be considered what conversion is, or what is meant by conversion, *viz.* the being turned from all their sins to God. They have no desire to be converted, they will not have conversion when it is offered them, when it comes to them they are not willing to be saved from sin, for they are not willing to part with their sins. When they think of the thing in the general, they wish that they were turned from sin. But when it comes to particulars, they can not comply with it, they love their sins too well. When a particular lust comes and pleads to be indulged and gratified, then in this instance they have no wish to be converted, they are not willing to be turned from their sin altogether, they can not bear entirely and forever to renounce and reject it. They have a wish to be converted, but not from enjoying their right hands, and right eyes. They pray that they may be thoroughly and savingly converted, and seem to wish and pray for it. But yet when it comes to them, they are not willing for any more than a partial conversion. They can not comply with a thorough conversion, for a thorough conversion is a turning from every one of their sins. And that proves that they would be willing to be converted from their sins for a little while, but to part with them finally is what they can not find it in their hearts to comply with.

2. Some wicked men do in certain respects desire that a work of humiliation may be wrought in them, and yet are utterly opposed to humiliation. They do many things that they may be humbled, and pray that they may be brought off from their own righteousness, and yet would by no means let it go, but are indeed building up their own righteousness all the time.

They seem in some respects to wish that they might submit to the justice and sovereignty of God in their condemnation, but yet are utterly averse to any such thing as owning God's justice. They are averse to this submission, as appears from their showing such a spirit of strife with God. They do not believe that God is just and sovereign, and how therefore is it possible that they should desire really to submit to God's justice and sovereignty? They can not heartily and fervently desire to submit to God as just and sovereign, when they do not believe that he possesses those attributes, but think him unjust and tyrannical.

3. They in some respects wish that they might come to Christ, but indeed are utterly averse to come to him, so that their will is in this also inconsistent with itself. They pray that they may come to Christ, they are ready to say that they would give all the world for an interest in Christ; and yet they will not have an interest in him, for that is what is offered them, and what Christ is continually inviting and urging them to accept, but they refuse it. It is true they like some things in Christ, they like salvation from the pains of hell, they like that safety from everlasting misery which they hear is to be had in him. But there are other things in him which they do not like, his holiness, his salvation from sin, his kingly office, and therefore they will not accept him as he is. If they could have a part of Christ without the rest they would, but they will not accept of the whole of Christ. Indeed they are not willing to come to Christ and cordially accept of him as a Saviour from hell, for they do not see that he is sufficient to save. And besides, they are not convinced that they have deserved it. There is no such thing as being cordially willing to accept of a Saviour, who offered to deliver us from an unjust and undeserved punishment. For the hearty accepting of him as a Saviour from the punishment would be allowing the punishment to be just. And God's offering a Saviour

from undeserved punishment is an imposition upon them. A man therefore can never heartily and sincerely accept such an offer. At the same time that natural men seem to wish, and pray, and strive to come to Christ, they are in their hearts bitter enemies to him. And there is no such thing as a sincere willingness to accept of one towards whom at the same time we are bitter enemies.

4. Natural men in some respects are desirous to go to heaven, and yet are averse to heaven. They are full of designs as to what they will do hereafter that they may go to heaven, but yet have no inclination to that wherein heaven really consists. The employments of heaven, which consist altogether in holy acts and holy contemplation, in holy exercises and holy praises, are that for which they have no desires nor inclination. And for the happiness of heaven they have no relish, but on the contrary, a dislike and an aversion. For the happiness of heaven consists in holy communion with God and Christ, to which their natures are opposite. Nor have they any desire for the company of heaven. And when it is observed what heaven really is, they choose this world before heaven.

5. They wish to have salvation from misery, but yet are averse to those things wherein salvation consists. And at the same time that they pray to Christ to serve them, they undo themselves as fast as they can. They spend their time daily in working out their own ruin. They pray that they may be delivered from hell, and yet are all the while piling up fuel and kindling and blowing the fire. Thus their wills are inconsistent with themselves, as they do in some respects choose and refuse the same things.

Second, they dislike and refuse spiritual things as they are, and yet refuse to have them otherwise. This was the very case with the Jews in the text, they would not have a prophet come eating and drinking. If he did so, they looked on him very reproachfully. Nor yet would they have him not come eating and drinking, for if he did so they called him a mad man, and possessed with a devil, which is a lively specimen of the inconsistency of wicked men, of which we are speaking.

I will mention several instances of this inconsistency on the part of wicked men.

1. They do not like God as he is, and yet they would not like him if he were otherwise. They would not like him if he were otherwise than he is in those very things for which they most dislike him.

(1.) They dislike God because he is a holy God. This is the main foundation of the enmity that wicked men have against God. His perfect purity and holiness make them enemies to him, because from this perfection of his nature he necessarily hates sin, and so hates their sins, which they love, and he will not and can not allow of any sin in them. They are utter enemies to such a holy God. And yet they would not like him if they supposed him to be an unholy being, or if they supposed him to be at all wanting in perfect holiness, for then he could not be depended upon. If he were unholy, they know that if he promised them anything they could have no certain dependence upon it, for an unholy being is liable to break his promises. If he were unholy they could have no dependence on his faithfulness, and therefore they would never be willing to give up themselves to him as their God, for they would not know how he would dispose of them, what he would do with them. If he were to obligate himself by covenant, yet

they could have no dependence upon it; and therefore they would by no means accept of such a God to be their God, to rule over them, and dispose of them.

(2.) They do not like God, because he is a God of justice. This indeed is a branch of his holiness, for being strictly and perfectly just, he is disposed to execute just punishment on all iniquity. Therefore they are exceeding enemies to him, for they are the persons who are obnoxious, being those that have committed iniquity, and exposed themselves to just punishment. And yet they would not like God if he were an unjust God. If he were an unjust being, that would be an insuperable objection with them against accepting him as their God, for then they would think with themselves, "how do I know how unjustly he may deal with me." And wicked men, however unjust they are, never like injustice against themselves. And they never would be persuaded to accept of such a God as their Lord and King, for they should then expect to be wronged and abused by him. They would dread committing themselves into the hands of a God that is infinite in power, and can do what he will with them, and has no principle of holiness or justice to keep him from using that power in the most unjust and abusive manner towards them.

Though they are enemies to God because of his justice, yet whenever at any time they think God deals unjustly, they quarrel with him for it. How frequent is it for natural men, when there are any of God's methods of providence, the justice of which they can not see through, to have their hearts swell with enmity, and to be full of blasphemous, malignant thoughts against God, if they do no even manifest it outwardly by a fretful, discontented behaviour, and murmuring speeches?

(3.) They do not like God because he is an Almighty God and is able to destroy them when he pleases. Nor yet would they like him if he were a weak being and of but little power. They would on this account refuse to close with him as their God, for they would have a God able to do great things for them. They wish to have many things done for them, and they would have a God that can do them.

(4.) They do not like God because he is an omniscient God, for hereby he sees all their wickedness. But yet neither would they like him if he did not know all things, for then in many cases he would not know what their case is, and what it requires, and what is best for them. He might ruin them in the disposal of them through mistake, he might not know how to extricate them out of difficulties in which they are or may be involved.

(5.) Natural men oftentimes dislike God in the exercises of his infinite sovereign mercy, when it is exercised towards others. They are greatly displeased at God's being so gracious to others. They dislike it much that God bestows converting grace upon them and pardoning mercy, and a title to eternal life upon them. When they hear of their conversion it is unpleasant news, and they find fault with it the more when the persons who seem to have received such mercy are very unworthy, and have been very great sinners. They think of the sins of which they have been guilty, and reckon up all the instances of wickedness they can think of, so that the mercy exercised towards them is the more displeasing because it appears so great in being bestowed on one so unworthy, like the elder brother, Luke 15:30, "But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." And yet they would not like God if he were not infinitely merciful, for then they would

have less hopes of obtaining mercy themselves. They are angry because God appears so merciful in the exercises of his grace to others. But yet they should have God merciful, and are at the same time afraid that he is not merciful enough to be willing to pardon their sins, and bestow his blessing on them. Thus natural men do not like God as he is, nor yet would they like him if he were otherwise.

2. They do not like men that are holy, nor yet do they like men that are wicked. They do not like holy men, for they know that such do not approve of that which themselves love, and the lives of the godly are a condemnation of the wickedness of their own hearts and lives. Hence there is an enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Gen. 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." But although they do not like men if they are godly, so neither do they like them if they are ungodly. They are more forward than the godly are to reprove others for their vice and wickedness, and bitterly to reflect on others for their pride, their covetousness, and their idleness. None are more apt to find fault with wickedness in others than those who are wicked themselves, and one great reason is that other men's lusts clash with theirs. Thus one man's pride crosses the pride of another, for it is the nature of pride to desire to be alone in advancement, to make the person in whom it is affect to be a God, to appropriate all power and all honour to himself as his own prerogative. But such an aim in one man clashes with such an aim in another. Hence there are none that can bear pride in others so ill, as those that are very proud themselves, and there never are such strife and enmity as between proud, haughty men. Proud men love to have others walk humbly before them, and nothing enrages them so much as to have others carry themselves proudly. For the same reason covetous men dislike covetous men, for this lust clashes with the same lust in another. Every covetous man strives to get all into his own hands, to get and keep all that he can to himself from his neighbour. So the lusts of envy, and malice, and revenge, are hated in others by envious and malicious men; because none are so obnoxious to malice, and envy, and revenge, as those that have the most of these qualities. Hence the wicked world on earth, who are at enmity with the church of God for its holiness, do not at all agree together. Though they agree in being alike under the power of wickedness, yet how full is the world of wicked men of strife and contention, of perpetual jars, animosities, and confusion! Rom. 1:29, 30, 31, 32, "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." So Tit. 3:3, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." And hence also it comes to pass that devils and wicked men in hell, though they hate angels and saints in heaven for their holiness, have yet no love one to another. Though they all agree in being perfectly wicked, yet they hate one another with implacable hatred, and are continually mortifying and tormenting one another so that hell is a world of perfect malice and contention.

3. They refuse to accept of heaven as it is. Yet they would not like it if it were otherwise. As has been observed before, they have no relish for the holy enjoyments

and employments of heaven. They dislike heaven for its holiness, and yet they would not like it if it were unholy. For then they would be liable to the same troubles and vexations in heaven that they meet with in this world. If it were not that heaven differs from this world in holiness, it would be as full of pride and malice, envy, revenge, contention, injustice, violence, and cruelty, as this world is, and so would be as vexatious a world as this is. Wicked men are as liable to the trouble and vexation of the world, which arise from those things, as godly men, and in some respects more so, for they have no divine supports against those things, no safer portion to which their hearts betake themselves.

Third, the things that wicked men choose, imply an inconsistency in their own nature. The things which they would have are impossibilities and self-contradictions.

1. They would have a sufficient Saviour, and not a holy one. They would not have a holy Saviour, because such a Saviour does not at all agree with their lusts. But yet they would have a sufficient Saviour, one that is sufficient to save them from hell, and so one that is sufficient to make a proper atonement for all their sins, to make full satisfaction to the justice of God, that they may escape the penalty of that justice. But these things prove a great inconsistency, for how is it possible that a Saviour, who is not perfectly holy himself, should make satisfaction for the unholiness of others? How is it possible that one who deserves to suffer the eternal wrath of God himself for his own sin, should by his sufferings appease God's wrath for the sin of others?

They would have a worthy Saviour, as appears in this; when they are awakened, and in some measure sensible of their guilt, they dare not come to Christ, because they can not see that he has worthiness enough to commend them to God. They are afraid that he is not worthy enough. And yet they dislike Christ because he is a holy Saviour! And what an inconsistency is this! How can he be a worthy Saviour, and not a holy one? So that their choice does in effect contain this inconsistency in it, that they would have a Saviour who is infinitely worthy, without worthiness.

2. They wish for salvation from misery without salvation from sin. They do not love misery any better than others, and hope to be saved from it. And some of them are in distress for fear of misery. But yet they would have it without being parted from their sins, which is in its own nature impossible, for the creature that is sinful, must be miserable. For misery consists in separation from the fountain of happiness, and an enmity between the creature and the chief good. But sin implies in its own nature such a separation. It is a separation from that God who is the fountain of good, and is enmity against him, and therefore necessarily brings enmity from that being against the sinner, if it be continued. Sin is the seed of misery. Misery is the necessary fruit of it. It is necessary from the nature of God, who, being infinitely holy, necessarily hates it, and so necessarily arrays himself against that being who remains under the pollution and guilt of it. And it is necessary from the nature of man, and the nature of sin. Misery is the natural fruit of sin, as the bud and blossom are the natural fruit of that on which they grow, and is so spoken of, Eze. 7:9, 10, "And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways, and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth. Behold the day, behold it is come; the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed; pride hath budded."

Natural men would be freed from hell without being saved from sin, which is an inconsistency and impossibility. For where sin remains the reigning power, it will necessarily kindle up the flames of hell, and will bring on the torments of hell. Indeed, while men remain in the body, in the midst of the carnal objects of this world to engross the mind, to please the carnal appetites, to stupefy the conscience, and lull the soul asleep, they may avoid the torments of hell for a little while. But when the body comes to be dissolved, and all worldly objects, diversions, and entertainments come to an end, and the polluted and guilty soul comes to be stripped and turned out naked, infernal horror and misery will naturally and necessarily arise in such a soul. So that there is no such thing as being saved from hell, without being saved from sin.

3. They desire happiness without holiness. Wicked men have as earnest a desire of happiness as others. They are restlessly saying, "Who will show us any good?" And yet they are enemies to holiness. Here also they are inconsistent with themselves, for there is no such thing as happiness without holiness. The happiness of the creature consists in holiness. It is as great an inconsistency to suppose that a creature should be happy without being holy, as that a man should enjoy all the strength, and ease, and activity, and other comforts of health, in sore sickness; or that the notes of a tune should be harmonious that are disproportionate and discordant. So that they would be happy, and yet would not be happy. The thing they choose contains as great an inconsistency as if they should choose light or brightness, consisting in the blackness of darkness.

Fourth, in things that do most nearly concern them, they will neither choose nor refuse. The things of religion are things that concern them in the highest degree. It is no matter of indifference to them, whether they will betake themselves in good earnest to the business of religion or not, whether they will obtain heaven, or be content with a portion in this life. But yet many natural men seem to remain in suspense about these things all the days of their lives. They are always at a loss, always halting between two opinions, which Elijah reproves, 1 Kin. 18:21, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." No wonder that they had nothing to answer, for their unreasonableness and inconsistency too manifestly appeared in it. Many, who hear of these subjects from their infancy, never come to a thorough conclusion in their own minds, whether they will continue to go on in the way to hell, or whether they will do what must be done to escape it. They neither resolve that they will forsake all their sins, nor yet that they will retain them. They do not determine to hearken to the warnings and counsels given to them, nor yet do they fully reject them. They have life and death set before them, one or the other, but they never come to a determination which they will choose.

Fifth, in pursuing the objects which they desire, their lusts are inconsistent with each other. It has before been shown that the lusts of one wicked man clash with those of another. But not only is it thus. Some of the lusts of the same person disagree with other lusts of his. Often, wicked men's covetousness clashes with their pride. Their pride prompts them to many things that their covetousness forbids. It would be agreeable to men's pride to make a splendid show in their houses and apparel, and manner of living, who yet are not willing, through their covetousness, to be at the cost of it. So their covetousness often thwarts their sensuality. Their sensual disposition inclines them to feast their appetites, but their covetousness will not allow it.

Sometimes men's sloth and idleness clash with their other lusts, with their pride, their covetousness, and sensuality. These lusts draw them one way to obtain much of the world, in order to pamper and gratify them. But their slothfulness draws another, or rather holds them and binds their hands from obtaining these things.

IV. The outward show of wicked men disagrees with their hearts. They very often make an appearance that is exceedingly different and contrary to what they really are inwardly. They have the clothing of sheep, but the nature of wolves, Mat. 7:15. They are like whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. They make a show as though they believed the truth of the gospel, and believed that God was an infinitely great and an infinitely excellent being. They make a show of great respect to God, a show of reverence and love, when indeed they have no such thing in their hearts, but the contrary. The outward show they make, which is at war with their hearts, consists either in their words, or in their behaviour.

The show they make in words is inconsistent with their hearts. Many of them profess to believe that God is an infinitely excellent being, when indeed they think that the meanest of their carnal enjoyments is more excellent than he. They profess to believe that there is another world, a heaven and a hell, when indeed they realise no such thing. They profess to believe that Christ is the only Saviour, and that they can be saved in no other. And yet they all the while believe in their hearts that there are other Saviours, and particularly that they can be Saviours for themselves by their own strength and righteousness.

They do abominably dissemble in the profession they make of the favour of God, and of love to him, and willingness to obey him, and desire to glorify him. They have not a jot of these things in their hearts, but are all the while wholly under the influence of vile carnal principles in all that they do, and are only aiming at selfish ends and serving their lusts in all.

So did those Jews dissemble that came to Jeremiah and desired him to inquire of the Lord. Jer. 42:20, "For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it." So did the Jews of whom we read in the test dissemble. They pretended to be enemies of gluttony, and drunkenness, and to dislike any such thing as associating with sinners. And so made a pretence of zeal against wickedness, in their opposition to Christ; when indeed they were actuated by a love to wickedness, and were enemies to Christ, for the sake of his holiness. So they pretended to be influenced by enmity against the devil in their opposition to John the Baptist, who they pretended had a devil; when indeed it was not enmity against the devil, but against God. Many pretend a great deal of love to God in what they do, when it is only love to the world at bottom. Eze. 33:31, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."

The show which they make in their prayers is quite inconsistent with their hearts. Their very approach to God in this duty has a show of religion in it without the reality. And those things they say in their prayers are hypocritical dissembling pretences. They

profess honour, reverence, trust, humility, a sense of unworthiness, repentance towards God, trust in Christ as a Mediator, a willingness to forsake sin, from which they pray to be delivered, and thankfulness for the divine mercies. In this manner they resemble the Jews spoken of in Isa. 29:13, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth; and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men;" and in Psa. 78:36, 37, "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." And many of them make a show in words, in conversation with their neighbour, that is quite inconsistent with their hearts. They are forward in religious conversation, in giving an account of their experience in a show of zeal, merely to be seen of men, their God is themselves, their own honour, and the esteem of men. It is themselves whom they love and honour in everything, and not God.

They often make that show in their external behaviour that is inconsistent with their hearts. Many who are destitute of the least spark of love to God, and are at utter enmity with him, will make a great show of respect to him in many things in their behaviour. They may put on a religious saint-like visage, may seem devout in keeping the Sabbath, and in their attendance on religious duties and the ordinances of worship, may in some things be very strict, and may appear to do all from a holy respect to God. So it was of old with the Israelites. Isa. 58:1, 2, 3, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours."

So did the Pharisees of old. They made a great show of love and holy regard to God in their behaviour. They abounded in religious duties, they fasted twice a week, and they were very strict in many things. They were so in many duties of the moral law, they were not extortioners, nor unjust, nor adulterers. And they were exceedingly exact in duties of the ceremonial law. They gave tithes of all that they possessed, and so exact were they in paying tithes, that they tithed all the herbs of their gardens, as mint, anise, and the like, and put on an exceedingly religious countenance, and wore a righteous garment for a show of great humility. And yet had no love to God in their hearts, but were a generation of vipers, and most bitter enemies to God and Christ, and cruel persecutors of good men.

V. The practice of wicked men is often very inconsistent with their profession.

It is so, whether we look at the profession which they make in common with others who are brought up under the light of the gospel, or at the distinguishing and extraordinary profession which some of them make.

First, if we look at the professions which they make in common with the generality of those who are brought up under the gospel. These do in general profess that there is a God, an infinitely great and holy God, who hates sin, and who is everywhere present, who always sees them, has his eye continually upon them, sees what they do in secret

as well as what is done openly. A God, who not only knows all their words and actions, but sees all their thoughts, and who is able to do what he pleases with them, and can save or destroy them as he will.

But how does the practice of the greater part of them consist with their profession when they live in direct opposition to his commands, when they live as though there were no God that had the care and government of the world, and as though he were not a holy God, but altogether such an one as themselves, liking ways of sin as well as they, or as though they thought him a weak being, and not able to do them any great matter of hurt, or as though they thought they were stronger than he, and should be able to make their part good with him another day? 1 Cor. 10:22, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?"

How does that wickedness, which many persons who are brought up under gospel light commit in secret, those abominable secret practices of which many young people are guilty, agree with their professing that God is everywhere present? These things they do not commit openly for fear of human punishment, or for fear of shame and disgrace among men. And yet they commit them boldly, and live on them in the sight of God, upon whose favour they profess that their happiness infinitely more depends than on the esteem of men.

They profess to believe that there is another world, and a future judgment, and that they must in a little time stand before the judgment-seat of God, to give an account of themselves to him. And that then the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the counsels of the heart made manifest. And that then God will call them to a strict account of their improvement of their time, and all their talents, and that for every idle word men must give account in the day of judgment. And that then every man shall have his state everlastingly and unalterably fixed by the sentence of the great Judge, according to the things done in the body, that they who have done well shall be invited into heaven, where they shall enjoy honour, and glory, and pleasure unspeakable forevermore, and that they who have done evil, shall be sentenced and sent down to hell, into everlasting fire, with the devil and his angels, where they shall endure unspeakable torments, as in a furnace of fire, without any end, or any hope, and that they shall have no rest day nor night; and that their souls shall be fixed in one or other of those states in a little time, as soon as ever the body dies.

Now how does their practice consist with such a profession, while they live idle, careless lives, little troubling themselves about the good of their souls, and have their hearts and pursuits after the vanities of the world, just as if they never expected any other world but this, going on in sins against the plainest commands, and loudest warnings, and fullest light, and conviction of their own conscience? How does this consist with the profession of a belief that they must in a little time be called to give account of themselves to God? Would any spectator who should judge only by their practice, in the least imagine that these men expected within a few years to burn in everlasting fire, if they did not please and serve an infinitely holy God, and to be received to an everlasting paradise of blessedness if they did. Could he be persuaded to think that such men are in heart, as they profess to be, the followers of the meek, holy, and humble Lamb of God, of him who laid down his life for his enemies?

