A Treatise of Self-Denial

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About the Author

About This Edition

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Introduction

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."

–Matthew 16:24

1. Context

Christ said these words when He had foretold His passion and Peter took offence. Although the cross is the badge of Christianity, it is always displeasing to flesh and blood. We dislike heaven not for itself, but for the way we travel to the land of promise: through a howling wilderness. Carnality[1] imagines a path strewn with lilies and roses; we are too tender-footed to think of briars and thorns.

Peter gave vent to his distaste by carnal counsel: "Master, favour Yourself " (see v. 22). Peter's speech to his Master is much like the voice of the flesh or of Satan in our own hearts. When duty cannot be done without difficulty and disadvantages, our carnal hearts say, "Favour yourself; let this be far from thee."

Christ rebuked Peter, or rather the devil in Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." God's own children may often play Satan's game. Peter spoke out of an innocent affection and respect to his Master, but the devil had a hand in it. And therefore it is a high point of spiritual wisdom to be skilled in the devil's ways. "We are not ignorant of his devices," says the apostle (2Co 2:11). The devil twists and turns at every opportunity; the same Satan who stirred up the high priests to crucify Christ, sets His own disciple upon Him to discourage Him from being crucified. The devil was afraid of the work of redemption, and therefore seeks either to hinder the sufferings of Christ, or to make them so shameful that the scandal might reduce the effectiveness. When Christ was upon the cross, the devil plays the same game, but through another: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Mat 27:40). Although the devil seemed to have had our Saviour at that point, yet he still was afraid of what the work of redemption would come to.

It is very notable that when Christ rebukes Peter, He also with the same severity checks the devil. The devil had tempted Him to idolatry, and Peter had discouraged Him from sufferings, so it is spoken to both: "Get thee behind me, Satan" (compare Mat 4:10 with 16:23). Our Lord had so strong a commitment to die for us, that He looked upon Peter's natural pity to His person with the same indignation and scorn as upon a temptation to idolatry!

However, the condescension and tenderness of Christ to His erring disciple is to be noted: He not only rebukes him, but instructs him and the rest of His disciples. Thus Christ can make an advantage of our failings. Peter's fleshly counsel was the occasion of this excellent lesson, which Christ by this means has forever consigned to the use and profit of the church.

2. The Words

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."

I shall open the words of our text for a moment. Christ says, "If any man," to show that the duty is of an unlimited application. It involves all, whosoever will enter themselves in Christ's

school, or enlist themselves in His flock or company. It does not concern only a few who are called out to be champions for His cause, and to expose their bodies to the cruel flames, but "if any will come after me."

"If any man will come" (Greek, thelei): the word is emphatic, it notes the full purpose and consent of the will—whosoever is firmly resolved.

"Will come after me": as a student after his teacher, as a sheep after his shepherd, as a soldier after his centurion. "Come after" is a phrase proper to students. The phrase shows the necessity of the duty, unless you will be disclaimed by Christ as not of His followers. Here Christ gives us the main character of His own disciples: Christianity is a group of men who deny themselves and their own conveniences for Christ's sake.

"Let him deny himself"; these are the words that I shall insist upon. And in them there are two things to be observed: the act – "let him deny," and the object – "himself."

[2.1] The act

The Greek word for the act, aparneisastho, is an emphatic compound word; it signifies to let him utterly deny himself. Denial properly belongs to speeches, but by a figure of speech it also may be applied to things. In speeches, it is proper for propositions or requests. In propositions we are said to deny when we contradict that which is affirmed; in requests we deny when we refuse to grant what is desired of us.

Now, denial may also be applied to things. We are said to deny things when we neglect, slight, or oppose them, as denying the power of godliness; that is, neglecting or opposing it (2Ti 3:5). However, with propriety enough the word may retain its original sense, because all things are managed in the heart of man by rational debates, counsels, and suggestions. We are said to deny when we refuse to give assent to fleshly dictates and counsels. The flesh, the corrupt self, has its propositions, its motions in the soul; it speaks to us by our own thoughts and points us to this or that work. Envy, lust, and corruption have a voice, and an imperious[2] voice too, so that it is difficult for us to resist. Envy bids Cain, "Go kill thy brother"; ambition bids Absalom to rebel against his father; covetousness bids Judas to betray his Lord and Master—so worldly affection bids us to pursue present things with all our might.

Now, because we are wedded to our opinions, and these fleshly motions are the suggestions of our own hearts, therefore they are called "self"; and we are said to "deny" when we enter our dissent and deny the motion. Paul said in effect, "Flesh, what have I to do with you? I am not 'a debtor to the flesh' (Rom 8:12). I will risk all for Christ..."

This for the act—"Let him deny."

[2.2] The object

The object is the next word to be opened: the Greek eauton, which means "himself." This is a word with a large scope; it not only involves our persons, but whatever is ours, so far as it stands in opposition to God or comes into competition with Him. A man and all his lusts; a man and all his relations; a man and all his interests; life and all the appendages of life are one aggregate thing that in Scripture is called "self." In short, whatsoever is of himself, in himself, belonging to himself, as a corrupt or carnal man—all that is to be denied. And indeed, every man has many a "self" within him: his lusts are himself; his life is himself; his name is himself; his wealth, liberty, ease, favour, lands, father, mother, and all relations—they are all comprised within the term "self." Our Lord explained it in this way, "If any man will come after me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, nay, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (see Luk 14:26). The Greek misein, "to hate," is similar to aparneisthai, "to deny." Denying these relations is the same as neglecting his duty to them for God's sake, when a higher duty is to take place.

3. The Things Called “Self”

Among the things that are called “self” there is a difference.

Some are absolutely evil, and must be denied without limitation; as lusts and carnal affections (see Ti 2:12). These are very properly called self because we are as tender of them as of our own souls; and therefore they are expressed by the terms “right hand” and “right eye” (Mat 5:29-30). A sinner will as soon part with his eyes as with his lusts or the pleasure of his senses. And so they also are called members: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth” (Col 3:5). Sin is riveted in the soul; it is as irksome to a natural heart to part with any lust as with a member or joint of the body. We are willing to hold them as fast and close as we hold ourselves. We startle at a reproof, as if a joint were pricked or touched!

Other things are only evil in a relative sense, as they prove idols or snares to us; and so life and all the ornaments, comforts, and conveniences of life, such as liberty, honours, wealth, friends, health—they are all called self. The reason is because by love, which is the affection of union, they are incorporated with us and become parts of us. “Ephraim is joined to idols” (Hos 4:17); the people of Ephraim are “cemented” to their idols.

Now, that which is to be denied in these things is not so much the thing itself, but our corruption that mingles with them and causes them to become a snare to the soul.

I.
Self-denial in General

The point that I shall insist on is,

Doctrine:
That it is the duty of all who would be Christ's disciples to deny themselves.

I shall handle the doctrine of self-denial
1) in general and
2) in its several kinds and subjective parts.
In managing the general argument, I shall give,
A. The extent of self-denial.
B. The reasons for this duty, with the most effective motives and arguments of persuasion.
C. The signs by which we may know whether we omit or practise this duty.
D. The helps that the Scripture prescribes for our furtherance in so great a work.

I. Self-denial in General

A. The Extent of Self-denial

First, and as a foundation for all the rest, I shall consider the extent of this duty, both in regard to the object, the things which are to be denied, and in regard to the subject, the persons who are to practice it.

1. The Object: A Man's Own Self

The object is a man's own self, which is a bundle of idols. Since God was laid aside [at the Fall of man in the garden], self took the crown; we set up everything that we call our own. Everything before which we may put that possessive "ours" may be abused and set up as a snare—all the excellences and comforts of human life, both inward and outward.

For the understanding of this, and that you may know how far self is to be denied, I must premise some generalconsiderations, and then mention some particulars; for it seems harsh and contrary to reason that a man should deny himself, since a) nature teaches a man to love himself and cherish himself, "No man ever hated his own flesh" (Eph 5:29), and b) grace does not disallow it.

[1.1] In general

In general, you must know when respects to self are sinful. There is a lawful self-love, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Jam 2:8), in which there is not only a direction to love our neighbour, but a concession and allowance implied to love ourselves; and in so doing, we do well. By an innocent and natural respect, nature fortifies itself and seeks its own preservation. A man therefore may respect himself in a regular way.

But the self which we must hate or deny is that self which stands in opposition to God, or in competition with Him, and so jostles with Him for the throne. Lay aside God and self steps in as the next heir; it is the great idol of the world ever since the Fall. When men were so bold as to depose and lay aside God, self succeeded to the throne. Fallen man, like Reuben, went up to his father's bed. Self intercepted all those respects and embraces that were due to God Himself, and so man became both his own idol and idolater. It is with God and self as it was with Dagon and the ark (1Sa 5:2-4): they can never stand together in competition. Set up the ark, and Dagon must fall upon his face; set up Dagon, and the ark is seemingly deposed and put down.

[1.2] In some particulars

Well then, if we would know when self is respected sinfully, we must consider what are the rights and the undoubted flowers of the crown of heaven. What are those special privileges and respects that are so appropriated to the Godhead, as they cannot—without treason to the King of all the earth—be alienated from Him or communicated to any creature. Now these are four.

God has the right to be the first cause, upon Whom all things depend in their being and operation.

God has the right to be the chief good, and therefore to be valued above all beings, interests, and concerns in the world.

God has the right to be the highest Lord and most absolute sovereign, Who sways all things by His laws and providence.

God has the right to be the last end, in which all things do at length terminate and center.[3]

(1) God is to be the first cause.

As God is the first cause, so He would keep up the respects of the world to His majesty by dependence and trust. Now it is the ambition of man to be independent, to be a god to himself, sufficient for his own happiness. Our first parents greedily grabbed at that bait: "Ye shall be as gods" (Gen 3:5). The devil meant it not in the sense of a blessed conformity to God, but a cursed self-sufficiency—and we are all apt to be taken in the same snare, which certainly is a very grievous sin. Nothing can be more hateful to God. This therefore is a great part of self-denial, to remove us from other dependencies, so that we may trust in God alone.

(2) God is to be the chief good.

As God is the chief good, so He must have the highest esteem. Valuing other things above God is the ground of all going astray in the practice of religion. When anything is honoured above God, made equal with God, or indulged against the will of God, Dagon is set up and the ark is made to fall!

(3) God is to be the highest lord.

As God is the highest lord and most absolute sovereign, it is His special right to give laws to the creature. Therefore, "self" is not to assert itself to give laws to us, but only God; His will must stand. The great contest indeed between God and the creature is, whose will shall stand, God's will or ours; who shall prescribe to us, self or God. Fleshly nature sets up laws against laws, and our fleshly wills set up providence against providence. Self-will is revealed by murmuring against God's providence, by rebellion against His laws, and by stubbornly insisting upon obedience to self. We will walk in the way of our own heart (Jer 18:12); and whatever comes out of our mouths, that we will do (Jer 44:17). In the same way, in James 1:14 the apostle makes it to be the root of all sin when a man is drawn away by his own lusts, and by his own will that is set up against the laws of God. In the same way in providence, a stubborn creature will not submit when God's will is declared. It was a great submission and an act of self-denial in Christ when He said, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mat 26:39). Instead, self says, "Not as thou wilt, but as I will"; for by murmuring we set up a rival to God's providence.

(4) God is to be the highest end.

As God is the last end of our beings and actions, the supreme cause is to be the utmost end. "God made all things for himself" (see Pro 16:4), but now, in all that we do, we look to ourselves. Vain man sets up self at the end of every action, and jostles out God.

All the actions of life are but a kind of homage to the idol of self. If they eat and drink, it is to nourish self, a meat-offering and drink-offering to appetite. If they pray or praise, it is but to worship self, to advance the repute of self. The crown is taken off from God's head; He is not made the utmost end. If they give alms, they are a sacrifice offered to the idol of self-estimation. "They give alms to be seen of men," says Christ (see Mat 6:1-4). In this self is set up, and God is deposed and laid aside.

So for moral excellences. Righteousness is apt to be a snare because of self-dependence. Paul found it to be a "loss" (Greek, zeimian, Phi 3:7), a hindrance from casting ourselves entirely upon grace. It is the highest point of self-denial for a man to deny his own righteousness, to see the dung and dross that is in himself and all his moral excellences.

So also concerning our own wisdom. Carnal wisdom is a self that needs to be denied. It is said to Babylon, "Thy understanding hath undone thee" (see Isa 47:10).

So of all men. When we presume upon our own sense and apprehension, we soon go wrong. This is the main thing to be considered here; for Peter, out of carnal wisdom, discourages Christ, and then Christ says, "Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself," that is, deny the dictates of his own reason and will. He that makes his own heart his oracle[4] asks counsel of a fool. We shall be arguing and disputing until we have disputed ourselves out of all religion. "Cause me to understand wherein I have erred" (Job 6:24). Until we come to see by divine light, carnal wisdom is always making lies and ill reports of religion: we think it folly and preciseness to be strict in our obedience, that zeal is fury, and that it is cowardice and disgrace to forgive when we have been wronged. We shall still be calling good evil and evil good, because we are wise in our own eyes. There is a woe pronounced upon such, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isa 5:21). It is an excellent point of self-denial to become a fool, that we may be wise (1Co 3:18). When we look in a telescope, we wink with one eye that we may see the more clearly with the other; so here we must put out the eye of carnal wisdom and become as fools, that we may be wise for Christ.

So for all civil interests. Life is the most precious possession of the creature, and yet not too good to be denied. Christ instances, "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Mat 16:25). That is the gospel way of thriving: to lose all for God. Now, this is to be denied not only in purpose and vow, but also when it comes to trials, as it is said of the saints, "They loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev 12:11). When it comes to a point where they must either leave their God or lose their lives on the account of religion, the loving-kindness of God is better than life.

So for estate. "We have forsaken all, and followed thee," say the disciples (Mat 19:27). We must leave our coat, as Joseph did, that we may keep our conscience whole. The best usury[5] in the world would be counted an oppression by the world; but now here is a spiritual benefit with a hundred to one return (Mar 10:28-30)!

So also for fame and esteemin the world. Though to an ingenious spirit fame is exceeding precious, yet John the Baptist, speaking of Christ, said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). We must be content to be as ciphers,[6] so that Christ may rise up into the greater sum. [We must be content to be] as one in a crowd that holds another upon his shoulders: the one is lost in the throng, but the other is exposed to the view of all.

So for our friends. Whosoever hates not his father and his mother, etc. (Luk 14:26). There are many cases where we are to deny our friends, as when we should incur their displeasure from our own faithfulness to Christ. Carnal parents will frown upon us and, it may be, withdraw maintenance and other conveniences of life; but it is better an earthly father should frown than that God should frown. The loss will be replaced with spiritual relations.

So in case of doing justice and right. We must not indulge father, mother, brothers, or sisters, for this would be but a more respectable and natural bribery. Levi was commended for this by the Lord, "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant" (Deu 33:9). It is good to be blind and deaf to all relations in this case. Asa spared not his own mother, but deposed her, being idolatrous.

> If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers...thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. (Deu 13:6-9)

We are apt to look upon these rules as calculated for an ideal situation, and so we have but a

grammatical knowledge of them.

So also for carnal[7] things. If a carnal thing be as dear to us as a right hand or a right eye, it must be plucked out and cut off (Mat 5:29-30). If it should be as gainful and as profitable a sin as the right hand is profitable to us, yet it must not be spared. We must deny all ungodliness though ever so pleasing (Ti 2:12).

Thus for the object; it extends to all things.

2. The Subject: All Men

For the subject of self-denial, see the extent of it: it reaches all sorts of men. Christ says, "If any will come after me, let him deny himself." The circumstance of Christ giving the lesson of self-denial in Mark is notable: "When he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself" (Mar 8:34). There is no calling, no sex, no age, no duty, no condition of life that is excluded; one way or other, they are all put upon self-denial. No calling is excluded.

Magistrates and those who are called to public trust are most obliged, in regard of God and men, to deny themselves. The self-denial of Joseph is notable: although he was a great officer in Egypt, yet his family ran the same lot with other tribes. And Joshua, in the division of the land, took his own lot and share last (Jos 19:49). Men in public places are most liable to mind private interest, to the neglect of the public; but they ought not to feather their nests with public spoils.

So for men of private stations. It is not the duty of public persons only, all conditions are liable to self-seeking.

Many times your private callings may be against the public interest, either of religion or civil welfare. Notice those that made shrines for Diana: when the gospel came and reformation was likely to be wrought, they cried, "Our gain will be gone" (see Act 19:24-27). Therefore, in this case you should be content to suffer loss.

Or, it may be, you have prospered by iniquity in trade; now you are to deny yourselves by making restitution, "I will restore fourfold, and give to the poor" (see Luk 19:8). Restitution is a hard duty, but a necessary one; you must vomit up the sweet morsels you have indulged in, or else your conscience will not be healthy.

And so for other callings and relations: the minister and the people of the congregation. Ministers, of all men, had most need to practise this duty. We are to deny our own ends.[8] How many carnal ends may a man promote by his service in the ministry: fame, accolades, the satisfying of our necessity? We are not to preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. We are to deny ourselves in our learning and abilities: we are debtors to the learned and unlearned, and are therefore to become all things to all men, for Christ has lambs as well as sheep. We must be content to go back ten degrees[9] that we may meet all at their own level, and not soar aloft in speculation. Possibly this may be more for our fame and repute of learning, but less for profit.

So for the people of the congregation: in hearing you must deny the curiosity of the ear, that others may profit by plainer lessons, and that everyone may have his portion in due season.

It is a great part of self-denial to sufferthe words of exhortation. Guilt is apt to recoil when tender parts are touched. Now you are to deny yourselves, to love the reproof as well as the comfort, and count it precious oil (Psa 141:5). Consider the submission that was in Hezekiah when the prophet came with the bitter threatening of a curse that should cleave to his posterity: "Good is the word of the Lord" (Isa 39:8)—a sweet submission of a sanctified judgment, because the only good in it was that it should not come in his days.

So also for all sexes. It is a duty not only for men, who are called out to public actions, but for

women also: they are to deny themselves in their delicacies of life, that they may exercise themselves in the grave duties of religion, that they may not become wanton.[10]

It is necessary also in all spiritual duties. The two great duties of prayer and praise, for example, which divide and take up the whole Christian life, should be practised with self-denial. When we come for grace, we should deny our own merit: "O Lord, not for our own righteousness!" (see Phi 3:9). And when grace is received, when we come to praise God, self must vanish that God may have all the praise. When the good servant gives an account of his faithfulness, he says in effect, "Not my industry, but thy pound hath gained ten pounds"; he gives it all to grace (Luk 19:16). So the apostle checks himself, as if he had spoken inappropriately, "I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1Co 15:10). So also, "I live," then he presently draws in his words again, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal 2:20).

As the elders throw their crowns at the Lamb's feet, so all our excellences must be laid at the feet of Christ (Rev 4:10-11). As the stars disappear when the sun rises, so we must shrink into nothing in our own thoughts. When Joab had conquered Rabbah, he sent for David to take the garland of honour (2Sa 12:27-28); so when we have done anything by grace, we must send for Christ to take the honour. Prayer is the humble appeal to mercy and disclaiming of merit; praise is the setting of the crown upon Christ's head: "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1Co 15:10).

3. Application

To apply this:

All men are to practise the duty of self-denial—in all things, at all times, and with all their hearts.

[3.1] All men

All men are to practise this duty of self-denial. Oh, do not put it off to others; no man can exempt himself. Usually, when these duties are pressed, we think they are calculated for rich men and those in great places; but it is a duty that lies upon all. All are apt to seek themselves. When Christ spoke something concerning Peter, it is said, "Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved"; in the same way we are apt to look around at others. Look for it: before you die you will be eminently called to this service. Never a Christian went out of this world but, one time or other, God has tried him in some eminent point of self-denial. As it is said, "God did tempt Abraham," that is, He tried him in that difficult point of offering his son (Gen 22:1). So Christ tried the young man, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor" (Mat 19:21).

[3.2] In all things

For the object: in all things. Let not your self-denial be partial and unsteady, as Saul slew some of the cattle but spared the fat ones and Agag (1Sa 15:9). Many can deny themselves in many things, but they are loth to give up all to God without bounds and reservations. As Joshua deposed all the kings of Canaan (Jos 12:7-24), so every lust is to be cast out of the throne. He that denies himself only in some things, really denies himself in none. Jehu put Baal's priests to death, but continued the golden calf idols in Dan and Bethel out of interest and reasons of state (2Ki 10:25-31). Herod denied himself in many things, but could not part with his Herodias (Mar 6:17-20).

[3.3] At all times

You must deny yourself always; it must not be temporary and vanishing. In a good mood we

can give up and renounce all, be humble, and ascribe all to grace. We may hang the head for a day like a bulrush (Isa 58:5). Instead, we should maintain a constant sense of our unworthiness, and a purpose of renouncing all and giving up all. It is not enough to deny a man's self in a thing wherein there is no pleasure, as when his soul abhors dainty food, but it must be in things that are desirable. This must be constantly practised too: Ahab humbled himself only for a few days (1Ki 21:29).

[3.4] With all your heart

It must be with all your heart. It must not be done by a mere constraint of providence, as a mariner in a storm casts away his goods by force, but rather as a bride when she voluntarily leaves her father's house: "Forget thy father's house" (see Psa 45:10). It must be out of a principle of grace and out of love to Christ. Now you must not do it politically[11] but with your whole heart. There is no self-seeking so great as is carried on usually under the colour of self-denial, as the apostle speaks of some that would preach the gospel to afflict Paul (Phi 1:15-16). The devil disguises himself in many forms (2Co 11:14-15). As Jacob put on animal skin that he might appear rough and hairy and so get the blessing (Gen 27:11-23), so many seem to deny themselves the comforts of life, but it is just for their own praise. The Pharisees were liberal in alms (Mat 6:2); they could deny themselves in giving, which others could not do; but it was so that they could be seen of men.

Therefore this self-denial must not be self-seeking, carried on under a pretence,[12] for that is abominable to God. Thus for the extent of the duty.

I. Self-denial in General

B. The Reasons for Self-denial

Secondly, I come to handle some reasons for self-denial, with the most effectual enforcements. It is the duty of all that would be Christ's disciples to deny themselves. I shall prove it by several grounds.

1. To Be Conformed to Our Great Master

We must deny ourselves because we cannot otherwise be conformed to our great Master. Jesus Christ came from heaven on purpose to teach us the lesson of self-denial. His birth, His life, and His death were patterns of self-denial.

His birth was a great step from God's bosom into the virgin's lap, a great condescension.[13] "Though he was rich, he became poor, that we might be rich" (see 2Co 8:9). None can deny themselves so much as Christ did, because none was so rich as He. We may talk of flocks and herds, and the poor ornaments and supplies of a frail life; but He possessed a perfect happiness and glory in the divine nature; He was rich indeed. He needed not to have the respect of men to make Him more happy; He was the Lord of glory and Heir of all things.

Yet, when He was thus rich, He made Himself poor. He not only subjected Himself to the Law and to the abject condition of the creature, but He came in a poor, ordinary way, not in pomp,[14] not equipped as a prince. As soon as He took our nature, He desired to have a feeling of our deprivation and miseries; therefore, He was born in a common, obscure way. Born of a poor mother, in a poor place, wrapped up in cheap and unworthy swaddling clothes, the Fellow[15] of God, the Heir of all things, the Lord of angels is thrust out among beasts in a stable! Christ would not come in pomp, but with slender provisions, to put a disgrace upon worldly greatness and bravery. He would overturn the idol of the world, not only by power but by the choice of His life.

As His birth, so was His life; He was exercised with sorrows and labours. Christ was not a man of pleasure, but a man of sorrow. The apostle says, "Christ pleased not himself" (Rom 15:3), neither in the choice of His own life, nor in delights that He could propose to Himself of His own profit and advantage. He was happy enough without them.

So in His death. If any had reason or cause to love his natural life, Jesus Christ had. His soul dwelt with God in such a fellowship as we are not capable of, and yet He gave up Himself to redeem us from the present world (Gal 1:4). It is ridiculous to profess Jesus Christ to be our master and not conform to His example. We have no reason to be more tender and delicate of our own interest than Christ was of His. What is our self to Christ's self? We are poor creatures under a law; Christ was God over all, blessed forever. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Mat 10:25).

We should not murmur; we cannot be worse used than Christ was. We have no cause to complain if we be reduced to a coarse robe, when we remember Christ's swaddling clothes; to

complain of a hard bed or prison, when Christ was laid in a manger. Certainly an innocent poverty is more comfortable than all the pomp in the world, if we would but choose what Christ chose. Christ was a pattern of suffering from the cradle to the cross. They that caress themselves in all the delights of the world seem to profess another master than Christ. We are of a base condition, only two or three degrees distant from dust and nothing. The sun can go back ten degrees (2Ki 20:9-11), and Christ, the Lord of glory, might go back ten degrees, but we have not so much to lose.