Second, if we look at the profession which some of them make of special and distinguishing experiences of the influence of God's grace in their hearts, their practice is very inconsistent with their profession. Persons may make a profession of such experiences, and yet be carnal and wicked men. So did some of the Galatians, of whom the apostle was afraid, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain. They professed great experience of the sweetness and blessedness which is to be had in religion, and experienced in the truths of the gospel. Gal. 4:11, 15, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." At their first seeming conversion, they appeared to be exceedingly lifted up with their new light, and full of joy and comfort, and full of affection. But by this expostulation of the apostle it appears that their lives afterwards did not well agree with their profession. Some wicked men may profess that they have seen their own utter insufficiency and helplessness, their own vileness and wickedness, and have been brought to God's footstool self-emptied and self-abased, as wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. But yet how ill does their walk and life agree with such a profession! In this none appear fuller of themselves than they. None seem to manifest more of a spirit of self-sufficiency, and of dependence on their own righteousness, or more high conceit of their own goodness, or are more ready to say to others, "Stand by thyself, come not nigh to me, for I am holier than thou." None appear in their walk and conversation further from lying in the dust as being poor in spirit than they. So it was with the Pharisees, they pretended to be extraordinarily emptied of themselves, and to have a low thought of themselves, in their wearing a rough garment, and in so often keeping days of fasting. And yet none were more self-righteous and self-sufficient than these very men, who are set forth in sacred history as living examples of self-righteousness to all succeeding ages.

So some of them may profess that they have had great discoveries made to their souls of God's glory and excellency, and that they have seen how much more glorious God is than all earthly things. But if it be so, why do not they cleave to God, and follow him, rather than other things? If they have known God to be so much more excellent than the things of the world, because they have had acquaintance with God, why do they in their practice cast off God for the sake of the things of the world? Why do they in their practice prefer a little of the world, a little worldly gain, a little worldly honour, or a little worldly convenience or pleasure, before God? Certainly, if God be more excellent than the whole world, as they profess that they have seen him to be, then surely he is worth more than so small a part of the world.

So they may tell what love they have found in their hearts to God, how they have found their hearts drawn out in love to him at different times. But if they love him so well, why do they take no more care to please him? Why are they so careless of his honour, and of their duty to him? Why do they allow themselves in practices which they know he hates, and utterly forbids?

So they may profess that they have seen the truth of the gospel, and that they not only think, but know, that the Scripture is the Word of God. But if it be so, why do they not take more heed to it? why do they live not only as if they were not certain of it, but as if they were certain of the contrary? If they know that those commands which are in the Bible are the commands of God, then they are worthy of the greatest regard. If

they know that those promises and threatenings which are found there are the promises and threatenings of God, then surely they should be of great weight with us. Why do they seem to be of so little weight with them?

So they may tell how God has manifested his love to their souls, has given his Spirit to witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, and that they have much communion with God. But if God has done such great things for them, and they are admitted to such unspeakable privileges above others, surely they ought to do more than others. They should not appear more carnal, and careless, and unchristian in their temper and walk than other men who make no such pretences. Thus wicked men's practice is very often inconsistent with their profession, agreeably to Tit. 1:16, "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him; being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."

VI. Their practice is inconsistent with their hope of eternal life. Men in general who live in Christian countries, hope to go to heaven, and there to possess eternal glory with God, and Christ, and holy saints and angels, though some of them have a much more confident hope than others. Some of them think that God has already made over this glory to them by firm promises, they look on heaven as their own, they think they belong to that world, and have an inheritance reserved there for them.

But the practice of wicked men is very inconsistent with such a hope, it is very displeasing to that God, and that glorious Redeemer, with whom they hope to spend their eternity in heaven. Though they live wickedly, yet they hope in a little time to go to be with an infinitely holy God, to be received by him with perfect approbation and delight, to be near to him, and to dwell in the courts of his love. They hope to enter into that same holy of holies, into which Christ the forerunner of saints has entered, and there to dwell, there to be as a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out. Yea, they hope there to sit in that heavenly holy of holies, to be admitted to a higher privilege than the high priests were of old in the earthly holy of holies, who were admitted only to appear in the holy of holies once a year. What holiness was expected of the high priests of old who were admitted to this privilege! What holiness then may well be expected of those who hope to be admitted to a so much greater privilege! Their wicked life is very unsuitable to that state of heaven. Those who are in heaven are all perfectly holy, and so must they become if ever they go to heaven. They will perfectly hate all wickedness, and perfectly delight in the contrary. How disagreeable therefore is the hope of spending eternity in such a heaven, to their wallowing like swine in the filth and mire of sin, and feeding with such eagerness and delight on the loathsome objects of their lusts, as worms feed with pleasure on the loathsome carcass!

Their wicked life is very unfit for the company of heaven, with which they must spend an eternity, if ever they arrive there, even with the holy angels and saints. Heb. 12:22, 23, "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." How disagreeable is a carnal, worldly, sensual, impure life, to a hope of being one of such an assembly as this to all eternity!

Their wicked life is very disagreeable to the eternal business of heaven, which consists in employing their faculties altogether on holy objects, in employing their

understandings in viewing and contemplating the holy perfections of God, and his wonderful works, and their wills and affections in loving God, and delighting themselves in him, and their whole souls in praising and serving him. Rev. 22:3, 4, “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.” How inconsistent is a life spent in this world in the service of lust and of the devil, to a hope of spending eternity in such a holy manner as this!

Their wicked life is unfitted for the pleasure and entertainment of heaven, which consist in delighting and rejoicing in God, in loving him, and in holy communion with him. How unsuited to a hope of enjoying such a happiness as this throughout eternity is it to place all one’s delight and happiness here in hoarding up worldly pelf, in gratifying the bodily appetites and sensitive desires, and in those pleasures that are common to the cattle and the swine?

Wicked men hope to spend their eternity in that world, which is a world of perfect peace and love, and to dwell there forever, where are no jars nor strife, but perfect agreement, harmony, and love forever. Yet many of them live a life of malice and contention in this world, are very often in one strife or other, and always carry about in their breasts a malice and hatred towards some of their neighbours, and towards some of those same persons with whom they pretend to hope to spend their eternity in such perfect love and amity. If we in our thoughts compare the life that many men actually live in this world, with that life which they hope to live in another world, how ill do they consist together; how disagreeable and shocking is the comparison, or the union of them in our thoughts! How many are there who now are drunkards or unclean persons, or who live in the neglect of secret prayer, and who cast off fear and restrain prayer before God. And how many that are mere earth-worms in covetousness and eagerness after the world; how many proud men whose God is their earthly honour; how many wrathful men who spend their days in hatred of their neighbour; how many such are there who hope in a little time to be with an infinitely holy God, in his glorious presence, in his holy of holies, and with Jesus Christ, and in the arms of his love, and to be of the assembly of holy angels and saints in perfect purity, holiness, and love, loving, contemplating, and admiring God’s glory, and enjoying unspeakable blessedness in communion with God! Thus wicked men’s practice disagrees with their hopes.

VII. The practice of wicked men is inconsistent with itself.

First, their practice at one time is inconsistent with their practice at another. They are not of a piece with themselves at different times, but are such as the apostle James compares to “a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed;” and such as he called “double-minded.” At one time they are of one mind, with respect to the things of religion; and at another, of another; and so have one mind against another. It is so with false professors of religion. They are not steadfast in God’s covenant, nor in the practice of religion. At one time they may seem to be much affected with the things of religion, and greatly engaged in their spirits about it, as though they could even pluck out their own eyes for God and Christ’s sake, may be full of religious conversation, and may seem forward in religious deeds. But, if we observe them, all their goodness is as the morning cloud, all their religiousness is over, and they appear as carnal, and senseless, and as irreligious as ever. Their religious affections are all gone, their

religious practice is gone, and “it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

So it is with the hearers, that hear the Word of God, and anon with joy receive it, but in time of temptation fall away. So it was with many of Christ’s followers. They followed him for a while, and by and by left him.

There were some who seemed to believe in Christ and followed him for a while. But Christ did not commit himself to them, he knew they were of an unstable mind, and would not be consistent with themselves. Some of them were for a while greatly affected with his preaching and with the miracles that he wrought, and it is said of them that the glorified God who had given such power to men, and said, “Never man spake like this man.” John 7:46. And it seems as though some of the same Jews who had their affections so raised when Christ was coming into Jerusalem, and who cried, “Hosannah to the son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;” did presently after cry, “Crucify him, crucify him!” There are many professors like those, and like the Israelites, that sang God’s praise, and soon forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel, that “turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers. They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.” That is, a bow that missed the mark to which it seemed to direct the arrow. The arrow seems to be pointed right, as though it would hit the mark, but yet the bow unexpectedly tends quite another way.

There are many disciples like Judas, who was at one time a disciple, and a traitor at another. It is commonly so that when false professors come to be tried by any remarkable allurements of the world, or by special difficulties which they meet with in the way of duty, that their practice as such times is quite inconsistent with their practice at other times. While times are smooth, and the way plain, and the external practice of religion seems to be consistent with their worldly interests, they are very religious. But when times are changed, and they can not be religious without seeing them crossed, they appear quite another sort of men.

Thus their practice at one time is inconsistent with their practice at another.

Second, their practice in some things is inconsistent with their practice in others at the same time.

1. Their moral and religious practice in some things does not consist with their irreligious and impure practice in others. False professors are very commonly widely different in this respect from those who are sincere and upright. Sincere Christians are universally holy. They have regard to all God’s commands. It is their sincere desire, aim, and endeavour to do their duty in every respect. But it is generally far otherwise with hypocrites. In some things they are like Christians, in others like heathens. Sometimes they appear earnestly religious in duties that immediately respect God, as in attending ordinances, and in appearing devout in external duties of the first table. But in duties that respect their neighbour, there is but little appearance of Christianity. Some behave themselves like saints in God’s house, and like devils at home. Some seem to be very religious abroad, in the house of God, and also at the houses of their neighbours, at private meetings, and in religious conferences. But if you follow them into their own families, and observe their carriage there towards those who dwell under

the same roof, towards their wives, or husbands, or children, or servants, their behaviour there does not at all consist with the other. So some may carry themselves well in their families, and yet are wretchedly negligent of the religion of the closet. Some seem to be religious men, who are not honest men. Some are honest men, and are not religious. They are willing to pay their debts, to speak the truth, and to avoid all knavish actions, all low and underground management. But as to religion, or to seeking God in the religious use of his ordinances, and in reading his holy word, in meditation and prayer, there is but little of this to be seen in them.

Some are honest men with respect to strict commutative justice, but they are not charitable men. They are selfish, covetous, close, and unmerciful. Some seem to be generous and liberal, and yet are very proud and haughty. Their honour is their God. Some are very strict and exemplary as to all that can be seen of men, but secretly they live in some abominable practice. So their practice does not consist with itself. It is not of a piece. God complains of this self-inconsistency in Israel of old. Hos. 7:8, "Ephraim hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned." "He hath mixed himself among the people;" that is, he was conversant with the heathen nations, and mingled the religion and customs of an Israelite with those of the heathen; so that he was inconsistent with himself, he was partly an Israelite and partly a heathen. "He is a cake not turned," alluding to their custom of baking cakes on the hearth, or in the sun; where, if they were not turned, one side would be baked, and the other raw. So they on one side seemed to appear religious, and like saints, but on the other, wicked and impure. So it was with the Pharisees. In some things they appeared eminently religious, but in others they behaved themselves as some of the vilest of men. Mat. 23:14, 23, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence, make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." A true saint is sanctified throughout, in soul, body, and spirit. He has put off the old man with his deeds, and has put on the new man. He is all over a new creature. He has not only a new hand and head, but he is a new man, all the members are new. But hypocrites are monsters. They have a saint's tongue, and a devil's heart. The members do not well consist together. They are inconsistent with themselves as they go about to serve two masters, God and Mammon, which Christ has taught us to be a great inconsistency. They are alike inconsistent as the Samaritans were, who would serve the God of Israel and their own god too. 2 Kin. 17:28, etc. "Then one of the priests, whom they had carried away from Samaria, came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord. Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt."

There is the like inconsistency in them as was in Judas, who betrayed Christ with a kiss. How ill did those two things in Judas consist together, his coming to him and kissing him, his seeming to show himself his friend, and at the same time betraying him to death! But it was not greater inconsistency than is commonly found with hypocritical professors, who carry themselves as Christ's friends, and as though he were very dear to them in some things, and yet act the part of mortal enemies in others, and by their wicked behaviour do indeed betray his cause and interest.

2. Their wicked practice in one thing is inconsistent with their wicked practice in others. It is a common thing for wicked men to quarrel with God for permitting those things which they allow themselves, and practice with delight. It is common for wicked men to ascribe the blame of their wickedness to God, therein following their first father, Adam. So men will often lay the blame of their being unconverted, and having lived so wicked a life, so carnal, careless, and evil a life, to God, and especially under conviction, to quarrel with God for it. And yet they approved of those things which they did themselves, with full consent and approbation.

And again. It is common for wicked men to contend with men, and hate their neighbour, for doing the same thing that they do themselves, and allow in themselves. So an unjust man, a backbiter and reviler, a revengeful man, will *condemn* in others the sin which he allows in himself. And so, many other instances might be mentioned. And thus I have showed through all the instances proposed, how wicked men are inconsistent with themselves.

APPLICATION

I. Hence we may see the woeful ruin which sin has brought on the nature of man. Man was not thus in his first estate. If we had nothing but the light of nature, or the light of our own reason to guide us, that would be sufficient to lead us to conclude that man in his first estate was not made thus by his Creator, who has made other things in such excellent order and harmony. We see that God hath so made the world, that one thing sweetly harmonises with another, all things are adapted to each other, the nature of one thing to the nature of another; one thing to be subservient to another; and all things subject to the laws that the Creator has fixed.

We therefore, without the Scripture, should have all reason to conclude that man, the most noble of all the creatures in the visible world, was not made in this state of woeful inconsistency with himself; so that all the faculties of his nature are at war with each other, and at war with themselves; so that now there is nothing but the most dreadful confusion to be seen.

But the Scripture teaches us plainly that God saw all things that he had created and made, and behold, they were very good; and particularly that God made man upright, and that it is himself that has brought ruin on his own nature. In man's first estate all things were in perfect order in his nature. There shone such a light in his understanding as led him to right judgments of things, all the dictates of his understanding were consistent one with another. And then his reason, the superior faculty, kept its place, and bare rule in him over the other faculties, and there was no principle or faculty of his nature but what was subject to its dictates, nothing rose up in rebellion against it. His will then was agreeable to his reason, and agreeable with itself. There was a perfect harmony between his outward appearance and his inward character. His mouth and his heart and his mouth and practice then agreed together, and his practice then was of a piece. Until he ate of the forbidden fruit, all was in perfect order, and peace, and decorum, both within and without.

But what was the consequence when man hearkened to the devil, and rebelled against his Maker? We learn, by what has been said under this doctrine, that then the Spirit of God departed from him, and with his influence, God's holy image also, the life, the

crown, and glory of his nature left him, and all light, and regularity, and order were gone, and a worse darkness and confusion succeeded than was in the primitive chaos when it was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And such is the woeful confusion of the nature of all men now in their fallen state. Now their reason determines one thing, and their governing practical judgment the reverse of it. And their judgment in some things is utterly inconsistent with their judgment in others. Now the will is in no consistency with the reason, but commonly determines directly contrary to its dictates. Men's wills are in such bondage and slavery to their lusts, that they are not only determined contrary to their own consciences to choose those things which their reason tells them are unjust, and vile, and unbecoming their nature, but also those things which their reason at the same time declares to be exceedingly against their own highest interest, even so as to tend to their everlasting perdition. Yea, their dispositions are not only contrary to their own reason and consciences, but contrary to themselves. There is not only war between faculty and faculty, but the very same faculty is at war with itself, so that they do in some respects choose and refuse the same things at the same time. There are some things that they seem earnestly to wish for, and yet indeed are at the same time utterly averse to and refuse, and will by no means accept of when offered. Yea, they will not have them though they are urged, and entreated, and pleaded with for years together to accept of them. So inconsistent are their dispositions with themselves, that they will not have spiritual and divine things as they are, nor yet will they have them otherwise. They do not like God as he is, they find abundance of fault with him, they are urged to accept of him as their God, but they will by no means comply with it. They reject him, and have an enmity against him. They love to keep at a distance from him, and to have as little as possible to do with him, and will not hearken to him, or submit to him, but are ever maintaining a kind of warfare against him, because they do not like him as he is. And yet they would not like him if he were any otherwise. If it were possible that he could be altered from what he is in any respect whatsoever, they would refuse to accept of him as their God then. They are enemies to him because he is so holy and just a God, and yet they would not like him if he were unholy and unjust. They do not like his almighty power, and yet they would not like him if he were weak. They also dislike his knowing all things, and yet they would dislike him if he were ignorant. They quarrel with God for the exercise of his infinite mercy and grace to others, and the more for its being so great in some instances, in being exercised towards those who are so unworthy. And yet they would not like him if he were not infinitely merciful. They would wish him to be merciful enough to pardon the most unworthy, and yet sometimes quarrel with him because he is no more merciful.

Now there is a similar inconsistency in them with themselves in that they do not like men for being godly. They have an enmity against such sort of men. And at the same time, they do not like those who are godly, they hate men for being wicked, and will have a bitter spirit against them for it. The world in its fallen state can not agree with the church of God. It has always had a spite against it, and has almost always from the beginning of the world hitherto been persecuting it. And yet neither can they agree among themselves, but are at the same time contending and quarrelling with one another. And as there is no suiting them in this world, so neither is there any suiting them in another. They would neither go to heaven, nor to hell. They do not like heaven because it is holy. And yet they would not like it if it were a world of wickedness. And such is the jarring and confusion that is in their disposition, that those things that they

do choose are impossibilities, and self-contradictions, and self-inconsistencies. They would have a sufficient Saviour and not a holy one. They would have one good, and excellent, and holy enough to save them, and yet would not have one with any holiness at all. They have a mind to have salvation from misery, without salvation from sin; when sin is their misery. They have a mind to have light, and yet to keep darkness without light. They would have a light consisting in darkness; and sweet, consisting in bitterness; and good, consisting in evil. They would have such a sort of happiness as is impossible in its own nature. For they would have happiness with unholiness, which is as much as to say they would be *happy* men, and yet remain *destroyed* and *ruined*. And when life and death are set before them to choose, and they are urged to make their choice, and told that they must certainly have one or the other, that there is no possibility of avoiding it; yet they will come to a deliberate, determinate choice to have neither one nor the other. They are always halting between two opinions, they are always choosing and yet never come to a choice. Instead of those holy principles that man had in his heart at first, that sweetly consented one with another, he has now introduced into his soul a number of vile and hateful lusts, that clash one with another: pride clashing with covetousness, and covetousness thwarting sensuality, and sloth crushing all these. And instead of the purity in body and mind, which man had at first, he is now, if he has any show of purity, become like a whited sepulchre, that is beautifully adorned outside, and within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. Their faces disagree with their hearts, and their mouths disagree with their hearts. They have the visage and show of saints, and the hearts of devils. Their prayers are filled up with thanksgiving, adoration, great honour to God, praise and glory to him, a show of humility before him, a show of repentance for sin, trust, thankfulness, desire of obedience, and trust in Christ alone; when within is nothing but a slight and contempt of God, enmity against God, distrust of God, pride, self-righteousness, obstinacy, and disobedience, without one jot or tittle of honour, or love, or trust, or humility, or repentance, or obedience, or any of those things that there is a show of in their prayers. And now they say and profess one thing, and practice another. They will show one thing to God, and do another, and will live all their days in this world carnally, contentious, and alienated from God, in the indulgence of brutish lusts and filthiness. And yet hope when they die to go to be with him, and in eternal communion with him in perfect holiness, and with holy angels, spending an eternity in holy contemplation and praise, and to have these things for their everlasting happiness. And when they seem to practice well for a time it lasts but a little while, but their practice at one time is utterly inconsistent with that at another. Yea, if they were narrowly observed, their practice at the same time is inconsistent with itself: saints at church, and heathen at home; saints before the world, heathen in secret; with the tongues and faces of the children of God, and with the hearts of the children of the devil.

Such work has the fall made in the nature of man, such a creature as this is man become, instead of shining as at first, in the holy and lovely image of God. Thus has the fall of man ruined God's workmanship. And if the fall has *thus* ruined man, what can be more effectually ruined? Does not this show that it is indeed so, that man is in a lost and undone condition. And can it be expected that any other can ever restore to him the divine image, but only that same God that made him at first? And how vain are the attempts of natural men to rectify their natures in their own strength, wherein is such woeful ruin and confusion! And is there not need of a mighty Saviour in order to this?

II. This subject may be applied in the way of conviction to natural men, in several particulars.

First, hence you may see your folly. Wisdom is ever consistent with itself, and wise men are not wont to act inconsistently. Self-inconsistency in temporal things is ever looked upon as a note of folly. Those men that talk very inconsistently, are accounted to talk very foolishly. And so those men that act inconsistently with themselves in temporal matters, are looked upon as acting very absurdly and ridiculously, and it is common with men to treat such with derision. Certainly, then, to be so exceedingly self-inconsistent in such great concerns as we have spoken of, is the highest degree of folly.

The inconsistency of the judgment of wicked men shows their folly. It shows the foolishness of those practical judgments they govern themselves by, that they make them contrary to the plain dictates of their own reason. Men oftentimes count the judgments of others very foolish, because they are very inconsistent with other men's reason, though their judgments are formed according to the best light of their own reason. But how much more foolish is it for men, in such things as infinitely concern them, to make such practical judgments of things as are plainly contrary not only to other men's reason, but to their own; so as to determine their will and their practice by those judgments! As for instance, when men's practical judgment and conclusion within themselves, by which they determine their choice and practice, is that it is best for them for the present, to neglect their souls and seek the vanities of this world, which are but for a moment, more than their eternal welfare.

And how does it show the folly of men's judgment when some of their judgments are inconsistent with others; as when in one thing they will judge that a long-continued eternity is of less importance than this short and fleeting life! So it shows the great folly of men's wills and dispositions, that they are so inconsistent, that in some respects they will both choose and refuse the same things, will wish and pray for them, and take pains for them, and yet will not have them when offered. How madly would a man be looked upon to act, that should so act in temporal concerns, if he was sick and like to perish for want of a certain medicine, and should wish and long for that medicine, and ask others to seek it for him, and yet when it was bought and offered, he should utterly refuse it!

What folly does it argue that men's dispositions are so inconsistent with each other, that there is no suiting them with anything! They are pleased neither with piping nor mourning, with eating nor fasting. They will not have God, or Christ, or heaven as they are, and yet will not have either any otherwise. How would men, if they manifested such a disposition in temporal things, often be hissed at, as most ridiculous, childish, and foolish. Yea, and be accounted to act like madmen! And what folly does it discover that they will choose and accept of nothing but that which is impossible in its own nature, and a self-contradiction, as when they will have happiness without holiness! If any man should act thus in temporal things, if he would have no house because he could not build one in the air, if he refused to go because he could not go without feet, or to see because he could not see without eyes, what words would be thought adequate to describe his folly! Yet this is the very folly of sinners with regard to their salvation.

How would men be looked upon if they acted thus in their temporal affairs! If they must inevitably perish in the winter if they did not labour in the summer, and yet spend all the summer in halting between two opinions. Or if they were sick with some deadly disease, and were told that they must inevitably die if they did not send for a physician, yet were undetermined, and when the distemper increased upon them, still continued undetermined, and when it was come to extremity, and seemed very near death, still could not come to a conclusion; or if a house should be on fire over their heads, and they could not make up their minds to flee from under it.

And what folly does it argue for men, that their practices are so inconsistent with their hearts, and that they say one thing and do another, and so are unsteady in their practice, and inconsistent with themselves at different times! It is looked upon as great folly, and what persons are much to be ashamed of, to be so unsteady in temporal matters, to undo one day what they did another. And so, in their practice in some things to be inconsistent with their practice in others. In one thing to act like a friend, and in another like an enemy. Persons that do so in temporals are abhorred of men, and looked upon as not fit for human society.

Second, you may hereby be convinced of your misery. A man can not be happy, and can not but be miserable, with whom it is thus. It shows a man to be undone. He, whose nature is brought into such violation, is evidently brought into a state of ruin. Where there is such self-inconsistency and self-opposition, a man is at war with himself, and therefore must be miserable. It is a calamity for a man not to be at peace with his neighbour, and to live in contention with those that are about him. But certainly it is a much greater calamity for him to be at war with himself, to have his judgment at war with his judgment, and his will at war with his reason and conscience, and his will at war with itself, and one lust thwarting another, and his outward man at war with his inward man, his mouth contradicting his heart, his practice contradicting his profession, and contradicting itself. It is impossible that such a man should enjoy any happiness as long as things are thus within him. Do what you will here, you can not make him happy. If you take him and place him in a palace, and set him on a throne, and clothe him in the robes of princes, and put a crown of gold on his head, and set before him the richest dainties, feed him and feast him as much as you will, still he that so disagrees with himself, is a miserable wretch. Though he may be stupid, yet it is impossible he should enjoy any true peace or rest. How should he, in whom all things are in such utter confusion and uproar within, and in whom there is so much self-opposition.

This may convince us of the truth, and show us the reason, of Isa. 57:20, 21, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it can not rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

How should he have any peace, who is his own enemy, who chooses and practices these things which his own conscience condemns, and which his own reason tells him tend to his own ruin? How should he have any peace, that hates his own soul and loves his own death, and that has one lust holding him one way, and another the contrary, so as in some respects to choose and refuse the same thing, to wish for a thing that at the same time he hates and refuses, and so goes on from day to day in warring against himself?

Third, this shows your inexcusableness. By this inconsistency with yourself, you are condemned out of your own mouth in that you act contrary to your own conscience. Your own conscience condemns you in your will and practice being contrary to your own reason. Your own reason condemns you in acting contrary to your profession. Your own profession condemns you in the sense in which the apostle speaks of a heretic as being condemned of himself. Tit. 3:10, 11, "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself:" *i.e.* he in departing from his former profession is inconsistent with himself. His present heretical tenets are contrary to his former solemn profession, and therefore that former profession condemns him.

Consider how inexcusable you, who are thus inconsistent with yourself in your wickedness, will appear at the last day, when you come to stand before the judgment-seat of God, when you are by him called to an account for your wicked life, how will your mouth be stopped. When you are called to an account why you have preferred things of such short and uncertain continuance as the things of this vain world, to the great things of the eternal world, what will you have to say for yourself, when it shall appear that herein you acted in direct opposition to the plain dictates of your own reason, and that this choice is inconsistent with the judgment and choice you were wont to make in temporal things? And what will you say for yourself when you are called to give an account why you rejected God, and Christ, and heaven for their holiness; when it so plainly appears that you would not like them, and would not have accepted them, if they had been any other way than holy?

It will then appear that you have voluntarily rejected Christ and his great salvation, and refused to accept of heaven, and that you are condemned of yourself in it, in that at the same time you evinced the great necessity of those things in praying for them, and doing many things in order to the obtaining of them.

When it shall then appear how you had a mind to have impossibilities: as a sufficiently worthy Saviour, and not a holy one; salvation from misery, and not salvation from sin, the source of all misery; and happiness without holiness. It shall from hence most plainly appear, that you did in effect utterly refuse to accept of any Saviour or any salvation at all, and would not be saved from misery at all, and refused to accept of any happiness at all, because you would have no salvation, no happiness, but such as was impossible in the nature of things, such a salvation as was not and could not be. And then how just will it appear to your own conscience, and to the world, that you should e'en go without salvation!

And when it shall appear how you had life and death set before you, and were told the necessity of coming to a choice, and were so often urged to it, and had so much opportunity for it, and yet refused. How just will it appear that divine justice should make your choice for you, when you refused to make any for yourself!

And how will you appear condemned out of your own mouth, when you shall be called to an account by the Judge, why you so often professed to God in your prayers that he was an infinitely great and holy God, and yet never feared him. And why you so often said to God that he was a sovereign and righteous God, and yet never submitted to him. And why you so often said to him that he was an all-sufficient and faithful God, and yet never would put your trust in him. And why you so often said to him that he

was an infinitely glorious, and excellent, and good God, and yet never loved him. And why you so often owned that he was an infinitely gracious and bountiful God, and what you had received abundance of kindness from him, and owned him to be the author of all those good things of your life that you enjoy, and yet never were truly thankful to him, but improved those things that you owned were the gifts of God, against himself who was the giver of them. Why you so often owned in your prayers before God that you were a poor sinful, vile creature for your sins, and yet never would forsake your sins, and begged of God to keep you from sin, and yet carelessly and wilfully went on in the commission of sin? What will you say to such interrogations of the Judge of heaven and earth? Will not your mouth be stopped when it shall appear that what has already so often proceeded out of your own mouth, does so much condemn you? And what will hypocrites and self-pretenders to experiences say, who have told what discoveries they had of the glory of God, of Christ, and of heaven. When the Judge inquires of them, why they set so light by this God, and did so prefer the dust of the earth and the filth of sin before him? When those who have often told what love they have felt to the Lord Jesus Christ, are asked why they took no more care to please and honour him, and why they rather chose from time to time to reject him than sacrifice their worldly interest.

So when wicked men are inquired of why, when they professed to believe a future state, they took no more pains to prepare for it. Why, when they professed to be the followers of Christ the Lamb of God, they were no more like him? Why, when they owned him for their head, and expressed such wonderful love to him, they could turn and become his enemies? Why, when they lived in hope of a life of such unspeakable glory in heaven, they set their affections wholly on this world? Why, seeing they made such a show of regard to God and their duty at one time, they discovered such a total disregard at another? Why, when they made such pretences to religion, and had such appearances of it in some things, they were so irreligious and wicked in others? What will they answer? Wicked men will appear self-condemned every way: their own reason and their own consciences, their own mouths and their own actions, have condemned them. Their reason and consciences will still condemn them, and God will condemn them, and men and angels will and must condemn them. So that they will appear universally condemned, they will have nothing to say for themselves, nor will any one have anything to say for them.

Fourth, if you are so inconsistent with yourself, you need not wonder that God will enter into no friendship with you, or that he does not receive you into his favour. Many natural men are ready to wonder that god will not receive them into favour - they do so much in religion.

But if you consider what has been said, you need not wonder at it. A wise man will make no friendship with another who is very inconsistent with himself in those things wherein men are concerned with him. He will not associate himself with him, nor care to have such to communicate with him. For men know that such persons are not to be depended on. One does not know where to find them, nor how to suit them, and if they will be so inconsistent with themselves, certainly they will not be very consistent with others that trust them. God therefore justly refuses to receive such persons into union with him. It is not consistent with his divine wisdom to give himself to them in a covenant relation.

No wonder that Christ will not commit himself to such persons as these. John 2:23, 24, 25, “Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.” Christ knew that there was no dependence to be had upon them. He knew they would not prove consistent with themselves.

Fifth, how vain and inconsistent is the dependence of wicked men on themselves! If this be the case with natural men, if all natural men are as we have heard, so absurdly inconsistent with themselves, how unreasonable is their high thought of themselves, and their trusting to their own goodness, to their own prayers, and their other performances!

And that they do so, is an evident sign of their woeful ignorance of themselves. If such persons saw themselves as they are, and to be such as we have described them, certainly they would be far from trusting in their own excellency and goodness, but would see themselves to be polluted, wretched, miserable, lost creatures, and would no more say in their hearts, “I am rich, and increased with goods;” but would rather condemn themselves, and cry out with self-abhorrence and amazement, “Unclean, unclean, undone, undone!”

12. SINNERS IN ZION TENDERLY WARNED

OR, THE FEARFULNESS WHICH WILL HERE-AFTER SURPRISE SINNERS IN ZION, REPRESENTED AND IMPROVED

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” - Isaiah 33:14

Subject: The time will come when fearfulness will surprise the sinners in Zion; because they will know that they are going to be cast into a devouring fire, which they must suffer forever and ever, and which none can endure.

SECTION I

Showing who are sinners in Zion.

There are two kinds of persons among God’s professing people. The one, those who are truly godly, spoken of in the verse following the text, “He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly,” etc. The other kind consists of sinners in Zion, or hypocrites. It is to be observed that the prophet in this chapter speaks interchangeably, first to the one, and then to the other of these characters of men, awfully threatening and denouncing the wrath of God against the one, and comforting the other with gracious promises. Thus you may observe, in the 5th and 6th verses, there are comfortable promises to the godly. Then in the eight following verses, awful judgments are threatened against the sinners in Zion. Again, in the two next verses are blessed promises to the sincerely godly, and in the former part of verse 17. And then in the latter part of verse 17. and in verse 18 and 19 are terrible threatenings to sinners in Zion. Then in the verses that follow are gracious promises to the godly.

Our text is part of what is said in this chapter to sinners in Zion. In verse 10, it is said, “Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself,” *i.e.* Now will I arise to execute wrath upon the ungodly. I will not let them alone any longer. They shall see that I am not asleep, and that I am not regardless of mine own honour. “Now will I be exalted.” Though they have cast contempt upon me, yet I will vindicate the honour of my own majesty. I will exalt myself, and show my greatness, and my awful majesty in their destruction. “Now will I lift up myself.” Now I will no longer have mine honour trampled in the dust by them. But my glory shall be manifested in their misery.

In verse 11, the prophet proceeds, “Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble,” *i.e.* Ye shall pursue happiness in ways of wickedness, but you shall not obtain it. You are as ground which brings forth no fruit, as if only chaff were sowed in it. It brings forth nothing but stubble, which is fit for nothing but to be burned.

It seems to have been the manner in that land where the corn grew very rank, when they had reaped the wheat, and gathered it off from the ground, to set fire to the stubble, which is alluded to here. And therefore it is added, “Your breath, as fire, shall devour you.” *i.e.* Your own wicked speeches, your wickedness that you commit with your breath, or with your tongues, shall set fire to the stubble and devour it.

Then it follows in verse 12, "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime." As they are wont to burn lime in a great and exceeding fierce fire, till stones, and bones, and other things are burnt to lime, so shall the wicked be burnt in the fire of God's wrath. "As thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire." As briers and thorns are the encumbrance and curse of the ground where they grow, and are wont to be burnt, so shall it be with the wicked that are among God's people, and grow in God's field. Heb. 6:7, 8, "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

Then it follows in verse 13, "Hear ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might." This implies that God will by the destruction of ungodly men, manifest his glory very publicly, even in the sight of the whole world, both in the sight of those that are near, and of those that are far off. "Acknowledge my might." Which implies that God will execute wrath upon ungodly men in such a manner as extraordinarily to show forth his great and mighty power. The destruction and misery of the wicked will be so dreadful, that it will be a manifestation of the omnipotent power of God, that he can execute such misery; agreeable to Rom. 9:22, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."

Next follow these words: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" The sense is, That the time will come, when fearfulness will surprise the sinners in Zion, because they will know, that they are about to be cast into a devouring fire, which they must suffer forever and ever, and which none can endure.

It may be inquired, who are the sinners in Zion? - I answer, that they are those who are in a natural condition among the visible people of God. Zion, or the city of David of old, was a type of the church. And the church of God in Scripture is perhaps more frequently called by the name of Zion than by any other name. And commonly by Zion is meant the true church of Christ, or the invisible church of true saints. But sometimes by this name is meant the visible church, consisting of those who are outwardly, by profession and external privileges, the people of God. This is intended by Zion in this text.

The greater part of the world are sinners. Christ's flock is, and ever hath been, but a little flock. And the sinners of the *world* are of two sorts: those who are visibly of Satan's kingdom, who are without the pale of the visible church; and those who do not profess the true religion, nor attend the external ordinances of it. Beside these there are the sinners in *Zion*. Both are the objects of the displeasure and wrath of God. But his wrath is more especially manifested in Scripture against the latter. Sinners in Zion will have by far the lowest place in hell. They are exalted nearest to heaven in this world, and they will be lowest in hell in another. The same is meant by *hypocrites*. Sinners in Zion are all hypocrites. For they make a profession of the true religion. They attend God's ordinances, and make a show of being the worshippers of God. But all is hypocrisy.

SECTION II

How fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners in Zion.

I. They will hereafter be *afraid*. Now many of them seem to have little or no fear. They are quiet and secure. Nothing will awaken them. The most awful threatenings and the loudest warnings do not much move them. They are not so much moved with them, but they can eat, and drink, and sleep, and go about their worldly concerns without much disturbance. But the time will come, when the hardest and most stupid wretches will be awakened. Though now preaching will not awaken them, and the death of others will not make them afraid, though seeing others awakened and converted will not much affect them, though they can stand all that is to be heard and seen in a time of general out-pouring of the Spirit of God, without being much moved; yet the time will come, when they will be awakened, and fear will take hold of them. They will be afraid of the wrath of God. However senseless they be now, they will hereafter be sensible of the awful greatness of God, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.

II. They will be *surprised* with fear. This seems to imply two things; *viz.* the greatness of their fear, and the suddenness of it.

First, the *greatness* of their fear. Surprise argues a high degree of fear. Their fears will be to the degree of astonishment. Some of the sinners in Zion are somewhat afraid now. They now and then have some degree of fear. They are not indeed *convinced* that there is such a place as hell. But they are *afraid* there is. They are not thoroughly awakened. Neither are they quite easy. They have at certain times inward molestations from their consciences. But they have no such degrees of fear, as to put them upon any through endeavours to escape future wrath.

However, hereafter they will have fear enough, as much, and a great deal more, than they will be able to stand under. Their fear will be to the degree of horror. They will be horribly afraid and terrors will take hold on them as water. Thus we read of *their fear coming as a desolation, and of distress and anguish coming upon them*; Pro. 1:27. It is also very emphatically said of the wicked, that *trouble and anguish shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle*. Job 15:24.

The stoutest heart of them all will then melt with fear. The hearts of those who are of a sturdy spirit, and perhaps scorn to own themselves afraid of any man, and are even ashamed to own themselves afraid of the wrath of God, will then become as weak as water, as weak as the heart of a little child. And the most reserved of them will not be able to hide his fears. Their faces will turn pale. They will appear with amazement in their countenances. Every joint in them will tremble. All their bones will shake and their knees will smite one against another. Nor will they be able to refrain from crying out with fear, and from rending the air with the most dismal shrieks.

Second, they will be *suddenly* seized with fear. The sinners in Zion often remain secure till they are surprised, as with a cry at midnight. They will be, as it were, awakened out of their secure sleep in a dismal fright. They will see an unexpected calamity coming upon them, far more dreadful than they were aware of, and coming at an unexpected season.

With respect to the TIME when the wicked shall be thus surprised with fear.

1. It is often so on a *death-bed*. Many things pass in their lifetime, which one would think might well strike terror into their souls, as when they see others die, who are as young as they, and of like condition and circumstances with themselves, whereby they may see how uncertain their lives are, and how unsafe their souls. It may well surprise many sinners, to consider how old they are grown, and are yet in a Christless state. How much of their opportunity to get an interest in Christ is irrecoverably gone, and how little remains. Also how much greater their disadvantages now are, than they have been. But these things do not terrify them. As age increases, so do the hardness and stupidity of their hearts grow upon them.

But when death comes, then the sinner is often filled with astonishment. It may be, when he is first taken sick, he has great hope that he shall recover; as men are ready to flatter themselves with hopes, that things will be as they fain would have them. But when the distemper comes to prevail much upon him, and he sees that he is going into eternity, when he sees that all the medicines of physicians are in vain, that all the care and endeavours of friends are to no purpose, that nothing seems to help him that his strength is gone, that his friends weep over him, and look upon his case as desperate; when he sees, by the countenance and behaviour of the physician, that he looks upon his case as past hope, and perhaps overhears a whispering in the room, wherein his friends signify one to another, that they look upon it that he is struck with death, or wherein they tell one another, that his extreme parts grow cold, that his countenance and manner of breathing, and his pulse, show death, and that he begins to be in a cold death-sweat; and when perhaps, by and by, some one thinks himself bound in duty and faithfulness to let him know the worst, and therefore comes and asks him whether or no he be sensible that he is a dying: then how does fearfulness surprise the sinner in Zion! How does his heart melt with fear! This is the thing which he feared ever since he was taken sick. But till now he had hope that he should recover. The physician did not speak. Or if he despaired, he spoke of such and such medicines as being very proper. And he hoped that they would be effectual. And when these failed, he changed his medicines, and applied something new. Then the sinner hoped *that* would be effectual. Thus, although he constantly grew worse and worse, still he hoped to recover.

At the same time he cried to God to spare him, and made promises how he would live, if God would spare him, and he hoped that God would hear him. He observed also, that his friends, and perhaps the minister, seemed to pray earnestly for him. And he could not but hope that those prayers would be answered, and he should be restored. But now how does his heart sink and die within him! How does he look about with a freighted countenance! How quick is the motion of his eye, through inward fear! And how quick and sudden are all his motions! What a frightful hurry does he seem to be in! How does forever look to him when he sees pale grim death staring him in the face, and a vast eternity within a few hours or minutes of him!

It may be, he still struggles for a little hope. He is loth to believe what is told him. He tells his informers that he hopes they are more affrighted than they need be. He hopes that those symptoms arise from some other cause. And, like a poor drowning man, he

catches at slender and brittle twigs, and clinches his hands about whatever he sees within his reach.

But as death creeps more and more on him, he sees his twigs break, all his hopes of life fail, and he sees he must die. O! there is nothing but death before him! He has been hoping, but his hopes are all dashed. He sees this world, and all that belongs to it, are gone. Now come the thoughts of hell into his mind with amazement. O! how shall he go out of the world? He knows he has no interest in Christ. His sins stare him in the face. O the dreadful gulf of eternity! He had been crying to God, perhaps since he was sick, to save him. And he had some hope, if it were his last sickness, that yet God would pity him, and give him pardoning grace before he should die. He begged and pleaded, and he hoped that God would have pity on his poor soul. At the same time he asked others to pray for him, and he had been looking day after day for some light to shine into his soul. But, alas! now he is a dying, and his friends ask him, how death appears to him? whether any light appear? whether God have not given him some token of his favour? And he answers, No, with a poor, faltering, trembling voice, if able to speak at all. Or if his friends ask a signal of hope, he can give none.

Now death comes on him more and more, and he is just on the brink of eternity. Who can express the fear, the misgivings, and hangings back, and the horrible fright and amazement, of his soul? Some who, in such circumstances, have been able to speak, have been known to cry out, *O eternity! eternity!* and some, *O! a thousand worlds for an inch of time! O! if they might but live a little while longer!* But it must not be. Go they must. They feel the frame of nature dissolving, and perceive the soul is just a going. For sometimes the exercise of reason seems to hold to the last.

What, in such a case, is felt in the soul, in those last moments, when it is just breaking its bands with the body, about to fetch its leap, on the edge of eternity, and the very brink of hell, without any Saviour, or the lest testimony of divine mercy. I say, what is sometimes felt by Christless souls in these moments, none can tell. Nor is it within the compass of our conception.

2. The misery of the departed soul of a sinner, besides what it now feels, consists in a great part in amazing fears of what is *yet to come*. When the union of the soul and body is actually broken, and the body has fetched its last gasp, the soul forsakes its old habitation, and then falls into the hands of devils, who fly upon it, and seize it more violently than ever hungry lions flew upon their prey. And with what horror will it fall into those cruel hands!

If we imagine to ourselves the dreadful fear with which a lamb or kid falls into the paws of a world, which lays hold of it with open mouth; or if we imagine to ourselves the feeling of a little child, that has been pursued by a lion, when it is taken hold of, and sees the terrible creature open his devouring jaws to tear it in pieces; or the feeling of those two and forty children, who had mocked Elisha, when they fell into the paws of the bears that [tore] them in pieces; I say if we could have a perfect idea of that terror and astonishment which a little child has in such a case, yet we should have but a faint idea of what is felt in the departing soul of a sinner, when it falls into the hands of those cruel devils those roaring lions, which then seize of it!

And when the soul is carried to hell, and there is tormented, suffers the wrath of the Almighty, and is overwhelmed and crushed with it, it will also be amazed with the apprehensions of what shall *yet remain*. To think of an eternity of this torment remaining, O how will it fill, and overbear, and sink down the wretched soul! How will the thought of the duration of this torment without end cause the heart to melt like wax! How will the thought of it sink the soul into the bottomless pit of darkness and gloominess! Even those proud and sturdy spirits, the devils, tremble at the thoughts of that *greater* torment which they are to suffer at the day of judgment. So will the poor damned souls of men. They have already more than they will be able to bear. How then will they tremble at the thought of having their misery so vastly augmented!