2. Practised by All the Saints

Self-denial has been practised, not only by the Master, but by all the fellows in the same school. Christ was the original example, and all the saints have copied Him, some better, some worse. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord" (Rom 14:7-8). In the context the apostle speaks of the difference between weak and strong believers, but they all agree in this: none of us, not one that has given up his name to Christ, is admittedly a self-seeker—none live to themselves.

The example of the saints is to be considered lest we should think it exceeds the capacity of the creature, and that only Christ could practise it. We find those among the children of God who have made the highest progress in Christ's school have had the lowest thoughts of self. Paul was a glorious apostle, yet he says in one place that he was "the chief of sinners" (1Ti 1:15), and in another place that he was "less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8). One would have thought that Paul might have said with more accuracy, "the greatest of saints and least of sinners." But he says, "the greatest of sinners and the least of saints," not to lessen grace, but still to lessen self and put a disgrace upon it. They that are the best scholars in this school most abhor self-conceit and self-seeking. As tree limbs burdened with fruit hang the head and bend downward, so do the children of God that have been most fruitful in the Christian course. As the higher aim casts less shadow, so for self-seeking.

I wonder how someone can look upon the two great instances of Moses and Paul without blushing! Of Moses: "Blot me…out of thy book" (Exo 32:32), if God would not forgive His people—as if he could take no comfort in his great spiritual privileges when the glory of God should suffer loss by the loss of His people. So also in Romans 9:3, "Let me be accursed from Christ, for my brethren that are in the flesh." Paul, in an excess of zeal, could be willing to bear the common punishment for a common good. We that are so tender of our honour and respect, so wedded to our ease and private interests, how can we look upon these without shame? Can Moses and Paul wish to be common sacrifices for God's glory, and for the redemption of others, and we be so tender to our own interests?

Moses speaks to God Himself, and Paul calls God to witness: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." (Rom 9:1). This is a triple oath and declaration: "I speak the truth," "I lie not," "the Spirit bears witness with my conscience." Or rather, there is a double declaration with an appeal to two witnesses, both to the Spirit and to conscience. Not as though they could wish for hardness of heart, but with an excess of zeal they were carried so high in imitation of Christ as to part with their own happiness for a public good.

3. Expected by All the Idols of the World

While Jesus Christ may justly require it, even all the idols of the world expect it from their followers. By nature we are sensible that all respects to divine powers are commended by self-

denial.

We see it in pagans: when Baal was silent, his priests gashed themselves (1Ki 18:28). They cut themselves, after their manner, with knives and lances so that the blood gushed out; to gratify their idol, they would not spare their own blood. In the same way, see how liberal those hypocrites are: "Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil" (Mic 6:6-8). They thought to part with a beast in sacrifice was not self-denial enough, so they devised something more costly: all their flocks and herds, their children, the fruit of their womb, their whole substance!...[16]

See the instance in spiritual idols, how worldly and carnal men can deny themselves in order to accomplish their ends: they rise early, go to bed late, eat the bread of sorrow (Psa 127:2). They can deny themselves of sleep, food, and rest—all in a devotion to worldly interests. He bereaves his soul of good (Ecc 4:8). There is no end of their toil; with an unwearied patience they lay out their strength in vain pursuits. Many a covetous man shames many a godly man.

But true religion is a better thing. Shall lust do more with them than the love of Christ with you? Lust will make a man labour in the very fire, denying himself of the necessary support and conveniences of life, though it be but for a thing that will come to nothing. Consider, then, the tyranny of worldly affection.

Certainly, we should have a stronger impulse, for we have a better reward; we are empowered by a more mighty spirit. It is true: in carnal men it is not self-denial so much as the obstinacy of self-will and stomach. The kingdom of Satan is divided; self-will is set up against self-delight or ease. Pleasure seems of all vanities to be the most soft and effeminate, yet men can deny themselves for their pleasure—their credit, estate, conscience, and all sacrificed to the gullet of that great idol and Moloch-god, their belly!

4. The Greatest Enemy to God and Man

We must deny self because it is the greatest enemy both to God and man.

[4.1] Self is God's enemy.

Self robs God of His honour. Self—a near and dear word to man—is both the idol and the idolater. It receives the worship that it performs, as the sea sends out waves to the shore and then sucks them in again. Self is made a god, and then that god is made an idol. "Whose god is their belly" (Phi 3:19)—all their toil and labour is to feed, delight, and exalt themselves.

Self has the same sacrifices and devotions for itself as God requires for Himself. Self has solemn worship. A carnal man prays, and what then? He makes God the object, and self the end, so that self is the god. So self has private and closet duties, vain thoughts and musings, in which we lift up ourselves in our own conceit: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" (Dan 4:30). Some time in the day we consecrate to the great idol self, to puff up ourselves with the conceit of our own worth. This is a more secret worship of self. The public worship of self is in self-seeking, and the private in self-conceit, when we feast and entertain our spirits with whispers of vanity and suppositions of our own excellency and greatness.

[4.2] Self is man's enemy.

As self is God's enemy, so it is man's. Self parts itself against itself, and is its own greatest enemy. Not only they of a man's own house are his enemies, as Christ speaks (Mat 10:36), but his own heart is his enemy. Self-will and self-wit are the greatest foes you have in the world! Look, as the ape crushes out the insides of her young ones while she embraces them, so man wrongs himself when he over-loves himself. A man need fear and suspect no creature in the world so much as himself.

This is especially so when we most respect self. The world and the devil may trouble you, but they cannot hurt you without yourself. No enemy can hurt us so much as we hurt ourselves. Therefore, if we would take revenge of them that hate us most, we should begin with our own hearts. Men trust their hearts as their best friends, and so they are deceived. It is the greatest judgment that God can lay upon any creature, to give him up to himself: "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels" (Psa 81:12). Oh! it is a sad doom to be given up to self.

On the other side, to conquer self is the greatest conquest that can be. It is an enemy that will be subdued only with extreme difficulty. Better is the one who overcomes himself than the one who conquers a city (Pro 16:32)—referring to him who is able to conquer the masterless inner enemy, self, which is so apt to betray us.

5. Christ's Disciples Not Their Own

We must deny self because those who are Christ's disciples are not their own men. We are not our own, but the Lord's (Rom 14:7-8). Our will should not be our own law, nor our profit[17] our aim, because we are not our own. There are many relations between us and Christ that take away all the property we have in ourselves. We cannot say that our tongues are our own, to speak what we please, nor our works our own, nor our interests our own. No, your tongue when you speak is not yours but Christ's. And when you conduct your business, remember it is not yours, but Christ's. Your prayer and your public service are not yours, but Christ's. Remember, your strength is not your own when you are wasting it in lust and vanity, but Christ's.

It is the same in our several relations to Christ. I have showed you before the ownership God has of us; now let me open our several relations to Him. We are but servants; servants are not masters of their own will, but subject to the will of another, by whose command and for whose profit they are to act. The property of servants, said Aristotle,[18] is not to do their own will and pleasure; they have given up themselves to another. So we are children and God is our Father—and children are under government; they are to be guided by their father. Then the most honourable relation is that of a spouse. Now the woman, says the apostle, must not rule over her own head; in the same way, we are to be guided and directed by Christ (1Ti 2:11). These three most honourable relations put us upon self-denial.

6. The Most Gainful Project in the World

We must deny self because it is the most gainful project in the world. Self-denial is the true way of self-advancing. Leave as much as you can for Christ, you will lose nothing; "He that loseth his life…shall find it" (Mat 10:39).

> Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life. (Mar 10:29-30)

Though we have these things not in the same kind, we shall have them over and above in value. God will not weary us with expecting too much. Here we have peace of conscience, and hereafter life eternal.

Others gain only a shadow for the loss of their substance. They have neither quiet of conscience nor the hope of glory. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mat 16:26); the evangelist Luke has it as, "lose himself " (Luk 9:25). To

seek the good of our souls is indeed to seek good for ourselves. Every man's mind, his soul, is himself; to lose his soul, that is indeed to lose himself; and when we lose ourselves, we lose all. When a man has most need, riches fly away; you cannot bribe divine justice, nor keep the soul from hell. Therefore, if you indeed would seek good for yourselves, seek it in God!

7. Otherwise Nothing in Religion

We must deny self because otherwise a man can be nothing in religion, neither acceptably to do good works, nor to suffer to give God glory; and therefore we must resolve either to deny ourselves or to deny Christ. Before we go out of the world, we shall be put upon the trial. Peter denied his master, because he could not deny himself (Luk 22:57).

All duties in religion put us upon self-denial: private duties upon the denial of lusts, and public upon the denial of interests. We read, therefore, of "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts" (Ti 2:12). Whenever you go to pray, private duties are contrary to the inclinations and dispositions of the heart (which are for ease and pleasure) and the gratifications of the flesh. If you have no self-denial, you will never bring your heart to God in private duties. Then also in public duties we must look for opposition. Advancers of public good are usually exposed to public hatred; they are sure to be spoken against. When the devil cannot prevail with instruments to slacken the work of God, then he stirs up the world against it. It must be a very complete action in which malice cannot find fault. It is true, we are not always exposed to persecution, but we are always exposed to censure. Many who have neither heart nor hands to do good, yet have tongues to censure those that do it, such as magistrates and ministers. Therefore, we must look for trouble, if not from malice, yet from envy. Who can stand before envy? (Pro 27:4). If persecutors be under restraint, yet carnal professors[19] will be apt to criticize what is not done by themselves.

Therefore, whosoever would be a disciple to God and Christ, self-denial is his first lesson; this is the "A-B-C" of religion. We shall never digest the inconveniences of a spiritual life till we resolve upon self-denial. We must give over our interests in our lives, and count the costs for whatever is dear to us (Luk 14:26). A builder spends cheerfully as long as his expenses are within his allowance; but when that is exceeded and he goes beyond what he has planned for, then every penny is disbursed with grudging. Most resolve upon little or no trouble in religion; and from then on, when they are crossed, they prove faint-hearted. Therefore, put your life in your hand, and resolve to follow Christ wherever He goes!

8. A Special Part of Faith

Everyone must deny himself because it is a special part of faith. Faith looks upon God's mercy in Christ, not only as true, but as good. It looks upon mercy as better than life (Psa 63:3), and better than all the pleasures of it, else it is not faith. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1Ti 1:15). It not only looks upon it as a wise and faithful saying, but as a thing of choice. There is not only assent to what is true, but there is consent and choice. Faith is an inclination of the soul to true worth, and therefore, with a resting upon the mercies of Christ, there is a renouncing of self-interest: the merchant that found the rich pearl went and sold all to buy it (Mat 13:46). This is faith, to come do business with God for His mercy in Christ, and to thus part with all, whatever is pleasant and profitable in the world, rather than be deprived of His grace.[20] "He that hateth not his father and mother, yea, and his own life, cannot be my disciple" (see Luk 14:26). Just after this saying, our Lord brings the illustration of a man who goes about to build and sits down to count the costs. In faith there is a sitting down and accounting the costs, or considering what it is to take Christ.

…He that desires to be a Christian indeed is seriously to reckon what is required at his hands and thoroughly to examine whether he is willing to forego such hopes and comforts as are incompatible with the life he seeks, or willing to endure all crosses and calamities by which he may be burdened.

The builder who goes hand over head to work[21] lays the foundation of his disgrace in the loss of his investment. Men labour to fortify their actual persuasion of the mercies of Christ before the carnal life be renounced.[22] It is a mistake to look to faith first, and the settling of our particular assurance, as if that were the most difficult thing in religion. Rather, the great difficulty lies in self-denial. As Christ put the young man on trial: "Canst thou leave all, and follow me?" (see Mat 19:21), so we are to put ourselves upon the trial, otherwise our application to God's mercy, and the settling of our particular persuasion, will be but a rash confidence. Everyone has some tender parts, and usually at first conviction our tender parts are touched. When God begins to work upon the heart, we should say, "Soul, you have busied yourself in a wrong way, but there is one thing necessary: come out of that wrong way, or you shall never be happy. Forsake your father's house!" And we are apt to stop at this point; we are not able to renounce all for Him. When God called Abraham, He called him from his father's house (Gen 12:1); so when we are called to God, we are called from something pleasant and profitable to self.

I. Self-denial in General

C. The Marks and Signs of Self-denial

Thirdly, I will give you the marks and signs of self-denial. There are exclusive and inclusive marks. Exclusive marks will show us when self is not denied; then inclusive marks follow [showing when we have indeed denied ourselves], wherein we may take comfort.

1. Exclusive Marks Showing the Lack of Self-denial

These tell us how we may know when self is still in dominion and sovereignty.

[1.1] Never thwarting own desires

It is a sign self is exalted and in dominion when a man has never set himself to thwart his own desires. Carnal indulgence makes lust wanton. When we indulge our lusts, they grow rebellious and stubborn. Those who gratify their senses and wallow in all fleshly delights never knew what it was to be exercised in Christ's school. A man that cannot deny his ease and pleasure is not fit for Christ, "Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy" (Ecc 2:10). When men can remit[23] nothing of their vanity and luxury they make Christianity to be but a notion and an empty pretence. They are men and women of pleasure, when Jesus Christ was a man of sorrows. The children of God always tend to cross themselves in things that they most desire, as David poured out the water of Bethlehem when he longed for it (2Sa 23:15-17). It is good sometimes to make such an experiment upon ourselves. We may find out many idols if we would test whether we could deny ourselves in what we most desire.

[1.2] Impatience when crossed by others

It is a sign self is exalted and in dominion when there is an impatience in our natures when we are crossed by others. Self seems to be a very delicate and tender thing; we cannot endure to be crossed in our opinions and interests, or in the accomplishment of our lusts. Haman was full of wrath because he wanted Mordecai's reverence (Est 3:5). Our affliction always exposes the greatness of our affection. It should be "the smallest thing," as the apostle says, to be judged by men (1Co 4:3). When men have set a high price and value upon themselves, they are vexed when others will not come up to their price! John died for crossing Herod in his Herodias. Jonah made his gourd to be a piece of himself; he prized it too much, as appears by his great vexation when God had smitten it (Jon 4:9). Fretting and murmuring show what is the tender part of our souls, and what we have made to be part of ourselves.

[1.3] Loathing to be a loser by religion

It is a sign self is exalted and in dominion when a man is loath to be a loser because of his religion. Some are of cheap and vile spirits; they love a gospel without costs. They can be content to serve God as long as they bear no expense for God. Look, as we should count and reckon upon the costs before we profess religion, so after profession we should ask conscience what it has cost us to be godly, and what expense we have incurred for Jesus Christ, since we have espoused Christ. David would not serve God with that which cost him nothing (2Sa 24:24).

If a man were told that his way to such a place is overgrown with briars and thorns, and that he must ride through many dirty lanes, and must watch out for scratching brambles and many miry places, when he sees nothing but a green and pleasant path, he would think he had mistaken and lost his way! So when you are told your way to heaven is a narrow way (Mat 7:14), and that religion will put you upon self-denial of your pleasure, profit, and carnal desires, and yet you never wrestled with your lusts, nor quitted anything for Christ, and meet with nothing but pleasure, profit, and delight in the profession of religion, you may well think that you have missed the way. Then it is a great sign that you are yet to seek in the duty that Christ's students must practise.

[1.4] Grieving over the good of others

When the heart is grieved when others experience good, it is a sign self is then in dominion. Many can rejoice and please themselves when God has been glorified by some act of their own, but they are grieved when the work is done by others! Selfish and carnal men would gladly make a monopoly of religion. Oh consider, such an attitude is a sign that self is too dear and near to us. We should be as glad when God is glorified by others as when we ourselves are the instruments of His glory. Martin Luther[24] said, "My design is that the work of God may be done; and if I be not worthy, let the work of God be done by others." So Paul: "Many preach the gospel, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; yet if the gospel is preached, I therein rejoice, and will rejoice" (see Phi 1:14-18). It is a Pharisee's spirit to malign and envy the good of others: "Behold, all the world goes after him, and we prevail nothing" (see Joh 12:19). They were grieved that Christ had so much of the respect of the people. Men would monopolize all respect to their faction and keep up a devotion to their interest; this made the elder brother envy at the prodigal's return (Luk 15:28).

When we envy the gifts and graces of others, and their esteem in the world, it is a sign self remains in sovereignty and dominion. Many, because they would shine alone, are apt to blast and censure the reputation of others, and malign the grace wrought in them, whereas we should rather rejoice therein.

[1.5] Promoting private over public interest

It is a sign that self is exalted and in dominion when men do not care how it goes with the public, so long as they can promote their private interest. I mention this because, as self is to be denied for God's sake, so it is to be denied for the good of others. There is self in opposition to God, and self in opposition to the good of others. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (1Co 10:24). As we are bound to promote the glory of God, so the good of one another too, especially the public good. Therefore the children of God should have no heart or regard to their private conveniences when it brings the loss of the public good.

When He promises to prefer Moses, God says, "Let me alone, do not beseech me for this people, and I will make of thee a great nation." God offers him a recompense if he would cease his prayers, and tells him that the holy seed would be continued in his line and that all the rest of the tribes should be abolished. Yet Moses besought the Lord and desired mercy for the people, "O Lord, let not thine anger kindle against thy heritage; it is no matter what becometh of me, so the people be safe" (see Exo 32).

So Nehemiah: "Required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people" (Neh 5:18). He would not take the necessary support and maintenance whereby the greatness of his place might be borne out, because there was affliction upon the children of God.

But now carnal men care not how they embroil a nation, nor how it goes with the public affairs, so long as they may promote their own interest, and set up self in a place of honour. The

children of God are in the habit of yielding up all their own interest for a public good: as Jonah, "Cast me into the sea, so that the tempest may be stilled, no matter what becomes of me" (see Jon 1:10-12). So said Nazianzen[25] when there was a great trouble and contest about his place, "Doth my honour trouble you? Let me go aside in obscure silence, and live neglected, and die, and my bones be thrown into the dark, where they may not be found nor known."

2. Inclusive Marks Showing Self-denial

As there are exclusive marks, which show a man not to be denying himself, so there are inclusive marks also, which show a man in fact to be practicing self-denial. I shall name but three.

[2.1] Swayed by conscience rather than interest

It is a mark of self-denial when a man, in all his purposes, in every actual choice, is swayed by reasons of conscience rather than by reasons of interest; when he is contented to be anything, so that he may be serviceable to God's glory, and Jesus Christ may be all in all. Consider Paul, when he was in a strait whether to die or remain alive: "It is no matter which it be, so Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death" (see Phi 1:20-25). In effect he was saying, "If my body be spent with labour, or fall as a burnt-offering in martyrdom, it is no matter, so long as Christ still is magnified." We deny self when we are contented that self should vanish, so that Christ may appear and shine in all His glory, just as the stars vanish when the sun displays its beams.

When we are put upon any choice of life, whether we shall do this or that, still we are not to measure it by self-interest, but with respect to God's glory. Seneca[26] says, "A magnanimous man cares not, does not look, where he may live most safely, but most honestly." In the disposal of his affairs, a child of God looks where he may have most work and do most service, and not merely to provide for ease and safety. When two ways are proposed to a traveller, one pleasant and the other very craggy and dangerous, he looks not to which way is most pleasant, but which way best brings him to his journey's end. In the same way, a child of God looks not to what is most gratifying to his flesh, but to how he may do the most work and service to glorify God upon earth.

[2.2] Swayed by a humble submission to God's will

It is a mark of self-denial when a man is swayed by a humble submission to God's will. It is a great conquest over ourselves when we can conquer our own will. Now, the children of God speak as if they had no will of their own at all. Before providence is past, they absolutely give up themselves to God's disposal, either for deliverance or trouble. King David said, "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him" (2Sa 15:25-26). David speaks as if he had no will of his own, and gives up himself to the disposal of God.

So also after the event, when God has declared His will, His children silence all the murmuring of their spirits, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good" (1Sa 3:18). There is enough to calm all the discontent of their mind because God is in the providence.

A child of God can lose nothing by force. Men may take away his estate by violence, but he resigns it to God. God may take away his friends, but he resigns them; they are taken away with the consent and resignation of a sanctified will. So for their lives, they resign themselves up to God. Therefore it is notable, when the Scripture speaks of wicked men, it is said, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" (Job 27:8);

and, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luk 12:20).

Upon the call of providence, the children of God consent to give up their souls, estates, and friends. There is a subscription to God’s will: “It is the Lord.” Nay, there is not only patience, but they can even bless God, because His will is accomplished: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). They can see as much cause of blessing God, not only when He enriches them, but when He impoverishes them and lays His hand upon them. This is to cause our wills to be swallowed up in the will of God, and this is to be like the great pattern of Christ Himself, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luk 22:42). We would not be like our great Master if we did not do this. Christ indeed prays against affliction; so may we. We should not have known the greatness of His self-denial if He had not manifested His natural desires. But He refers Himself to God, and so must we also.

[2.3] Vile in one’s own eyes

It is a mark of self-denial when a man is vile in his own eyes, and reflects with the most indignation upon his own sins. There are none that condemn themselves more severely than do the children of God when they have sinned against God; they need no other judge than their own consciences to pass a sentence upon them. Men naturally are apt to favour themselves; they are slight in self-humiliation and deep in censure of others. With indignation they reflect upon the sins of others, but with indulgence upon their own. As Judah, when it was told him, “Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt” (Gen 38:24). But when she showed him the evidence that he had been the one who defiled her, then he was calm enough. It is otherwise with God’s children; there are no sins so odious to them as their own. “Jesus Christ came…to save sinners, of whom I am chief ” (1Ti 1:15). Paul in effect says, “Oh, there is no such sinner in the world as I am.”

Likewise in Proverbs 30:2, “Surely I am more brutish[27] than any man, and I have not the understanding of a man.” How could a godly man say so? It is the fruit of spiritual indignation. A godly man spends the most of his revenge and spiritual indignation upon himself. “Oh,” he says, “there cannot be a more brutish person than I have been, because I have sinned against so many mercies, so many obligations, and so much light!” These are not compliments, but they speak them with bitter feeling. Chrysostom[28] says, “They do not only speak it in humility, but in truth. They can know the sins of others only by guess and imagination, but they feel their own sins; they know them by sense.” As in sorrow, we are apt to say of our sins, “There is none like mine.” Why? Because we feel the gripes[29] of our own pains. It is the same with the children of God; they feel how grievously they have sinned against God. Says David, “I was as a beast before thee” (Psa 73:22). They know they have more mercies than others, and more obligations than others, therefore their offences seem to them to be more grievous.

Well, if your heart is brought to this place, where the heat of indignation is spent upon your own sins, and these things be spoken not by rote and imitation but out of deep sense and feeling, it is a comfortable sign that self is dethroned in you.

I. Self-denial in General

D. The Means of Self-denial

Fourthly, I will give you the means of self-denial, whereby the work of denying oneself may be made more effective.

1. Lessen Your Affection for Worldly Things.

If you would deny yourself, lessen your esteem and affection to worldly things. I join esteem and affection together because affection follows esteem. If you would deny yourself for Christ, you must prize the worst of Christ before the best of the world. "I had rather," says the Psalmist, "be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psa 84:10). When an earthen pitcher is broken, a man is not troubled at it, because he has not set his esteem and heart upon it, it being but a trifle. What made Moses so eminent for self-denial? Was it not that he could refuse all the honours of Pharaoh's court, and choose rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"? It is said He esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb 11:25-26). Moses' esteem was set right.

Again, we must lessen the affection; [30] the greatness of our affection causes the greatness of our affliction. We are so troubled to part with things, therefore, because our hearts are too much set upon them. We enlarge the things of the world in our esteem and affection; then it is a trouble to part with them for Christ's sake. Alas! All these outward things serve but to prop up a tabernacle that is always falling.

But how shall we lessen our esteem and affection? Is it in our power? I answer, Yes, it is in your power[31] to do much that will lessen these. First, deny lusts at their very inception, ere they grow upon your esteem and affection, and prevail by delight in the soul. When anything begins to sit too close and too near the heart, it is good for a Christian then to be wary, and ask this question: "How shall I deny this for God?" "I would not he brought under the power of anything" (see 1Co 6:12). Though the objects you make use of be lawful, yet when they encroach upon your spirit, then you must deny them.

Secondly, take heed how you assess yourself. It is a great part of Christian prudence to know what is inside you. Do not count sin as part of yourself. See how the apostle distinguishes it: "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom 7:17). You should be able to say concerning all carnal desires, "It is not I, but sin." There is an old and corrupt self. Therefore, you should not count the world as yourself; it has no part in you: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness"—and what is the reason?—"For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luk 12:15). The world is not yourself; if you had worldly possessions you would be neither further from the grave nor the nearer to true contentment. Therefore, you may be happy without this or that worldly thing.