Persons sometimes in this world are afraid of the day of judgment. If there be an earthquake, or if there be more than common thunder and lightning, or if there be some unusual sight in the heavens, their hearts are ready to tremble for fear that the day of judgment is at hand. O how then do the poor souls in hell fear it, who know so much more about it, who know by what they feel already, and know *certainly*, that whenever it comes they shall stand on the left hand of the judge, to receive the dreadful sentence. And that then, in soul and body, they must enter into those everlasting burnings which are prepared for the devil and his angels, and who probably know that their misery is to be an hundred-fold greater than it is now.

3. Fearfulness will surprise them at the *last judgment*. When Christ shall appear in the clouds of heaven, and the last trumpet shall sound, then will the hearts of wicked men be surprised with fearfulness. The poor damned soul, in expectation of it, trembles every day and every hour from the time of its departure from the body. It knows not, indeed, *when* it is to be, but it knows it *is* to be. But when the alarm is given in hell that the day is come, it will be a dreadful alarm indeed. It will, as it were, fill the caverns of hell with shrieks. And when the souls of the damned shall enter into their bodies, it will be with amazing horror of what is coming. And when they shall lift up their heads out of their graves, and shall see the judge, it will be a most terrible sight. Gladly would they return into hell, their former state of misery, to hide themselves from this awful sight, if that would excuse them.

So those sinners in Zion, who shall then be found alive on the earth, when they shall see this sight, will be surprised with fearfulness. The fear and horror which many poor sinners feel when they are dying, is great, and beyond all that of which we can have any idea. But that is nothing to the horror that will seize them when they shall come to see this sight.

There will not be a wicked man upon earth who will be able to bear it, let him be who he will. Let him be rich or poor, old or young, male or female, servant or master, king or subject, learned or unlearned. Let him be ever so proud, ever so courageous, and ever so sturdy. There is not one who will be able at all to support himself. When he shall see this sight, it will immediately sink his spirit. It will loose the joints of his loins. It will make his countenance more ghastly than death. The rich captains, and valiant generals and princes, who now scorn to show any fear at the face of an enemy, who scorn to tremble at the roaring of cannon, will tremble and shriek when they shall hear the last trumpet, and see the majesty of their judge. It will make their teeth to chatter,

and make them fly to hide themselves in the caves and rocks of mountains, crying to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the judge.

Fearfulness will surprise them when they shall be dragged before the judgment-seat. The wicked hang back when they are about to meet death. But in no measure as they will hang back when they come to meet their great judge. And when they come to stand before the judge, and are put on his left hand, fearfulness and amazement will surprise them. The majesty of the judge will be intolerable to them. His pure and holy eye, which will behold and search them, and pierce them through, will be more terrible to their souls a thousand times than flashes of lightning piercing their hearts. They will stand in a trembling, expectation, that by and by they shall hear the words of that dreadful sentence proceed out of the mouth of Christ. They will have a horrible expectation of that sentence. And what shall they do, whither shall they fly, so as to be out of its hearing? They can not shut their ears, so as not to hear it.

Fearfulness will surprise them when the sentence shall come to be pronounced. At the close of the judgment, that dreadful doom will be uttered by the judge. And it will be the most terrible voice that ever was heard. The sound of the last trumpet, that shall call men to judgment, will be a more terrible sound to wicked men than ever they shall have heard till that time. But the sound of the last sentence will be much more terrible than that. There will not be one of all those millions at the left hand, whether high or low, king or subject, who will be able to support himself at all under the sound of that sentence. But they will all sink under it.

Lastly, fearfulness will surprise them, when they shall come to see the fire kindle upon the world, in which they are to be tormented forever. When the sentence shall have been pronounced, Christ, with his blessed saints and glorious angels, will leave this lower world, and ascend into heaven. Then will the flames begin to kindle, and fire will probably be seen coming down from heaven. And soon will the fire lay hold of that accursed multitude. Then will their hearts be surprised with fearfulness. That fire will appear a dreadful fire indeed. O what chatterings of teeth, what shaking of loins, what distortions of body, will there be at that time, when they shall see, and begin to feel, the fierceness of the flames! What shall they do, whither shall they go, to avoid those flames? Where shall they hide themselves? If they creep into holes, or creep into caves of the earth, yea if they could creep down to the centre of the earth, it will be in vain. For it will set on fire the bottoms of the mountains, and burn to the lowest hell. They will see no place to fly to, no place to hide themselves.

Then their hearts will be filled with fearfulness and will utterly sink in despair. Thus it shall hereafter be with every one that shall then be found to be a sinner, and especially with sinners in Zion.

SECTION III

Why sinners in general will hereafter be surprised with fear.

I. Fearfulness will surprise them because they will know that they are to be cast into *devouring fire*. There is nothing which seems to give one a more terrible idea of torment and misery than to think of being cast alive into a great fire, especially if we conceive of the senses remaining quick, and not benumbed by the fire. The wicked will

hereafter have that to make them afraid, that they are not only to be cast into a *fire*, but into *devouring* fire; which implies, that it will be a fire of extraordinary fierceness of heat, and before which nothing can stand.

The fire into which men are to be cast is called a *furnace of fire*. Furnaces are contrived for an extreme degree of heat, this being necessary for the purposes for which they are designed, as the running and refining of metals, and the melting of materials into glass. The fire of such earthly furnaces may be called *devouring fire*, as the heat of some of them is such, that in them even stones will presently be dissolved. Now, if a person should be brought to the mouth of such a furnace, and there should see how the fire glows, so as presently to make everything cast into it all over white and bright with fire, and at the same time should know that he was immediately to be cast into this furnace, would not fearfulness surprise him?

In some heathen countries, the manner of disposing of dead bodies is to dig a great pit, to put in it a great quantity of fuel, to put the dead bodies on the pile, and to set it on fire. This is some image of the burning of dead souls in the pit of hell. Now, if a person were brought to the edge of such a pit, all filled with glowing flames, to be immediately cast into it, would it not surprise the heart with fearfulness?

The flames of a very great fire, as when a house is all on fire, give one some idea of the fierceness of the wrath of God. Such is the rage of the flames. And we see that the greater a fire is, the fiercer is its heat in every part. And the reason is because one part heats another. The heat in a particular place, besides the heat which proceeds out of the fuel in that place is increased by the additional heat of the fire all around it. Hence we may conceive something of what fierceness that fire will be, when this visible world shall be turned into one great furnace. That will be devouring fire indeed. Such will be the heat of it, that, as the apostle says, “the elements shall melt with fervent heat,” 2 Pet. 3:10.

Men can artificially raise such a degree of heat with burning glasses, as will quickly melt the very stones and sand. And it is probable that the heat of that great fire which will burn the world, will be such as to melt the rocks, and the very ground, and turn them into a kind of liquid fire, so that the whole world will probably be converted into a great lake, or liquid globe of fire, a vast ocean of fire, in which the wicked shall be tossed to and fro, having no rest day nor night, vast waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads.

But all this will be only an *image* of that dreadful fire of the wrath of God, which the wicked shall at the same time suffer in their *souls*. We read in Rev. 19:15 of “the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” This is an extraordinary expression, carrying a terrible idea of the future misery of the wicked. If it had been only said of the wrath of God that would have expressed what is dreadful. If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, what is the wrath of God? But it is not only said the wrath of God, but *the fierceness and wrath of God*, or the rage of his wrath; and not only so, but the fierceness and wrath of *Almighty* God. O what is that! the fierceness and rage or fury of Omnipotence! of a being of infinite strength! What an idea does that give of the state of those worms that suffer the fierceness and wrath of such an Almighty Being! And is it any wonder that fearfulness surprises their hearts when they see this about to be executed upon them?

II. Another reason given in the text, why fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners, is that they will be sensible this devouring fire will be *everlasting*. If a man were brought to the mouth of a great furnace to be cast into the midst of it, if at the same time he knew he should suffer torment but for *one minute*, yet that minute would be so terrible to him, that fearfulness would surprise and astonish him. How much more, if he were to be cast into a fire much fiercer, the fire in which wicked men are hereafter to be tormented! And if the thought of suffering this devouring fire for one minute would be enough to fill one with such surprising fearfulness, what will seize them, when they shall know that they are to bear it, not for one minute, nor for one day, nor for one year, nor for one age, nor for a hundred ages, nor for a million of ages, one after another, but *forever and ever*; without any end, and never, never be delivered!

They shall know that the fire itself will be *everlasting fire*, a fire that never shall be quenched. Mark 9:43, 44, "To go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And they shall know that their torment in that fire never will have an end, Rev. 14:10, 11. They shall know that they shall forever be full of quick sense within and without; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins, and their vitals, shall forever be full of glowing melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements. And also that they shall eternally be full of the most quick and lively sense to feel the torment.

They shall know that they shall never cease restlessly to plunge and roll in that mighty ocean of fire. They shall know that those billows of fire, which are greater than the greatest mountains, will never cease to roll over them, following one another *forever and ever*.

At the same time they will have a more lively sense of eternity than we ever can have here. We can have but a little sense of what an eternal duration is. And indeed none can comprehend it. It swallows up all thought and imagination. If we set ourselves to think upon it, we are presently lost. But they will have another and far clearer sense of it than we have. O how vast will eternity appear to them, when they think of spending it in such burnings! This is another reason that fearfulness will surprise them. The thoughts of eternity will always amaze them, and will sink and depress them to a bottomless depth of despair.

III. The third reason given in the text why fearfulness will surprise them at the apprehension of this punishment is that they will know they shall *not be able to bear it*. When they shall see themselves going into that devouring fire, they will know that they are not able to bear it. They will know that they are not able to grapple with the fierceness and rage of those flames. For they will see the fierceness of the wrath of God in them. They will see an awful manifestation of Omnipotence in the fury of that glowing furnace. And in those views, their hearts will utterly fail them. Their hands will not be strong, nor can their hearts endure. They will see that their strength is weakness, and that they can do nothing in such a conflict.

When they shall have come to the edge of the pit and of the burning lake, and shall look into the furnace, then they will cry out with exclamations like these: O! what shall I do? How shall I bear the torments of this fire? How can I endure them? Who can endure? Where is the man so stout-hearted, where is the giant of such strength and such courage, that he can bear this? O! what shall I do? Must I be cast in thither? I can

not bear it. I can never endure it. O that I could return to my first nothing! How can I endure it one moment? How much less can I endure it forever and ever! And must I bear it forever? What! forever and ever, without any end, and never find any refuge, never be suffered to return to my first nothing, and be no nearer to the end of these sufferings after millions of ages? O what dismal contentions and shrieks, and shaking of loins, and gnashing of teeth, will there be then! No wonder that fearfulness will then surprise the wicked.

SECTION IV

Why it will be especially thus with sinners in Zion, who dwell among God's visible people.

There will hereafter be a very great difference between *sinners in Zion* and other sinners; a great difference between the most pointed hypocrite of them all, and the drunkards, the adulterers, the Sodomites, the thieves, and murderers among the heathen, who sin against only the light of nature. The fearfulness which will be in no measure so amazing and horrible, as that which will seize the sinners in Zion. That fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, which they will suffer, will be mild and moderate in comparison with that which the sinners in Zion will suffer.

The wrath of God is in his word manifested against the wicked heathens. But it is ten times as much manifested against those sinners who make the profession and enjoy the privileges of the people of God; and yet remain enemies of God. Both the Old Testament and the New are full of terrible denunciations against such. Read the books of Moses, read the prophets, and you will find them full of dreadful threatenings against such. Read over the history of Christ's life and the speeches which he made when upon earth. There you will see what woes and curses he frequently denounced against such. How often did he say, that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for the cities in which most of his mighty works were done! Read over the history of the Acts of the Apostles, and their epistles. There you will find the same. It is the sinners in Zion, or hypocrites, that are always in Scripture spoken of as the people of God's wrath. Isa. 10:6, "I will send him against a hypocritical nation, against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil." The reasons are chiefly these:

I. That they sin against so much *greater light*. This is often spoken of in Scripture as an aggravation to the sin and wickedness of sinners in Zion. He that knows not his Lord's will, and doeth it not, is declared not to be worthy of so many stripes, as he who, being informed of his Lord's will, is in like manner disobedient. If men be blind, they have comparatively no sin. But then they see, when they have light to know their duty, and to know their obligation, then their sin is great, John 9:14. When the light that is in a man is darkness, how great is that darkness! And when men live in wickedness, in the midst of great light, that light is like to be the blackness of darkness indeed.

II. That they sin against such *professions and vows*. The heathens never pretended to be the worshippers of the true God. They never pretended to be Christ's disciples. They never came under any covenant-obligations to be such. But this is not the case with sinners in Zion. Now, God highly resents falsehood and treachery. Judas, who

betrayed Christ with a kiss, was a greater sinner, and much more the object of God's wrath, than Pilate, who condemned him to be crucified, and was his murderer.

III. That they sin against so much greater mercy. They have the infinite mercy of God, in giving his own Son, often set before them. They have the dying love of Christ represented to them. They have this mercy, this glorious Saviour, his blood and righteousness, often offered to them. They have a blessed opportunity to obtain salvation for their souls. A great price is put into their hands to this end. They have that precious treasure, the Holy Scriptures, and enjoy Sabbaths, and sacraments, and the various means of grace. But all these means and advantages, these opportunities, offers mercies, and invitations, they abuse, despise, and reject.

But there is no wrath like that which arises from mercy abused and rejected. When mercy is in this way turned into wrath, this is the fiercest wrath. Sinners in Zion, beside their fall by the first Adam, have a fall also by the second. He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, at which they stumble and fall. And there is no fall like this. The fall by the first Adam is light in comparison with it.

On these accounts, whenever we see the day of judgment, as every one of us shall see it, we shall easily distinguish between the sinners in Zion and other sinners by their shriller cries, their louder, more bitter, and dolorous shrieks, the greater amazement of their countenances, and the more dismal shaking of their limbs, and contortions of their bodies.

SECTION V

An earnest exhortation to sinners in Zion, now to fly from the devouring fire and everlasting burnings.

You have often been exhorted to fly from the "wrath to come." This devouring fire, these everlasting burnings, of which we have been speaking, are *the wrath to come*. You hear of this fire, of these burnings, and of that fearfulness which will seize and surprise sinners in Zion hereafter. And O what reason have you of thankfulness that you only hear of them, that you do not as yet feel them, and that they have not already taken hold of you! They are, as it were, following you, and coming nearer and nearer every day. Those fierce flames are already kindled in the wrath of God. Yea, the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God burn against you. It is ready for you. That pit is prepared for you with fire and much wood, and the wrath of the Lord, as a stream of brimstone, does kindle it.

Lot was with great urgency hastened out of Sodom, and commanded to make haste, and fly for his life, and escape to the mountains, lest he should be consumed in those flames which burned up Sodom and Gomorrah. But that burning was a mere spark to that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings, of which you are in danger. Therefore improve the present opportunity.

Now, God is pleased again to put out his Spirit upon us. And he is doing great things amongst us. God is indeed come again, the same great God who so wonderfully appeared among us some years ago, and who has since, for our sins, departed from us, left us so long in so dull and dead a state, and has let sinners alone in their sins, so that

there have been scarcely any sins to be seen of any such work as conversion. That same God is now come again. He is really come in like manner, and begins, as he did before, gloriously to manifest his mighty power, and the riches of his grace. He brings sinners out of darkness into marvellous light. He rescues poor captive souls out of the hands of Satan. He saves persons from the devouring fire. He plucks one and another as brands out of the burnings. He opens the prison-doors and knocks off their chains and brings out poor prisoners. He is now working salvation among us from this very destruction of which you have now heard.

Now, now, then, is the time, now is the blessed opportunity to escape those everlasting burnings. Now God has again set open the same fountain among us, and gives one more happy opportunity for souls to escape. Now he has set open a wide door, and he stands in the door-way, calling and begging with a loud voice to the sinners of Zion: Come, saith he, come, fly from the wrath to come. Here is a refuge for you. Fly hither for refuge. Lay hold on the hope set before you.

A little while ago, it was uncertain whether we should ever see such an opportunity again. If it had always continued as it has been for some years past, almost all of you would surely have gone to hell. In a little time fearfulness would have surprised you and you would have been cast into that devouring fire and those everlasting burnings. But in infinite mercy God gives another opportunity. And blessed are your eyes, that they see it, if you did but know your own opportunity.

You have had your life spared through these six years past, to this very time, to another outpouring of the Spirit. What would you have done if you had died before it came? How doleful would your case have been! But you have reason to bless God that it was not so, and that you are yet alive, and now again see a blessed day of grace. And will you not improve it? Have you not so much love to your poor souls, as to improve such an opportunity as this?

Some, there is reason to think, have lately fled for refuge to Christ. And will you be willing to stay behind still, poor miserable captives, condemned to suffer forever in the lake of fire? Hereafter you will see those of your neighbours and acquaintance who are converted, mounting up as with wings, with songs of joy, to meet their Lord. And if you remain unconverted, you at the same time will be surprised with fear and horror will take hold of you, because of the devouring fire, and the everlasting burnings.

It is an awful thing to think of, that there are now some persons in this very congregation, here and there, who will be the subjects of that very misery of which we have now heard, although it be eternal! There are probably some now reading or hearing this discourse, who shall be seen at the day of judgment, among the devils, at the left hand of the judge, with freighted, ghastly countenances, wringing their hands, gnashing their teeth, shrieking and crying out.

Now we know not their names, nor where to look for them. But God knoweth their names, and now seeth and knoweth what they think, and how much they regard the warnings which are given them this day. We have not the least reason to suppose any other than that some of you will hereafter see others entering into glory with Christ, and saints, and angels, while you, with dreadful horror, shall see the fire begin to kindle about you. It may be, that the persons are now blessing themselves in their own hearts,

and each one saying with himself, Well, I do not intend it shall be I. Every one hopes to go to heave. None would by any means miss of it. If any thought they should miss of it, they would be greatly amazed. But all will not go thither; it will undoubtedly be the portion of some to toss and tumble forever among the fiery billows of God's wrath.

It is not to be supposed, but that there are some here who will not be in earnest. Let them have ever so good an opportunity to obtain heaven, they will not thoroughly improve it. Tell them of hell as often as you will, and set it out in as lively colours as you will, they will be slack and slothful. And they will never be likely to obtain heaven while they are sleeping, and dreaming, and intending, and hoping. The wrath of God, which pursues them, will take them by the heels. Hell, that follows after, will overtake them. And a tempest will steal them away.

Nor is it to be supposed, that all who are now seeking will hold out. Some will backslide. They will be unsteady. If now they seem to be pretty much engaged, it will not hold. Times will probably alter by and by, and they having not obtained grace, there will be many temptations to backsliding, with which they will comply. The hearts of men are very unsteady. They are not to be trusted. Men are very short-winded. They can not tell how to have patience to wait upon God. They are soon discouraged. Some that are now under convictions may lose them. Perhaps they will not leave off seeking salvation at once. But they will come to it by degrees. After a while, they will begin to hearken to excuses, not to be quite so constant in duty. They will begin to think that they need not be quite so strict. They will say to themselves, they see no hurt in such and such things. They see into but they may practice them without any great guilt. Thus giving way to temptations, and hearkening to excuses, they will by degrees lose their convictions, and become secure in sin.

There were some who were guilty of backsliding, the last time of the revival of religion among us. While the talk upon religious subjects was generally kept alive, they continued to seek. But when this began to abate, and they saw others less zealous than they had been, and especially when they saw some miscarriages of professors, they began to grow more careless, to seek less earnestly, and to plead these things as an excuse. And they are left behind still. They are to this day in a miserable condemned state, in danger of the devouring fire, and of everlasting burnings, in twice so dangerous a state as they were in before they were awakened. And God only knows what will become of them. And as it was then, so we dread it will be now.

Some who are now in a natural condition, are doubtless near death. They have not long to live in the world. And if they seek in a dull way, or if, after they have sought for a while, they are guilty of backsliding, death will come upon them long enough before there will come such another opportunity. When they leave off seeking, it will not be without a design of seeking again some time or other. But death will be too quick for them. It is not the manner of death to wait upon men, while they take time to indulge their sloth, and gratify their lusts. When his appointed time comes, he will do his work. Will you put off in hope of seeing another such time seven years hence? Alas! how many of those who are now in a natural condition may be in hell before another seven years shall have elapsed!

Therefore now let every one look to himself. It is for your own souls' salvation. If you be foolish, and will not hearken to counsel, will not improve the opportunity when it is

given you, and will not enter into such an open door, you alone must bear it. If you shall miss this opportunity, and quench your convictions now, and there shall come another time of the outpouring of the Spirit, you will be far less likely to have any profit by it. As we see now God chiefly moves on the hearts of those who are very young, who are brought forward upon the stage of action since the last outpouring of the Spirit, who were not then come to years of so much understanding, and consequently not so much in the way of the influences of the Spirit. As to those who were grown up, and had convictions then, and quenched them, the most of these are abundantly more hardened, and seem to be more passed over. So it will probably be with you hereafter, if you miss this opportunity, and quench the convictions of the Spirit which you have now.

As to you who had awakenings the last time of the outpouring of the Spirit, and have quenched them, and remain to this day in a natural condition, let me call upon you also, now that God is giving you one more such opportunity. If passing in impenitence through one such opportunity has so hardened you, and has been such a great disadvantage to you, how sad will your case be, if you shall now miss another! Will you not thoroughly awake out of sleep, bestir yourselves for your salvation, and resolve now to begin again, and never leave off more? Many fled for refuge from the devouring fire before, and you were left behind. Others have fled for refuge now, and still you are left behind. And will you always remain behind? Consider, can you dwell with devouring fire? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Shall children, babes and sucklings, go into the kingdom of God before you?

How will you hereafter bear to see them coming and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, when yourselves are thrust out, and are surprised with fearfulness at the sight of that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings, into which you are about to be cast? Take heed lest a like threatening be fulfilled upon you with that which we have in Num. 14:22, 23, "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers; neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." Together with verse 31, "But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."

13. THE ETERNITY OF HELLS TORMENTS

Dated April, 1739.

“These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Matthew 25:46

Subject: The misery of the wicked in hell will be absolutely eternal.

In this chapter we have the most particular description of the day of judgment, of any in the whole Bible. Christ here declares that when he shall hereafter sit on the throne of his glory, the righteous and the wicked shall be set before him, and separated one from the other, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. Then we have an account how both will be judged according to their works: how the good works of the one and the evil works of the other will be rehearsed, and how the sentence shall be pronounced accordingly. We are told what the sentence will be on each, and then we have an account of the execution of the sentence on both. In the words of the text is the account of the execution of the sentence on the wicked or the ungodly, concerning which, it is to my purpose to observe two things.

I. The duration of the punishment on which they are here said to enter: it is called everlasting punishment.

II. The time of their entrance on this everlasting punishment, *viz.* after the day of judgment, when all these things that are of a temporary continuance shall have come to an end and even those of them that are most lasting - the frame of the world itself, the earth which is said to abide forever, the ancient mountains and everlasting hills, [and] the sun, moon, and stars. When the heavens shall have waxed old like a garment and as a vesture shall be changed, then shall be the time when the wicked shall enter on their punishment.

Doctrine. The misery of the wicked in hell will be absolutely eternal.

There are two opinions which I mean to oppose in this doctrine. One is that the eternal death with which wicked men are threatened in Scripture, signifies no more than eternal annihilation: that God will punish their wickedness by eternally abolishing their being.

The other opinion which I mean to oppose is that though the punishment of the wicked shall consist in sensible misery, yet it shall not be absolutely eternal, but only of a very long continuance.

Therefore, to establish the doctrine in opposition to these different opinions, I shall undertake to show,

I. That it is not contrary to the divine perfections to inflict on wicked men a punishment that is absolutely eternal.

II. That the eternal death which God threatens is not annihilation, but an abiding sensible punishment or misery.

III. That this misery will not only continue for a very long time, but will be absolutely without end.

IV. That various good ends will be obtained by the eternal punishment of the wicked.

I. I am to show that it is not contrary to the divine perfections to inflict on wicked men a punishment that is absolutely eternal.

This is the sum of the objections usually made against this doctrine: that it is inconsistent with the justice, and especially with the mercy, of God. And some say [that] if it be strictly just, yet how can we suppose that a merciful God can bear eternally to torment his creatures.

First, I shall briefly show that it is not inconsistent with the justice of God to inflict an eternal punishment. To evince this, I shall use only one argument, *viz.* that sin is heinous enough to deserve such a punishment, and such a punishment is no more than proportionable to the evil or demerit of sin. If the evil of sin be infinite, as the punishment is, then it is manifest that the punishment is no more than proportionable to the sin punished, and is no more than sin deserves. And if the obligation to love, honour, and obey God be infinite, then sin which is the violation of this obligation, is a violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil. Again, if God be infinitely worthy of love, honour, and obedience, then our obligation to love, and honour, and obey him is infinitely great. So that God being infinitely glorious, or infinitely worthy of our love, honour, and obedience, our obligation to love, honour, and obey him (and so to avoid all sin) is infinitely great. Again, our obligation to love, honour, and obey God being infinitely great, sin is the violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil. Once more, sin being an infinite evil, deserves an infinite punishment. An infinite punishment is no more than it deserves. Therefore such punishment is just, which was the thing to be proved. There is no evading the force of this reasoning, but by denying that God, the sovereign of the universe, is infinitely glorious, which I presume none of my hearers will venture to do.

Second, I am to show that it is not inconsistent with the mercy of God, to inflict an eternal punishment on wicked men. It is an unreasonable and unscriptural notion of the mercy of God, that he is merciful in such a sense that he can not bear that penal justice should be executed. This is to conceive of the mercy of God as a passion to which his nature is so subject that God is liable to be moved, and affected, and overcome by seeing a creature in misery, so that he can not bear to see justice executed: which is a most unworthy and absurd notion of the mercy of God, and would, if true, argue great weakness. It would be a great defect, and not a perfection, in the sovereign and supreme Judge of the world, to be merciful in such a sense that he could not bear to have penal justice executed. It is a very unscriptural notion of the mercy of God. The Scriptures everywhere represent the mercy of God as free and sovereign, and not that the exercises of it are necessary, so that God can not bear justice should take place. The Scriptures abundantly speak of it as the glory of the divine attribute of mercy, that it is free and sovereign in its exercises, and not that God can not but deliver sinners from misery. This is a mean and most unworthy idea of the divine mercy.

It is most absurd also as it is contrary to plain fact. For if there be any meaning in the objection, this is supposed in it, that all misery of the creature, whether just or unjust,

is in itself contrary to the nature of God. For if his mercy be of such a nature that a very great degree of misery, though just, is contrary to his nature, then it is only to add to the mercy. And then a less degree of misery is contrary to his nature (again to add further to it), and a still less degree of misery is contrary to his nature. And so the mercy of God being infinite, all misery must be contrary to his nature, which we see to be contrary to fact. For we see that God in his providence, does indeed inflict very great calamities on mankind even in this life.

However strong such kind of objections against the eternal misery of the wicked, may seem to the carnal, senseless hearts of men, as though it were against God's justice and mercy, yet their seeming strength arises from a want of sense of the infinite evil, odiousness, and provocation there is in sin. Hence it seems to us not suitable that any poor creature should be the subject of such misery, because we have no sense of anything abominable and provoking in any creature answerable to it. If we had, then this infinite calamity would not seem unsuitable. For one thing would but appear answerable and proportionable to another, and so the mind would rest in it as fit and suitable, and no more than what is proper to be ordered by the just, holy, and good Governor of the world.

That this is so, we may be convinced by this consideration, *viz.* that when we hear or read of some horrid instances of cruelty, it may be to some poor innocent child or some holy martyr - and their cruel persecutors, having no regard to their shrieks and cries, only sported themselves with their misery, and would not vouchsafe even to put an end to their lives - we have a sense of the evil of them, and they make a deep impression on our minds. Hence it seems just, every way fit and suitable, that God should inflict a very terrible punishment on persons who have perpetrated such wickedness. It seems no way disagreeable to any perfection of the Judge of the world. We can think of it without being at all shocked. The reason is that we have a sense of the evil of their conduct, and a sense of the proportion there is between the evil or demerit and the punishment.

Just so, if we saw a proportion between the evil of sin and eternal punishment, *i.e.* if we saw something in wicked men that should appear as hateful to us, as eternal misery appears dreadful (something that should as much stir up indignation and detestation, as eternal misery does terror), all objections against this doctrine would vanish at once. Though now it seem incredible, [and] though when we hear of such a degree and duration of torments as are held forth in this doctrine and think what eternity is, it is ready to seem impossible that such torments should be inflicted on poor feeble creatures by a Creator of infinite mercy. Yet this arises principally from these two causes: 1. It is so contrary to the depraved inclinations of mankind, that they hate to believe it and can not bear it should be true. 2. They see not the suitability of eternal punishment to the evil of sin. They see not that it is no more than proportionable to the demerit of sin.

Having thus shown that the eternal punishment of the wicked is not inconsistent with the divine perfections, I shall now proceed to show that it is so far from being inconsistent with the divine perfections, that those perfections evidently require it; *i.e.* they require that sin should have so great a punishment, either in the person who has committed it, or in a surety. And therefore with respect to those who believe not in a

surety, and have no interest in him, the divine perfections require that this punishment should be inflicted on them.

This appears as it is not only not unsuitable that sin should be thus punished, but it is positively suitable, decent, and proper. If this be made to appear, that it is positively suitable that sin should be thus punished, then it will follow that the perfections of God require it. For certainly the perfections of God require what is proper to be done. The perfection and excellency of God require that to take place which is perfect, excellent, and proper in its own nature. But that sin should be punished eternally is such a thing, which appears by the following considerations.

1. It is suitable that God should infinitely hate sin, and be an infinite enemy to it. Sin, as I have before shown, is an infinite evil, and therefore is infinitely odious and detestable. It is proper that God should hate every evil, and hate it according to its odious and detestable nature. And sin being infinitely evil and odious, it is proper that God should hate it infinitely.

2. If infinite hatred of sin be suitable to the divine character, then the *expressions* of such hatred are also suitable to this character. Because that which is suitable to be, is suitable to be expressed. That which is lovely in itself, is lovely when it appears. If it be suitable that God should be an infinite enemy to sin, or that he should hate it infinitely, then it is suitable that he should *act* as such an enemy. If it be suitable that he should hate and have enmity against sin, then it is suitable for him to express that hatred and enmity in that to which hatred and enmity by its own nature tends. But certainly hatred in its own nature tends to opposition, and to set itself against that which is hated, and to procure its evil and not its good, and that in proportion to the hatred. Great hatred naturally tends to the great evil, and infinite hatred to the infinite evil, of its object.

Whence it follows that if it be suitable that there should be infinite hatred of sin in God, as I have shown it is, it is suitable that he should execute an infinite punishment on it. And so the perfections of God require that he should punish sin with an infinite, or which is the same thing with an eternal, punishment.

Thus we see not only the great objection against this doctrine answered, but the truth of the doctrine established by reason. I now proceed further to establish it by considering the remaining particulars under the doctrine.

II. That eternal death or punishment which God threatens to the wicked, is not annihilation, but an abiding sensible punishment or misery. The truth of this proposition will appear by the following particulars.

First, the Scripture everywhere represents the punishment of the wicked, as implying very extreme pains and sufferings. But a state of annihilation is no state of suffering at all. Persons annihilated have no sense or feeling of pain or pleasure, and much less do they feel that punishment which carries in it an extreme pain or suffering. They no more suffer to eternity than they did suffer from eternity.

Second, it is agreeable both to Scripture and reason to suppose that the wicked shall be punished in such a manner that they shall be sensible of the punishment they are under: that they should be sensible that now God has executed and fulfilled what he

threatened, what they disregarded and would not believe. They should know themselves that justice takes place upon them, that God vindicates that majesty which they despised, [and] that God is not so despicable a being as they thought him to be. They should be sensible for what they are punished, while they are under the threatened punishment. It is reasonable that they should be sensible of their own guilt, and should remember their former opportunities and obligations, and should see their own folly and God's justice. If the punishment threatened be eternal annihilation, they will never know that it is inflicted. They will never know that God is just in their punishment, or that they have their deserts. And how is this agreeable to the Scriptures, in which God threatens, that he will repay the wicked *to his face*, Deu. 7:10. And to that in Job 21:19, 20, "God rewardeth him, and he shall know it; his eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty." And to that in Eze. 22:21, 22, "Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you." And how is it agreeable to that expression so often annexed to the threatenings of God's wrath against wicked men, *And ye shall know that I am the Lord?*

Third, the Scripture teaches that the wicked will suffer different *degrees* of torment, according to the different aggravations of their sins. Mat. 5:22, "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." Here Christ teaches us that the torments of wicked men will be different in different persons, according to the different degrees of their guilt. It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon, than for the cities where most of Christ's mighty works were wrought. Again, our Lord assures us that he that knows his Lord's will, and prepares not himself, nor does according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knows not, and commits things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. These several passages of Scripture infallibly prove that there will be different degrees of punishment in hell, which is utterly inconsistent with the supposition that the punishment consists in *annihilation*, in which there can be *no degrees*.

Fourth, the Scriptures are very express and abundant in this matter: that the eternal punishment of the wicked will consist in sensible misery and torment, and not in annihilation. What is said of Judas is worthy to be observed here, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born;" Mat. 26:24. This seems plainly to teach us, that the punishment of the wicked is such that their existence, upon the whole, is worse than non-existence. But if their punishment consists merely in annihilation, this is not true. The wicked, in their punishment, are said to *weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth*; which implies not only real existence, but life, knowledge, and activity, and that they are in a very sensible and exquisite manner affected with their punishment, Isa. 33:14. Sinners in the state of their punishment are represented to dwell with everlasting burnings. But if they are only turned into nothing, where is the foundation for this representation? It is absurd to say that sinners will dwell with annihilation, for there is no dwelling in the case. It is also absurd to call annihilation a burning, which implies a state of existence, sensibility, and extreme pain: whereas in annihilation there is neither.

It is said that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone. How can this expression with any propriety be understood to mean a state of annihilation? Yea, they are expressly said to have no rest day nor night, but to be tormented with fire and brimstone forever and ever, Rev. 20:10. But annihilation is a state of rest, a state in which not the least torment can possibly be suffered. The rich man in hell lifted up his eyes being in torment, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and entered into a particular conversation with Abraham: all which proves that he was not annihilated.

The spirits of ungodly men before the resurrection are not in a state of annihilation, but in a state of misery. They are spirits in prison, as the apostle says of them that were drowned in the flood, 1 Pet. 3:19. And this appears very plainly from the instance of the rich man before mentioned, if we consider him as representing the wicked in their separate state between death and the resurrection. But if the wicked even then are in a state of torment, much more will they be, when they shall come to suffer that which is the proper punishment of their sins.

Annihilation is not so great a calamity but that some men have undoubtedly chosen it, rather than a state of suffering even in this life. This was the case of Job, a good man. But if a good man in this world may suffer that which is worse than annihilation, doubtless the proper punishment of the wicked, in which God means to manifest his peculiar abhorrence of their wickedness, will be a calamity vastly greater still, and therefore can not be annihilation. That must be a very mean contemptible testimony of God's wrath towards those who have rebelled against his crown and dignity - broken his laws, and despised both his vengeance and his grace - which is not so great a calamity as some of his true children have suffered in life.

The eternal punishment of the wicked is said to be the *second death*, as Rev. 20:14, and 21:8. It is doubtless called the second death in reference to the death of the body, and as the death of the body is ordinarily attended with great pain and distress, so the like, or something vastly greater, is implied in calling the eternal punishment of the wicked the *second death*. And there would be no propriety in calling it so, if it consisted merely in annihilation. And this second death wicked men will suffer, for it can not be called the second death with respect to any other than men. It can not be called so with respect to devils, as they die no temporal death, which is the first death. In Rev. 2:11, it is said, "He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death;" implying that all who do not overcome their lusts, but live in sin, shall suffer the second death.

Again, wicked men will suffer the same kind of death with the devils; as in verse 41 of the context, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now the punishment of the devil is not annihilation, but torment. He therefore trembles for fear of it. not for fear of being annihilated - he would be glad of that. Where he is afraid of is torment, as appears by Luke 8:28, where he cries out and beseeches Christ that he would not torment him before the time. And it is said, Rev. 20:10, "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever."

It is strange how men will go directly against so plain and full revelations of Scripture, as to suppose notwithstanding all these things, that the eternal punishment threatened against the wicked signifies no more than annihilation.

III. As the future punishment of the wicked consists in sensible misery, so it shall not only continue for a very long time, but shall be absolutely without end.

Of those who have held that the torments of hell are not absolutely eternal, there have been two sorts. Some suppose that in the threatenings of everlasting punishment, the terms used do not necessarily import a proper eternity, but only a very long duration. Others suppose that if they do import a proper eternity, yet we can not necessarily conclude thence, that God will fulfil his threatenings. Therefore I shall,

First, show that the threatenings of eternal punishment do very plainly and fully import a proper, absolute eternity, and not merely a long duration. This appears,

1. Because when the Scripture speaks of the wicked being sentenced to their punishment at the time when all temporal things are come to an end, it then speaks of it as everlasting, as in the text, and elsewhere. It is true that the term forever is not always in Scripture used to signify eternity. Sometimes it means “as long as a man lives.” In this sense it is said that the Hebrew servant, who chose to abide with his master, should have his ear bored and should serve his master forever. Sometimes it means “during the continuance of the state and church of the Jews.” In this sense, several laws, which were peculiar to that church and were to continue in force no longer than that church should last, are called statutes forever. See Exo. 27:21, 28:43, etc. Sometimes it means as long as the world stands. So in Ecc. 1:4, “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever.”

And this last is the longest temporal duration that such a term is ever used to signify. For the duration of the world is the longest of things temporal, as its beginning was the earliest. Therefore when the Scripture speaks of things as being before the foundation of the world, it means that they existed before the beginning of time. So those things which continue after the end of the world, are eternal things. When heaven and earth are shaken and removed, those things that remain will be what can not be shaken, but will remain forever, Heb. 12:26-27.

But the punishment of the wicked will not only remain after the end of the world, but is called everlasting, as in the text, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” So in 2 Thes. 1:9-10, “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints,” etc. Now, what can be meant by a thing being everlasting, *after* all temporal things are come to an end, but that it is absolutely without end!

2. Such expressions are used to set forth the duration of the punishment of the wicked, as are never used in the scriptures of the New Testament to signify anything but a proper eternity. It is said, not only that the punishment shall be forever, but *for ever and ever*. Rev. 14:11, “The smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever*.” Rev. 20:10, “Shall be tormented day and night, *for ever and ever*.” Doubtless the New Testament has some expression to signify a proper eternity, of which it has so often

occasion to speak. But it has no higher expression than this: if this do not signify an absolute eternity, there is none that does.

3. The Scripture uses the same way of speaking to set forth the eternity of *punishment* and the eternity of *happiness*, yea, the eternity of God himself. Mat. 25:46, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life *eternal*." The words *everlasting* and *eternal*, in the original, are the very same. Rev. 22:5, "And they (the saints) shall reign *for ever and ever*." And the Scripture has no higher expression to signify the eternity of God himself, than that of his being *for ever and ever*, as Rev. 4:9, "To him who sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever;" and in the 10th verse, and in Rev. 5:14; 10:6, and 15:7.

Again, the Scripture expresses God's eternity by this: that it shall be *forever*, after the world is come to an end, Psa. 102:26-27, "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

4. The Scripture says that wicked men shall not be delivered till they have paid the uttermost farthing of their debt, Mat. 5:26. The last mite, Luke 12:59, *i.e.* the utmost that is deserved, and all *mercy* is excluded by this expression. But we have shown that they *deserve* an infinite, an endless punishment.

5. The Scripture says absolutely that their punishment shall not have an end, Mark 9:44, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Now it will not do to say that the meaning is [that] their worm shall live a *great while*, or that it shall be a great while before their fire is quenched. If ever the time comes that their worm shall *die*, if ever there shall be a *quenching* of the fire at all, then it is not true that their worm *dieth not* and that the fire is *not quenched*. For if there be a dying of the worm and a quenching of the fire, let it be at what time it will, nearer or further off, it is equally contrary to such a negation - *it dieth not, it is not quenched*.

Second, there are others who allow that the expression of the threatenings do denote a proper eternity. But then, they say, it does not certainly follow that the punishment will really be eternal, because God may *threaten*, and yet not *fulfil* his threatenings. Though they allow that the threatenings are positive and peremptory, without any reserve, yet they say [that] God is not obliged to fulfil absolute positive threatenings, as he is absolute promises. Because in promises a right is conveyed that the creature to whom the promises are made will claim. But there is no danger of the creature's claiming any right by a threatening. Therefore I am now to show that what God has positively declared in this matter, does indeed make it certain that it shall be as he has declared. To this end, I shall mention two things:

1. It is evidently contrary to the divine *truth*, positively to declare anything to be real, whether past, present, or to come, which God at the same time knows is not so. Absolutely threatening that anything shall be, is the same as absolutely declaring that it is to be. For any to suppose that God absolutely declares that anything *will be*, which he at the same time knows *will not be*, is blasphemy, if there be any such thing as blasphemy.

Indeed, it is very true that there is no *obligation* on God, arising from the claim of the creature, as there is in promises. They seem to reckon the wrong way, who suppose the necessity of the execution of the threatening to arise from a proper obligation on God to the creature to execute consequent on his threatening. For indeed the certainty of the execution arises the other way, *viz.* on the obligation there was on the omniscient God, in threatening, to conform his threatening to what he knew would be future in execution. Though, strictly speaking, God is not properly *obliged* to the creature to execute because he has threatened, yet he was obliged not *absolutely* to threaten, if at the same time he knew that he should not or would not fulfil, because this would not have been consistent with his truth. So that from the truth of God there is an inviolable connection between positive threatenings and execution. They who suppose that God positively declared that he would do contrary to what he knew would come to pass, do therein suppose, that he absolutely threatened contrary to what he knew to be *truth*. And how anyone can speak contrary to what he knows to be truth, in declaring, promising, or threatening, or any other way, consistently with inviolable truth, is inconceivable.

Threatenings are significations of something, and if they are made consistently with truth, they are true significations, or significations of truth, *that which shall be*. If absolute threatenings are significations of anything, they are significations of the *futurity* of the things threatened. But if the futurity of the things threatened be not true and real, then how can the threatening be a *true* signification? And if God, in them, speaks contrary to what he *knows*, and contrary to what he *intends*, how he can speak true is inconceivable.

Absolute threatenings are a kind of *predictions*. And though God is not properly *obliged* by any claim of ours to fulfil predictions, unless they are of the nature of promises, yet it certainly would be contrary to *truth*, to predict that such a thing would come to pass, which he knew at the same time would not come to pass. Threatenings are declarations of something future, and they must be declarations of future truth, if they are true declarations. Its being future alters not the case any more than if it were present. It is equally contrary to truth, to declare contrary to what at the same time is known to be truth, whether it be of things past, present, or to come: for all are alike to God.

Beside, we have often declarations in Scripture of the future eternal punishment of the wicked, in the proper form of *predictions*, and not in the form of *threatenings*. So in the text, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” So in those frequent assertions of eternal punishment in the Revelation, some of which I have already quoted. The Revelation is a *prophecy*, and is so called in the book itself. So are those declarations of eternal punishment. The like declarations we have also in many other places of Scripture.

2. The doctrine of those who teach that it is not certain that God will fulfil those absolute threatenings, is *blasphemous* another way, and that is, as God, according to their supposition, was obliged to make use of a *fallacy* to govern the world. They own that it is needful that men should *apprehend* themselves liable to an eternal punishment, that they might thereby be restrained from sin, and that God has threatened such a punishment, for the very end that they might *believe* themselves exposed to it. But

what an unworthy opinion does this convey of God and his government, of his infinite majesty, and wisdom, and all-sufficiency! - Beside, they suppose that though God has made use of such a fallacy, yet it is not such an one but that they have *detected* him in it. Though God *intended* men should believe it to be certain that sinners are liable to an eternal punishment, yet they suppose that they have been so cunning as to find out that it is not certain. And so that God had not laid his design so deep, but that such cunning men as they can discern the cheat and defeat the design, because they have found out that there is no necessary connection between the threatening of eternal punishment, and the execution of that threatening.

Considering these things, is it not greatly to be wondered at, that Archbishop Tillotson, who has made so great a figure among the new-fashioned divines, should advance such an opinion as this?

Before I conclude this head, it may be proper for me to answer an objection or two that may arise in the minds of some.