2. Seek Self in God.

If you would deny yourself, seek self in God. To seek self in God is an innocent diversion. When we cannot weaken the affection, let us change the object of our affection.

What is it that is so near to you? Is it honour? Seek honour in God. Do but change vain glory for eternal glory; that is a lawful seeking of self when we seek it in God. "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (Joh 5:44). You may change your desires from vain glory into everlasting glory, "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Joh 12:43). If a man desired praise, what could be better than to be praised with God's own mouth, in the face of all the world, at the great day of accounts, when Christ shall proclaim him to be an heir of the crown of heaven?

It is the same for pleasure; if your soul is attracted to it, remember, there are no pleasures like those chaste delights you may enjoy by communion with God, the pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore (Psa 16:11).

If you desire riches, turn out your heart toward the good treasure God has opened in the covenant: to be rich in grace, rich toward God.

Affections are not done away with, but transferred; we transplant our desires, so that they may flourish in a better soil.

3. Resolve to Please God.

If you would deny yourself, resolve to please God even in the worst circumstances, though it may be with the displeasure of yourself and all the world. Usually, we do not sit down and count the costs; we do not make our resolve large enough. When we take up the profession of religion, we look for but little trouble, and therefore we are soon discouraged. Usually we give God but a small portion of our lives. When we take religion upon us, we do not carry our lives and our estates in our hands, as we should, in order to give them away. A man never comes to Christ rightly unless he gives up himself and his friends, and bids Christ take all. Do this until you come to where Nazianzen came concerning his human learning: "I never sought riches nor greatness in the world, only I have sought a little eloquence—and I will tell you how far I have sought it: that I might have something of value to esteem as nothing for Christ!"

In the same way, men should give Christ liberal allowance. Then when it comes to trial, you will not be grudging: the thing you must give up is only what you already have counted to be able to part with for Christ's sake.

4. Avoid Only Outward Means.

If you would deny yourself, take heed of confining your welfare to outward means, as if you could not be happy without such an estate, or without such and such an income. Beware of binding up your life and contentment with your outward condition, for when you come to part with it, you can as soon part with your life. The children of God resolve, though the fig-tree do not blossom, and the labour of the olive fail, yet to rejoice in the Lord (Hab 3:17-18). This should be a Christian's resolution: not to trust in created things, but in God, though all these things are gone. This is a holy independency, when our hearts are taken off from the creature. The men of the world have only a candle, which is soon blown out, an estate that may easily be blasted. But the children of God have the sun, which can serve them without a candle. The Lord says, "I will cause their mirth to cease," speaking of the carnal Jews (see Hos 2:11-12). Why? "I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees." All the wicked man's happiness is bound up with the vine and fig-tree; that is, with his estate.

Consider, your happiness does not lie within yourselves, nor in any other creature, but in God alone. God in Himself is much better than God in the creature. Carnal men prize God's work in

the creature, but not God in Himself. And therefore the first thing we must depend upon is that God is an all-sufficient God in Himself; not God in friends, not God in wealth, but God in Himself. We cannot see how it can be well without friends, wealth, and liberty; therefore, our hearts are glued to them. Oh, take heed of this! All these things are but several conduits to deliver and convey to us the influence of the supreme cause. Therefore, still prize God in Himself before God in the creature.

5. Often Exercise Faith.

If you would deny yourself, often exercise faith and look within the veil. Send your thoughts as spies and messengers into the land of promise. A man more easily will quit[32] what he has upon earth when he has strong expectations of heaven (Rom 8:18). When a man sees that God has laid up a more excellent glory for him, he will reckon these things are not to be named the same day.

> For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen. (2Co 4:16-18)

The apostle gives an account of his valour and resolution, how he was able to withstand the discouragements of the world: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen." Heaven will satisfy all losses so that the world can be left with ease. Look, as the woman left her pitcher when she was acquainted with Christ (Joh 4:5-29), so when a man is acquainted with better things, his heart is taken off from these outward things. When Christ said to Zacchaeus, "Salvation is come to thy house," Zacchaeus added, "Half of my goods I give to the poor" (see Luk 19:8-9). When the heart is much in heaven, the earth will seem a small thing. When we look upon the stars, they seem but as so many sparks and spangles; but if we were above the earth, the world would seem like only a little black spot.

6. Observe God's Special Providences.

If you would deny yourself, in all debates between conscience and interest be sure to observe God's special providences to you. When conscience and interest struggle, consider, from where do you have that which you are so unwilling to part with, but from the Lord (1Co 4:7)? Distrust is the ground of self-seeking. We do not consider the providence of God to us, and that all changes are in His hands, and therefore we cannot deny ourselves. Who is He that has given you such an estate that you are loth to lose, or such a comfort you are unwilling to part with?

When Amaziah the king of Judah was admonished by the prophet not to let the army of Israel go with him, he said, "What shall we do for the hundred talents?" (2Ch 25:9), the sum for which he had hired them. The man of God answered, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." Just so, when you are troubled, saying, "How shall I live? What shall I do for an estate?" the Lord is able to give you more than that. It is God's blessing that makes rich, and He can supply you with a great deal more if He sees fit. Men think it is their own work that does all, and so they are loth to part with what they have. Consider, you could not have it if God had not given it to you.

In the same way, when you are loth to lose your friends, when by the profession of religion you may be in danger of just that, remember Who brought them to be your friends. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Pro 16:7). Piety will do more than carnal compliance. You may by carnal compliance risk losing God and

your friends too!

7. Consider God's Rights.

If you would deny yourself, consider the right God has in all that is yours: He has a natural right and a right by contract.

God has a natural right to all you have: He made it, and He gave it to you. No creature can be at his own power and disposal. Riches are not your own, but they are God's bounty to you. Foolish men account all that they have as their own; they think they may do with it as they please: "Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Psa 12:4). Consider, your tongue is not your own, for you did not make it; and when it is greatly injured, you cannot repair it yourself. A prodigal that is not able to deny his pleasure; speak to him about it, and he will answer, "I thought that which I spend is my own." Your estate is not your own to spend as you please. In the same way, covetous men think they are absolute lords of what they have: "Shall I take my bread, and my drink, and give it to strangers?" (see 1Sa 25:11). Goods must be laid out according to the owner's will, or else it is robbery. Now, all that you have is God's; therefore you are to part with every interest and concern of your own, for His glory.

God also has a right by contract: you have given up yourself, and all that is yours to God (Rom 12:1). Therefore, consider the danger of alienating[33] things that are once consecrated to God. Consider the end of Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5)!

I. Self-denial in General

E. Observations Concerning Self-denial

Before I come to the particular kinds of self-denial, take note of some observations concerning this duty.

1. Constitution of Soul

If you would deny yourselves, everyone must observe his temperament and the particular constitution of his own soul. There are several ways of sinning; let everyone look to his own way (Isa 53:6). God knows that we are all out of the way, but usually there is some particular way of sin into which our hearts wander and digress. Now, when God tries any man, He tries him in his particular "Isaac," just as He tried Abraham (Gen 22:1-2). Therefore, self-denial must be considered according to the kind of self-love particular to each person, which way self-love most bends and inclines his soul.

This observation is necessary because there may be a kind of shadow of self-denial in carnal men. Lusts are obstinate, and because their opposition will not give way to another, for the convenience of a bigger lust, a man may deny himself in something else. A covetous man may deprive his soul of good, and may be harsh and disobliging to his nature, yet he may not really deny himself. He may deny himself of pleasure, but not of worldly profit. Others who are of a sensual constitution of spirit may be slight as to worldly profit, when their hearts are caught by another snare; "I kept myself from mine iniquity" (Psa 18:23). Usually there is some special sin that we may, by the frequency of temptation and by our desires that run that way, call "our sin." Now herein is our uprightness tried, when we can deny that particular sin.

2. Purpose to Deny Self, Yet Fail to Act

Many may purpose to deny themselves, yet fail when they come to actually do so. Certainly, in purpose we must deny ourselves. Whenever we come to Christ, we must bring our lives and our comforts in our hands; we must come with a resolution to part with all. Though every Christian is not an actual martyr in effect and act, yet he must be in vow and purpose, and resolve to renounce all upon the just and appropriate reasons of religion. Now the trial is when we are put upon these particular cases. We cannot so well judge of an affection by its single exercise, as when it is brought into a direct conflict and trial. The things of religion, in the absence of a temptation, may seem best to the soul; but the true spirit is never discovered until we come to an actual choice, and particulars are compared with particulars. Then desires, which before lay hid and dormant, rouse themselves and oppose grace in the civil wars of the soul. When there is a conflict between conscience and interest, then are we tried.

You need not wish for these cases, for before you go out of the world you will find that they come fast enough. Many such cases will happen when duty is without encouragement, and all self-respects[34] fail, when for conscience's sake you are put upon visible disadvantage. It is said of the children of God that "they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev 12:11). When it came

to this trial, that they must either deny life or deny Christ, then they loved not their lives. Many, in an emotional and superficial resolution, may seem to lay all at Christ's feet, as Peter in his confidence talked high, "I will not deny thee" (see Mat 26:35). But yet afterward they may fail, when they come to resist unto blood: "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb 12:4). When you must make a choice between the world and Christ, then are the best discoveries made [about the true condition of your heart].

3. Deny Pleasure and the Delicacy of Life.

They are nothing in religion that cannot deny pleasure and the delicacy of life. This is the constant and private self-denial of a Christian, which is always necessary. All sin is rooted in a love of pleasure more than of God. This is the reason we sin, because of the satisfaction we imagine to be in sin, which draws the heart to the practice of it. Now he that cannot forsake his worldly satisfaction is nothing: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Pro 25:28). The meaning is this: he who cannot subdue his inclination to pleasure lies open to every temptation. As an un-walled town in time of war receives every army that comes, so is his soul; it lies open and exposed to temptation.

In addition, pleasures will necessarily bring a brawn[35] upon the heart, because they are so contrary to the severity of religion. Seneca said, "Certainly it is necessary that he should have low thoughts of duty who has high thoughts of pleasure and gratifying his senses." If God had required nothing of us but the perfection of reason, if we were only to show ourselves men, there must be a bridle upon appetite and sensual desires. There is an old quarrel between appetite and reason. Nature itself, then, suggests such arguments to us as would put us upon the mortification of the senses.

4. Deny Self in Desire as Well as in Enjoyment.

We must deny ourselves in point of desire as well as in point of enjoyment. "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts [or, desires]" (Ti 2:12). The great part of this duty consists in mortifying and subduing worldly lusts, so that we may be content with our portion even though it may be but a little in the world, if God sees us fit for no more. It is a high point of self-denial not only to part with what we have, but to be content with what we have, when the soul comes to this, to say, "I have enough, because I have as much as God has allotted me, and because God sees fit that I should have no more." To be content with a little of the world, and not to desire more, is the poor man's duty as well as the rich. As a rich man is to quit his possessions when God calls him, so a poor man is to quit, mortify, and subdue his desires.

When once covetousness prevails upon the heart, it desires, grasps, and aims at the whole world; therefore Christ said, "If a man should gain the whole world" (Mat 16:26), implying that gaining the whole world is the aim of men. When a man's corruptions break out that way, he will never be satisfied. Solomon says, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver" (Ecc 5:10). The heart of man is largely drawn out so that, like the grave, we shall never be able to say, "It is enough" (Pro 30:15-16).

To enjoy contentment in our portion is a great part of self-denial. To desire more is but to desire more snares. If I had more, I should have more trouble, more snares, more duty. Greater gates do but open to more care. I should have more to account for, more time, and more opportunity; and, alas, I cannot answer for what I have already! If a plant be starved in the valleys, it will never thrive on the mountains. If in a low condition we are not able to conquer temptation, what shall we do if we had more, when we cannot be responsible to God for what we have already?

5. Deny Vainglory[36] as Much as Seeking Riches.

Vainglory is as sordid a piece of self, and as much to be denied, as seeking riches and worldly greatness. Covetousness carries a man to another object, but vainglory to another destination altogether; the one makes us idolaters, and the other hypocrites. An idolater sets up another God, and a hypocrite denies the true God.

Mark this: God, by reason of the excellency of His being, is to be the highest object of our respect. Because He is the supreme cause, He is to be the ultimate end of all our actions. When we set up another end, we deny God His prerogative.

6. Deny Self for Duty and Obedience.

We are to deny ourselves, not only in case of temptation to direct sin, when either we must thus deny ourselves or actually sin, but also for the general advantage of duty and obedience, and the convenience of a holy life. For instance, I am to deny my pleasure, not only when reason may be grossly violated, not only by refusing such works of the flesh as stink in the nostrils of nature, but also lest I be unfitted for duty, lest insensibly I bring imbalance or hardness into my heart. And so I am to deny riches, not only not to seek them by unlawful means, when I cannot keep them with a good conscience, but not to lay out the strength of my spirits in the pursuit of the world, that this may not intercept the vigour and strength of my soul, which should be reserved for communion with God. Riches are to be denied not only when they choke conscience, but also when they choke the Word. So I am to deny honours; that is, not only the ambitious seeking of them, but also when they will make me to lose the pleasant opportunity of quiet devotion and religious privacy with God.

7. Have Special Regard to the Seasons of Life.

In the work of self-denial, we must give special regard to the seasons wherein we live, in several cases.

[7.1] In doubtful times

In doubtful times, when God seems to threaten judgment, then our heart must be more loosely attached to worldly comforts than at other times, and we must deny ourselves of those comforts that at other times a man may take. Our Saviour reproached the scribes and Pharisees for not discerning the seasons. It is a great fault of Christians when they do not regard the season and time of God's displeasure, "That which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not" (Jer 45:4-5). I am pulling down, God says, and plucking up, and for men to mind worldly greatness, honours, and the conveniences of the outward life when the face of the times looks toward judgment—when we may see a storm in the black clouds—then to think of building, planting, and advancing ourselves is a most unseasonable and horrid security.

The Spirit of God takes notice of this in the men that lived in the days of Noah: "They did eat, they drank, they married" (Luk 17:27). All these things are necessary for the support of mankind; but they minded these things, had no regard to the season, and did not see the storm in the clouds at such a time when God seemed to begin His controversy with the people! Whatever we do at such times, we should do it with caution and fear, for the more we busy ourselves in the world, the more snares we draw upon ourselves. God looks that we should be observant of the season, and not seek after honours, ease, and plenty. When judgments are

coming, when the face of the sky begins to lower[37] and thicken toward a storm, then our hearts should be most weaned.

[7.2] For a new convert

In the work of self-denial, we must give special regard to when we are likely to put a stumbling-block in the way of a new convert. The prophet spoke to Gehazi when he ran after Naaman for a gift, "Is this a time to receive money, and to think of vineyards and olive-yards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants?" (see 2Ki 5:26). Simply to receive a gift was not unlawful, but Elisha was resolved to take none, to show he did not make a profit from miracles for his private gain. It was God's honour he aimed at; it was enough for him that the God of Israel was acknowledged by Naaman the Syrian to be the true God. Elijah would allure Naaman by the freeness of the gift. The prophet rebukes Gehazi not so much for the lie, as for the untimeliness of the action, because it might bring disgrace upon the honour and high calling of the prophet, and dishonour the God of Israel.

We must depart from our own convenience in such cases; it is a great stumbling-block to the world when they that pretend to reformation seek honours, profits, great places, and preference for themselves and their families. All pious designs must have a suitable carriage. In Augustine's[38] time, it was a scandal against the Christians when they overturned the idols, not out of any piety or devotion, but from covetousness, that they might have the gold; and the heathens soon reproached them for it. Reformers, of all men, should be content with the goodness of the action.

[7.3] In prosperous times

In prosperous times of the church there is much self-denial to be practised. I confess, self-denial is chiefly for times of suffering, for so it is in the text, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross"; these two are coupled together, so that when a cross meets us in our way, which we cannot avoid without some risk to conscience, then we must deny ourselves. However, it is a duty that is always in season.

I shall show you wherein this self-denial is to be practised in prosperous times.

(1.) In charity

We must deny ourselves through charity in a constant use of our material resources to God's glory. Charity is the constant vent of Christian affection, a holy emptying out of self in liberal and benevolent distributions. It is the only cure and preservative we can have against self-seeking, if done out of sincere aims. "Go sell all that thou hast," Christ says to the young man, and "give to the poor, and come and follow me, taking up thy cross," but he was sad at that saying (see Mar 10:17-22). There is something extraordinary in that test: "Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." This is the self-denial Christ calls for. Can we trust Him to adequately repay us in heaven?

How much to give is hard to define. The amount given must be enough to be worthy of the gospel, and that you may have joy, otherwise you may be as great a self-seeker as those that get goods by robbery, when you possess them by greed. A covetous self-seeker is not only he who takes away other men's goods, but also he who stingily keeps his own, if he holds more than is appropriate. We are to go back some degrees in pomp and pleasure. Consider the example of Jesus Christ, how many degrees He went back: "Though he was rich, he became poor, that we might be rich" (see 2Co 8:9).

(2.) In obedience to the Word

Self-denial is to be practised in prosperous times by obedience to the strictest inward duties of the Word. Many duties go against the bent of a carnal heart: inward mortification, meditation,

self-examination. There is no outward glory in these things, and they are painful and distasteful to flesh and blood. You must deny yourselves in order freely to practise holy duties. Cornelius said to Peter, "Here we are all before the Lord, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (see Act 10:33)—"We are contented to hear whatever God will be pleased to teach." The ministers of the gospel are agents for heaven; they drive God's bargain and covenant with the world. Now the Lord cannot endure any reservation or withdrawing the shoulder from any known duties. Howsoever contrary and distasteful they are to flesh and blood, you must practise them.

We are all afraid of sins against conscience, and certainly they will be very clamorous.[39] Now, the world is mistaken about sins against light and conscience: we think that sins only of commission are sins against conscience, as when a man commits adultery or tells a lie against a check of conscience. But, oh, let me tell you, sins of omission may be sins against conscience too. Notice, the apostle does not say, "To him that knows it is evil, it is sin"; but rather, he that "knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jam 4:17). When you are convinced of any duty, and do not practise it, you are not come up to Christ's rules. Sins of omission, as well as sins of commission, are sins against knowledge.

(3.) In the uprightness of our aims

In prosperous times, self-denial is to be practised in the uprightness of our aims, to see that we are not guided by aims that flow from self-love. A man has more need to fear his heart in prosperous times than in times of persecution, so that he is not motivated by wicked desires, the outward countenance of religion, or respect to his own interest. The end you are aiming for is that you will not be lovers of yourselves, with "a form of godliness" (2Ti 3:1-5)—that you do not merely hold out a pretence of religion upon those undue motives. There are no greater enemies to Christ than those who profess Christ upon self-interest. The apostle speaks of some who preached Christ, whose god was their belly, and who minded earthly things; but their entire aim was to gain an abundance of wealth and pleasure (Phi 3:18-19). In reality, they oppose the virtue and power of His cross as much as those that openly call Him a seducer.

(4.) In mortifying earthly pleasures

In prosperous times you are to deny yourselves by mortifying sinful pleasures and carnal desires, howsoever dear they may be to the soul, though these lusts be as near and dear as the right hand and the right eye. In times of danger God takes away the fuel of our lusts, but in times of peace we are to take away the desires and lusts themselves—and indeed this is hardest. It is easier to quit life than to quit one lust for Christ; lusts are more rooted in our nature, and therefore are more difficult to overcome. Enduring of hardships is nothing to the overcoming of lusts. We are to crucify and deaden these desires to the world, howsoever sweet they are. Men think there can be no pleasure but in the accomplishment of their carnal desires. It is pleasant, no doubt, for a woman with child to have what she longs for [because she has especially strong desires when in that condition]; but yet it is more pleasant not to be troubled with those longings at all. When these lusts are gone, it will be exceeding pleasant and comfortable to the soul.

Your great work then is to take heed that you do not live as those that are debtors to the flesh (Rom 8:12). You owe no service to your carnal desires. We are bound to clothe and feed the body, that it may be an instrument to serve God, but no further.[40] You are not debtors to it; you owe it nothing; and therefore, if those desires encroach upon you, you must renounce them. The conveniences of the present life serve only as ballast to a ship in the passage; we are bound for a city whose goods cannot be purchased for gold or silver. You cannot buy repentance, faith, pardon, or glory, with gold or silver!

(5.) In seeking to promote the common salvation

This public self-denial is required of you in seeking to promote the common salvation and public benefit of the saints, without any partial respect to your own interest and opinion. Nazianzen said that usually this is the fault of the children of God when they begin to grow well, that then they are wilful and divided, just as green timber that lies in the sunshine is apt to warp. So it is with us: when we enjoy the sunshine of prosperity, we are apt to divide and grow unruly. "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification" (Rom 15:2). We are not to please ourselves, not to look to the gratification of our own opinions, not to be privately urging our own opinions to the tormenting of interests and the breach of Christian charity.[41]

It is a most spiritual kind of self-denial to be ever ruled by respect to the general interests of religion more than by private affection to our own party. Look, as the elements leave their proper motion—the water will ascend, and the air descend, in order to conserve the universe, and that there may be no vacuum and emptiness in the world—so it is good not to be partial to our own private interest, and at least to forbear censures and exasperations and taking disagreements too far.

II.
Self-denial in Respect to God

Having handled the doctrine of self-denial in general, I come to the kinds and subjective parts of it. Self must be denied so far as it is opposite to God or put in the place of God. Therefore, we may judge of the kinds of self-denial according to the distinct privileges of the Godhead.

A. God is the first cause, upon Whom all things depend in their being and operation; and so we are to deny self, that is, self-dependence.

B. God, and God alone, is the highest lord and most absolute sovereign, Who rules all things by His laws and providence; and so we are to deny self, that is, self-will. We do this by a willing and full obedience to His laws, and by an absolute subjection to the dominion of His providence. Obedience to His laws is holiness, and submission to His providence is patience; the one relates to His governing will, the other to His disposing will.

C. God is the chief good and therefore to be valued above all beings, interests, and concerns in the world; and so we are to deny self, that is, self-love.

D. God is the last end, in which all things at length terminate;[42] and so we are to deny self, that is, self-seeking.

According to these considerations is the doctrine of self-denial.

II. Self-denial in Respect to God

A. God the First Cause
Denying Self-dependence

As God is the first cause, so He would keep up the respect of the world to His majesty by dependence and trust. It is the ambition of man to seek independence, to be a god to himself, sufficient to his own happiness. Nothing can be to God more hateful than this. The main thing that preserves and maintains our allegiance and respect to the crown of heaven, is a constant dependence upon God for all things; for we find by experience that the heart is never kept in a right frame but when we look for our all from God. Therefore, it is notable that in the covenant of grace,[43] wherein the Lord would repair the ruins of the Fall and bring the creature into a new obligation to Himself, God represents Himself as all-sufficient—as when He came to make a covenant with Abraham, "I am the Almighty God" (see Gen 17:1). We bring nothing to the covenant but all-necessity, and we come to meet with all-sufficiency in God.

A great part of self-denial is to work us off from all other dependencies. We are incredibly apt to depend upon the following:

1. Our own righteousness
2. Our own wit and wisdom
3. Our own spiritual strength, and
4. The supplies of outward life.

Therefore, I shall in the succeeding discourse seek to draw off the heart from these things, so that our trust and dependence may be entirely fixed upon God Himself.

1. Deny Dependence upon Your Own Righteousness.

I will first persuade you to deny dependence upon your own righteousness. For this we have an important example in the Apostle Paul: "I count all things but dung and dross, that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness" (see Phi 3:8-9). Look into the context, and you will find this verse fits well to the purpose. In the fourth verse he says, "If any might have confidence in the flesh, I might much more." It is no great matter for those to deny themselves who have nothing to trust in, but who could display such a banner of his own excellence as Paul could? Besides his other external privileges, take notice of his moral qualification: that he was, "touching the righteousness of the law, blameless" (see 3:6); that is, whilst a Pharisee, he was a man of a strict and severe life, altogether blameless in outward conformity and righteousness of life. Who was so strict, so just, and so temperate as Paul?

Nay, after he was a Christian, he testified, "I have suffered the loss of all things for Christ" (see 3:8): credit and interest, honours among the Jews, friends, country—all things in behalf of the gospel. Now, what is his judgment upon all? "Those things which were gain to me I counted loss" (see 3:7). He was apt naturally to count those things gain, to look upon them as rare and

singular grounds of confidence. If any might expect to be saved, certainly Paul might. You would have wished your soul in his soul's stead if you had been acquainted with him. But Paul says, "I counted them to be loss"; that is, the treachery of my heart would prove a hindrance from closing[44] with Christ, and a dangerous allurement to hypocrisy and self-confidence.

He repeats it again in the eighth verse for the greater emphasis, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss," to show that he made this judgment not only upon his Jewish observances, but upon his actions as a Christian, upon his good works after faith. Though he had converted many thousands to God, and done and suffered much for Christ, "yet I do to this day count it to be a loss, I count them to be skubala," refuse to be thrown to the dogs. Not that he repented of anything that he had done and suffered, but he counted them loss as they might hinder the application of the merit of Christ, and as things that his heart was apt to plead before God's tribunal. It is all nothing, it is loss, it is dung, it is dog's meat. And why? "That I might gain him, and be found in him," etc. All was to make way for the greater esteem of Jesus Christ.

Now, upon this eminent example, let me press you to this kind of self-denial, to draw off your hearts from your own righteousness. My method shall be to show you the following:

1. How hard a matter it is to bring men off from dependence upon their own righteousness.
2. The danger of leaning upon your own righteousness.
3. Some discoveries of those that are taken in this snare of death, that are carried away by a vain trust and presumption of righteousness in themselves.
4. Some remedies and cures.

[1.1] Difficult to end dependence upon one's own righteousness

I shall show what a very hard matter it is to bring men off from a dependence upon their own righteousness.

(1.) Occurs in all men by nature

Dependence upon our own righteousness is difficult to end because by nature it occurs in all men. This is an evil that is natural to us; works are our natural copy and tenure.[45] "Do this, and live" was the covenant made with Adam, and it is written upon the heart of all men. We all seek to be saved by our own doing. Therefore, upon conviction, as soon as we begin to be serious, as soon as the conscience is awakened, the first question is, "What must I do to be saved?" (Act 16:30), and, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" (Joh 6:28). They imagined that life eternal might be gained by the works of the Law without Christ.

Now this natural disposition is confirmed and strengthened, partly by ignorance and security. Men do not know what is necessary to true righteousness. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom 10:3). They do not know what is necessary to the justifying of a soul in God's sight.

None are so apt to rest in their own righteousness as those that have least reason, namely, persons who are either ignorant or formal. The Apostle Paul says, "If any might have confidence in the flesh, much more I" (see Phi 3:4). As those that have little learning will show it on all occasions, so persons who regard the outside of religion and practise formal duties are most apt to rest in them. Why? Because formal duties do not discover weakness, and therefore they only puff men up. Carnal men search little, and blind conscience is soon pacified. Usually, men that are ignorant are most confident; they are men who go on in a dead course, without feeling their defects and need of the supplies of heaven.

None are so apt to rest in their own righteousness as those that have natural pride and self-conceit. Man is a proud creature, and loth to be indebted to another. A russet[46] coat that we

ourselves have patched seems better than a silken garment that is borrowed. Our righteousness! What a poor, filthy, tattered thing it is! Yet our hearts run upon it more than on the righteousness of Christ, which is so excellent and glorious. We are loth to submit and yield to Christ's righteousness. That is the reason why the apostle uses the expression, they "have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom 10:3). It needs a great deal of submission and humility to be content to be indebted to divine grace. Men would gladly maintain the dignity of works, and are loth to stoop and sue informa pauperis,[47] to come as beggars to God. We would rather come to God as creditors, to demand repayment of a debt that we suppose He owes us!

And partly, our own righteousness is confirmed and strengthened by natural ease and laziness. That which is our own costs us no waiting. Paul says, "I have suffered the loss of all things…that I may win Christ" (Phi 3:8). Before Paul could be secured against his own fears, he ran through a great many hazards; he suffered much. We [might] not have the comfort of Christ's righteousness until after much waiting and prayer; but now, when we seek it in ourselves, blind conscience will take hold of anything.

And partly too, our own righteousness is confirmed and strengthened because God follows such kind of men with prosperity in this world. They think, therefore, that the Lord is well pleased with them—until the hour of death comes. Then they find all to be but froth, and that no man is a loser by God. Outward religion brings outward blessing. Dogs have the crumbs that fall from the table; they have the offals[48] of mercy. Therefore, they who depend upon their own righteousness cannot say that God is in their debt because they have outward prosperity.[49]

(2.) Common after first conviction

Dependence upon one's own righteousness is most incident to persons after their first conviction. When conscience is first opened, men fetch their comfort from their own duties. The Law leaves them wounded and low, and they lick themselves whole again by some offers and resolutions of obedience. Observe that, usually, carnal men are only sensible of or careful about religion upon some pains of conscience; they use duties as men do alcohol when distressed. Nature is more prone to a sin-offering than to a thank-offering. Duties should be a thank-offering, but men make them to be a sin-offering;[50] as in an outward case, when men have offended their superiors, for a while they become more compliant and dutiful, that they may redeem their fault by their diligence. So it is here: when conscience comes and convicts men in the name of God, then men will run to duties until conscience is asleep again. Therefore, it is good, in all pains of conscience and whenever you come to settle your peace, to notice from where you get your comfort and how it grows upon you.

"In the midst of my sad thoughts, thy comforts delight my soul" (see Psa 94:19). It is very sweet when a Christian can see that he has fetched his comfort from Christ, and not merely from some outward observances and formal duties. How did you come to be satisfied with your current condition? Usually, when conviction is not very deep, men blind and choke conscience with their own endeavours and their resolution of growing better. When they are wounded with sin, they are apt to run to self for a remedy.

(3.) Very subject to it after conversion

After conversion, the children of God are very subject to dependence upon their own righteousness, to lessen their esteem of Christ by overvaluing their own righteousness. As long as we live in the world, we are apt to set up a righteousness of our own. When the apostle gave us a catalogue of sins (1Jo 2:15-17), pride of life is last mentioned because pride remains when other sins are subdued—it grows upon the ruin of other sins. Of all the aspects of pride, this is the most dangerous: to pride ourselves in our own righteousness. The Apostle Paul says not

only, “as a Pharisee I count my righteousness loss,” but also, “now that I am a Christian, I account all things loss” (see Phi 3:4-9).

It is storied of Mr. Foxe[51] that he was apt to say he was more afraid of his graces than of his sins, as being in danger to be puffed up, lest they should tempt him to self-confidence. Our Saviour prescribes it as a general rule, whenever we have done anything for God, He would still have us cherish thoughts of our own nothingness, because herein we have merited nothing: “When you have done all, say you are unprofitable servants” (see Luk 17:7-10). That possibly may be the reason why the children of God, in the fairest view of their graces, so solemnly disclaim their own righteousness. The Apostle Paul says, “I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified” (1Co 4:4). Paul knew no unfaithfulness or negligence in himself in the work of the ministry, yet he said in effect, “I am not justified for this before God.” When you have done your utmost, still run to grace and make grace your claim. “I caused the Levites to sanctify themselves; remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy” (see Neh 13:22). It was an excellent work, “yet spare me,” Nehemiah says, “according to the greatness of thy mercy.”

[1.2] The danger of dependence upon one’s own righteousness

I shall show how dangerous it is to lean upon our own righteousness.

(1.) Not prize Christ

If we lean upon our own righteousness, we shall not prize Jesus Christ. Christ is displaced from the heart by the confidence that men have in their works. Because Paul disesteemed works and counted “all things dung,” the more excellent did Jesus Christ seem to him—“All is dung for the excellency of the knowledge of my Lord” (see Phi 3:8). So, on the contrary, when men esteem works, they are sure to disesteem Christ. Now, it is the highest profaneness in the world not to esteem Christ. It is not only profaneness to be drunk, commit adultery, or steal, but also not to prize the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the apostle speaks of not prizing Christ, he says, “Let him be accursed till the Lord come” (see 1Co 16:22); and “Let there be no profane person, as was Esau, who despised the birthright” (see Heb 12:15-17). The birthright was a pledge of the grace we have by Christ, and therein lay Esau’s profaneness: he despised his spiritual privileges. Therefore, nothing is more dangerous than the conceit of our own righteousness.

(2.) A great loss

If you lean upon your own righteousness, it will certainly be a great loss to you. It will deprive you of many precious experiences. God is very tender of the trust of men; when they stand upon their own foundation and turn their backs upon their own mercies, they will soon grow dead and careless. Religion will not be carried on in such a sweet and sensible way, because grace is obstructed by their depending upon themselves.

Now, by disclaiming works you will lose nothing, but you will gain Christ, and in Him find comfort and grace. When once we possess the righteousness of Christ, then we shall have the proof and virtue of the Spirit of Christ for the mortifying of sin and quickening the soul to holiness: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection” (Phi 3:10).

(3.) Hypocrisy

Dependence upon our own righteousness will draw the heart to a modest hypocrisy, by making men contented with an imperfect resemblance and dead picture of righteousness. There are none that trust more in works than those that are most defective in them. If we come to perform duties indeed, we cannot but be sensible of the weakness of them, and so we shall fly to mercy. None are so truly godly as those that cast their whole dependence upon grace. None perform duties with more care, and overlook them with more self-denial. None have

greater care of duty, and lower thoughts of it when it is performed.

Who was more strict and diligent than Paul? Yet all is to him nothing but dung and dog's meat! In the scheme of judgment and at the Last Day, when Christ will say to the sheep, "Stand on my right hand, you have fed me" etc., they will reply, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee?" etc. (see Mat 25: 31-40). They wondered that God should take notice of such worthless services. The goats were apt to plead for themselves, but the sheep admire at God's thoughts of their charity. When carnal men are pressed to strict duties, they choke conscience with principles of grace; but when they look for blessing, then they build upon works. Now the godly are quite contrary: they work as if there were no grace; and yet they expect all from grace, as if there were no works!

(4.) Gospel promises of no effect

Self-dependence is dangerous because it makes gospel promises of no effect. All our comfort lies in the acceptance of the gospel, for we are undone by the old Law. Now, when you depend upon works, you cut off yourselves from those hopes, and you are subject to the rigour of the Law. God puts it to your choice at what court you will stand: will you plead at the tribunal of justice, or of grace? If it be of works, then it is no more grace; and if of grace, it is no more of works (Rom 11:6); either it must be wholly of grace or wholly of works. If you build upon the Law, you will make void the promise to you (Rom 4:14-16; Gal 3:18). The covenant will not be mixed any more than gold with clay; there is no mixing of these things. The apostle tells those who would establish works that they are fallen from grace, are debtors to the whole Law, and that Christ profits them nothing (Gal 5:2-4). God does not love a patched righteousness; new cloth upon an old garment will make the rent worse (Mat 9:16). Your souls must be entirely carried out to the righteousness of Christ.

(5.) When wrath pursues sinners

We shall best know the danger of self-dependence when wrath actually pursues after sinners, either in pangs of conscience, in the hour of death or at the Day of Judgment. "O that I might be found in him" (see Phi 3:9); the expression "found" implies that there is a time when God will search Jerusalem with candles (Zep 1:12). When wrath makes inquisition for sinners, oh, it is an excellent thing to be sheltered under the shield of grace!

Merit-mongers[52] are best proved wrong by experience. Certainly, they who cry up works seldom look into their own consciences. However men may babble in the schools, yet when they come to plead with God, then they will see that there is no claim which will meet their need but the righteousness of Christ. They may dispute with men such as themselves, but when they come to dispute with their own consciences in the agonies of death, then they will cry out, "It is best to lean upon the merit of Christ." Let a man plead with God, "Give me not a crumb of mercy unless I be found worthy; do not save and justify me unless I deserve it"; yet, when conscience arrests men and cites them before the tribunal of God, then they fly trembling to the horns of God's mercy[53] and to His free acceptance in Jesus Christ. Therefore this will be comfortable to you in the hour of death. You cannot have a better winding-sheet[54] than to be wrapped up in Christ's righteousness. It is only that which will bear you out.

[1.3] How self-dependence may be discovered

Now I will give some ways in which dependence upon our own righteousness may be discovered.

Because men are doctrinally right, and disclaim the opinion of merit and works, they do not discern this secret vein of guilt that runs throughout the soul. There are practical papists[55] as well as practical atheists. You shall not be judged by your naked opinion, however, but by the disposition of your heart. A man may own grace in outward display, yet trust in himself all the

while.

In Luke 18:9 it is said, "Jesus spake this parable against those that trusted in themselves that they were righteous"; there He brings the instance of the Pharisee. In verse 11 this Pharisee says, "God, I thank thee." He talks of grace, of blessing God and owning God, but he was proud and puffed up by the conceit of his own righteousness. His secret confidence was built upon his own works.

So it is also in Deuteronomy 9:4, "Say not in thine heart, this is for my righteousness." Though we do not plead for merit with the tongue, yet we may say it in the heart. There is a language that God understands in the secret dispositions of the soul.

Not all thoughts are explicit, impressed upon the conscience; some are implicit, thoughts by interpretation.[56] How shall we find this difference out?

(1.) Self-conceit

We discover self-dependence when we secretly bless ourselves in our performance of good duties, without our being humbled by our defects. The children of God, the more they do, the more they abhor themselves and hunger after Christ. It is a notable passage:

> And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should… sanctify the Sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy. (Neh 13:22)

Nehemiah did excellent work there to put them upon sanctifying the Sabbath, yet he says, "spare me." When the children of God do anything worthy and excellent, they hunger after grace all the more, because of being sensible of their own defects whenever they come into God's presence. They have more cause to be humbled than lifted up, though carried on with much activity and life in a holy service. There is much weakness, much lack of zeal, and lack of affection or attention; therefore they still have cause to reflect even upon their holy things. But when there is no actual humility, when men perform duties and grow more proud and conceited, then their duties prove a loss to them, not gain.

This is one advantage we have by holy ordinances: growing more vile in our own eyes. Nothing makes the children of God to abhor themselves so much as their duties, because there they converse with a holy God, and that puts them upon the remembrance of their defects, and there they discern the weakness of their graces. As men feel the lameness of the arm in labour and exercise, so in those spiritual exercises they discern the feebleness of their graces. Nay, there their corruptions are irritated and resist, and therefore they come to see that their natures are full of sin and their services full of weakness. And so they cry out with David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!" (see Psa 143:1-2). He does not say "with thine enemies," with unbelievers, but "with thy servant."

Self-conceit then is a sure argument of self-dependence. When men think much of what they have done for God, and do not break out into actual humility, certainly it is a sign that their hearts are depending upon the merit of their actions. Secretly they say in their hearts, "This is my righteousness," which is against the standing rule of Christ: "When you have done all you can, say you are unprofitable servants" (see Luk 17:10).

(2.) Growing vain of solemn duties

We discover self-dependence when men grow foolish and careless after solemn duties, as if their former strictness should bear them out.

> If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. (Eze 33:13)

Usually men who trust in their righteousness indulge themselves in vanity and sin with the more

license and boldness, as if one part of obedience would recompense and make amends for the defect of another. Carnal men do this grossly, as the Jews hoped to repair their lack of mercy by the multitude of their sacrifices, as if tithing mint and cumin would make amends for their defect in the weighty things of the Law. It is true, the children of God may be surprised, as good Josiah was when he went out to fight against Necho, king of Egypt: his breach with God was after he had prepared the temple (2Ch 35:20).

Self-dependence also occurs when the indulgence goes before the duty; it is all one, only it is more carnal, as when men give up themselves to a greater liberty in sinning, out of pretence that their repentance shall make amends for all—as those in primitive times who delayed their baptism, saying, "When I am baptized, I will leave off my vicious course of life"; or as men give up themselves to youthful follies upon a dream of a religious old age, a pretence of a devout retirement, supposing that thereafter they would sequester themselves from the world.

(3.) Finding worth in self

We discover self-dependence when men would have some worth in themselves before they come to God for mercy. He comes to God most worthy who comes most sensible of his unworthiness. Read the parable that Christ spoke against those who were "trusted in themselves that they were righteous" (Luk 18:9-14). The one would come to God with something of his own, the other would come as a beggar, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The one appeals to justice, the other to mercy.

The Pharisee's behaviour is contrary to the gospel, however disguised it seems; it seems to be humility, yet indeed it is but pride. When men will not look after the comforts of the gospel because they are not worthy, this is contrary to the essence of the gospel; for Christ is a saviour for sinners (1Ti 1:15). It is but a "humble pride" when men would have some worth in themselves before they would come to God.

(4.) Murmuring over "unheard" prayers

We discover self-dependence when men murmur if God does not hear their prayers and answer at their desired times and seasons. "Wherefore have we fasted, and thou regardest not?" (see Isa 58:3). When men will challenge God as if He were in debt to them, it is a sign their hearts secretly run upon their own righteousness. Murmuring is a fruit of [dependence upon one's own] merit. If God be not a debtor, why should we complain where nothing is due? Therefore, the complainers speak perversely against the providence of God. It is a sign they think they have deserved better. Those who prescribe what God should do, ascribe too much to themselves.

Proud hypocrites think God is indebted to them, that He is required to hear them, therefore they murmur if they have not what they expect. They entertain crosses with anger and blessings with disdain. When God loves them, they count slight of His mercy and say, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" (Mal 1:2).

The children of God wonder why the Lord should show them any mercy at all; they wonder that anything should be theirs but vengeance and punishment, since nothing is theirs but sin. "Who am I!" said David (2Sa 7:18)—why should God be so merciful and gracious to me? Nothing can be little to them, because they know their sins are so great. And if God should lay affliction upon them, they are humble and quiet, knowing it is but the fruit of their doings.[57]

(5.) Relying upon outward observances

We discover self-dependence when men walk in a track of duty and outward observances, and never look after the interest of their souls. This is a sign that they think they will be accepted for their works' sake. But it is God's method to accept of the person before the work. And all who are God's are driven to take hold of the covenant, driven out of themselves to run to the

hope that God has set before them, as it is said of the heirs of promise (Heb 6:17-20). There was never a man that belonged to God but one time or other he was driven to run to the covenant of grace;[58] therefore, when men never breathe out those desires to be found in Christ, it is a sign that their hearts secretly build upon their own righteousness.

(6.) Perceiving Christ as not precious

If the person of Christ is not exceeding precious to your souls, and always kept in the eye of your faith and in the arms of your love, you have not a due sense of your own state and actions, "A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved" (Song 1:13). The children of God always keep up an esteem for Christ in their hearts, and strive to keep in the fire of love to their dearest Lord. Paul groans fearfully under the relics of sin, but he also says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 7:24-25). Your hearts will be breaking out in thanksgiving if you have a due sense of the nothingness of your own works.

[1.4] Remedies to self-dependence

Now for the helps and remedies to take you off from depending upon your own righteousness.

(1.) The nature of God

Meditate much upon the nature of God. His children are ashamed to appear in His presence. Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). Oh, you have to do with a holy God, Who can endure no imperfection because of the holiness of His nature, and Who will not release His Law because of the severity of His justice. "In thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psa 143:2). Alas, we can scarce keep up a fair show before men! If a discerning man may soon look through the veil of our profession, then how shall we appear before the holy God? We need to have a better robe than our own if we would be comely in God's sight, for our righteousness is but as filthy rags (Isa 64:6).

(2.) Evil of sin

Excuse no sin, for that will lessen your esteem of Jesus Christ. Have true and proper thoughts of the least sin. See how God has been displeased with the lesser sins of His people: one passionate fit of anger kept Moses out of Canaan;[59] Adam was thrown out of Paradise for eating a piece of fruit (Gen 3); and the angels out of heaven for a thought of aspiring to God's greatness and majesty. Therefore, excuse no sin, and this will make Christ exceeding precious.

(3.) God's love and reward

Consider the greatness of God's love, and the infiniteness of the reward that He has provided for us. If we thought of this more often, we would be ashamed of our weak response and would run to the merit of Christ.

(4.) All from God

Remember that we have all from God. Whenever we have done anything for which the heart is apt to be tickled, remember how many considerations there are to humble you. If there is anything good in any holy service, it is from God: "Of thine own have we given thee" (1Ch 29:14). Shall we be proud because we have received more from God than others? A servant who trades with his master's money only does his duty and deserves nothing. All we do in holy things is upon the expense and cost of divine grace.

(5.) Evil in every service

Consider how much evil and weakness is in every service. Something that itself needs pardon certainly cannot merit glory. Though whatever we do in holy things is by divine grace, yet all that passes through our hands receives some soil and filth from our hearts, like pure

water that runs through a dirty channel.

(6.) All due to God

Whatever we can do for God, it is due to Him, so that the payment of new debts will not settle old ones.[60]

Thus we have first considered denial of dependence upon our own righteousness.

2. Deny Dependence upon Your Own Wisdom.

Secondly, I come to work you off from dependence upon your own wisdom, a matter necessarily to be considered in this argument. Christ had foretold His sufferings, but out of carnal wisdom Peter discourages Him from the cross and allowing Himself to be so used. Upon this occasion, Christ said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself" (Mat 16:24); that is, he must not, as Peter, follow his own carnal reason and understanding, as if such kind of counsel and advice were best. Thereupon, as a help to self-denial, our Lord lays down a conclusion that is quite contradictory to the judgment of carnal sense: "He that will save his life must lose it" (see Mat 16:25); implying that we must have other thoughts—we are not to be guided by the judgment of our own sense and reason, but by principles of faith. Therefore we have this warning, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Pro 3:5), where Solomon shows that dependence upon our own understanding and wisdom is wholly inconsistent with a trust in God. In the managing of this argument, I shall show,

1. How far we are to deny our own wisdom,
2. How hard and difficult a matter it is to bring men off from leaning upon their own understanding,
3. The signs whereby leaning on our own wisdom is discovered,
4. Reasons to take us off from such dependence, and
5. The directions that are proper in this case.

[2.1] How far we are to deny our own wisdom

It concerns us both in doctrine and practice.

(1.) In doctrine

To avoid controversial discourse, I shall lay down only two propositions: a) reason must not be heard when it is opposed to Scripture, and b) Scripture cannot be understood or applied without the Spirit.

(a.) Reason

Reason[61] must not be heard in opposition to Scripture, or be set up as the highest judge in matters of religion. Otherwise, we shall soon leave many of the chief principles and articles of faith, such as the incarnation of Christ, the resurrection of the body, the mystery of the Trinity, etc. Who, by his own wisdom, can see God veiled under the curtain of flesh as the Man Christ Jesus, the Root of the vine growing upon one of His own grapes? Who can see that life must be fetched out of death, or that one man must be healed by Another's stripes, or that we morsels of worms are parcels of the resurrection?

Therefore the first work of grace is to take captive the pride of our thoughts and our prejudices against religion, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2Co 10:5). There is an obedience of faith. Reason must be subjugated to faith, though not to presumption; and, if something be revealed, we must believe it, however absurd and

unlikely it seems to nature.

At first conversion, our prejudices must strike sail[62] to religion. When our Saviour speaks of first conversion, he says that whoever receives the kingdom of God must receive it as a little child (Mar 10:15; Luk 18:17). A little child believes as he is taught, and so must we, as we are taught by God and not by men. You are never fit for heaven nor the understanding of heavenly things until you have denied your own wisdom. That which is above reason cannot be comprehended by reason.

All lights must keep their place. There are three lights: sense, reason, and faith. Sense is the light of beasts, reason is the light of men, faith is the light of the church. All these must keep their place. To consult with nature in supernatural things is the same as if you should seek the judgment of reason among the beasts, determining human affairs by mere animal instinct. If carnal men only had liberty to let nature work and set down a divinity of their own, what a goodly religion should we have in the world; it would be a very comely monster! For practices, I am sure it would be large enough, because natural conscience hates fetters and restraints. And in doctrines, it would be absurd enough, because man can never draw a right picture of God.

We cannot empty the ocean with a cockleshell, so neither can we exhaust the divine perfections by the shallow discourse of our reason. The heathens who were most profound in the researches and inquiry of reason thought of hatching an excellent religion; but what was the issue? "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom 1:22). All they produced were fables and high strains of folly mixed with popular rites and customs.

There are many things necessary to religion, that the very angels themselves could not know if it had not been revealed to them, "That now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10). The way of salvation by Christ is such a mystery as that it could not have entered into the heart of any creature, no, not even of an angel. If an angel had been responsible to set down which way man should be saved—nay, if all the cherubim and seraphim, thrones, dominions, and powers had all met together in a synod and council—it would have baffled all the world and the united consultation of angels to have found out such a way. Therefore, in those things that are revealed, we must believe God upon His Word. We must believe above and without carnal reason.

(b.) The Spirit

The Scripture cannot be understood[63] nor applied without the Spirit. A blind man cannot see the sun, though it shine ever so clearly; just so, until inward light meets with outward, we cannot apprehend God's mind. We shall be "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2Ti 3:7). It is as the eunuch said to Philip, when Philip said to him, "Understandest thou what thou readest? And [the eunuch] said, How can I, except some man should guide me" (Act 8:30-31). Whenever you go to the Word of God, you must not be your own interpreter; it must be interpreted by the same Spirit by which it was inspired.