Objection 1. It may be here said [that] we have instances wherein God has not fulfilled his threatenings: as his threatening to Adam, and in him to mankind, that they should surely die, if they should eat the forbidden fruit. I answer, it is not true that God did not fulfil that threatening. He fulfilled it and will fulfil it in every jot and tittle. When God said, "Thou shalt surely die," if we respect spiritual death, it was fulfilled in Adam's person in the day that he ate. For immediately his image, his holy spirit and original righteousness, which was the highest and best life of our first parents, were lost, and they were immediately in a doleful state of spiritual death.

If we respect temporal death, that was also fulfilled. He brought death upon himself and all his posterity, and he virtually suffered that death on that very day on which he ate. His body was brought into a corruptible, mortal, and dying condition, and so it continued till it was dissolved. If we look at all that death which was comprehended in the threatening, it was, properly speaking, fulfilled in Christ. When God said to Adam, "If thou eatest, thou shalt die," he spoke not only to him, and of him personally, but the words respected mankind, Adam and his race, and doubtless were so understood by him. His offspring were to be looked upon as sinning in him, and so should die with him. The words do as justly allow of an imputation of death as of sin. They are as well consistent with *dying* in a surety, as with *sinning* in one. Therefore, the threatening is fulfilled in the death of Christ, the surety.

Objection 2. Another objection may arise from God's threatening to Nineveh. He threatened, that in forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, which yet he did not fulfil. I answer, that threatening could justly be looked upon no otherwise than as *conditional*. It was of the nature of a *warning*, and not of an absolute denunciation. Why was Jonah sent to the Ninevites, but to give them warning, that they might have opportunity to repent, reform, and avert the approaching destruction? God had no other design or end in sending the prophet to them, but that they might be warned and tried by him, as God warned the Israelites, Judah and Jerusalem, before their destruction. Therefore the prophets, together with their prophecies of approaching destruction, joined earnest exhortations to repent and reform, that it might be averted.

No more could justly be understood to be certainly threatened, than that Nineveh should be destroyed in forty days, *continuing as it was*. For it was for their wickedness that that destruction was threatened, and so the Ninevites took it. Therefore, when the cause was removed, the effect ceased. It was contrary to God's known manner, to threaten punishment and destruction for sin in this world absolutely, so that it should come upon the persons threatened unavoidably, let them repent and reform and do what they would; Jer. 18:7, 8, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." So that all threatenings of this nature had a *condition* implied in them, according to the known and declared manner of God's dealing. And the Ninevites did not take it as an *absolute* sentence of denunciation: if they had, they would have despaired of any benefit by fasting and reformation.

But the threatenings of eternal wrath are positive and absolute. There is nothing in the Word of God from which we can gather any condition. The only opportunity of escaping is in this world. This is the only state of trial, wherein we have any offers of mercy, or place for repentance.

IV. I shall mention several good and important *ends*, which will be obtained by the eternal punishment of the wicked.

First, hereby God vindicates his injured *majesty*. Wherein sinners cast contempt upon it, and trample it in the dust, God vindicates and honours it and makes it appear, as it is indeed infinite, by showing that it is infinitely dreadful to condemn or offend it.

Second, God glorifies his *justice*. The glory of God is the greatest good. It is that which is the chief end of the creation. It is of greater importance than anything else. But this one way wherein God will glorify himself, as in the eternal destruction of ungodly men, he will glorify his justice. Therein he will appear as a just governor of the world. The vindictive justice of God will appear strict, exact, awful, and terrible, and therefore glorious.

Third, God hereby indirectly glorifies his *grace* on the vessels of mercy. The saints in heaven will behold the torments of the damned: "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Isa. 66:24, "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." And in Rev. 14:10 it is said, that they shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. So they will be tormented in the presence also of the glorified saints.

Hereby the saints will be made the more sensible how great their salvation is. When they shall see how great the misery is from which God has saved them, and how great a difference he has made between their state and the state of others, who were by nature (and perhaps for a time by practice) no more sinful and ill-deserving than any, it will give them a greater sense of the wonderfulness of God's grace to them. Every time they look upon the damned, it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God, in making them so to differ. This the apostle informs us is one end of the damnation of ungodly men; Rom. 9:22-23, "What if God willing to show his wrath,

and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known *the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy*, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" The view of the misery of the damned will double the ardour of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven.

Fourth, the sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever. It will not only make them more sensible of the greatness and freeness of the grace of God in their happiness, but it will really make their happiness the greater, as it will make them more sensible of their own happiness. It will give them a more lively relish of it: it will make them prize it more. When they see others, who were of the same nature and born under the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, O it will make them sensible how happy they are. A sense of the opposite misery, in all cases, greatly increases the relish of any joy or pleasure.

The sight of the wonderful power, the great and dreadful majesty, and awful justice and holiness of God, manifested in the eternal punishment of ungodly men, will make them prize his favour and love vastly the more. And they will be so much the more happy in the enjoyment of it.

APPLICATION

I. From what has been said, we may learn the folly and madness of the greater part of mankind, in that for the sake of present momentary gratification, they run the venture of enduring all these eternal torments. They prefer a small pleasure, or a little wealth, or a little earthly honour and greatness, which can last but for a moment, to an escape from this punishment. If it be true that the torments of hell are eternal, what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? What is there in this world, which is not a trifle and lighter than vanity, in comparison with these eternal things?

How mad are men, who so often hear of these things and pretend to believe them; who can live but a little while (a few years); who do not even expect to live here longer than others of their species ordinarily do; and who yet are careless about what becomes of themselves in another world, where there is no change and no end! How mad are they, when they hear that if they go on in sin, they shall be eternally miserable - that they are not moved by it, but hear it with as much carelessness and coldness as if they were no way concerned in the matter - when they know not but that it may be their case, that they may be suffering these torments before a week is at an end!

How can men be so careless of such a matter as their own eternal and desperate destruction and torment! What a strange stupor and senselessness possesses the hearts of men! How common a thing is it to see men, who are told from Sabbath to Sabbath of eternal misery, and who are as mortal as other men, so careless about it that they seem not to be at all restrained by it from whatever their souls lust after! It is not half so much their care to escape eternal misery, as it is to get money and land, and to be considerable in the world, and to gratify their sense. Their thoughts are much more exercised about these things, and much more of their care and concern is about them. Eternal misery, though they lie every day exposed to it, is a thing neglected, it is but now and then thought of, and then with a great deal of stupidity, and not with concern enough to stir them up to do anything considerable in order to escape it. They are not

sensible that it is worth their while to take any considerable pains in order to it. And if they do take pains for a little while, they soon leave off, and something else takes up their thoughts and concern.

Thus you see it among young and old. Multitudes of youth lead a careless life, taking little care about their salvation. So you may see it among persons of middle age, and with many advanced in years, and when they certainly draw near to the grave. Yet these same persons will seem to acknowledge that the greater part of men go to hell and suffer eternal misery, and this through carelessness about it. However, they will do the same. How strange is it that men can enjoy themselves and be at rest, when they are thus hanging over eternal burnings: at the same time, having no lease of their lives and not knowing how soon the thread by which they hang will break. Nor indeed do they pretend to know. And if it breaks, they are gone: they are lost forever, and there is no remedy! Yet they trouble not themselves much about it, nor will they hearken to those who cry to them, and entreat them to take care for themselves, and labour to get out of that dangerous condition. They are not willing to take so much pains. They choose not to be diverted from amusing themselves with toys and vanities. Thus, well might the wise man say, Ecc. 9:3, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil. Madness is in their heart while they live; and after that they go to the dead." How much wiser are those few, who make it their main business to lay a foundation for eternity, to secure their salvation!

II. I shall improve this subject in a use of exhortation to sinners, to take care to escape these eternal torments. If they be eternal, one would think that would be enough to awaken your concern, and excite your diligence. If the punishment be eternal, it is infinite, as we said before. And therefore no other evil, no death, no temporary torment that ever you heard of, or that you can imagine, is anything in comparison with it, but is as much less and less considerable, not only as a grain of sand is less than the whole universe, but as it is less than the boundless space which encompasses the universe. Therefore here,

First, be entreated to consider attentively how great and awful a thing eternity is. Although you can not comprehend it the more by considering, yet you may be made more sensible that it is not a thing to be disregarded. Do but consider what it is to suffer extreme torment forever and ever: to suffer it day and night from one year to another, from one age to another, and from one thousand ages to another (and so adding age to age, and thousands to thousands), in pain, in wailing and lamenting, groaning and shrieking, and gnashing your teeth - with your souls full of dreadful grief and amazement, [and] with your bodies and every member full of racking torture; without any possibility of getting ease; without any possibility of moving God to pity by your cries; without any possibility of hiding yourselves from him; without any possibility of diverting your thoughts from your pain; without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation, or help, or change for the better.

Second, do but consider how dreadful despair will be in such torment. How dismal will it be, when you are under these racking torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them. To have no hope: when you shall wish that you might be turned into nothing, but shall have no hope of it; when you shall wish that you might be turned into a toad or a serpent, but shall have no hope of it; when you would

rejoice if you might but have any relief; after you shall have endured these torments millions of ages, but shall have no hope of it. After you shall have worn out the age of the sun, moon, and stars, in your dolorous groans and lamentations, without rest day and night, or one minute's ease, yet you shall have no hope of ever being delivered. After you shall have worn a thousand more such ages, you shall have no hope, but shall know that you are not one whit nearer to the end of your torments. But that still there are the same groans, the same shrieks, the same doleful cries, incessantly to be made by you, and that the smoke of your torment shall still ascend up forever and ever. Your souls, which shall have been agitated with the wrath of God all this while, will still exist to bear more wrath. Your bodies, which shall have been burning all this while in these glowing flames, shall not have been consumed, but will remain to roast through eternity, which will not have been at all shortened by what shall have been past.

You may by considering make yourselves more sensible than you ordinarily are. But it is a little you can conceive of what it is to have no hope in such torments. How sinking would it be to you, to endure such pain as you have felt in this world, without any hopes, and to know that you never should be delivered from it, nor have one minute's rest! You can now scarcely conceive how doleful that would be. How much more to endure the vast weight of the wrath of God without hope! The more the damned in hell think of the eternity of their torments, the more amazing will it appear to them. And alas, they will not be able to keep it out of their minds! Their tortures will not divert them from it, but will fix their attention to it. O how dreadful will eternity appear to them after they shall have been thinking on it for ages together, and shall have so long an experience of their torments! The damned in hell will have two infinites perpetually to amaze them, and swallow them up: one is an infinite God, whose wrath they will bear, and in whom they will behold their perfect and irreconcilable enemy. The other is the infinite duration of their torment.

If it were possible for the damned in hell to have a comprehensive knowledge of eternity, their sorrow and grief would be infinite in degree. The comprehensive view of so much sorrow, which they must endure, would cause infinite grief for the present. Though they will not have a comprehensive knowledge of it, yet they will doubtless have a vastly more lively and strong apprehension of it than we can have in this world. Their torments will give them an impression of it. A man in his present state, without any enlargement of his capacity, would have a vastly more lively impression of eternity than he has, if he were only under some pretty sharp pain in some member of his body, and were at the same time assured that he must endure that pain forever. His pain would give him a greater sense of eternity than other men have. How much more will those excruciating torments, which the damned will suffer, have this effect!

Besides, their capacity will probably be enlarged, their understandings will be quicker and stronger in a future state, and God can give them as great a sense and as strong an impression of eternity, as he pleases, to increase their grief and torment. O be entreated, ye that are in a Christless state and are going on in a way to hell, that are daily exposed to damnation, to consider these things. If you do not, it will surely be but a little while before you will experience them, and then you will know how dreadful it is to despair in hell. And it may be before this year, or this month, or this week, is at an

end: before another Sabbath, or ever you shall have opportunity to hear another sermon.

Third, that you may effectually escape these dreadful and awful torments. Be entreated to flee and embrace him who came into the world for the very end of saving sinners from these torments, who has paid the whole debt due to the divine law, and exhausted eternal in temporal sufferings. What great encouragement is it to those of you who are sensible that you are exposed to eternal punishment, that there is a Saviour provided, who is able and who freely offers to save you from that punishment, and that in a way which is perfectly consistent with the glory of God: yea, which is more to the glory of God than it would be if you should suffer the eternal punishment of hell. For if you should suffer that punishment you would never pay the whole of the debt. Those who are sent to hell never will have paid the whole of the debt which they owe to God, nor indeed a part which bears any proportion to the whole. They never will have paid a part which bears so great a proportion to the whole, as one mite to ten thousand talents. Justice therefore never can be actually satisfied in your damnation. But it is actually satisfied in Christ. Therefore he is accepted of the Father, and therefore all who believe are accepted and justified in him. Therefore believe in him, come to him, commit your souls to him to be saved by him. In him you shall be safe from the eternal torments of hell. Nor is that all: but through him you shall inherit inconceivable blessedness and glory, which will be of equal duration with the torments of hell. For, as at the last day the wicked shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, so shall the righteous, or those who trust in Christ, go into life *eternal*.

14. SINNERS DELAY CONCERNS OF THE SOUL

Dated August, 1752.

“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Acts 24:25

I. The subject of the Apostle’s preaching.

II. How Felix was affected by it.

III. How he conducted himself in these circumstances.

Subject: Sinners delaying in putting off the great concern of their souls till a supposed more convenient season.

1. How sinners oftentimes do delay.

2. The reasons or causes why sinners do thus.

3. The end of it.

I. I would briefly observe how sinners do frequently delay and put off the great concern of their souls till a supposed more convenient season.

(1.) They sometimes put off to certain times they set, when they intend... Children sometimes... Shall know more - Know better how to pray and perform other duties of Religion that grown-up persons perform.

‘Tis a common thing for young people. Till settled in the world.

“More convenient season:” a better inclination... not so much inclined to mirth and youthful vanities... fewer temptations... out of the way of young company... more in the way of those who are solid and serious persons.

They esteem the present season very inconvenient for religion... being so very convenient for other purposes... Now a very convenient time to take liberty in mirth and youthful delights.

Many that are past their youth put off to a supposed more convenient season... when got through such and such particular affairs wherein they are now involved... when they hope they shall be more at liberty... or till in this and the other respect they are got into more convenient circumstances.

(2.) There are many that delay and put off without fixing any time in their mind... hoping for a more convenient future time...

The present time appears peculiarly inconvenient... feel a great opposition... have many temptations... hope it will be better with them... not feel such an aversion... fewer temptations...

Wait to have the Spirit of God strive with them.

Now a time of general deadness, and very inconvenient on that account... all the talk is of other things... put off till a time of the outpouring of the Spirit of God...

Or, perhaps, they are hoping for some greater advantage in other respects, some better means than now they enjoy, or a better concurrence of circumstances to favour a design of seeking God and their salvation.

II. The cause of persons thus delaying.

1. Stupidity... senselessness of their danger and necessity.

Insensible of the reality... insensible of the greatness... senseless of the heinousness of their sin... a brutish stupidity...

2. The importunity of lust... Job 20:12 - "Wickedness is sweet in his mouth; he hides it under his tongue; he spares it, and forsakes it not, he keeps it still in his mouth."

3. Aversion to their duty.

4. Ignorance of themselves and self-confidence.

Trust in wisdom... strength... steadfastness...

5. A spirit of self-blinding... The blinding influence of a sinful self-love... promise themselves future opportunity... better opportunity... that God will hear...

6. The subtle temptations of the Devil...

III. The evil of it.

1. 'Tis exceeding wicked.

Direct disobedience... wilful, resolved, wickedness...determine to continue in sin, and an allowance of it...

'Tis not only designedly committing one act of wickedness, but deliberately determining on a course of it... a course of manifested wickedness... neglect of many commands... gratification of many lusts... horrible ingratitude, abusing the past "long suffering"... horrible presumption on future mercy... contempt of offered mercy...

2. 'Tis exceeding foolish... Hereby they reject and miss a good deal of present good... wilfully continue in a miserable state... bring a great deal of certain future misery upon them...

They run a dreadful risk...depend on innumerable uncertainties... life continued... means of grace continued... use of reason... disposed... "more convenient season"...given one... if disposed whether succeed... whether God won't give over to delusion and to hard-heartedness...

Depend on many things that are not only uncertain, but very improbable... disposition... convenient season... thought when they were children... make their case more and more dangerous... depending on greater conveniences they make inconveniences for themselves... and by this means many thousands are actually undone...

APPLICATION

This may be of warning to sinners not to delay and put off...

You have heard how common this is... Men are exceeding prone to it... Does your own experience confirm what has been said in this matter? And are there not some here who are now doing as has been represented? Have we not reason to think that there are many here present that say as Felix, "When..." etc.?

Undoubted, by what is everywhere to be seen at such a time of general deadness and regardlessness of religion as this is: a good evidence of the exceeding proneness to put off...

Let all take warning...

You have heard something in general of wickedness and folly; but here consider more particularly -

1. What guilt you contract: what a horrible thing it is to live in known and wilful disobedience to God;... what great light ye will sin against if you...
2. What would you think of your delays if God should say to you, "Thou fool, this night...?"
3. If the future time you are putting off to should never come, how far it will probably be from being a "more convenient season."...

In many respects, far more inconvenient... God's anger increased... your heart harder, more stupid... every evil habit established... sloth... a carnal, worldly disposition... an habitual making light of things affecting such awakenings... Satan's great opportunity to establish his interest... commonly an increase of inconvenience of outward circumstances... increase of temptations... commonly many inconveniences arise that never would be thought of... less likely ever to set about the work... Satan hath greater advantages if they do... more likely to be unsteady... more likely soon to be discouraged... the work is greater and harder that they have to do... less time to do it...

4. Others have lamented their folly in delaying... many when under concern... I who have long been in the work of the ministry... many on a death-bed.

5. How much otherwise you deal with God, and desire that God should deal with you.

6. If you continue still to delay after the warning you have this day, how aggravated your wickedness will be!

How have you been warned hereof before... and how have you gone from the meeting-house and still...

How can you excuse yourself to go home tonight and do nothing? or to do a little this evening, and then to-morrow, or in a few days?...

Consider how unreasonable this is...

And if now again,... and there be a God,... how many you reasonably suppose He will resent it?

7. If you still... what danger that you will be utterly given up before the time comes... Giving up a common thing...

8. Inquire whether you yourself don't believe [that] there are many now in Hell through this very means?

Here some, perhaps, may say, to excuse themselves, and quiet their own consciences with respect to this, "I don't delay and put off the concern of my soul. I am in a way of seeking my salvation."

Here I would put two or three questions to such persons.

1. Whether you are in a way of minding this affair more than all other? "Seeking FIRST the kingdom of God" - "*one* thing."...

2. Is your reformation universal? Sins of omission... commission...

3. [Do you feel] as much pains as ever you take will be needful? Forsaken all practices you think you would need to forsake? Complied with all duties? As earnestly?... Do you intend to continue? How has secret, closet religion been with you? How have you kept the Sabbath? Attended the sermons? If not,... you are guilty of the fore-mentioned wickedness,...wilful disobedience - guilty of folly. Therefore, if you have any regard to... think on your mercies, and "turn your feet,"... and whatever "your hands find to do."...

15. NATURAL MEN IN A DREADFUL CONDITION

Dated February, 1753. Preached to the Stockbridge Indians.

“Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs what must I do to be saved?” - Acts 16:29-30

We have here and in the context and account of the conversion of the jailer, which is one of the most remarkable instances of the kind in the Scriptures. The jailer before seems not only to have been wholly insensible to the things of religion, but to have been a persecutor, and to have persecuted these very men, Paul and Silas; though he now comes to them in so earnest a manner, asking them what he must do to be saved. We are told in the context that all the magistrates and multitude of the city rose up jointly in a tumult against them, and took them, and cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Whereupon he thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And it is probable he did not act in this merely as the servant or instrument of the magistrates, but that he joined with the rest of the people in their rage against them. And that he did what he did urged on by his own will, as well as the magistrates' commands, which made him execute their commands with such rigour.

But when Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises at midnight, and there was suddenly a great earthquake, and God had in so wonderful a manner set open the prison doors, and every man's bands were loosed, he was greatly terrified. And in a kind of desperation, [he] was about to kill himself. But Paul and Silas crying out to him, “Do thyself no harm, for we are all here,” then he called for a light, and sprang in, as we have the account in the text. We may observe:

First, the objects of his concern. He is anxious about his salvation. He is terrified by his guilt, especially by his guilt in his ill treatment of these ministers of Christ. He is concerned to escape from that guilty state, the miserable state he was in by reason of sin.

Second, the sense which he has of the dreadfulness of his present state. This he manifests in several ways.

1. By his great haste to escape from that state. By his haste to inquire what he must do. He seems to be urged by the most pressing concern, sensible of his present necessity of deliverance, without any delay. Before, he was quiet and secure in his natural state. But now his eyes are opened. He is in the utmost haste. If the house had been on fire over his head, he could not have asked more earnestly, or as being in greater haste. He could soon have come to Paul and Silas, to ask them what he must do, if he had only walked. But he was in too great haste to walk only, or to run; for he sprang in. He leaped into the place where they were. He fled from wrath. He fled from the fire of divine justice, and so hastened, as one that fled for his life.

2. By his behaviour and gesture before Paul and Silas. He fell down. That he fell down before those whom he had persecuted, and thrust into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks, shows what was the state of his mind. It shows some great distress, that makes such an alteration in him, that brings him to this. He was broken

down, as it were, by the distress of his mind, in a sense of the dreadfulfulness of his condition.

3. His earnest manner of inquiring of them what he shall do to escape from this miserable condition; "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So distressed, that he is brought to be willing to do anything; to have salvation on any terms, and by any means, however difficult; brought, as it were, to write a blank, and give it in to God, that God may prescribe his own terms.

Doctrine. They who are in a natural condition, are in a dreadful condition. This I shall endeavour to make appear by a particular consideration of the state and condition of unregenerate persons.