It is very notable, when Christ Himself was the preacher (and certainly none can interpret as Christ could), He expounded the Scriptures. But it is said, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scripture" (Luk 24:45). Christ, as an external minister, first opened the Scriptures, and then, as the Author of grace, He opened their understandings, without which they would be veiled in darkness.

Mere flesh and blood are apt to stumble in God's plainest ways. When we rest in the strength of our own reason, we soon make a contrary and indiscreet use of truth, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein" (Hos 14:9). The ways of the Lord become an occasion of ruin to the wicked; they shall undo themselves by their

own limited understanding. Carnal reason turns all to a carnal purpose, just as the sea turns the dews of heaven and the rivers into salt water.

But the ways of the Lord are plain to them who are enlightened by a heavenly light. As the sun draws out a stench from carrion and a sweet savour from flowers, or as the pillar of the cloud was "light to the Israelites" and "darkness to the Egyptians"; so are the ways of God "the savour of life unto life" to them that believe, but unto the others the "savour of death unto death" (2Co 2:14-16).

Natural men may have literal knowledge, but they turn it to quite another purpose. This is easy to demonstrate in many principles. "The time is short," says the apostle. What is the use he makes? To be more strict: "Let they that have wives be as though they had none" (see 1Co 7:29). There is his inference. Now compare it with 1 Corinthians 15:37; the glutton draws another inference. "The time is short; what then? Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die." The apostle presses strictness, and the natural man presses jollity. The simplest truth in practical divinity is a mystery; it must be divinely understood.

(2.) In practice

As self-denial holds in doctrine, so also in practice; there also we are to cease from our own understanding.

(a.) What to avoid

[1st] Human wisdom

We must not take counsel from human and fleshly wisdom. Folly is bound up in the heart of a man, and it is the more dangerous because it goes under the disguise of wisdom, so that we think none are wise but those who are fleshly wise. Now the apostle says the wisdom of the flesh is enmity[64] to God (Rom 8:7). An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. A vicious man may become virtuous, but vice cannot become virtue.

Observe what a contradiction there is between the wisdom of the flesh and the wisdom of the Spirit. The Spirit says that the way to be exalted is to abase ourselves (Luk 14:11); the way to become first is to be last; the way to be strong is to be weak; the way to live is to die; the way to be wise is to be a fool. He that would be wise must be a fool, that he may be wise (1Co 3:18); that is, to renounce his own wisdom that he may be taught of God.

It is a high point of wisdom to be one of the world's fools, to take such a course in which the world counts us as fools. To save life we must lose it, so consequently of estate and other accessories of life. That which the flesh would call saving, the Spirit calls losing; that which the flesh would call wisdom, the Spirit calls folly. So also in the opposite direction, the flesh is against the Spirit: that which the Spirit calls holiness, the flesh calls foolishness—that it is cowardice and disgrace to love enemies and to put up with wrongs; to pardon injuries is weakness; and that charity is a foolish scattering of resources. As astronomers miscall the glorious stars by the names of lions and bears, and "the dragon's tail," so carnal reason miscalls the graces of God's Spirit.

There is not a course more foolish in the eye of natural reason than to renounce present delights and advantages: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1Co 2:14). These things are folly to him; and our heart will be apt to say, when any begin to be strict, "You have become as a fool now." Fervent zeal seems fretful and stubborn, and strictness as overly careful and precise. To be severe and strict in religion, to be active, to suffer, to quit visible conveniences for invisible rewards, to renounce interests, to mortify carnal affections—all this is folly in the judgment of sense.

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isa 5:20). It is a strange perverseness

to confound the names and nature of things. We would count him a madman that would call night day, and day night; yet just so is our reason distorted and depraved.

Now, what is the reason of all? It is given in the next verse: "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isa 5:21). When men lean upon their own wisdom, they can expect to make no better judgment. Carnal reason is not only blind, but mad!

Therefore, see who you make your counsellors. We shall never be good subjects to God as long as we give fleshly wisdom the hearing. Abraham, when he offered Isaac, did not tell Sarah, lest she should discourage him. So in all cases of religion: consult not with flesh and blood.[65] Every sin has a thousand shifts[66] and fig-leaves. There is no sinner but he is like Solomon's sluggard, who is "wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason" (Pro 26:16). I confess that, in a doubtful case, a man is to deliberate; but in the wisdom of the flesh, self-interest has the deciding voice rather than conscience and religion. Therefore, take heed of making your bosom your oracle, and of neglecting constant application to God for wisdom and direction in all cases, especially as to religion.

[2nd] Private light

We must not rest in our own private and sanctified light, however good it may be. It must not puff us up and take off our dependence from God, though we have knowledge, wisdom, and learning. It is a high contempt of God when you make your bosom your oracle,[67] because you take His work out of His hands. Christ is the great counselor (Isa 9:6), and we are to go to Him for advice. It is God's exclusive right that He will not part with: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Pro 3:6).

This keeps us in the fire of religion, and maintains communication between us and heaven. All nations that have been touched with the sense of a deity have granted a necessity of consulting with a divine power. The very pagans had their oracles that they consulted with. And certainly the people of God dare not resolve upon any design until they have first asked counsel of God. God is very jealous of the creature's trust, for trust is the acknowledgment of His sovereignty and sets the crown upon His head. "The bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow" (Jdg 9:15), where trust is made an acknowledgment of sovereignty.

(b.) What to do

Therefore if we would acknowledge God, we must make Him our counselor and source of wisdom, and that in three cases.

[1st] In the general choice of your life

You must make God your counselor in the general choice of your life, both for opinion and practice. David had made God his portion, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons" (Psa 16:6-7)…

"What man is he that feareth the Lord him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose" (Psa 25:12). They that think to be religious upon their own choice and intelligence prove stark fools, and are justly hardened by their own prejudices. It was the corrupt doctrine of the heathens; Seneca says, "That we live, we owe to the gods; that we live well, we owe it to ourselves." So Tully,[68] "This is the judgment of all men, that prosperity is to be sought of God, but wisdom is to be taken from ourselves." This is to rob God and enrich man; that is the highest sacrilege,[69] to rob God of His glory. God must not only give you heaven, but He must give you counsel. You may resolve and purpose, and yet still you shall be set back until God gives you direction. As a picture must be seen in its proper light, so the ways of God are never lovely until they are discerned by His own beam and light.

[2nd] In the management of the spiritual life

In the management of the whole spiritual life, still we need counsel and direction. Our own wisdom is an empty lamp; we shall soon stumble if we have not new counsel and direction from God. Mark the apostle's speech, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2Th 3:5). We know not how to exercise love, nor how to fix our patience, nor how to dispense the exercise of every grace in an orderly manner, without counsel from God. When a ship is rigged, yet it needs a captain; so when the soul is furnished with grace, still we need direction how to exercise grace. Otherwise religion will degenerate into a fondness and superstition;[70] and patience will be turned into timidity, zeal into an indiscreet heat, and faithfulness into abnormal stiffness. There are many precise and critical cases in religion that we shall not understand without the continual direction of the Spirit.

Let me give an example:

> Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all. (Ecc 7:16-18)

How else shall we know how to take the middle way, so that we may neither risk violating conscience nor endanger ourselves by a sullen and rigid strictness? God will direct us how to temper zeal with prudence, for he who fears God shall come out of them all (see Deu 5:29). Through false appearances and the weakness of grace we are apt to fail, but "fear God"—that is, acknowledge Him—and He will decide the case.

[3rd] In all your particular actions

In all your particular actions and affairs, self-wit is very confident and presumptuous. We speak as if all were in our own hands: "I will carry on this business, and thus and thus order my affairs." But alas, where we seem most wise we are most foolish! Pharaoh was never such a fool in his life as when he said, "Let us go wisely to work" (Exo 1:10). God loves to confute men in their vain confidences. When they lean to their own understanding, they seldom prove successful, for then they entrench upon God's exclusive right. God will have the creature know that all their actions are in His power, and their success depends upon His blessing.

This is the bridle God has on the world: the disposal of their affairs. "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" (Pro 20:24). We cannot see the event[71] of things in the course of our lives, what is expedient[72] and what is not; therefore we must ask counsel of God. Man would like to work out his own happiness, and like a spider climb up by a thread of his own weaving; but it is gone with a breath. The hope of the hypocrite is like a spider's web. Men who will be their own carvers[73] seldom carve out a good portion to themselves. God will have us daily acknowledge the dominion of His providence and live in a continual dependence upon Him, so that there may be a constant respect between us and Him. "Lord, teach me," says David, "on thee do I wait all the day"; "Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths" (Psa 25:4-5). David would not give over his dependence; no, not for a moment.

Thus I have shown how far we should not lean upon our own understanding.

[2.2] Difficulty in ending dependence upon own wisdom

I shall show you how hard a matter it is to draw men off from dependence upon their own wisdom.

It is natural to us all, but especially it is incident to young Christians, who are hugely given to unwarranted, absolute beliefs, because their notions, being hasty and rash, are accompanied with more confidence, though with less reason. They are irritable and stubborn in their sense, and none are so conceited of what they hold as they.

It is incident also to men of great ability. Simple men that are not able to raise doubts and objections are more believing: "The simple believeth every word" (Pro 14:15). But these who have such a high claim to the exercise of reason, are prone to scoff at matters of faith, to lose the reverence and respects of religion. At the least, they are not so soon won to the simplicity of the gospel.

But I say, self-dependence upon our own wisdom is naturally incident to us all, and truly cured with difficulty, for several reasons.

(1.) Close by

Self-dependence upon our own wisdom is difficult to cure, partly because the evil is so close and spiritual. Christians do not easily fall to open idolatry, to worship a stock and a stone, but they easily idolize their own understanding. Therefore, their respects to God either are intercepted or are rendered only coldly. We are not so sensible of the defects and weakness in the understanding as we are of disorders in the will. Disorders of the will are always accompanied with some combat and strife, by which they are exposed to the view and notice of conscience; but the disorders of the understanding are more silent. Also, when we are convinced of them, they seem more pardonable, because they do not work such disturbance as other sins do. It is a secret and sly evil.

(2.) Carnal desires

Self-dependence upon our own wisdom is difficult to cure, partly because a natural intellect befriends carnal desires. There is an alliance and a conspiracy between the understanding and the carnal desires. "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Heb 4:12). The Word can dissolve this cursed conspiracy between a carnal understanding and a carnal heart. It is an easy matter to deceive him that will be deceived. We love our understanding, for there bad counsel has more credit than the best and most sacred suggestions of the Holy Ghost. Our mind is forestalled by affection, so that we are willingly directed by the dictates of our own hearts, and it is troublesome to us so much as to suspect them.

(3.) Pride

Self-dependence upon our own wisdom is difficult to cure, partly because of pride. Natural wisdom is very confident. It is no easy thing for a man to pluck the eyes out of his own head, and to give his hand to another to lead him which way he pleases (Mat 5:29-30). Man is loath to have the leading part of his soul to be debased. By our understandings we are distinguished from the beasts, and therefore we cannot endure to cease from resting in our own understanding and abilities.

The fact that man is extremely proud of his understanding appears by two sensible experiences or observations.

(a.) Wicked rather than weak

We rather would be accounted wicked than weak. We may sooner own wickedness in morals than weakness in the intellect. In wickedness there seems to be somewhat of bravery and choice. Yet we seek after a reputation for having wisdom: "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12). Though man be foolish and gross of conceit, yet he would happily be accounted wise. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5); ever since the Fall, we seek after knowledge. The Pharisees were mighty angry with our Saviour when He charged them with blindness: "Are we blind also?" (Joh 9:40). "Will you say we are ignorant, we who are the great rabbis and doctors of the people?"

(b.) Vices rather than errors

Another observation is that errors are more touchy than vices. Men may with greater patience bear with attacks against sin than convictions of error. This may arise partly because erroneous

persons usually take up their errors because they are interested in[74] them, and men cannot endure the voice of a hated truth. But chiefly, and the most universal reason, is our natural pride. Men are conceited of the sufficiency of their understanding, and so become impatient when they are convinced of their mistakes.

[2.3] The signs whereby leaning to our own understanding is discovered

(1.) A conceit of knowledge

When men are puffed up with a conceit of their knowledge, it is a sign they lean upon it. Why? Because esteem and admiration are inseparable evidences of trust. Therefore, the Scripture that dissuades us from leaning upon our own understanding, dissuades us also from conceit, or being wise in our own eyes: "Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom 12:16); "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil" (Pro 3:7). These two go together: self-conceit and self-dependence: "Knowledge puffeth up," and, "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1Co 8:1-2). Our ignorance is never cured until we come to heaven. It is good progress in grace to be sensible of it.

When men think they are above ordinances, they know as much as men can teach them about real truth, yet they know nothing. It is a sign they have never waded into the depth of the Scripture. Menedemus[75] was prone to say of them that went to Athens to study: the first year, he thought they were wise men; the second year, philosophers; the third year, orators that could talk of wisdom; the next year, that they were only as common people, that they understood nothing but their own ignorance! Usually it is this way in growth in scriptural knowledge. Young Christians are very opinionated, but when they look into the breadth of the commandment, then they see their own ignorance, that "they know nothing."

This is the reason why the children of God have such a low opinion of their understandings. A man would wonder at their expressions: "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy" (Pro 30:2-3). The more he saw, the more he was acquainted with his ignorance; so that he dared not attribute any wisdom to himself. None are so sensible of their ignorance as those who abound in knowledge. Look, when the sun appears, the light of the candle seems nothing; so when God comes and enlightens my mind, oh, what a brutish creature was I! But self-admiring indicates great confidence.

(2.) Not asking counsel from God

It is a sign of leaning upon their own understanding, when men dare undertake anything without asking counsel from God. "In all thy ways acknowledge him" (Pro 3:6). We are not to lessen our dependence upon God; no, not for a moment. Whenever you go forth in the strength of human counsel and reason, you say, as it were, "In this business I can do well enough without God." It is a great contempt to put upon God because we do not seek Him earnestly in the things of the family, church, or commonwealth. Not only in doubtful and difficult cases, which are wholly above our strength and intellect to decide, but in all our ways, God must be sought and acknowledged. The prophet Jeremiah speaks as one that was sensible of his dependence, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer 10:23). There should be such an actual sense and feeling upon the soul in all men. So David said, "Show me thy ways, O Lord…on thee do I wait all the day" (Psa 25:4-5). A Christian dares not to go into the study, shop, assembly, or council, without God. When one came to ask an English merchant his advice in business, he answered, "Friend, you and I have not prayed yet."

(3.) Not blessing God for making Christ your wisdom

If you were never moved to bless God for making Christ to be your wisdom, it may be a sign

of leaning upon your own understanding. You know what the apostle says: He is made to us of God "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30). I observe that many bless God because Christ was made redemption and sanctification, for natural conscience is sensible of the sad consequences of sin. But usually we lean upon our own understanding; we do not bless Christ for being made wisdom to us. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (Joh 14:6). Many may bless Him for life, for the hopes of glory; but have you blessed Him because He has been a prophet to teach you?

This is always the first work of grace, to convince us of our brutishness and folly—as Paul when he was converted and made blind—that we may prize Christ the more; that we may say to Christ, as Moses to Hobab, his father-in-law, "Leave us not, I pray thee,…and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes" (Num 10:31); that we may run to Christ for eye-salve.

> 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: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. (Rev 3:17-18)

When men are never convinced of their natural blindness, they do not prize Christ in all His offices. It is no small matter that He is a prophet to guide you to the truth, as well as to the way and the life.

(4.) Summoning God before the tribunal of own reason

When men summon God before the tribunal of their own reason, this is a sign that the Word and counsel of God were never exalted in their judgments. In matters of faith, worship, and obedience, we are to fetch our light from the Scripture; but we would set up a higher tribunal, and fetch all from our reason, and give laws to heaven! Men usually will dispute against the righteousness of God's decrees, the simplicity of His ordinances, the mysteries of faith; but, "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom 9:20). It is an ill sign when men are apt to pick quarrels with religion, to argue and snarl at God's ways, to dispute away duties rather than practise them.

All the ways of God seem unjust and incredible to the carnal reason of men. They cannot believe how Christ should be God and man in one person; how it should be just that by one man's transgression all should be made sinners; and why God should elect some for salvation and leave others in their corruption. Ah, foolish man! Who art thou that disputest against God? They cannot believe the same body shall rise again: suppose it be thrown into the sea, eaten up by fishes, those fishes devoured by men, and those men torn with wild beasts—they cannot see how it is possible that God should restore to each body its own substance. "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Mat 22:29). The power of God shows that it may be so; the Scripture shows that it is so. There is the rule and ground of truth.

So men will dispute against the simplicity of the ordinances, [as Naaman said when commanded to bathe in the Jordan River to heal his leprosy]: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" (2Ki 5:11-12). They cannot see but that reading at home may be as effective as the public ministry. They cannot see why men should pray, since God's decrees are past and His decrees are unalterable. They think that, if He will, He may give mercy and salvation without their prayers; and if He will not, He cannot be won to it by their continual praying. But, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"

(5.) Despising the advice of other Christians

It is a sign of leaning upon their own understanding when men despise the advice and help of other Christians. The Lord will have us to profit by one another. He withdraws Himself many

times to this end and purpose, that we may be endeared one to another as well as engaged to Himself. Certainly the head cannot say, "I have no need of the foot" (see 1Co 12:21). As God would establish a dependence between Himself and us, so He would establish a dependence between Christians among themselves. Therefore, grace comes from God, but we receive it in part through the means of the body, "And not holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col 2:19). The admonitions of the weakest Christian may be of great use to stimulate zeal, if not to better our knowledge—as a wisp of straw may start a great block of wood on fire.

Now, when a man thinks that his own intelligence is sufficient, and that he need not be taught of any, it is an evil sign. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him" (Pro 26:12). A fool will receive counsel more easily than someone who is given to self-conceit. You cannot put wine, or any other liquor, into an inflated bladder[76] until the air is removed, so here, such puffed bladders are in a sad condition, can receive nothing, and can make no progress in grace!

[2.4] Warnings and directions

In the next place I must join warnings and directions together.

(1.) Utter impotency of nature

If you would cease from your own understanding, be sensible of the utter impotency of nature. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1Co 2:14)…The mind of man is not a blank sheet of paper to be filled in, but it is prepossessed with carnal principles, atheism, unbelief, profaneness, and free thinking. As the upset stomach that casts up all the food it receives as soon as it is swallowed, so we reject all holy doctrine. Though we may like moral generalities, yet when we are pressed to practise them, carnal reason will show itself. We are apt to think ourselves angels, yet we are but beasts: "I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts" (Ecc 3:18). Nay, even after regeneration we still have great cause to suspect ourselves.

There are two voices, flesh and spirit. The wisdom that we have is often enthralled by and made a prisoner to sinful passions and affections. Therefore, when we go about any business, especially when we come to the Word, we should never do it without lifting up our souls to God for the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

> That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. (Eph 1:17-18)

(2.) Resulting mischief

If you would cease from your own understanding, consider the mischief resulting from self-conceit, or dependence upon your own wisdom.

Most men in the world are ruined by self-conceit; of Babylon it is said, "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee" (Isa 47:10). Who would choose him for a captain that drowns every vessel he governs? Trusting in our own wisdom is as inconsistent with salvation as trusting in wealth. It is true that the object is more excellent, but therefore the temptation is the more dangerous: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mat 19:24). Consider what a great folly it is. The common proverb says, "He that is wise in his own eyes is twice a fool: by having but a little knowledge, and by his great conceit of it."

Self-conceit is also the ground of all the creature's failures. Where does apostasy from

religion come from? From idolizing our own intellect. Christ once spoke of eating His flesh, which His disciples understood not. “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:66), because they could not understand the saying by their reason. This is the usual rise of heresy, because then a man is ripe to breed monstrous opinions in the church. When a man will have the mysteries of faith demonstrated by the law of reason he is like a sick man who will not swallow his pills, but chews them: when he tastes the bitterness, he presently brings them up, and so loses a wholesome remedy.

Self-conceit is also the ground of all corruption in life. The lust of covetousness is rooted upon self-conceit. When Solomon dissuades from covetousness, “Labour not to be rich,” he adds, “Cease from thine own wisdom” (Pro 23:4). See how these two precepts are coupled, as if the Spirit of God should say: if you hearken to carnal wisdom, which gives you hope of honour, great pleasure, and flourishing in your family, you may lack nothing material; but be not wise in your own eyes. Such lack of self-conceit will be a means to keep you from labouring to be rich, which is just a prostitution of your precious time, care, and strength, because it only serves to advance your secular, not your spiritual, interests.

3. Deny Dependence upon Your Own Spiritual Strength.

I come now to speak of dependence upon your spiritual strength and grace received. “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal 2:20), there is a denial of all his own strength with respect to the spiritual life. The work of the inferior is denied, that the supreme may have all the glory: “not I, but Jesus Christ.” I shall show you,

1. The necessity of this part of self-denial, and
2. What signs indicate that we are depending upon our own strength.

[3.1] The necessity of this part of self-denial

For the consequence and weight of denying dependence upon our own spiritual strength, I shall show you in several considerations that certainly this is a necessary part of self-denial.

(1.) Relationship between God and man

Denying dependence upon our own spiritual strength is a necessary part of self-denial, because dependence upon God’s strength maintains the relationship between God and man. It is the ground of the creature’s respect to God. A proud man is loath to be in debt to another, to come out of himself, and to fetch all from another; we had rather keep the main part ourselves. When the prodigal had his portion in his own hands, away he goes from his father (Luk 15). We would be strangers to the throne of grace were it not that there were a continual dependence upon God for the supply of grace.

Those two great duties of prayer and praise are built upon dependence, so that in effect the whole spiritual life is but a profession of our dependence upon God.

(a.) Prayer

If we did not depend upon God for daily receiving, the Lord would seldom hear from us! Note the prayers in the apostle’s writings for a supply of grace:

> Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. (2Th 1:11)
>
> I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ…that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. (Eph 3:14-17)

This was the reason why Paul prayed for others, and why the saints pray for themselves: that they may have new strength from God in the inward man. Notice also,

> Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight. (Heb 13:20-21)

This is the great cause of Christ's intercession, to maintain the life that we have received. God obliges us to continual visits and communication with Himself by keeping grace in His own hands.

(b.) Praise

Self loves to divide the glory with free grace; and truly, if we be not sensible of our dependence upon God, we shall never think of setting the crown upon grace's head. The saints who are kept humble are also kept thankful; they see that they can do nothing themselves, and therefore they come and give God the glory. "Thy pound," said the faithful servant, "hath gained ten pounds" (Luk 19:16); as if he had said, "It was not my industry, but your pound." This makes the children of God to come with ingenuous acknowledgments: "Not I," said Paul, "but Christ that liveth in me," as if he were to say, "I do little in the spiritual life; it is Christ that does all. I live, there is some concurrence; but mine is nothing to what Christ does." So also, "I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1Co 15:10). They take off the crown from the head of self and lay it at the feet of Christ, as Joab sent for David when he had conquered Rabbah, so that David could take the honour of the victory (2Sa 12:27-28). So when Christians have done anything through grace, they send for God to take the honour. They know where their supplies come from, and that makes them thankful.

(2.) Resting in ourselves

It is a very great sin to rest in ourselves. It crosses the very object of the covenant and robs Christ of His free grace. In all God's acts toward the creature, His aim is to magnify His own grace. The great end of our being Christians is to be to the "praise of his glorious grace" (Eph 1:3-12). When we come to heaven, a great question is: what shall we most admire, grace or glory? Certainly when our affections are lifted to the pitch of the glorified estate, we shall value glory for grace's sake; for this is God's great purpose, that His grace may have the glory. Therefore, it is a necessary part of a Christian's work to keep his heart still sensible of His dependence upon grace. This is why self-sufficiency after receiving God's grace is such a great sin. The more we rest in self, the more we rob grace.

Carnal men are hardly sensible of foul and gross sins; but a Christian is sensible of spiritual evils, and mainly of these. When we humble ourselves for lack of life and quickening, there may be something of hypocrisy in it, because quickening serves pride in our abilities; we all desire gifts that bring the approval of men. Now it is a sign of grace to be humbled for depending upon our own strength and endeavours, because we would not rob Christ of His chief honour and glory.

(3.) Severely punished

Denying dependence upon our own spiritual strength is a necessary part of self-denial because it is a sin not only foul in its nature, but severely punished by God.

The saints have never so foully sinned as by their self-confidence. Who would have thought that Lot, who was pure and chaste in Sodom, should have committed incest in the mountain when there was none but he and his own daughters (Gen 19:30-36)? Though he avoided the filthiness of Sodom, where there was a multitude to draw him to evil, yet he fell foully when there was none but his own family. In the dreadful falls of God's children, we see that nature is but a sorry support for righteousness.

No man knows how far his heart will carry him until it is tested. Who would have thought that Peter's high resolution would end in curses, blasphemy, and denial of Christ (Mat 26:69-75)? The man of God who spoke against the altar of Bethel could deny the king's request, but could not deny the old prophet to turn back and eat (1Ki 13:7-26); when grace had left him, then he fell. The prophet said of Ephraim that he was "a cake not turned" (Hos 7:8), baked but on one side. For a great while we may stand fast, but when once we grow secure, we may sadly fall. Hezekiah knew how to be sick, but not how to be well (2Ki 20:1-18). The Spirit of God will not flatter us in our vain confidences; when we proudly trust in ourselves, the Lord will deny His assisting grace in order to punish pride, and so we soon feel the disappointment of a trust misplaced. When God renewed us by grace, He reserved a dominion over particular acts of grace. Grace is but a gift from God; if we rest in it, we may make grace an idol. It is not an independent thing, but depends on God for its existence, maintenance, and operation. There is a constant concurrence[77] necessary to strengthen the habit as well as to produce the act, without which habits are dead and useless.

[3.2] The signs of depending on your own spiritual strength

I now come to give you the signs of denying dependence upon your spiritual strengths.

(1.) Frame of heart

If you would know whether you are denying self in your spiritual strengths, observe the frame of the heart both before and after spiritual duties.

(a.) Before duty, and every address to God whenever we come to worship, we should have actual thoughts of our own weakness. When we come to pray, we should say, "Lord, we know not how to pray, how to act faith, nor how to draw forth grace." We should still be "poor in spirit," which is a grace of constant use. But now, when men are full of strengths and gifts, and think to go forth and shake themselves as at other times, as it is said of Samson when his strength was gone (Jdg 16:20); when we think to find the same clever and smart expression, God will make us see how much we are mistaken. Therefore, when we have not actual thoughts of our own weakness when we come to perform any holy exercise, it is a sign we are too full of our own gifts and abilities.

(b.) After the duty, are you moved to bless God for the supplies of His grace, especially if the use of your gifts has resulted in praise from men? Are you able to say with David, "Lord, of thine own have we given thee" (1Ch 29:14). Can you cast the crown at the feet of Christ; can you take all your excellence and lay it down at Christ's feet? If it be not so with us, it is a sign we depend too much on our own spiritual strength.

(2.) Presumption of future success

Another note of the lack of denying dependence upon our own spiritual strength is a confident presumption of the success of future actions and undertakings, without taking God along with us in our resolution. Thus Peter was a sad instance of leaning upon himself, "Though all men should deny thee, yet I will not deny thee" (see Mat 26:33-75). The confidence of the children of God is built upon the expectation of grace; and if God will undertake for them, then they can be confident of the success of their endeavours; "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psa 119:32). Look to the foundation, whether it is built upon your own resolution, or the expectation of God's grace.

(3.) Venturing upon sin

When men dare venture upon occasions of sinning and temptations, certainly this is a great confidence, and it cannot proceed from divine grace, for when God keeps us, He will keep us in His ways, not when we tempt His providence. Therefore, when men can delight in carnal company and put themselves upon such a snare, it is a sign they are not depending upon God.

For what is the fruit of depending upon God? Avoiding all occasions of evil. Therefore, when men deal lightly with temptation, it is a sign they place confidence in their own strength.

(4.) Despising of ordinances[78]

The ordinances are the pipes by which God conveys His influences to us, and by which the habits of grace are strengthened, through the power that goes out in them. There must be dependence upon God in the use of means if we would maintain grace: take heed what you hear, for to him that hath shall be given (Luk 8:18). Attend upon ordinances. Why? Otherwise you will lose the abundance of gifts that you glory in. Many despise hearing when they have received but a little knowledge.

(5.) Insulting the weaker

It is a sign of dependence upon ourselves when we contemptuously insult others who are weaker than ourselves. For if we did acknowledge all to be from grace, how could we be proud? Who would dare to be proud of that which is but borrowed? Who could be proud because he is most in debt? If we have more gifts than they, we are more obliged to God, and this keeps the hearts of God's people humbled. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1Co 4:7). Your merit is no more than theirs, and in yourself you are as incapable of spiritual blessings as they are, and in holy duties you can do no more than they can. For what do you add to duty? Nothing but what will lessen the value of it! They can add corruptions and weakness of their own, and so can you. The Pharisee who condemned the publican speaks of grace in pretence: "God be thanked, I am not as other men" (see Luk 18:9-14); Christ spoke that parable to certain that "despised others." When men are proud and confident of their own abilities, and despise others, there is a depending upon themselves; they have much cause to be thankful, but none to be proud.

4. Deny Dependence upon the Supplies of the Outward Life.

I come to speak of the fourth head, dependence upon the supplies of the outward life. We will show

1. There is such a sin,

2. How evil and heinous it is, that it is capable of the highest aggravations,

3. What are the notes and evidences by which this secret vein of guilt may be traced and discovered in the soul, and

4. The proper cure and remedy.

[4.1] The existence of such a sin

That there is such a sin as dependence upon outward supply appears both by the testimony of Scripture and by experience.

(1.) By the testimony of Scripture

That there is such a sin appears by the testimony of Scripture, which is the best judge of the heart. "And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mar 10:23). Now because this seemed harsh to the disciples, who had been taught proudly to expect a pompous Messiah, therefore it is said, "The disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" (10:24).

Christ relieves the wonder: it is not simply impossible for a rich person to be saved. Poor Lazarus, for example, sleeps in the bosom of rich Abraham (Luk 16:23); there may be godly rich

as well as godly poor; but it is impossible for them that "trust in riches." Our Lord shows how irreconcilable this is with the hope of salvation, as impossible as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle (Luk 18:25). This shows that there is such a sin, a sin that we may easily commit when we have so much in the world. And because men think light of spiritual sins that do not end in gross and foul acts, He shows how irreconcilable "trusting in riches" is with all hopes of salvation.

So it was with Job when he protested his own innocence, "If I have made my gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much" (Job 31:24-25). Job, to vindicate himself from hypocrisy, recounted the usual sins of hypocrites, and among the rest this is one: to make gold our hope and confidence. He had before named oppression, and now carnal confidence. It is not enough that our wealth be not gotten by fraud and extortion, but we must also not trust in it nor make it our confidence. The rich man is charged not that he had gotten his goods wickedly, but that he had trusted in them: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luk 12:19).

Men think riches to be the staff of their lives and the chief support of their posterity; therefore it is said, "The rich man's wealth is his strong city," just as elsewhere it is said, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Pro 18:10-11). A godly man thinks himself never safe until he is within the boundary of the covenant, until he is within the fortification of the rocks that God has provided for the safety of his soul. But the rich man, until he is walled and entrenched within his wealth, never thinks he is safe and secured against all the changes and chances of this present life; and so God is laid aside, and his wealth is his "strong city"—not "the name of the Lord"!

Therefore, covetousness is called idolatry, and a covetous person an idolater (Eph 5:5; Col 3:5). It is not so much because of his love of money, as because of his trust in money. The glutton loves his gullet and the gratifications of his appetite; he makes his "belly his god" (Phi 3:19). But he does not trust in his belly-cheer, and does not think to be protected by it, as the covetous person does by his estate, and so becomes an idolater, making the "creature his god." The covetous man is an idolater because he robs God of the chief respect that men can show to Him, which is confidence and trust. He thinks he is the better and safer because of the abundance of his goods.

(2.) By experience

I shall prove first that dependence upon outward supply is found in all men, and then, that they are ensnared who are least sensible of it.

(a.) Found in all men

Every man is naturally an idolater; he makes the creature his god. Few or none are free from this idolatry; we all stick to the creature too much. The rich, the poor, all sorts of men, may be comprised under this censure.

The poor cannot be exempted, for those that have not wealth idolise it too much in imagination and conceit. They imagine what a happy thing it is to be in such a case. Oh, had they wealth, this were enough to make them happy! And because they have not, therefore they trust in those that have it, which is idolatry upon idolatry!

Therefore it is said, "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie" (Psa 62:9); it is a lie, because they disappoint those that trust in them, to the wrong of God. To appearance, men of low degree can do little or nothing, but men of high degree are a lie. It supposes a promise and a breach of promise. Men of high degree tempt us to trust in them, and then they will surely prove a lie. The errors of the poor are by a servile dependence on such as have not power to hurt or help them, if God will not. They are apt to say, "I shall lose such a

friend, hazard his frowns and displeasure"; all their hopes are built upon his favour, so they come to displease God.

But chiefly this sin occurs in the rich: "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Psa 62:10). Usually, as our estate grows, so does our confidence; the distemper is bred up in us by degrees. Great men's minds are secretly and unawares enchanted with their estates, and delight in the fruition of them, and from that point forward they begin to date their happiness,[79] and so grow secure, and neglectful of God and holy things. Many that are in need despise wealth, and live in dependence upon the providence of God; but as soon as they begin to have some possessions, their hearts begin to value their estates, as if they could live alone and without God. And then they are altogether intent about increasing their store, or keeping and retaining that which they have gotten. Antigonus' soldier,[80] when he had a grievous disease, yet fought bravely; but when cured, he became as timid as others, because then he began to prize his body. Just so, when we are poor, our hearts may be kept from materialism, but when riches increase, we begin to think that our "mountain stands strong" (Psa 30:7), and that now we are secure against all the strokes and changes of providence.

(b.) Found in those least sensible of it

Dependence upon outward things is a secret sin that is found in those that are least sensible of it. We are blinded with foolish and gross conceits, and are apt to think that a man does not make money his idol unless he prays and offers sacrifice to it, nor adores his gold unless he performs outward ceremonies, as the heathens did their idols of gold and silver.

However, the sin is to be determined not by formal rites of worship, but by the working of the heart toward it, as Gregory said. Many who call themselves Christians are idolaters in affection, though not by external rites of worship, yet in the inward workings of their heart. We smile at the vanity of the heathens that worshipped stocks and stones, and onions and garlic. And yet we do worse, though more spiritually we worship[81] the creature, and set it up instead of God. Though we do not actually say to gold, "Thou art my confidence," or use such gross language to riches as, "You shall deliver me," or, "I will put my trust in you"; yet our hearts do secretly say so when we make it our main care to gain wealth.

Therefore it is not enough that you do not break out into such actual thoughts. Remember, there are implicit as well as explicit thoughts. These implicit thoughts interpret our actions when we do not make God our portion but trust in the abundance of our wealth; our hearts say, "You, riches, are my confidence," and we do not perceive it. Many speak against the vanity of outward things, and yet their hearts secretly trust in them. There is a difference between speaking as an orator and acting as a Christian. Many may make it their common theme and common place; they grant the creature is vain and wealth but an unstable possession, because they are in judgment convinced of the vanity of them. Men will say, "We know well enough that money is but refined earth, and we esteem it as basely as others do"; but their hearts work towards it, and they are loath to part with it. Their "inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever" (Psa 49:11). This may not be the fruit of habitual meditation or mature deliberation. Still, money has their heart and trust, and they think they cannot be happy without it. He that gives God good words is not said to trust in Him; so he that gives the world bad words, that can speak against it with contempt, may yet trust in the world all the while.

[4.2] How great an evil

I will endeavour to show you the evil of the sin of dependence upon the outward supplies of life, and how great it is.

(1.) Making money your confidence

Job says it is a denying of God to make gold his confidence (Job 31:24-28).

(a.) A form of adultery

Depending upon the outward supplies of life is a form of adultery: you take away God's honour and wholly lay Him aside. Do not flatter yourselves, a man cannot trust in God and in riches too. "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy" (Jon 2:8); you renounce God by trusting in wealth. The same altar will never serve God and Dagon (1Sa 5:1-4); the Philistines could not bring it to pass, do what they could; nor will the same heart serve God and the world.

Now consider what dishonour this is to leave God for created things. It is as if a woman should leave her husband and dote[82] upon her slave; or as if a fool should throw away his treasure and fill his chest with coals, or take away his precious garments and fill his wardrobe with dung!

(b.) A form of idolatry

Depending upon the outward supplies of life is idolatry, the setting up of another God. We first commit adultery by diverting our love and esteem from the true God, and then we commit idolatry by fixing our hope and expectation in the creature. Trust is only due to God. Now by trusting in worldly riches you dethrone God and put money in His place; therefore it is said, "covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5). There is also a parallel expression: "Nor covetous man, who is an idolater" (Eph 5:5). Mammon is the idol and the worldling[83] the priest. The inward worship is esteem and trust, and the outward care and endeavour is to wallow in wealth. All their care is about their present accommodations, whereas a man's main care should be for heaven and grace, and for all other things he should refer himself to God's allowance.[84]

(2.) Ground of all failure in practice

Depending upon the outward supplies of life must be a very great sin, for it is the ground of all failure in practice. When men think they cannot be happy without money, they dare not obey God for fear of offending mammon. They might lose their wealth, which is their happiness.

> For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the son of God? (1Jo 5:3-5)

It is notable, when the Spirit of God speaks of "keeping the commandments," He presently speaks of "victory over the world." What is the connection between these two sentences? The world is the great hindrance to keeping the commandment; it hinders the soul from looking after heavenly things. It is impossible that a man should fix his heart on things above, unless he is first weaned from trust in the world. All our esteem of riches comes from trust in them. If men were truly persuaded that all things were vain, they would seek other satisfactions; but men think there is no need in their condition, therefore they neglect heaven.

(3.) Ground of all disquiet and discontent of mind

Depending upon the outward supplies of life is the ground of all disquiet and discontent of mind. If a man would live a happy life, let him but seek a fit object for his trust and he would be safe. We lose the equal poise of our spirits because we bind up our life and happiness with the life and presence of the creature. David says, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." (Psa 30:6-7). When once we begin to think of a strong mountain and set up our hopes and heart there, it makes way for a great deal of trouble.

A man shall never lack trouble who misplaces his trust; he will always be up and down as the creature is. A Christian whose heart is fixed in God is like the hub and center of a wheel: the center is still in its own place and posture, though [a point on the] wheel is sometimes up and

sometimes down. Such Christians keep their spirits in an equal balance in all providences. A child of God whose heart is fixed on God, though there be a great change made in his condition, is where he was still. But a wicked man's hope and comfort ebbs and flows with his estate; when his estate is gone, his confidence is gone.

It is a sad thing to have our hopes fixed upon that which is subject to so many casualties: the waves, wind, fire, wrath of man, undermining of thieves, and unfaithfulness of a debtor. Certainly we shall never have peace until our confidence be rightly placed. It is said of a godly man, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings" (Psa 112:7). Why? Because "his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Though there come messenger upon messenger—as to Job, one bringing him news of a bad debt, another of a loss at sea, another of an accident by fire, a tempest, an earthquake, or it may be by the violence of thieves—he is not "afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed," trusting in God. As Job, he was equally poised and equally balanced in spirit, his joy does not ebb and flow with the news that is brought to him. But now see the contrary in wicked men: they have heard evil tidings, therefore their hearts faint (Jer 49:23). The enemy had broken into their country, and all their estate that lay upon the borders was lost (for of that the prophet speaks); this causes faintness and trembling at the heart. It is a sad thing to put your joy and your contentment under the creature's power. But until your trust be rightly placed, so it will be.

[4.3] Signs for discovering dependence upon outward supply

The third thing is to give you the signs by which this confidence may be discovered. I will give you but three plain evidences:

1. By your care to get wealth,
2. By your thoughtfulness in the possession of it, and
3. By your grief in the losing of it.

(1.) By your care to get wealth

We show dependence upon outward supply by our care to get wealth. We think we cannot live without an estate. A man that is always needing crutches shows that he cannot go alone. There is a lawful labour: wealth may be sought for the necessities of life and for the exercise of good works. But when men make it their main aim to get an estate, it is a sign they place their happiness in it; they make it their chief good and utmost end. Now because it is hard to distinguish honest labour from worldly care, you must examine it by the disproportion of your endeavours in spiritual and heavenly things. Our Saviour concluded His parable against trusting in riches by saying, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luk 12:21).

Men make most provision for the world, and but a little slender care for heaven. They have no care to provide suitably for their souls. All their endeavours are to leave their posterity an estate, but they are not so careful to see grace in their hearts. That which they desire is to see them well matched and well provided for, but they are not troubled about their carnal or unregenerate state. They can be contented with slight assurance in the matter of heaven, but all things seem too little to settle their estate upon earth. A little degree of sanctification serves the turn, but in the world they would still have more and more. They join house to house and field to field, but not faith to faith or virtue to virtue. They have a lean soul and a fat estate: they suffer lean cows to devour fat ones (Gen 41:15-20) when they suffer worldly cares to eat up all their vigour and strength, which they should reserve for communion with God. Bernard[85] said, "Oh, that is a blessed family where Martha can complain of Mary!"[86] (Luk 10:40). Martha complains Mary was too much in spiritual things. But alas! It is usually quite contrary: Mary should complain of Martha—all our care and endeavours are spent in the world, and we content ourselves with

some drowsy devotion toward God.

When there is such a disproportion, this is a sign men had rather enjoy wealth than God. Heavenly things should have the first place and our principal strength: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Mat 6:33). But you are all for the fatness of an outward portion, neglecting heavenly things, and are for that which would perpetuate your names on earth!

(2.) By your thoughtfulness in the possession of wealth

Depending upon the outward supplies of life is seen when, in possessing wealth, you look upon it as the surety and pledge of your happiness and felicity. You then place the main foundation and trust of your souls in the things of this life. When a man has gotten an estate, then he grows proud and drunk with temporal happiness, as if he were above fate and all the changes by which the creatures are exposed to harm. This is a sign men dote upon their wealth, amid making a god of it. Vain admiration always ends in vain expectation. We think we are above the control of providence; we have enough for us and ours. "Soul, take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years" (see Luk 12:19).

When God gives us an estate, we think we have enough to make ourselves and our children happy. But oh, it is good to keep the heart sensible of the changes of providence every moment. When we are thrilled most in the splendour of an outward estate, let us remember man at his best estate is but vanity. Many times we cannot roast that which we have got in hunting; God may blast all in an instant.

But this is especially so if this security has put you upon injurious practices, when a man dares venture upon a sin in a confidence that his greatness and wealth shall bear him out. When men wax insolent to God and proud and injurious to men, and all upon confidence of their present greatness, as if they were sufficiently secured and fenced against all changes whatsoever—when they grow fat and wanton against God and men (Deu 32:15)—this is that which the Spirit of God speaks against. "Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery" (Psa 62:10), when men care not what wrong they do to their inferiors because they are sure and safe, as if God could not bring them down, surely and certainly, suddenly and terribly, by strange and unexpected means!

(3.) By your grief in the loss of wealth

Depending upon the outward supplies of life is seen when we are loath to let them go upon just and convenient reasons.

If they be taken away by providence, men's hearts are so depressed, as if all their happiness were gone. Job was otherwise; he had messenger upon messenger of evil tidings, yet blessed God. It was Gregory's observation that Job lost his estate without grief, because he possessed it without love and trust.[87] His heart was not fixed upon his estate, therefore he parts with it more easily. Carnal men are troubled when their riches take wing, because riches are their god. Their hearts are depressed because their happiness is gone; as Micah said, "Ye ask me what aileth me, when ye have taken away my gods" (see Jdg 18:24).

Or else they are loath to let riches go voluntarily, upon any good occasion. A carnal man holds his life by riches; he cannot be happy without them. Therefore he dares not dispose of them for holy uses or for his own relief.

[4.4] Remedies for dependence upon outward supplies

The remedies and cures for dependence upon outward supplies are these.

(1.) God's ability

God only can do it thoroughly and to purpose. We read in Mark 10:23-27, "Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the

kingdom of God!" and the disciples were astonished at His words." But Jesus answered them, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Then it is said, "And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith,… With God all things are possible." It is impossible for those who trust in riches to enter God's kingdom and to trust Him; it is almost as impossible to have riches and not to trust in them.

This blessing [i.e. not trusting in riches], then, is to be sought of God with greater care and diligence; you should put up more frequent prayers for this grace than you do for wealth and life. To have a competent measure, and not to trust in it, is a greater blessing than the greatest abundance in the world. Therefore, let this be one of your constant prayers: "Lord, let not my heart be set upon these things."

(2.) Man's endeavours[88]

Man must work diligently in this, for we hinder our prayers by idleness. When a man does not use God's methods and resources, he shows his designs are not sincere. Now, the means to cure dependence upon outward supply follow.

(a.) Frequent practices of charity

We should be as careful to employ wealth to charitable uses as worldlings are to gather wealth: "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth" (Luk 12:33). There is no remedy nor cure but only in giving them away, and then they will be ours forever. This is a real profession: you look upon all these things as vanity, and only useful as you have a further opportunity of service for doing good. There is no other means to prevent the danger of trust and confidence in riches, but only a constant exercise of good works; these are the true riches. The way of destroying idols was by crumbling them to pieces. It is better to be a steward than a treasurer; to have them in our hands that we may give them to others, than to have them in our hearts that we may adore them ourselves. Therefore, while you possess them, it is not you that are rich, but your storage chest; but when you distribute them and are rich in good works, these are the riches that can never be lost (Mat 19:21-30; Luk 16:1-15)!

(b.) Suppositions

Make hypothetical suppositions; see how you can bear the loss of all things when represented in imagination: if God should blast my estate, if such a friend should prove unfaithful, or such a debtor defraud me. The church makes such a supposition:

> Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. (Hab 3:17-18)

Suppose that God should send a difficult year when there would be scarcity in all things, what then? Can I comfort myself in these things? The fool in the Gospel dares not suppose what might come to pass that night; it would destroy all his mirth to have thought of a sudden stroke. He dreams instead of many years (Luk 12:19-20).

These suppositions would keep your souls in an equal poise, either to keep or forego an estate. Men do not acquaint their souls with suppositions of loss and danger, and so they grow secure.[89]

(c.) Meditations

Meditate upon the vanity of the creature. Talk hardens and deludes men, but meditation leaves deep effects: there is a moral efficacy in constant and serious thoughts. The world puts fair titles on outward supplies, and calls them "goods," "treasure," and "substance"; but God

calls them “shadows,” “lies,” and “running after shadows.” How different are the notions of the Word from those of the world!

The Word looks upon riches as a vain shadow, “Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain” (Psa 39:6). The Word shows they are not only vanity, but lies: “Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie” (Psa 62:9). Men lie by our own thought; they abuse us by our trust, and they will surely prove a lie. A man should not rest in any creature unless he has a mind to be deceived, but no man purposely wants to be deceived.

Nay, the Scripture speaks of riches as if they were nothing, “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?” (Pro 23:5). In comparison to better things, they are rather said not to exist than even just to exist. And consider, riches take to themselves wings: the thief, the sea, the displeasure of the magistrate, the violence of the soldier, and our own unadvised words many times are wings to riches that make them fly away from us. Nevertheless, the more enduring substance is in heaven (Heb 10:34).

(d.) Improvements

Make use of experiences to cure dependence upon outward supplies. It is a lesson God has taught us now in these times. Men were never more greedy of the world than now, and God never more showed us the vanity thereof more than in these times.[90] The greatest men have proved a lie to their dependents; how many have experience of these things! They, and their fathers and grandfathers, have laid out all their intellect, labour, and toil to get a great estate, and are deprived of it all in a moment, and now it is bestowed upon others. You have known many great ones who are now no more thought of; either they are dead and gone, and others enjoy their places; or if alive, their flower is gone, they live like a neglected stalk.

How often has God stained all worldly glory, and the world will do so still; it will forget you, as it has forgotten many others. How many in these times have had heirs that they never thought of, those who have been strangers to their blood and family! “Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver” (Job 27:16-17). They may provide and heap up a great estate, and think now they and their families are ennobled forever; but riches take wing, and God bestows them upon others of whom we never dreamed.

(e.) Gracious principles

Lay up several gracious principles in the soul.

1. No one ever trusted in the world, but they had cause to complain. Mammon’s servants have hard work, and worse hire and wages—as Jacob after he had served seven years, and when he expected beautiful Rachel, he received Leah (Gen 29:25). Riches will surely disappoint the trust you put in them. They promise contentment, but that promise is but a lie; they do but distract the head and heart with cares. They promise peace, plenty, and security, which they can never bring to you. They are called deceitful riches (Mat 13:22). A man should not trust in any material thing, unless he has a mind to be deceived.