I. As to their actual condition in this world.

II. As to their relations to the future world.

I. The condition of those who are in a natural state, is dreadful in the present world.

First, On account of the depraved state of their natures. As men come into the world, their natures are dreadfully depraved. Man in his primitive state was a noble piece of divine workmanship; but by the fall it is dreadfully defaced. It is awful to think that so excellent a creature as man is, should be so ruined. The dreadfulfulness of the condition, which unconverted men are in, in this respect, appears in the following things:

1. The dreadfulfulness of their depravity appears in that they are so sottishly blind and ignorant. God gave man a faculty of reason and understanding, which is a noble faculty. Herein he differs from all other creatures here below. He is exalted in his nature above them, and is in this respect like the angels, and is made capable to know God, and to know spiritual and eternal things. And God gave him understanding for this end, that he might know him, and know heavenly things and made him as capable to know these things as any others. But man has debased himself and has lost his glory in this respect. He has become as ignorant of the excellency of God, as the very beasts. His understanding is full of darkness. His mind is blind. [It] is altogether blind to spiritual things. Men are ignorant of God, and ignorant of Christ, ignorant of the way of salvation, ignorant of their own happiness, blind in the midst of the brightest and clearest light, ignorant under all manner of instructions. Rom. 3:17, "The way of peace they have not known." Isa. 27:11, "It is a people of no understanding." Jer. 4:22, "My people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and have none understanding." Jer. 5:21, "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding." Psa. 95:10, 11, "It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways; unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest." 1 Cor. 15:34, "Some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame."

There is a spirit of atheism prevailing in the hearts of men; a strange disposition to doubt of the very being of God, and of another world, and of everything which can not be seen with the bodily eyes. Psa. 121:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." They do not realise that God sees them when they commit sin, and will call them to an account for it. And therefore, if they can hide sin from the eyes of men, they are

not concerned, but are bold to commit it. Psa. 94:7, 8, 9, "Yet they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people; and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" Psa. 73:11, "They say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" So sottishly unbelieving are they of future things, of heaven and hell, and will commonly run the venture of damnation sooner than be convinced. They are stupidly senseless to the importance of eternal things. How hard to make them believe, and to give them a real conviction, that to be happy to all eternity is better than all other good; and to be miserable for ever under the wrath of God, is worse than all other evil. Men show themselves senseless enough in temporal things; but in spiritual things far more so. Luke 12:56, "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" They are very subtle in evil designs, but sottish in those things which most concern them. Jer. 4:22, "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Wicked men show themselves more foolish and senseless of what is best for them, than the very brutes. Isa. 1:3, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Jer. 8:7, "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."

2. They have no goodness in them. Rom. 7:18, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." They have no principle that disposes them to anything that is good. Natural men have no higher principle in their hearts than self-love. And herein they do not excel the devils. The devils love themselves, and love their own happiness, and are afraid of their own misery. And they go no further. And the devils would be as religious as the best of natural men if they were in the same circumstances. They would be as moral, and would pray as earnestly to God, and take as much pains for salvation, if there were the like opportunity. And as there is no good principle in the hearts of natural men, so there are never any good exercises of heart, never one good thought, or motion of heart in them. Particularly, there is no love to God in them. They never had the least degree of love to the infinitely glorious Being. They never had the least true respect to the Being that made them, and in whose hand their breath is, and from whom are all their mercies. However they may seem to do things at times out of respect to God, and wear a face as though they honoured him, and highly esteemed him, it is all in mere hypocrisy. Though there may be a fair outside, they are like painted sepulchres. Within, there is nothing but putrefaction and rottenness. They have no love to Christ, the glorious Son of God, who is so worthy of their love, and has shown such wonderful grace to sinners in dying for them. They never did anything out of any real respect to the Redeemer of the world since they were born. They never brought forth any fruit to that God who made them and in whom they live and move and have their being. They never have in any way answered the end for which they were made. They have hitherto lived altogether in vain, and to no purpose. They never so much as sincerely obeyed one command of God; never so much as moved one finger out of a true spirit of obedience to him, who make them to serve him. And when they have seemed outwardly to comply with God's commands, their hearts were not in it. They did not do it out of any spirit of subjection to God, or any disposition to obey him, but were merely driven to it by fear, or in some way influenced by their worldly interest. They never gave God the honour of one of his attributes. They never gave him

the honour of his authority by obeying him. They never gave him the honour of his sovereignty by submitting to him. They never gave him the honour of his holiness and mercy by loving him. They never gave him the honour of his sufficiency and faithfulness by trusting in him. But have looked upon God as one not fit to be believed or trusted, and have treated him as if he were a liar. 1 John 5:10, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." They never so much as heartily thanked God for one mercy they have received in their whole lives, though God has always maintained them, and they have always lived upon his bounty. They never so much as once heartily thanked Christ for coming into the world and dying to give them an opportunity to be saved. They never would show him so much gratitude as to receive him, when he has knocked at their door; but have always shut the door against him, though he has come to knock at their door upon no other ground but only to offer himself to be their Saviour. They never so much as had any true desires after God or Christ in their whole lives. When God has offered himself to them to be their portion, and Christ to be the friend of their souls, they did not desire it. They never desired to have God and Christ for their portion. They had rather be without them than with them, if they could avoid going to hell without them. They never had so much as an honourable thought of God. They always have esteemed earthly things before him. And notwithstanding all they have heard in the commands of God and Christ, they have always preferred a little worldly profit or sinful pleasure before them.

3. Unconverted men are in a dreadful condition by reason of the dreadful wickedness which there is in them.

(1) Sin is a thing of a dreadful nature, and that because it is against an infinitely great and an infinitely holy God. There is in the nature of man enmity against God, contempt of God, rebellion against God. Sin rises up as an enemy against the Most High. It is a dreadful thing for a creature to be an enemy to the Creator, or to have any such thing in his heart as enmity against him; as will be very clear, if we consider the difference between God and the creature, and how all creatures, compared with him, are as the small dust of the balance, are as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. There is an infinite evil in sin. If we saw the hundredth part of the evil there is in sin, it would make us sensible that those who have any sin, let it be ever so small, are in a dreadful condition.

(2) The hearts of natural men are exceedingly full of sin. If they had but one sin in their hearts, it would be sufficient to render their condition very dreadful. But they have not only one sin, but all manner of sin. There is every kind of lust. The heart is a mere sink of sin, a fountain of corruption, whence issue all manner of filthy streams. Mark 7:21, 22, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication's, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." There is no one lust in the heart of the devil, that is not in the heart of man. Natural men are in the image of the devil. The image of God is erased out, and the image of the devil is stamped upon them. God is graciously pleased to restrain the wickedness of men, principally by fear and respect to their credit and reputation, and by education. And if it were not for such restraints as these, there is no kind of wickedness that men would not commit, whenever it came in their way. The commission of those things, at the mention of which men are now ready to start, and seem to be shocked when they hear them read, would be common and general; and

earth would be a kind of hell. What would not natural men do if they were not afraid? Mat. 7:17, "But beware of men." Men have not only every kind of lust, and wicked and perverse dispositions in their hearts, but they have them to a dreadful degree. There is not only pride, but an amazing degree of it: pride, whereby a man is disposed to set himself even above the throne of God itself. The hearts of natural men are mere sinks of sensuality. Man is become like a beast in placing his happiness in sensual enjoyments. The heart is full of the most loathsome lusts. The souls of natural men are more vile and abominable than any reptile. If God should open a window in the heart so that we might look into it, it would be the most loathsome spectacle that ever was set before our eyes. There is not only malice in the hearts of natural men, but a fountain of it. Men naturally therefore deserve the language applied to them by Christ, Mat. 3:7, "O generation of vipers;" and Mat. 23:33, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers." Men, if it were not for fear and other such restraints, would not only commit all manner of sin, but to what degree, to what length would they not proceed! What has a natural man to keep him from openly blaspheming God, as much as any of the devils; yea, from dethroning him, if that were possible, and fear and other such restraints were out of the way? Yea, would it not be thus with many of those, who now appear with a fair face, and will speak most of God, and make many pretences of worshipping and serving him? The exceeding wickedness of natural men appears abundantly in the sins they commit, notwithstanding all these restraints. Every natural man, if he reflects, may see enough to show him how exceedingly sinful he is. Sin flows from the heart as constantly as water flows from a fountain. Jer. 6:7, "As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness." And this wickedness, that so abounds in their hearts, has dominion over them. They are slaves to it. Rom. 7:14, "Sold under sin." They are so under the power of sin, that they are driven on by their lusts in a course against their own conscience, and against their own interest. They are hurried on to their own ruin, and that at the same time their reason tells them, it will probably be their ruin. 2 Pet. 2:14, "Can not cease from sin." On account of wicked men's being so under the power of sin, the heart of man is said to be *desperately* wicked. Jer. 17:9 and Eph. 2:1, "Dead in trespasses and sins."

(3) The hearts of natural men are dreadfully hard and incorrigible. There is nothing but the mighty power of God will move them. They will cleave to sin, and go on in sin, let what will be done with them. Pro. 27:22, "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." There is nothing that will awe our hearts; and there is nothing that will draw them to obedience: let there be mercies or afflictions, threatenings or gracious calls and invitations, frowning, or patience and long-suffering, or fatherly counsels and exhortations. Isa. 26:10, "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord."

Secondly. The relative state of those who are in an unconverted condition is dreadful. This will appear if we consider,

1. Their relative state with respect to God; and that because,

(1) They are without God in the world. They have no interest or part in God. He is not their God. He hath declared he will not be their God (Hos. 1:9). God and believers

have a mutual covenant relation and right to each other. They are his people, and he is their God. But he is not the covenant God of those who are in an unconverted state. There is a great alienation and estrangement between God and the wicked. He is not their Father and portion. They have nothing to challenge of God, they have no right to any one of his attributes. The believer can challenge a right in the power of God, in his wisdom and holiness, his grace and love. All are made over to him, to be for his benefit. But the unconverted can claim no right in any of God's perfections. They have no God to protect and defend them in this evil world: to defend them from sin, or from Satan, or any evil. They have no God to guide and direct them in any doubts or difficulties, to comfort and support their minds under afflictions. They are without God in all their affairs, in all the business they undertake, in their family affairs, and in their personal affairs, in their outward concerns, and in the concerns of their souls.

How can a creature be more miserable than to be separated from the Creator and to have no God whom he can call his own God? He is wretched indeed, who goes up and down in the world, without a God to take care of him, to be his guide and protector, and to bless him in his affairs. The very light of nature teaches that a man's God is his all. Jdg. 18:24, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" There is but one God, and in him they have no right. They are without that God, whose will must determine their whole well being, both here and forever. That unconverted men are without God shows that they are liable to all manner of evil. They are liable to the power of the devil, to the power of all manner of temptation, for they are without God to protect them. They are liable to be deceived and seduced into erroneous opinions, and to embrace damnable doctrines. It is not possible to deceive the saints in this way. But the unconverted may be deceived. They may become papists, or heathens, or atheists. They have nothing to secure them from it. They are liable to be given up of God to judicial hardness of heart. They deserve it. And since God is not their God, they have no certainty that God will not inflict this awful judgment upon them. As they are without God in the world, they are liable to commit all manner of sin, and even the unpardonable sin itself. They can not be sure they shall not commit that sin. They are liable to build up a false hope of heaven, and so to go hoping to hell. They are liable to die senseless and stupid, as many have died. They are liable to die in such a case as Saul and Judas did, fearless of hell. They have no security from it. They are liable to all manner of mischief, since they are without God. They can not tell what shall befall them, nor when they are secure from anything. They are not safe one moment. Ten thousand fatal mischiefs may befall them, that may make them miserable for ever. They, who have God for their God, are safe from all such evils. It is not possible that they should befall them. God is their covenant God, and they have his faithful promise to be their refuge. But what mischief is there which may not befall natural men? Whatever hopes they may have may be disappointed. Whatever fair prospect there may seem to be of their conversion and salvation, it may vanish away. They may make great progress towards the kingdom of God, and yet come short at last. They may seem to be in a very hopeful way to be converted, and yet never be converted. A natural man is sure of nothing. He is sure of no good, nor is he sure of escaping any evil. It is therefore a dreadful condition that a natural man is in. They, who are in a natural state, are lost. They have wandered from God, and they are like lost sheep, that have wandered from their shepherd. They are poor helpless creatures in a howling wilderness, and have no shepherd to protect or to guide them. They are desolate, and exposed to innumerable fatal mischief's.

(2) They are not only without God, but the wrath of God abides upon them. John 3:36, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." There is no peace between God and them, but God is angry with them every day. He is not only angry with them, but that to a dreadful degree. There is a fire kindled in God's anger; it burns like fire. Wrath abides upon them, which if it should be executed, would plunge them into the lowest hell, and make them miserable there to all eternity. They have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger. God has been angry with them every since they began to sin. He has been provoked by them every day, every since they exercised any reason. And he is provoked by them more and more every hour. The flame of his wrath is continually burning. There are many now in hell that never provoked God more than they, nor so much as many of them. Wherever they go, they go about with the dreadful wrath of God abiding on them. They eat, and drink, and sleep under wrath. How dreadful a condition therefore are they in! It is the most awful thing for the creature to have the wrath of his Creator abiding on him. The wrath of God is a thing infinitely dreadful. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion. But what is the wrath of a king, who is but a worm of the dust, to the wrath of the infinitely great and dreadful God? How dreadful is it to be under the wrath of the First Being, the Being of beings, the great Creator and mighty possessor of heaven and earth! How dreadful is it for a person to go about under the wrath of God, who gave him being, and in who he lives and moves, who is everywhere present, and without whom he can not move a step, nor draw a breath! Natural men, inasmuch as they are under wrath, are under a curse. God's wrath and curse are continually upon them. They can have no reasonable comfort, therefore, in any of their enjoyments; for they do not know but that they are given them in wrath, and shall be curses to them, and not blessings. As it is said in Job 18:15, "Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation." How can they take any comfort in their food, or in their possessions, when they do not know but all are given them to fit them for the slaughter.

2. Their relative state will appear dreadful, if we consider how they stand related to the devil.

(1) They who are in a natural state are the children of the devil. As the saints are the children of God, so the ungodly are the children of the devil. 1 John 3:10, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." Mat 13:38, 39, "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom: but the tares are the children of wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil." John 8:44, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." They are, as it were, begotten of the devil. They proceed from him. 1 John 3:8, "He that committeth sin, is of the devil." As Adam begat a son in his own likeness, so are wicked men in the likeness and image of the devil. They acknowledge this relation, and own themselves children of the devil, by consenting that he should be their father. They subject themselves to him, hearken to his counsels, as children hearken to the counsels of a father. They learn of him to imitate him, and do as he does, as children learn to imitate their parents. John 8:38, "I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and ye do that which ye have seen with your father." How awful a state is this! How dreadful is it to be a child of the devil, the spirit of darkness, the prince of hell, that wicked, malignant, and cruel spirit! To have anything to do with him is very dreadful. It would be accounted a dreadful, frightful thing only to meet the devil, to have him appear to a

person in a visible shape. How dreadful then must it be to be his child; how dreadful for any person to have the devil for his father!

(2) They are the devil's captives and servants. Man before his fall was in a state of liberty; but now he has fallen into Satan's hands. The devil has got the victory and carried him captive. Natural men are in Satan's possession and they are under his dominion. They are brought by him into subjection to his will, to go at his bidding, and do what he commands. 2 Tim. 2:26, "Taken captive by him at his will." The devil rules over ungodly men. They are all his slaves, and do his drudging. This argues their state to be dreadful. Men account it an unhappy state of life to be slaves; and especially to be slaves to a bad master, to one who is very hard, unreasonable, and cruel. How miserable do we look upon those persons, who are taken captive by the Turks, or other such barbarous nations, and put by them to the meanest and most cruel slavery, and treated no better than they treat their cattle! But what is this to being taken captive by the devil, the prince of hell, and made a slave to him? Had not a man better be a slave to anyone on earth than to the devil? The devil is, of all masters, the most cruel, and treats his servants the worst. He puts them to the vilest service, to that which is the most dishonourable of any in the world. No work is so dishonourable as the practice of sin. The devil puts his servants to such work as debases them below the dignity of human nature. They must make themselves like beasts to do that work to serve their filthy lusts. And besides the meanness of the work, it is a very hard service. The devil causes them to serve him at the expense of the peace of their own conscience, and oftentimes at the expense of their reputation, at the expense of their estates, and shortening of their days. The devil is a cruel master; for the service upon which he puts his slaves is to undo themselves. He keeps them hard at work day and night, to work their own ruin. He never intends to give them any reward for their pains, but their pains are to work out their own everlasting destruction. It is to gather fuel and kindle the fire for themselves to be tormented in to all eternity.

(3) The soul of a natural man is the habitation of the devil. The devil is not only their father and rules over them, but he dwells in them. It is a dreadful thing for a man to have the devil near him, often coming to him. But it is a more dreadful thing to have him dwell with a man, to take up his constant abode with him; and more dreadful yet to have him dwell in him, to take up his abode in his heart. But thus it is with every natural man. He takes up his abode in his heart. As the soul of a godly man is the habitation of the Spirit of God, so is the soul of a wicked man the habitation of unclean spirits. As the soul of a godly man is the temple of God, so the soul of a wicked man is the synagogue of Satan. A wicked man's soul is in Scripture called *Satan's house*, and *Satan's palace*. Mat. 12:29, "How can one enter into a strong man's house?" meaning the devil. And Luke 11:21, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." Satan not only lives, but reigns, in the heart of a wicked man. He has not only taken up his abode there, but he has set up his throne there. The heart of a wicked man, is the place of the devil's rendezvous. The doors of a wicked man's heart are open to devils. They have free access there, though they are shut against God and Jesus Christ. There are many devils, no doubt, that have to do with one wicked man, and his heart is the place where they meet. The soul of a wicked man is, as it was said of Babylon, the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Thus dreadful is the condition of a natural man by reason of the relation in which he stands to the devil.

II. The state of unconverted men is very dreadful, if we consider its relation to the future world. Our state here is not lasting, but transitory. We are pilgrims and strangers here, and are principally designed for a future world. We continue in this present state but a short time; but we are to be in that future state to all eternity. And therefore men are to be denominated either happy or miserable, chiefly with regard to that future state. It matters but little comparatively what our state is here, but it will continue but a short time; it is nothing to eternity. But that man is a happy man who is entitled to happiness, and he is miserable who is in danger of misery, in his eternal state. Prosperity or adversity in the present state alters them but very little because this state is of so short continuance.

First, those who are in a natural condition, have no title to any inheritance in another world. There are glorious things in another world. There are unsearchable riches, an unspeakable and inconceivable abundance; but they have nothing to do with it. Heaven is a world of glory and blessedness. But they have no right to the least portion of those blessings. If they should die and go out of the world as they are, they would go destitute, having no inheritance, no friend, no enjoyments to go to. They will have no God to whom they may go, no Redeemer to receive their departing souls, no angel to be a ministering spirit to them, to take care of them, to guard or defend them, no interest in that Redeemer, who has purchased those blessings. What is said of the Ephesians is true of those who are in a natural condition. "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." What a dreadful case they are in, who live in the world having no hope, without any title to any benefits hereafter, and without any ground to hope for any good in their future and eternal state!

Second, natural men are in a dreadful condition because of the misery to which they are exposed in the future world. This will be obvious, if we consider,

1. How great the misery is of which they are in danger;

2. How great is their danger of this misery.

1. How great the misery is of which they are in danger. It is great in two respects: (1) The torment and misery are great in themselves. And (2) They are of endless duration.

- (1) The torment and misery, of which natural men are in danger, are exceedingly great in themselves. They are great beyond any of our words or thoughts. When we speak of them, our words are swallowed up. We say they are great, and exceedingly great, and very dreadful. But when we have used all the words we can to express them, how faint is the idea that is raised in our minds in comparison with the reality! This misery will appear very dreadful if we consider what calamities meet together in it. In it the wicked are deprived of all good, separated from God and all fruits of his mercy. In this world they enjoy many of the streams of God's goodness. But in the future world they will have no more smiles of God, no more manifestations of his mercy by benefits, by warnings, by calls and invitations. He will never more manifest his mercy by the exercise of patience and long-suffering, by waiting to be gracious. No more use any forbearance with them for their good. No more exercise his mercy by strivings of his Spirit, by sending messengers and using means. They will have no more testimonies of the fruits of God's goodness in enjoying food and raiment, and comfortable dwellings

and convenient accommodations, nor any of the comforts of this life. No more manifestations of his mercy by suffering them to draw near to him with their prayers, to pray for what they need. God will exercise no pity towards them, no regard for their welfare. Cut off from all the comforts of this life, shut out of heaven, they will see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But they shall be turned away from God and from all good into the blackness of darkness, into the pit of hell, into that great receptacle, which God has provided on purpose to cast into it the filthy, and polluted, and abominable of the universe. They will be in a most dreadful condition. They will have no friends. God will be their enemy, angels and the spirits of the just will be their enemies, devils and damned spirits will be their enemies. They will be hated with perfect hatred, will have none to pity them, none to bemoan their case, or to be any comfort to them. It appears that the state of the damned will be exceedingly dreadful in that they will suffer the wrath of God, executed to the full upon them, poured out without mixture. They shall bear the wrath of the Almighty. They shall know how dreadful the wrath of an Almighty God is. Now none knows, none can conceive. Psa. 90:11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" Then they shall feel the weight of God's wrath. In this world they have the wrath of God abiding on them, but then it will be executed upon them. Now they are the objects of it, but then they will be the subjects of it. Now it hangs over them, but then it shall fall upon them in its full weight without alleviation, or any moderation or restraint. Their souls and their bodies shall then be filled full with the wrath of God. Wicked men shall be as full of wrath as anything that glows in the midst of a furnace is of fire. The wrath of God is infinitely more dreadful than fire. Fire, yea the fiercest fire, is but an image and shadow of it. The vessels of wrath shall be filled up with wrath to the brim. Yes, they shall be plunged into a sea of wrath. And therefore hell is compared to a lake of fire and brimstone, because there wicked men are overwhelmed and swelled up in wrath, as men who are cast into a lake or sea, are swallowed up in water. O who can conceive of the dreadfulness of the wrath of an Almighty God! Everything in God is answerable to his infinite greatness. When God shows mercy, he shows mercy like a God. His love is infinitely desirable because it is the love of God. And so when he executes wrath it is like a God. This God will pour out without mixture. Rev. 14:10, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." No mixture of mercy or pity; nothing thrown into the cup of wrath to assuage or moderate it. "God shall cast upon him and not spare." (Job 27:22) They shall be cast into the wine-press of the wrath of God, where they shall be pressed down with wrath, as grapes are pressed in a wine-press. Rev. 14:19, "Cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God." God will then make appear in their misery how terrible his wrath is, that men and angels may know how much more dreadful the wrath of God is, than the wrath of kings, or any creatures. They shall know what God can do towards his enemies, and how fearful a thing it is to provoke him to anger.

If a few drops of wrath do sometimes so distress the minds of men in this world, so as to be more dreadful than fire, or any bodily torment, how dreadful will be a deluge of wrath. How dreadful will it be, when all God's mighty waves and billows of wrath pass over them! Every faculty of the soul shall be filled with wrath, and every part of the body shall be filled with fire. After the resurrection the body shall be cast into that great furnace, which shall be so great as to burn up the whole world. These lower

heavens, this air and this earth, shall all become one great furnace, a furnace that shall burn the earth, even to its very centre. In this furnace shall the bodies of the wicked lie to all eternity, and yet live, and have their sense of pain and torment not all diminished. O, how full will the heart, the vitals, the brain, the eyes, the tongue, the hands, and the feet be of fire; of this fire of such an inconceivable fierceness! How full will every member, and every bone, and every vein, and every sinew, be of this fire! Surely it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Who can bear such wrath? A little of it is enough to destroy us. Psa. 2:12, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." But how will men be overwhelmed, how will they sink, when God's wrath is executed in so dreadful a degree! The misery which the damned will endure, will be their perfect destruction. Psa. 50:22, "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

In several places the wicked are compared to the stubble, and to briers and thorns before devouring flames, and to the fat of lambs, which consumes into smoke. Psa. 37:20, "But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." They shall be as it were ground to powder under the weight of God's wrath. Mat. 21:24. Their misery shall be perfect misery; and because damnation is the perfect destruction of a creature, therefore it is called death. It is eternal death, of which temporal death, with all its awful circumstances, is but a faint shadow of the state of the soul under the second death. How dreadful the state of the damned is, we may argue from the desert of sin. One sin deserves eternal death and damnation, which, in the least degree of it, is the total destruction of the creature. How dreadful, then, is the misery of which natural persons are in danger, who have lived some time in the world, and have committed thousands and thousands of sins, and have filled up many years with a course of sinning, and have committed many great sins, with high aggravations, who have sinned against the glorious gospel of Christ, and against great light, whose guilt is far more dreadful than that of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah! How dreadful is the punishment to which they are exposed, in which all their sins shall be punished according to their desert, and the uttermost farthing shall be exacted of them! The punishment of one idle word, or sinful thought, would be more than they could bear. How then will they bear all the wrath that shall be heaped upon them for all their multiplied and aggravated transgressions? If one sin deserves eternal death and damnation, how many deaths and damnations will they have accumulated upon them at once! Such an aggravated, multiplied death must they die every moment, and always continue dying such a death, and yet never be dead. Such misery as this may well be called the blackness of darkness. Hell may well be called the bottomless pit, if the misery is so unfathomably great. Men sometimes have suffered extreme torment in this world. Dreadful have been the sufferings of some of the martyrs. But how little those are, in comparison of the sufferings of the damned, we may learn from 1 Pet. 4:16, 17, 18, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of those that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" The apostle is here speaking of the sufferings of Christians. And from thence he argues, that seeing their sufferings are so great, how unspeakably great will be the sufferings of the wicked! And if judgment begins with them, what shall be the end of

those who obey not the gospel! As much as to say, the sufferings of the righteous are nothing to what those, who obey not the gospel, are. How dreadful, therefore, does this argue their misery to be! Well may the sinners in Zion be afraid, and fearful, and surprised. Well may the kings of the earth, and the great men, and rich men, and chief captains, and every bond man, and every free man, hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, at Christ's second coming; and cry and say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Well may there be weeping and gnashing of teeth in hell, where there is such misery. Thus the misery of those who are in a natural condition, is, in itself, exceedingly great.

(2) It is of endless duration. The misery is not only amazingly great, and extreme, but of long continuance; yea, of infinitely long continuance. It never will have any end. There will be no deliverance, no rest, no hope. But they will last throughout all eternity. Eternity is a thing in the thought of which our minds are swallowed up. As it is infinite in itself, so it is infinitely beyond the comprehension of our minds. The more we think of it, the more amazing will it seem to us. Eternity is a duration, to which a long period of time bears no greater proportion than a short period. A thousand years, or a thousand ages, bear no greater proportion to eternity than a minute; or which is the same thing, a thousand ages are as much less than eternity as a minute. A minute comes as near an equality to it; or you may take as many thousand ages out of eternity, as you can minutes. If a man by the utmost skill in arithmetic, should denote or enumerate a great number of ages, and should rise by multiplication to ever so prodigious numbers, should make as great figures as he could, and rise in multiplying as fast as he could, and should spend his life in multiplying; the product of all would be no nearer equal to the duration which the wicked must spend in the misery of hell, than one minute. Eternity is that, which can not be made less by subtraction. If we take from eternity a thousand years or ages, the remainder is not the less for it. Eternity is that which will for ever be but beginning, and that because all the time which is past, let it be ever so long, is but a point to what remains. The wicked, after they have suffered millions of ages, will be, as it were, but in the first point, only setting out in their sufferings. It will be no comfort to them that so much is gone, for they will have none the less to bear. There will never a time come, when, if what is past is compared to what is to come, it will not be as a point, and as nothing. The continuance of their torment can not be measured out by revolutions of the sun, or moon, or stars, by centuries or ages. They shall continue suffering after these heavens and this earth shall wax old as a garment, till the whole visible universe is dissolved. Yea, they shall remain in their misery through millions of such ages as are equal to the age of the sun, and moon, and stars, and still it will be all one, as to what remains, still no nearer the end of their misery. Mat. 25:41, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Mark 9:44, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Rev. 20:10, "They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." And 14:11, "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." The damned in hell in their misery will be in absolute despair. They shall know that their misery will have no end, and therefore they will have no hopes of it. O, who can conceive the dreadfulness of such despair as this in the midst of such torment! Who can express, or think anything how dreadful the thought of eternity is to them, who are under so great torment! To what unfathomable depths of woe will it sink them! With what a gloom

and blackness of darkness will it fill them! What a boundless gulf of sorrow and woe is the thought of eternity to the damned, who shall be in absolute and utter despair of any deliverance!

How dreadful, then, is the condition of those who are in a natural state, who are in danger of such misery.

2. The dreadfulfulness of their condition will appear by considering how great their danger is of this misery. This will be obvious from the following things:

(1) Their danger is such, that continuing in their present state, they will unavoidably sink into this misery.

First, the state in which natural persons now are, naturally tends to it. And this, because they are separate from God, and destitute of any spiritual good. The soul that is in a state of separation from its Creator, must be miserable because he is separate from the fountain of all good. He that is separate from God, is in great danger of ruin because he is without any defense. He that is separate from God, must perish, if he continue so, because it is from God only that he can have those supplies which can make him happy. It is with the soul as it is with the body. The body without supplies of sustenance will miserably famish and die. So the souls of natural men are in a famishing condition. They are separate from God, and therefore are destitute of any spiritual good, which can nourish the soul, or keep it alive; like one that is remote in a wilderness, where he has nothing to eat or drink, and therefore, if he continue so, will unavoidably die. So the state of natural men naturally tends to that dreadful misery of the damned in hell, because they are separate from God.

Second, they are under the power of a mortal disease, which if it not healed, will surely bring them to this death. They are under the power and dominion of sin, and sin is a mortal disease of the soul. If it is not cured, it will certainly bring them to death; *viz.* To that second death of which we have heard. The infection of the disease has powerfully seized their vital parts. The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint. The disease is inveterate. The infection is spread throughout the whole frame. The very nature is corrupted and ruined; and the whole must come to ruin, if God by his mighty power does not heal the disease. The soul is under a mortal wound; a wound deep and dreadfully confirmed. Its roots reach the most vital parts; yea, they are principally seated there. There is a plague upon the heart, which corrupts and destroys the source of life, ruins the whole frame of nature, and hastens an inevitable death. There is a most deadly poison, which has been infused into, and spread over, the man. He has been bitten by a fiery serpent, whose bite issues in a most tormenting death. Sin is that, which does as naturally tend to the misery and ruin of the soul, as the most mortal poison tends to the death of the body. We look upon persons far gone in a consumption, or with an incurable cancer, or some malady, as in doleful circumstances. But that mortal disease, under whose power natural men are, makes their case a thousand times more doleful. That mortal disease of natural men does, as it were, ripen them for damnation. We read of the clusters of the vine of the earth being for the wine-press of the wrath of God, Rev. 14:18, where by the clusters of the vine are meant wicked men. The wickedness of natural men tends to sink them down to hell, as the weight of a stone causes it to tend toward the centre of the earth. Natural men have, as it were, the seeds of hell within their own hearts. Those principles of sin and

corruption, which are in them, if they remain unmortified, will at length breed the torment of hell in them, and that necessarily, and of their own tendency. The soul that remains under the power of sin will at length take fire of itself. Hell will kindle in them.

(2) If they continue in their present state, this misery appears to be unavoidable, if we consider the justice and truth of God.

First, if they continue in their present condition, so surely as God is just, they shall suffer the eternal misery of which we have heard. The honour of God's justice requires it, and God will not disparage his own justice. He will not deny his own honour and glory, but will glorify himself on the wicked as well as the godly. He will not lose his honour of any one of his creatures which he has made.

It is impossible that God should be frustrated or disappointed. And so surely as God will not be frustrated, so surely shall they who continue in a natural condition, suffer that eternal misery, of which we have heard. The avenging justice of God is one of the perfections of his nature. And he will glorify all his perfections. God is unalterable in this as well as his other perfections. His justice shall and must be satisfied. He has declared that he will by no means clear the guilty, Exo. 34:7. And that he will not justify the wicked, Exo. 23:7. And that he will not at all acquit the wicked, Nah. 1:3. God is a strictly just Judge. When men come to stand before him, he will surely judge them according to their works. They that have guilt lying upon them, he will surely judge according to their guilt. The debt they owe to justice must be paid to the uttermost farthing. It is impossible that anyone, who dies in his sins, should escape everlasting condemnation and punishment before such a Judge. He will render to every man according to his deeds. Rom. 2:8, "Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." It is impossible to influence God to be otherwise than just in judging ungodly men. There is no bribing him. He accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor. Deu. 10:17, "He regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." It is impossible to influence him to be otherwise than strictly just, by any supplications, or tears, or cries. God is inexorably just. The cries and the moans of the malefactor will have no influence upon this Judge to pass a more favourable judgment on them, so as in any way to acquit or release them. The eternal cries, and groans, and lamentations of the wicked will have no influence upon him. Though they are ever so long continued, they will not prevail upon God.

Second, so surely as God is true, if they die in the state they are now in, they shall suffer that eternal misery. God has threatened it in a positive and absolute manner. The threatenings of the law are absolute. And they, who are in a natural state, are under the condemnation of the law. The threatening of the law takes hold upon them. And if they continue under guilt, God is obliged by his word to punish them according to that threatening. And he has often, in the most positive and absolute manner, declared that the wicked shall be cast into hell; that they who believe not shall be damned; that they shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; and that their misery shall never have an end. And therefore, if there be any truth in God, it shall surely be so. It is as impossible that he who dies in a natural condition, should escape suffering that eternal misery, as that God should lie. The Word of God is stronger and

firmer than mountains of brass, and shall not fail. We shall sooner see heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or tittle of all that God hath said in his Word not be fulfilled. So much for the first thing, that evinces the greatness of the danger that natural men are in of hell; viz. that they will unavoidably sink into hell, if they continue in such a condition.

(3) Their danger will appear very dreadful, if we consider how uncertain it is, whether they will ever get out of this condition. It is very uncertain whether they will ever be converted. If they should die in their present condition, their misery is certain and inevitable. But it is very doubtful whether they will not die in such a condition, their misery is certain and inevitable. But it is very doubtful whether they will not die in such a condition. There is great danger that they will; great danger of their never being converted. And this will appear, if we consider two things.

First, they have nothing on which to depend for conversion. They have nothing in the world, by which to persuade themselves that they shall ever be converted. Left to themselves, they never will repent and turn to God. If they are ever converted, therefore, it is God who must do it. But they have no promise of God, that they ever shall be converted. They do not know how soon they may die. God has not promised them long life; and he has not promised them that they shall be ready for death before they die. It is but a peradventure, whether God will ever give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. 2 Tim. 2:25. Their resolutions are not to be depended on. If they have convictions, they are not to be depended on; they may lose those convictions. Their conversion depends on innumerable uncertainties. It is very uncertain, then, whether they will be converted before they die.

Second, another thing which shows the danger there is that they shall never be converted, is, that there are but few, comparatively, who are ever converted. But few of those, who have been natural persons in time past, have been converted. Most of them have died unconverted. So it has been in all ages, and hence we have reason to think that but few of them, who are uncovered now, will ever be converted; that most of them will die unconverted, and will go to hell. Natural persons are ready to flatter themselves, that they shall be converted. They think there are signs of it. But a man would not run the venture of so much as a sixpence in such an uncertainty as they are, about their ever being converted, or not going to hell. This shows the doleful condition of natural men, as it is uncertain whether they shall ever be converted.

Third, they who are in a natural condition are in danger of going to hell every day. Those now present, who are in a natural condition, are in danger of dropping into hell before tomorrow morning. They have nothing to depend on, to keep them out of hell one day, or one night. We know not what a day may bring forth. God has not promised to spare them one day; and he is every day angry with them. The black clouds, that are full of the thunder of God's wrath, hang over their heads every day, and they know not how soon the thunder will break forth upon their heads. Natural men are in Scripture compared to those that walk in slippery places. They know not when their feet will slip. They are continually in danger. Psa. 73:18, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment." Natural men hang over the pit of hell, as it were, by a thread, that has a moth continually gnawing it. They know not when it will snap in

twain, and let them drop. They are in the utmost uncertainty. They are not secure one moment. A natural man never goes to sleep, but that he is in danger of waking in hell. Experience abundantly teaches the matter to be so. It shows, by millions of instances, that man is not certain of life one day. And how common a thing is it for death to come suddenly and unexpectedly! And thousands, beyond all reasonable question, are going to hell every day, and death comes upon them unexpectedly. "When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." It is a dreadful condition that natural persons are in upon this account. And no wise person would be in their condition for a quarter of an hour for the whole world, because such is the danger that they will drop into hell before that quarter of an hour is expired.

Thus I have shown how dreadful the condition of natural men is, relatively considered. I shall mention two or three things more, which yet further make it appear how doleful their condition is.

1. The longer it continues, the worse it grows. This is an awful circumstance in the condition of a natural man. Any disease is looked upon as the more dreadful, for its growing and increasing nature. Thus a cancer and gangrene are regarded as dreadful calamities, because they continually grow and spread. And the faster they grow, the more dreadful are they accounted. It would be dreadful to be in a natural condition, if a person could continue as he is, and his condition grow no worse; if he could live in a natural condition, and never have it any more dreadful, than when he first begins to sin. But it is yet much more dreadful, when we consider that it every day becomes worse and worse. The condition of natural men is worse today than it was yesterday, and that on several accounts. The heart grows more and more polluted and hardened. The longer sin continues unmortified, the more is it strengthened and rooted. Their guilt also grows greater, and hell every day grows hotter; for they are every day adding sin to sin, and so their iniquity is increasing over their heads more and more. Every new sin adds to the guilt. Every sin deserves eternal death for its punishment. And therefore in every sin that a man commits, there is so much added to the punishment, to which he lies exposed. There is, as it were, another eternal death added to augment his damnation. And how much is added to the account in God's book every day. How many new sins are set down, that all may be answered for; each one of which sins must be punished, that by itself would be an eternal death! How fast do wicked men heap up guilt, and treasure up wrath, so long as they continue in a natural condition! How is God more and more provoked, his wrath more and more incensed; and how does hell-fire continually grow hotter and hotter! If a man has lived twenty years in a natural condition, the fire has been increased every day since he has lived. It has been, as it were, blown up to a greater and greater degree of fierceness. Yea, how dreadfully does one day's continuance in sin add to the heat of hell-fire!

2. All blessings are turned into curses to those who live and die in such a condition. Those things which are most pleasant and comfortable, and which men esteem the blessings of life, are but curses unto such; as their meat, and their drink, and their raiment. There is a curse goes with every mouthful of meat, and every drop of drink, to such a person. There is a curse with his raiment which he puts on. It all contributes to his misery. Though it may please him, yet it does him no good, but he is the more miserable for it. If he has any enjoyment which is sweet and pleasant to him, the

pleasure is a curse to him. He is really the more miserable for it. It is an occasion of death to him. His possessions, which he values himself upon, and sets his heart upon, are turned into a curse to him. His house has the curse of God upon it, and his table is a snare and a trap to him. Psa. 69:22. His bed has God's curse upon it. When he lies down to sleep, a curse attends his rest; and when he goes forth to labour, he is followed with a curse on that. The curse of God is upon his fields, on his corn, and herds, and all he has. If he has friends and relations, who are pleasant and dear to him, they are no blessings to him. He receives no comfort by them, but they prove a curse to him. I say it is thus with those who live and die in a natural condition. Deu. 28:16, etc., "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket, and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, and the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me." Man's faculties of reason and understanding, and all his natural powers, are turned into a curse. Yea, spiritual mercies and privileges shall also be turned into a curse to those who live and die in a natural condition. A curse goes with the worship of God, and with Sabbaths and sacraments, with instruction, and counsels, and warnings, and with the most precious advantages. They are all turned into a curse. They are a Saviour of death unto death. They do but harden the heart, and aggravate the guilt and misery, and inflame the divine wrath. Isaiah 6:9, 10. "Go, make the heart of this people fat." 2 Cor. 2:16, "To the one we are the savour of death unto death." It will only be an occasion of their misery, that God ever sent Christ into the world to save sinners. That which is in itself so glorious a manifestation of God's mercy, so unspeakable a gift, that which is an infinite blessing to others who receive Christ, will be a curse unto them. 1 Pet. 2:8, "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence." The blood of Christ, which is the price of eternal life and glory to some, is an occasion of sinking them vastly the lower into eternal burnings. And that is the case of such persons. The more precious any mercies are in themselves, the more of a curse are they to them. The better the things are in themselves, the more will they contribute to their misery. And spiritual privileges, which are in themselves greater mercies than any outward enjoyments, will above all other things prove a curse to them. Nothing will enhance their condemnation so much as these. On account of these, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for them. Yea, so doleful is the condition of natural men, that if they live and die in that condition, not only the enjoyments of life, but life itself, will be a curse to them. The longer they live, the more miserable will they be; the sooner they die, the better. If they live long in such a condition, and die in it at last, it would have been better for them if they had died before. It would have been far better for them to have spent the time in hell, than on earth. Yea, better for them to have spent ten thousand years in hell, instead of one on earth. When they look back, and consider what enjoyments they have had, they will wish they had never had them. Though when on earth they set their hearts on their earthly enjoyments, they will hereafter wish they had been without them; for they will see they have only fitted them for the slaughter. They will wish they never had had their houses and lands, their garments, their earthly friends, and their earthly possessions. And so they will wish that they had never enjoyed the light of the gospel, that they had been born among the heathen in some of the most dark and barbarous places of the earth. They will wish that Christ had never

come into the world to die for sinners, so as to give men any opportunity to be saved. They will wish that God had cast off fallen man, as he did the fallen angels, and had never made him the offer of a Saviour. They will wish that they had died sooner, and had not had so much opportunity to increase their guilt and their misery. They will wish they had died in their childhood, and been sent to hell then. They will curse the day that ever they were born, and wish they had been made vipers and scorpions, or anything, rather than rational creatures.

3. They have no security from the most dismal horrors of mind in this life. They have no security, but their stupidity. A natural man can have no comfort or peace in a natural condition, but that of which blindness and senselessness are the foundation. And from what has been said, that is the very evil. A natural man can have no comfort in anything in this world any further, than thought and consideration of mind are kept down in him. As you make a condemned malefactor senseless of his misery by putting him to sleep with opium, or make him merry just before his execution by giving him something to deprive him of the use of reason, so that he shall not be sensible of his own circumstances. Otherwise, there is no peace or comfort, which a natural man can have in a natural condition. Isa. 57:21, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Job 15:20, "The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days. A dreadful sound is in his ears." The doleful state of a natural man appears especially from the horror and amazement to which he is liable on a death-bed. To have the heavy hand of God upon one in some dangerous sickness, which is wasting and consuming the body, and likely to destroy it, and to have a prospect of approaching death, and of soon going into eternity, there to be in such a condition as this: to what amazing apprehensions must the sinner be liable! How dismal must his state be, when the disease prevails, so that there is no hope that he shall recover, when the physician begins to give him over, and friends to despair of his life; when death seems to hasten on, and he is at the same time perfectly blind to any spiritual object, altogether ignorant of God, of Christ, and of the way of salvation, having never exercised one act of love to God in his life, or done one thing for his glory; having then every lust and corruption in its full strength; having then such enmity in the heart against God, as to be ready to dethrone him, if that were possible; having no right in God, or interest in Christ; having the terrible wrath of God abiding on him; being yet the child of the devil, entirely in his possession and under his power; with no hope to maintain him, and with the full view of never-ending misery just at the door. What a dismal case must a natural man be in under such circumstances! How will his heart die within him at the news of his approaching death, when he finds that he must go, that he can not deliver himself, that death stands with his grim countenance looking him in the face, and is just about to seize him, and carry him out of the world. And that he at the same time has nothing to depend on! How often are there instances of dismal distress of unconverted persons on a deathbed! No one knows the fears, the exercise and torment in their hearts, but they who feel them. They are such that all the pleasures of sin, which they have had in their whole lives, will not pay them for. As you may sometimes see godly men go triumphing out of the world full of joy, with the foretastes of heaven, so sometimes wicked men, when dying, anticipate something of hell before they arrive there. The flames of hell do, as it were, come up and reach them, in some measure, before they are dead. God then withdraws, and ceases to protect them. The tormentor begins his work while they are alive. Thus it was with Saul and Judas; and there have been many other similar instances since; and none, who are in a natural condition, have any

security from it. The state of a natural man is doleful on this account, though this is but a prelude and foretaste of the everlasting misery which follows.

Thus I have, in some measure, shown in what a doleful condition those are who are in a natural condition. Still I have said but little. It is beyond what we can speak or think. They who say most of the dreadfulnes of a natural condition, say but little. And they who are most sensible, are sensible of but a small part of the misery of a natural state.