At death we especially shall see how the world has beguiled us. “What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?” (Job 27:8). It is a sorry gain and purchase. When our service is ended, we see what kind of wages mammon gives us in the day of wrath: “Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’s wrath” (Zep 1:18). Justice will not be bribed with money; we cannot buy a pardon. Consider, if a man had taken a long voyage to the Indies, and had brought many commodities with him, and discovered that not one was fit for the market in that place. Just so it is here, we are bound for a city where gold and silver have no commercial value; you cannot buy one extra hour for repentance. Consider how justly the saints and blessed angels may laugh at you when

your foolish trust is disappointed. They will say, “Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches” (Psa 52:7).

2. The more wealth, the more danger. In a net, when great fishes are taken, the lesser escape. So it is in public calamities: many times it is they who are the poorest who have the best portion. A tree that has largeness and thickness, being laden with boughs, provokes others to chop it down; or else it falls by its own weight. Nebuchadnezzar, when he had captured Jerusalem, carried away the princes and noble captains, but the poor were left in the land (2Ki 24:11-14). Therefore, never believe the world; it promises life, continuance, and advancement of families, but no man can assure himself to hold his wealth even one night. Remember, [when you deal with the world] you deal with a cheater!

3. Your estate is not your life. Your life and happiness are not bound up with your estate. They lie not in abundance, but in the providence of God (Luk 12:15-34).

4. Remember, God is the author of all the wealth we enjoy. This will cure the heart from dependence upon wealth, that it may with more entire trust fasten upon God Himself. In lack and in distresses, we see outward things are vain, but few will own this when they are in abundance. It is the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich (Pro 10:22). By whatsoever means you have your estate, it is God that gave it to you. If it comes to you by inheritance, yet it is God that gave it to you; it is of God’s grace that a man was born of such rich friends and not of beggars. If your estate comes by gift, remember, the hearts of men are in God’s hands, and it is He that can make them able and willing. If your estate comes by industry, skill, and diligence in your calling, bless God Who gives you your skill and success. Many have not the skill, and many who have as great skill as yourself have not the success.

II. Self-denial in Respect to God

B. God the Highest Lord

Denying Self-will

I now come to speak to the branch of denying self that we shall call self-will. As God is the supreme Lord and Law-giver, so we are to deny our self-will. Now our submission to God is double: 1) to His laws, and 2) to His providence. We submit to His laws by holiness and obedience; we submit to His providence by patience.

1. Denying Self-will by Submission to God's Law

We submit to God's laws by obedience. Our will is to give place to the will of God, "That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col 4:12). This was the prayer of Epaphras, and this should be the aim of every Christian: to bring his will to a perfect conformity to the will of God. I shall

1. Show the difficulty of this part of self-denial,
2. Give some motives to enforce it, and
3. Give some rules, which may serve both for direction and trial.

[1.1] Difficulty in denying self-will

First, the difficulty of this part of self-denial will appear if we consider the following:

(1.) The proudest enemy

Man's will is the proudest enemy that Christ has on this side of hell. It resists Christ in all His offices. It resists Christ in His kingly office and reign: "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luk 19:14). God has set up Christ as king, and the world votes it in the negative, "We will not have this man." The great contest between us and God is whose will shall stand, God's or ours. The soul cannot endure to hear of another king and another sovereign because it seeks supremacy. It cannot endure that any should lord it over us: "Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Psa 12:4). Man would have the command of his own actions. A proud creature cannot endure to hear of restraints. The rebellion of the world against Christ was to cast away his bands and cords (Psa 2). "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee" (Jer 2:31). They would be absolute and without God. This is so rooted in our nature that, when Satan sets heretics at work, he puts them upon holding out this bait of worldly liberty, freedom from the reign and sovereignty of God. "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption" (2Pe 2:19). The great rage and tumult of the world is to break the bands and cords, and to loosen us from our obedience to God.

The proud will of man cannot endure to hear of an higher Lord; this hinders God's reign in the heart and slights the offers of His grace, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (Joh 5:40). Christ comes with riches of grace and invites us to receive Him; and we neglect Him and are taken instead with the basest men. If a king should come to a subject's house and desire entertainment, and he should neglect him and talk with base fellows, this were a mighty affront

put upon the king. Yet this is our disposition towards Christ; He comes to dispense comforts and graces, and we will not receive Him, but are taken up with the creature. All that Christ has done is lost to us for lack of our consent. All things are ready and prepared, decreed in heaven; only the guests are not ready. They will not come, will not consent to ratify the decrees of heaven.[91]

In short, this is the cause of all sin and of all the disorder in men: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (Jam 1:14). Man takes himself to be lord over his own actions, and enacts contrary laws to God in the court of his own heart. He is so wedded to his own affections that he accounts his lusts as himself. He can as well endure a member of his body to be cut off as to have his sin reproved.

(2.) The most corrupted faculty

The difficulty of denying self-will appears also if we consider that the will is far more corrupted than any other faculty of the soul. The understanding is much blinded, but the will is more depraved and opposed to God. The mind of a carnal man has a little light, which is apt to suggest some good motion. As Job's messengers said, "I only am escaped alone to tell thee" (Job 1:15-19), so may conscience say, "I alone am escaped out of the ruins of the Fall to suggest some good motion to you." But now the will more abhors and refuses good than the understanding is ignorant of it; there is some light in the understanding, but there is nothing but sin in the will. Many a man is often convinced;[92] his understanding is gained before he is converted. They see better things, see what is good, before they choose them. The last fortress Christ conquers in the heart is the will of man.[93]

(3.) Not subdued by external methods

Consider: the will is not subdued by all the methods and external acts of grace that God uses to gain the soul. The Lord makes a challenge in Isaiah 5:3-4, "Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" What could God do more than to provide a Christ, a gospel, and a gracious covenant? And yet all this does not gain with man. There we have the highest motives to allure us, the strongest arguments to persuade us, the greatest terrors to affright us, yet the soul will not yield.

Oh, what sweet motives there are for us to come to God: the offer of Christ and the promise of heaven and glory! God outbids all the world. What will you have more? You have God's Son to die for you, His grace to help you, and heaven to reward you. God has contrived a sweet plot of grace, but the will of man slights all. The devil cannot bid so fair for your heart, yet men give up their souls to him. He cannot promise you everlasting glory. Can Satan give you such recompenses as God? The world cannot assure you of everlasting happiness. You may die, or these things may fly away from you. The devil was never stricken for you: he endured no agonies, shed no blood for you—rather, he seeks to undo you all he can. Therefore, "Come to me," says Christ. But the sum of all is, "I would, but you would not" (see Mat 23:37).

When God comes with external offers, with suitable instruments, with all necessary circumstances and methods of grace, yet the sinner turns back. Christ renews messengers, yet the proud will of man says, "I will not." They "will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely" (Psa 58:5). All the charms of grace will not prevail; they stop their ears.

Christ's blood may stand as cheap as common blood for all this, if God did not come in with an act of power. Nay, further, if He should threaten and inflict judgment, yet all will not work to soften the heart and subdue the will of man, without an almighty efficacy and influence. The greatest terrors are of no force. Judgment may break the back, but not the heart. Pharaoh was crossed again and again, God multiplies plague upon plague, yet his will stood out, "I will not let the people go" (Exo 4-11). When God knocks upon us by the hammer of judgment, yet it will not break the flint and the rock that is in our will. Not only the by-standers, but one of the thieves

derides Christ on the cross (Luk 23:39)—the bad thief had one foot in hell, yet he blasphemes still.

(4.) Turning back

When the will is in part renewed and cured, yet still it is apt to recoil and return back again to its old bondage. How often do the children of God complain of weariness, deadness, difficulties, and continual reluctance of the flesh: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit…so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal 5:17). A child of God cannot do what he would; when his will begins to be set towards heaven, it is very much broken and distracted. "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom 7:18). When we are gone out of Sodom, we are apt to look back again (Gen 19:26). And this will be our condition until we come to heaven: the flesh will rise up in arms against every holy motion, and our chains will hang upon us until we come into Christ's arms. We are not only at first conversion like an ox unaccustomed to the yoke, but afterward still we find there is an unruly will, not fixed with obedience to the will of God.

[1.2] Motives for denying self-will

Now I will give you motives and arguments to enforce this kind of self-denial.

(1.) None renewed without the will subdued

The soul is never renewed until the will be tamed and subdued to God.[94] The soul can never be said to be regenerated until the will is renewed. The new creature begins in the mind, but is never perfected until it comes to the heart, until we "put off the old man with his lusts" (Eph 4:22-23). Until our natural inclinations are altered, until grace is placed in the center of the heart, corruptions will recoil. When the bird's wings are broken, then it can fly no longer; so when once the will is broken, then the sinner is subdued and taken captive by grace. The mind is only the counselor; the will is the monarch.[95] Until the will is subdued by God, you cannot look upon yourselves as new creatures.

(2.) None live to their own pleasure

You must deny self-will because no man can be at his own disposal and live according to his own pleasure. If any might plead exemption, then certainly Christ, as man, might have done so, because of the glorious fellowship that was between His human and divine nature. But see, when Christ took human nature, He was bound to submit His human will to the Godhead. When He took our nature, He took our obligation upon Himself, and therefore He said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Heb 10:9). When Christ came into the world, this was His work: to do His Father's will. He brought Himself into the condition of a creature, and then, having taken our nature, He was to take our obligation upon Himself, which Christ performed. Christ and His Father had but one will between them both: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (Joh 5:30); there was a perfect resignation. Christ obeyed as if He had no private human will of His own, but only the will of His Father. Christ did not look to His own ends, to the safety and convenience of His human nature, but to what was His Father's will.[96]

And will you stand upon terms with God? Do you think you are too great to submit and stoop to God? Nay, consider the holy angels, that have many privileges above man, yet they have no exemption from duty and homage. They have many privileges—freedom from troubles, sicknesses, diseases, and all the infirmities of the flesh—but they are not freed from obedience. They obey his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word (Psa 103:20). The psalmist speaks of the angels there: they still owe homage to their Creator. Those courtiers of heaven are servants of God, and followers with us in the same obedience. Now Christ has referred us to the example of His angels in His prayer: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Mat 6:10). You upon earth are not held to a harder law than they are in heaven; they obey His will,

and so must you. Certainly, no men are too good or too great to obey God.

If the example of the angels be too high, then look to all created things. They obey God, and sometimes contrary to their natural tendency and motion, such as when the sun stood still (Jos 10:13); and it is said in the Gospel that the winds and seas obeyed him (Mat 8:27). Man only is eccentric[97] and exorbitant[98] in his motions. The natural elements glorify God in their way. The sun shall rise up in judgment against many a carnal wretch. God has set to them a decree beyond which they shall not pass, and they obey the laws of their creation; but we are disobedient and break through all restraints.

(3.) God's right

We must deny self-will. Consider the right God has to us, 1) as we are His creatures, and 2) as we are new creatures.

Because we are creatures, we hold our being and all that we have continually from God (Act 17:28). Now you know, the more a man owes to a lord, the more homage he is bound to perform. You hold your life and all your comforts by His allowance; the more you have, the more is due, though usually it is quite to the contrary: the more we have from God, the more we slight Him! Many times, they that hold the greatest lands pay the least rent; so the more we hold from God, the less careful we are to return obedience to Him. "I went to the great men, but they have altogether broken the yoke" (see Jer 5:5). Those that have more means of instruction, that have higher breeding, have greater obligations upon them; but these usually are the worst. A horse that is kept low[99] is easily ruled by his rider; but when he grows lusty and fat, he lifts up the heel against him and will not suffer the bit. So it is when men grow great and prosperous, when God has fenced them with prosperity, then they become indulgent and disobedient.

We are also new creatures. "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1Pe 4:2). The great aim of grace is to cure the disorders of the will and to bring us into a stricter bond of service to the Lord; therefore usually at conversion this is made explicit by our own solemn vow.[100] A good heart is contracted to Christ, as an evil heart is to the world. "My beloved is mine" (Song 2:16)—all that is yours is God's. You have no will of your own;[101] you have given up yourselves to another (1Co 6:19). Take heed, therefore, of breaking the vows of your solemn covenant that you have sworn to God.

(4.) Not able to manage the will ourselves

There is a great deal of reason our wills should be given up to the will of God, because we are not able to manage them ourselves. By the laws and customs of all nations, fools and madmen are to be ruled by their kindred, not to be left to their own wills, but to the will of another. Now, by nature, we are mad fools, foolish and disobedient (Ti 3:3), and have not the guidance of our own will; therefore, it is not fit that the will should be left in our power, but given up to God. If we be our own captains, we shall soon shipwreck ourselves. When God requires the resignation of our will, it is but the taking of a sword out of a madman's hands. A man's own will is the cause of all the mischief that comes to him, and, at last, of his ruin. Bernard said, "There would be no hell were it not for the perverseness of a man's will." It is Chrysostom's position too: "Man could never be hurt were it not for himself and his own will."

Others may trouble us, but cannot hurt us. The devil may tempt us, but he cannot hurt us unless we consent. The world may frown upon us, but it cannot harm us.[102] The apostle intimates this: "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1Pe 3:13). It is presently added in the next verse, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." Men may trouble and molest you, but they cannot harm you without your own consent. Now since none can harm us but our own will, and since we are unfit guides, it is fit we should have a guardian—and who is wiser than

God? The merchant, though he has stored the ship with goods, yet allows the captain to steer it because he has no skill in the art of navigation; so, though the will be ours, let us give it to God, to manage it according to His good pleasure.

(5.) A blessing

It is a very great blessing that God will take charge of our will. The strictest rules of religion are to be reckoned among our privileges. It is the greatest judgment that God can lay upon any creature, to give him up to his own will and to the sway of his own heart. The Lord threatens it when other means are ineffectual. He says, "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels" (Psa 81:12). That is a dreadful punishment. So in Romans it is said, "God also gave them up to uncleanness" (1:24) and to their own "vile affections" (1:26). It is worse for a man to be given up to his own heart than to be given up to Satan. A man given to Satan may be recovered again: "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1Co 5:5). This may be for his exercise and trial. But when once a man is given up to himself, to the sway of his own heart, there cannot be a greater judgment. When the sentence of hard-heartedness is passed upon us, it is as much as to say, "Give him up to hell and utter judgment, as an irrecoverable sinner."

(6.) Great pleasure

It will be great pleasure to us when once we can get the victory over our own will. There is none who have more joy and greater happiness than the angels and spirits of just men made perfect, and yet none have less of their own wills. The angels and blessed spirits perfectly accomplish the will of God, and therefore are completely happy. Why should we account denying our self-will a sad work, when the loss of our self-will is part of our happiness in heaven? The saints and angels complain not of any burden; yet they have no will of their own; they will as God wills. We think it is a happy thing to have our carnal desires accomplished, and wonder how any can be contented without them. They imagine such great happiness in their way; therefore the world wonders at the children of God: "They think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot" (1Pe 4:4).

It is pleasant for a woman with child to have what she longs for [her desires at that time of life are especially strong], but it is much more pleasant to be entirely without the trouble of such longings. In the same way, the world thinks it pleasant to have their carnal desires satisfied, but it is a great deal more pleasant to have those desires mortified (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5). Drink is very pleasant to a man in a fever, but who would put himself into a fever to taste the pleasure of drink? Certainly if a man would be completely happy, he must renounce his own carnal desires.

If you would but trust Christ upon His Word, you would find that such denial is not so burdensome and grievous as you imagine. You would find His "yoke to be easy" (Mat 11:28-30) —not only as you have help from God, but the very delight and contentment we enjoy would make it easy. Certainly it will be far better to give up our wills to God than to the devil. How hard is his yoke, and how small are his wages—a little pleasure here, and eternal pains hereafter!

[1.3] Rules for denying self-will

In the next place, I shall give you some rules that will serve both for direction and trial. These are very needful, for men are apt to flatter themselves with a pretence of obedience; they cry, "Lord, Lord!" but do not do His commandments (Mat 7:21-23). Many will give good words, and because they do not break out into such an actual contest with God as those rebellious and obstinate wretches who say, "There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart" (Jer 18:12), or as those who say, "As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth" (Jer 44:16-17), they

think they are safe. But Christ spoke the parable of the two sons for the discovering of such hypocritical professions. One son said, "I go, sir: and went not"; the other, "I will not: but afterward he repented, and went" (Mat 21:28-31). Our Saviour puts the question, "Whether of the twain did the will of his father?" He that said, "I will but did not," was the worst because the understanding is somewhat better than the will. Therefore men will give God good words.

This rebellion is disguised with promises and false claims of obedience; therefore I shall give some rules that you must observe in denying your own will, and by which you may try your state.

(1.) Resignation to Christ

If you will obey God, there must be some solemn time when you resign your self-will to Him. Naturally we are resistant, and therefore whoever is brought to God comes humbly like a pardoned rebel and lays down the weapons of defiance. God, as Creator, has a right to your wills, to your obedience; but He will have His right confirmed by your grant and consent. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1). There can be no more acceptable sacrifice to God than the entire resignation of our wills to Him. So in Acts 9:6, Paul gives up his own defence and gives God the key of his heart: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Grace had so melted him that he, who had done nothing before but breathe out threatening, now comes humbly, crying out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

This is what our Saviour intends in that expression, "Take my yoke upon you" (Mat 11:28). Jesus Christ will force it upon none; He requires the consent of your own will. In matrimonial contract consent is not to be forced; so Christ does not force His spouse against her own consent, but she is actually to resign her own self to God. You must desire God to come and take possession of your hearts![103]

(2.) Without reservation

When you give up yourselves to God, it must be without bounds and reservations, "perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col 4:12). You must not pick and choose, but take all the will of God as your rule to walk by. So also, "My servant David, he shall fulfil all my will" (see Act 13:22). Whatever God will signify to be His pleasure, that will David fulfil. We should so perfectly obey as if we had no will of our own, not reserving ownership of the least motion or faculty. The least sin, when it is allowed, is a pledge of the devil's interest and right to us. If a man has bid a thousand pounds for an excellent jewel, will he balk at a penny more?

As we entirely resign ourselves at the first, so afterwards we must make good our vows. We must remember in every action of ours that it is given up to God. Every motion, every glance, is under a rule. And in every lesser action, we should say, "Will God have this to be done or no, and in this manner?" And if it is God's will that it should not be done, let us not do it for a thousand worlds.

Especially in praying, do I pray as the Lord would have me? Is it with such reverence, with such submission, such affection? I gave up myself to do His whole will: to do the duty itself, and to do it in the manner that God requires. So in eating and drinking, and in all actions, you should do all in obedience, in that manner and to that end that God requires. Every glance of the eye is under a rule: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mat 5:28). We must use our sight in obedience to God, and so also our hearing.

(3.) Three special things

There are some special things that God has willed and about which He has given us a special charge. Those things must be done, howsoever distasteful to flesh and blood or

prejudicial to our interests. There are three things that have His stamp and seal upon them —"This is God's will."

1) It is said of holiness and sanctification, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1Th 4:3).

2) It is said of duties of relation, obedience to magistrates, parents, and masters:[104] "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man...for so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1Pe 2:13-15).

3) It is said of the duty of thanksgiving: "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1Th 5:18).

Concerning these three things we have the express pleasure of God. Now it is great rebellion and disobedience not to obey God's solemn charges. Holiness is irksome to nature, we are apt to forget thankfulness, and we are sensibly tried in duties of relations. God has expressed His will concerning all these.

(4.) Motive for obedience

In all these things we must not only do what God wills, but we must do it because He wills it. This is pure obedience. The bare proclamation of God's will and pleasure should be reason and motive strong enough. You read where God enacted various laws; this is the reason He gives that we should obey them: "I am the Lord" (Lev. 19). "The Lord wills." That is enough to engage the obedience of the creature. So in these places before mentioned, wherein holiness, thanksgiving, and duties of relation are enjoined, this is the reason alleged: "for this is the will of God." The angels have no other motive: they "do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word" (Psa 103:22). This is that which is motive enough to the angels: God has given His will. We therefore should capture all our thoughts and not allow disputes. "Have not I commanded thee?" said God to Joshua (Jos 1:9)—so we should plead with ourselves. When we are slack and sluggish to any duty, say, "Has not the Lord commanded me?" What need is there for any further reasons?

(5.) Search for more

We must not only do what we know, but we must search that we may know more. This is a great sign of an obedient heart, when we are willing to inquire what further duty God requires: "That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2). A man that has given up himself to God must make it his constant practice. We shall be accountable for ignorance as well as neglect.

Many times there may be somewhat of will in ignorance. When men have no mind to practise, certainly they have no heart to know and search. "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph 5:17). Men are loath to sift out truth in all its aspects, lest it should prove to their disadvantage. When they do not understand, or when they have a confused notion that what God commands is contrary to their lusts, they do not want to know His command specifically. These do not err in their minds so much as in their hearts. Some err in their minds out of simple ignorance, others in their hearts; they have no mind to know. In such negligence there is deceit.

Therefore search out what is the acceptable will of God, that you may have a clearer light and ground for practice. The angels are always hearkening unto his voice (Psa 103:20), so should we be hearkening still. As the beasts that stood before the throne had eyes on either side (Rev 4:6), so we should be always searching that we may be perfectly instructed in the will of God.

(6.) Keeping from sin

Our obedience is chiefly to be tried by our keeping ourselves from our sin, which our corrupt will had wedded and espoused. So it was with David: "I was also upright before him, and I kept

myself from mine iniquity" (Psa 18:23). Herein is our subjection to the will of God chiefly tried, in keeping ourselves from the particular sin that is most vehement and passionate to us: our worldliness, our sensuality, our pride, according as the corruption is displayed; for we are apt to deceive ourselves when we only deal in generalities.

God has left some particular lust to us as a test; we are to deny all ungodliness (see Ti 2:12), but chiefly this particular beloved sin. If men were acquainted with their own hearts, they would find there is some sin for which conscience strikes most—a sin to which temptations are most frequent and of most usual residence and recourse, a sin that is proper[105] to their constitution and course of life. Certainly, he is not acquainted with his own heart who does not know this sin; and he is not acquainted with the work of grace who does not resist and mortify it.

Therefore, though that sin be ever so dear and pleasant, yet herein God will try your obedience. Our Saviour expresses it by "cutting off the right hand," and "plucking out the right eye" (Mat 5:29-30). Though it is as dear and precious to us as a member of the body, as useful as a right hand or as pleasant as a right eye, yet it must be plucked out. As men to preserve life will cut off a gangrened[106] joint, though it be a right hand, so must our most beloved lust be mortified.

(7.) General course of life

Because there cannot be an exact conformity to the will of God, our obedience will be discovered by the general bent and course of our lives. A godly man sets his face toward heaven. It is true, sometimes he may be turned out of the way, but the course of his life, the bent and care of his soul, is to bring up his heart to a conformity to the will of God. A ship that sails overseas may be driven back by a storm, but it makes its way again towards the haven; so a man may be overborne by the violence of a temptation, but he makes his way again to the harbour to which he aims. A godly man is troubled for the breach of God's will above all things; sin is most contrary to the divine will. Therefore our obedience will be best known by our general care to avoid all sin, and by our grief for committing it.

2. Denying Self-will by Submission to God's Providence

I come now to speak to the second branch of submitting to God's will: the providence of God. As God is the supreme Lord and Law-giver, so we are to deny our self-will 1) by subjection to His laws, which is holiness, and 2) by submission to His providence, which is patience. In renouncing the dominion of the will, it is not enough to do what God commands (His laws), but to suffer what He inflicts (His providence). His will is declared in His providence as well as in His Law.

Now, murmuring is against providence. It is a renouncing of God's sovereignty, just as open sins and rebellion against His laws are a renouncing of His sovereignty. Therefore when God's will is declared through His providence, though it is against our dearest comforts and nearest relations, this should be enough to bring us to obedience. In stating this principle of submission, I shall show,

1. How far we are to submit to the will of God in providence,
2. What are the grounds of this submission, and
3. The helps to it.

[2.1] How far we are to submit to the will of God in providence

This will be discovered in several propositions.

(1.) Quietly submit

The most basic degree of this submission is that we must be quiet and silent. When a vessel

is much shaken, it is apt to splash over; and so usually we give vent to strong passions, and to the grievances of the mind, by murmuring and complaining. There is quick communication between the heart and the tongue: when the heart is burdened and overcharged, it seeks ease and vent by the tongue. The first degree then of the patience of the children of God is to keep silence. David says, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it" (Psa 39:9). It is God, and therefore the least complaining thought must not be allowed. When he saw God in the providence, he durst not speak one word that might savour of discontent. When Aaron had two children taken away by a judgment and a strange stroke of God's providence, it is said, "Aaron held his peace" (Lev 10:3).

This quietness and silence must be, not only in suppressing words of offence and passion, but also in calming the affections. When an oven is stopped up, it is more hot within. When David kept his tongue as with a bridle the fire still burned and his heart was hot (Psa 39:1-4). There must be a quiet contentment of the mind and submission of the heart, howsoever grievous the affliction may be. A stormy mind is as bad, though not as scandalous, as a virulent tongue. You must be contented in your very souls. You should not dare to quarrel with God, nor enter a plea against providence. Thoughts are as words with God; therefore, take heed of private arguments against Him. We must obey God with silence and quietness. Believing will give us ease when arguing cannot.

(2.) Willingly submit

We must not only quietly submit to God, but willingly—and approve and accept the providence. Patience is no grace when it is forced upon you by a circumstance outside your control. God is not glorified until there is an acceptance of the judgment and a consent of the will.

First, an acceptance of the judgment, that the providence is good because God wills it; as Hezekiah said, "Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken" (Isa 39:8). Look into the context and you will find it was a heavy sentence, which intimated the transportation of his family and posterity into Babylon; yet his sanctified judgment calls it "good"—good because God would have it so. That which God wills is best.

Second, a consent of the will. We murmur; we set up a preferred circumstance in our minds, and then censure the acts of God, as if we could correct them and do better for the government of the world. A heathen could say, "If this be pleasing to God, let it be; that is best which pleases Him." So there must be a consent of the will. "If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity" (Lev 26:41). Mark that place: it is not said, "if they shall bear the punishment," but "accept the punishment of their iniquity"; we must kiss the rod and welcome the providence.

There must be a perfect correspondence between our wills and the providences of God. Look, as the patient willingly takes bitter pills that make for his health, so should we swallow with willingness and contentment the hardest accidents.[107] We should not take the providence of God as a drenching,[108] but as a potion; not as a thing that is forced upon us, but that to which our sanctified judgment consents. Heathens, if their lives were as good as their works, might shame many Christians; they would always be of the same mind with God. Seneca said, "I yield to providence, not out of necessity, but choice." It is best because God wills it; if He bless, it is good; if He afflict, it is good. His will is the highest wisdom and reason.

Therefore, faith welcomes all providences, as well as submits to them. Rabbi Gamzeth said, "This dispensation[109] is good, and this too, because it comes from God." God has a supreme right to dispose of us according to His own pleasure. "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?" (Job 9:12). Will you resist Him in the disposal of

what is His own? Which is more equal,[110] that your will should stoop to God's, or that God's will be brought down to yours? How little good will it do us to murmur. It is better to submit to His providences!

(3.) Love

We are not only to submit to God, but to love Him when He seems to deal most hardly with us. You know in the gospel we are bidden to love our enemies (Mat 5:44), though they be really so, though they be our fellow-men, and though we do not depend upon them as we do upon God. Therefore much more are we to love God when He only seems to be an enemy. The Lord Jesus in the height of His sufferings loved His Father, yea, He loved the cross for His Father's sake: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Joh 18:11). Christ loved the elect when He suffered most for them, and loved His Father when He suffered most from Him, saying in effect, "It is a bitter cup, but it is of my Father's sending." Our love should glow most to God in our affliction…

Many pretend to love God when He blesses them, when they abound in ease and all kinds of comfort; but they storm as soon as they are touched in the skin. Look, as certain kinds of flowers turn after the sun, not only in a shining day, but also in a cloudy one; so in most gloomy days the bent of our hearts and desires should be after God. So also among the creatures: the dog loves his master who beats him, and many times when he is half dead he will run after his master. Look, as God reproves Israel by the ox because they did not love Him for His kindness: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa 1:3). So we may send you to the dogs for not loving God when He "beats" you. We should the rather love Him then, because God loves us when He corrects us: He loves whom He chastens (Heb 12:6). A man may give entertainment to strangers, but he gives chastisement only to those of his own family. We are of God's household, a part of the charge of God,[111] and therefore are under the discipline of His house.

And that is also an argument for God's love, when He does not let you alone. You are put to your trial before men and angels, whether you are able to love Him when He exercises you with sharp afflictions.

(4.) With cheerfulness and thanksgiving

We must not only love God for the providence, but entertain it with cheerfulness and thanksgiving. This should be enough to the creature: that God's will may be fulfilled, though with loss and hurt, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21). A child of God is of a different temper from other men: he can fear God for His mercies, and praise Him for His justice. We are bound to bless Him for taking as well as giving. All God's corrections to His children are administrations belonging to the covenant of grace, are evidences of God's faithfulness and means of good to the saints, and therefore deserve to be reckoned in the list of mercies.

Oh, what a good God do we serve, when we can even bless Him for afflictions! A Christian can sing in winter as well as in the spring. In outward things we can thank a physician for a bitter potion; we can pay a surgeon for cutting off a diseased arm or leg; and therefore much more have we cause to bless God for His faithfulness to us, for taking as well as giving. But even if there were no advantage, it is enough that God's will is accomplished: this is matter of praise. See David when he understood that his child was dead: He

> arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. (2Sa 12:20)

Before, he would not rise from the earth nor eat bread, but sat mourning; but after God's

pleasure was declared, i.e., when the child died, he worshipped in God's house…It is more than enough to you that it pleases God, Whose pleasure you are bound to fulfil, howsoever dear it should cost you.

(5.) Regardless of the trial

This submission to the will of God must be manifested whatever the cross is. As in obedience, there must be no reservation. They were not to leave a hoof in Egypt (Ex 10:25-26); so in the cross we must make no exceptions, but give God a blank paper and let Him write what He will. I know there is a gradation in our miseries, some are greater and some are less, though everyone thinks his own to be most burdensome, because he is under sense and feeling: "No sorrow like my sorrow." There is a great deal of difference between afflictions. Those miseries that light upon the outward estate, they do not sit so close as those that light upon the body. And those that light upon the body are nothing so terrible as those that light upon the soul: "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Pro 18:14). Common generosity[112] will bear up under an outward cross, yet all must be borne with patience and submission. The apostle lists various afflictions: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" (2Co 12:10). If it be racking pains of the body or reproaches that enter into the very soul; if it be need, calamity, infamy, loss of goods, or loss of children, husband, or all dear relations—we must not be our own carvers, but we must take up our cross, as Christ said. God Himself will choose the rod; we are not bound to seek, choose, or make the cross, but to bear and take it up when it is laid upon us.

We are not to fill the cup ourselves, but drink that which God tempers in the cup with His own hand. It is not a cup of our own brewing. It is a deceit to say, "I could bear such and such an affliction with cheerfulness and patience, if it were not the loss of dearest and nearest relations." But God knows how to strike in the right vein. The world would soon become an empty and lonely place if every ignorant person might be his own physician and prescribe his own potion.

Those that would have a cross of their own carving do not submit to God, but to their own wills. Pride of will shows itself in providence as well as worship, when men cannot bear the cross that God has laid upon them. Impatience is as great a sin as superstition. Look, as it is superstitious to carve to ourselves such worship as pleases us, so it is a breach of God's Law, an entrenchment upon the sovereignty and wisdom of providence, when we would carve out our own cross. Howsoever grievous the affliction is, we must submit. Suppose it is submission to death itself, it is not by chance but by God's disposing hand. God does but call us back to our old dust, and by the same sovereignty by which He brought us out of the womb, He brings us to the grave. "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men" (Psa 90:3).

(6.) Preparing to suffer yet more

This submission must be manifested by preparing ourselves to suffer yet more than we feel for the present in vow and purpose. A Christian resigns himself to the will of God; he has no will of his own. "Lord, turn me into what condition pleases you," as David, "Here I am, do to me as seems good in thine own eyes" (2Sa 15:25-26). A believer sets his name to a blank sheet of paper so that God may write what He pleases—this is to reserve no will of our own. Patience is a very high grace; it not only consents to known articles,[113] but also refers itself to God for the future.

It is a most worthy question: will it be obedience or patience? Obedience has a stated rule; all the articles of the covenant are absolutely set down regarding what God requires. But patience refers itself for the future to God, let God write what He will. Since we are God's creatures, we submit to whatever future trial God will appoint. The Apostle Paul speaks of greater sufferings: "I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the Lord Jesus" (see Act 21:13), as if he were to say, "If it were a heavier burden, even death itself, I am ready to bear it; I have given up my will

to God." "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb 12:4)…Resolution for the worst that can come is a great degree of submission, and will be a very great help when you are resolved to bear whatever God will inflict. Alas, otherwise we may soon faint and murmur.

(7.) In spiritual trouble

It is a very high degree of submission to submit to God's acts in spiritual needs and troubles. We should not be troubled at whatever we may lack without sin, and therefore you should bear spiritual evil with a sweet submission to the will of God. I shall give three examples of things that are to be borne: the lack of sensible consolation, spiritual desertion, and many times God's seeming not to hear our prayers.

(a.) Lack of sensible consolation

Consolations are a mere advancement in grace, and we must tarry until the Master of the feast bids us to sit higher. It is sin only if the comforts of the Holy Ghost are despised, not if they are not enjoyed—when we have low and cheap thoughts of them. It is not the lack that makes it sin, but the contempt. Such things as God distributes and offers as rewards are different from duties. To lack grace,[114] though it be God's gift, is a sin because the creature is under a moral obligation; but to lack sensible comfort is not a sin, because it is merely given, not required. Therefore, when we lack these things, we are to be patient. Remember, Christ Himself parted with these for a while: when He was in the midst of His agonies (Mat 27:46). He said, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luk 22:42)…

Therefore, when Christians would have those overflowings of Christ's love come when they so desire, it may be a sign they have not learned to submit to God; it may argue impatience or spiritual pride. Remember, in these sensible consolations there may be more of self-love, and of indulgence to our own appetite, than of obedience. We praise God best when we are contented with what He gives and does, though it be with our loss. But when men cannot love nor serve God unless they be feasted with love and fed with these sensible consolations, it is like fretful children who will not be quiet until pleased with some bait and sweetness; it is not the Father's will that quiets them, but the apple or some such external satisfaction. It is an act of obedience to submit to God's mere will.

(b.) Sensible of God's withdrawal

When God withdraws Himself from fellowship with us, it is good to be sensible of God's withdrawal. But we should be troubled rather about the fault that causes God to withdraw the comfort of His presence, than merely about the punishment…I confess this is a bitter cup, but remember, Jesus Christ Himself has tasted[115] of this before us. He experienced desertion: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mat 27:46), and we do not deserve to be handled more softly than the Son of God. He complains of desertion to manifest His sense of the evil; but still He says, "Not my will, but thine be done." God may make use of this to humble us for our self-conceits,[116] for our pride and thoughts of merit, or for having an obligation upon God. It is good sometimes to be left to ourselves, and stand upon our own legs, so that we may know ourselves—as God left Hezekiah, that He might show him the pride of his heart (2Ch 32:30-32). These providences are very necessary so that we might be kept low and empty, and that grace may be exalted.

(c.) No answers to prayer

Though having no perceived answers to our prayers is a very sad case—to go away from God without a token for good, without any sensible effect of His love—yet God will show us that prayer deserves nothing. When we have wrestled mightily at the throne of grace, yet we may miss.

Why do we sometimes have no answer to our prayers, though Christ be full and God willing? It may be so that we may know we yet must have "grace for grace" (Joh 1:16); that is, grace for

grace's sake, freely. God will make us see that we are but unprofitable servants (Luk 17:10), and He will not give blessings to us but in and through Christ, when we rely upon Him. Or else we may ask too coldly, or without esteem of those spiritual blessings. Or else, perhaps, you have been too earnest for temporal blessings, and God will not give you poisoned weapons to hurt yourself. God knows what is best, and His will must be submitted to.

[2.2] The grounds for denying self-will

Now for the grounds upon which we are to renounce our own will.

(1.) The absolute sovereignty of God

The first basis for denying our self-will is the absolute sovereignty of God, and His supreme right and dominion over all creatures to dispose of them according to His own pleasure. He can destroy and annihilate, and no man can call Him to account. "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?" (Job 9:12). Before what tribunal will you cite God? And where shall He give an account of His dispensations?[117] When He takes away, who can say, "Lord, what are you doing?" Every man may do with his own what he pleases, why may not God (Mat 20:13-16)?

You are as "clay" in the hand of the potter. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom 9:20). Why should we deny God the common privilege of all proprietors? If God uses us according to His own pleasure, He uses only that which is His own. A man may cut out his own cloth as he pleases; why should we confine the right of God to narrow limits? If He make us sick, pained, infamous; if He humble us with lack; if He should take away our relations—where will you cite God to give an account of this matter? It is injurious to resist a man in the disposal of his own goods, why should we resist God Who has such a supreme and absolute right over the creature? Eli says, "It is the LORD"—it is He that is the supreme and absolute Lord—"let him do whatsoever he pleaseth" (see 1Sa 3:18). It is good to be satisfied with the will of God, and sit down and say no more. It is the Lord, and He may do with His own as He pleases.

(2.) God gave us all at the beginning.

God can take away nothing from us but what He gave us at the first. We do but return Him His own, and we should do it with thanks. When He takes anything from us, He only demands His own goods. Job said, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). He that has taken, first gave. Seneca has just such a passage: "God has taken; ay, but He gave first; it was His own." Job again: "Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and not evil?" (see Job 2:10). If God has left blessings and comforts with us, shall we be grudging when He comes and demands them again, when He did but lend them to us for a while? Remember: God, Who gave all, takes but a part. It is His mercy that He has left you anything at all!

(3.) The excellence of God's will

God is infinitely good, wise, and powerful; He knows what is better for us than we do for ourselves. Unless we will blaspheme God and count Him evil, ignorant, impotent, or weak, why should we murmur? Alas, we are poor, short-sighted, narrow-witted creatures; it is best to leave our condition to the wisdom of providence. When you go to murmur against God after He has taken away your comforts, estates, or relations, say instead, "Who am I, that I should prefer my will and my judgment before God's?"

We pray daily, "Thy will be done," and shall we disprove our own prayers? Consider which is more equal: that your will should be conformed to God's or that God's will should stoop down to yours? It is to the child's happiness that the father's will is his rule and not his own. God's will is safer than our own! We usually make our reason the highest court, and enact laws, and then we

would have God bound by them! Should the sheep choose their pasture, or the shepherd? It is God Who shapes your condition and apportions your allowance.

(4.) The honour the Lord gives us when He corrects us

Another basis for denying our self-will is the honour the Lord gives us when He takes us in hand, even though it is to correct us. Job speaks of it with wonder, "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him?...And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" (Job 7:17-18). It is meant of God's chastening, that God should spend His thoughts upon such an unworthy creature, that God should try him in a way of affliction. Howsoever grievous the chastisement be, yet it is incredible that God should look after a man.

If a king should undertake to form the manners of one of his common subjects, it is a great lowering. It is just so when God looks down upon us from the height of His imperial glory:

> He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? (Job 14:2-3)

"What is man?" says he. Man is but a vapour, and "dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one?" Will you look upon such a shadow of clay? Upon such an unclean, sinful creature?...

(5.) God's good aims

Whatever God does to His children, it is with aims of good. He is goodness itself, more apt to do us good than the fire that warms or the sun that shines. Consider, God's nature is most alien from other possible motives; He does not "afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men" (Lam 3:33). It is for our sakes that He does it. If a friend should undertake something that is contrary to his nature and disposition in order to give us pleasure, we are the more obliged to him. So it is with God. His great condescension that He should take the rod in His hand, and that He should use it to our profit, makes us all the more responsible to acknowledge His care. If God punishes, it is not that He delights in punishment; but He punishes us here so that He may not have to punish us forever! Who would not rejoice when, if he owed a debt of a thousand pounds, the creditor should require but twenty shillings?[118] It is God's mercy that we shall suffer in this world, so that we may not suffer in the world to come. "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1Co 11:32).

There is often a great deal of mercy in affliction. After the sin of Adam, there could not be a more gracious nor more wise invention than affliction to wean our affections from the delight of the senses and to meeken the spirit. And if God should not deal so with us, we had cause to complain, as if He were too gentle—just as we have cause to complain of the physician who lets his patient die, because he will not put him to the trouble of medicine, or as Eli's children had cause to complain of their father because he was so indulgent, or Amnon of David. It is a great judgment to be let alone. When God was angry with Ephraim, what is the sentence? "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (Hos 4:17). It is an honour that God is mindful of us so that He will give us suitable corrections. If a man see a serpent creeping upon another man while he is asleep, though he give that man a great blow, yet it is a courtesy to him to kill the serpent that would destroy him; so God does but kill that serpent that would kill us. We are chastised, but it is only to destroy and kill sin.

But suppose we could see no good in the affliction, yet we are bound to believe there is good in it, and not to have hard thoughts of God. Alexander,[119] when his physician was accused that he would poison him with a potion, took the letter in one hand, showed it to his physician, and then drank the potion in confidence of his trust and fidelity. Distrust will make lies of God, as if He meant to hurt and wrong us; but we should say as Christ did, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Joh 18:11). We should trust God's potion. We are dearer to God

than we can be to ourselves; He is more solicitous[120] for our good than we are for our own. God loves the lowest saint infinitely more than the highest angels love God!

(6.) Impatience

Impatience does not lessen the evil, but doubles and increases it. Impatience does not take away the bitterness of the affliction, but makes it more bitter.

Evils in the world consist in the disorder of the will, in the disagreement that is between the object and the appetite. Man's will is the cause of all his misery; we are troubled because things happen otherwise than we would have them. He that wills what God wills may have somewhat to exercise him, but has nothing to trouble him.[121] Evils that we meet with in the world come from our own will!

[2.3] Helps for denying self-will

Now for the helps by which we might bring our hearts to yield to the will of God in providence.

(1.) See God in all things.

This is the first principle of submission: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it" (Psa 39:9). God's doing it made David quiet and altogether silent. So Hezekiah speaks: "What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it" (Isa 38:15)…

As soon as we see God in the providence, it is the duty of a Christian to cease and say no more, as one answered a king: "I have learned not to dispute with him that can command legions." Why should we contend with the Lord of hosts, unless we can make good our quarrel? Every wheel turns according to the direction of that which first moved it. Creatures are but subordinate instruments of providence. We break our teeth in biting at the nearest link of the chain. Oh! Look to the supreme Mover; it is God Who has fastened all the links.

David was so far from opposing God that he bears the insolence of God's appointed instrument: "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him" (2Sa 16:11). This was spoken when Shimei cursed him and one of the captains would have taken off Shimei's head, but it was a time for humiliation rather than revenge. As a magistrate, David might have punished Shimei; but instead he said in effect, "Let him alone, I see God in it." Consider, it is God that chooses men to be instruments of His justice, that by them He may admonish us of our duty. To resist a lower officer of state is to treat with contempt the higher authority with which he is armed. Consider, instruments are set a-work by God; they could not even wag their tongue without God.

It is good to see God at the end of causes. Do not think God sits idle in the heavens; providence has no vacancy. Christ says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (Joh 5:17). God is always working in and through the operation of the creature. We look no higher than the creature, and so are apt to murmur.

(2.) Wait for changes.

Evils are better digested and borne when they are foreseen; it is like the fitting of the burden before we put it on our backs. Hereby the cross is made more portable. Job said, "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me" (Job 3:25). It is good to look for changes; it is good to look for the affliction before it finds us out, and to keep our mind and heart loose from all comforts. We have great reason to think of changes; we cannot preclude the course that God has set. The cause of suffering is born and raised with us; we were born in sin, and sin grows as we grow. Therefore the cross, which is the consequence of sin, shall not be taken away until we are taken out of the place of sinning.

God might have translated us to heaven presently, without trouble, but there is a method in all His works. He might have caused the earth to bring forth bread as well as an ear of corn, but

instead He would have it first to grow, then to lie threshed, then ground, then baked, and so fitted for man's use. In the same way, there are many preparative changes to fit us for heaven, as the stones were squared before they were set in the temple. He were a madman that should expect his bread to grow out of the ground before the corn were cleansed by the thresher, bruised by the mill-stone, or baked in an oven. And he were a madman that should expect the stones of a building to come together by chance. In the same way, it is a great madness to think to go to heaven without changes and afflictions. We must expect through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of God (Act 14:22).

(3.) Moderate and lessen your carnal desires.

Our afflictions are very much heightened by our affections. We set up a court of providence in our own hearts, enact laws there, speak of what we would do, and do not reserve the exceptions of God's providence. Oh! It is very hard to repeal the decrees and sentence of our own will when once it is set and determined. When we have decreed that thus we will do and this we will have, then we are vexed if God will not let it stand. This causes storms and murmurs against the will of God. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not" (Jer 45:5).

When men's desires are for great things, especially in uncertain times, they dress up a trouble and sorrow for themselves. Self-love and self-seeking always make way for self-trouble; therefore, keep your desires low. It is far easier to add than to subtract; it is far better to rise with providence, when the master of the feast "bids us sit higher" (Luk 14:7-11), than to be compelled to descend and lie in the dust.

Therefore, until God's will is declared, it is good to keep the heart in an equal poise for all providences, and not let our will outstart God's. David said, "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again;…[if not,] here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him" (2Sa 15:25-26). He did not dare to pass his vote first, but gives providence the first place; and so should we.

(4.) Consider what little cause to indulge murmuring.

Consider what little cause you have to indulge your own murmuring. Guilt is enough to silence any creature. You are a creature (a created being), a guilty creature, and God is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth; let this stop your mouth. There is always cause for us to be chastened by God, and we may still say, "Thou…hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve" (Ezr 9:13). We were in Babylon, and we might have been in hell. Consider, God is too just to do us wrong. Certainly there is a cause; if He will exchange hell for Babylon, then there is much of mercy, but nothing of injustice.

But suppose there were no apparent reason for a particular providence; God may keep the reason of His actions in His own will. God is under no law, and you have no tie upon Him; why should He give an account of His matters to you? If affliction is not deserved from men, it is to be borne more cheerfully. Whose cross would we bear, the cross of Christ or of the thieves? When we suffer as malefactors, we bear the thieves' cross.

There is no cause why we should allow our murmuring. Consider the evil of murmuring, search it to the root cause, and you will find it always comes from pride…Murmuring is always a fruit of supposed merit; we think we have deserved better. Alas, we are worthy of nothing, and if we have ever so little, we have cause enough to be content. Though you cannot fare as well as others, though you have not such good profit from your work, though you have not houses so well furnished—yet what have you deserved?

(5.) Do but interpret your murmuring.

What is murmuring? It is but accusing God, and it is a high presumption for creatures to tax their Creator, as if they were wiser than He. In effect it is to say, "This is not well done; there is

an error in providence, which we desire to correct." But if God's will be good and best, why should we complain?

(6.) Consider what little good murmuring will do us.

We should never argue against providence, because we cannot counterwork it. It is best to do that voluntarily which we must otherwise do by force. Submit to God, therefore, because He will have the better in all contests with men. "Who can hinder him?" (Job 9:12). Your comforts, children, and estates are in His hands; if He will take them away, who can hinder Him? Therefore, why should we murmur against Him?

II. Self-denial in Respect to God

C. God the Chief Good

Denying Self-love

The next branch of self-denial is denying self-love. God is the chief good and highest object of the creature's respect, and therefore we are to deny self, that is, self-love. This is a necessary doctrine. It is said that in the latter times men will be lovers of themselves (2Ti 3:1-2). Men always have been lovers of themselves in every age of the church, but in the latter times this evil shall reign and prevail. The latter times are inflamed with wars, and so love to our neighbour is devoured; and with heresies (2Pe 2:1), and so God is neglected; and then there remains nothing but self to be respected and adored. In a moral consideration, there are made to be but three general persons or beings: God, your neighbour, and yourself. Now when men have lost their reverence to God and their charity to their neighbour, only self is left to devour your respect.

In treating of self-love we must

1. See how far it is criminal, and then
2. Speak of the two kinds of criminal self-love, to our persons and to our interests.

1. How Far Self-Love Is Criminal

To love ourselves is a dictate of nature, and it is not disallowed by grace. We do not read that man is expressly commanded to love himself because every man is naturally inclined to it: "No man hath ever hated his own flesh, but loveth it, and cherisheth it" (Eph 5:29). By natural instinct, all creatures move and act to their own good and preservation.

But though there be not an express command, yet there is an allowance; it is implied in that precept: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mat 22:39). The thing enforced is love to our neighbour, but the thing implied is love to ourselves. There is an innocent affection planted in nature that moves every man to procure his own welfare. In procuring this welfare we have a liberal allowance; nature aims only at things necessary, but in grace God has been indulgent, enlarging the bounds of allowance. Besides necessities, God has afforded us the conveniences, moderate pleasures, and delights of the present life. Therefore the motions of self-love are regular and tolerable as long as they do not entrench upon the privilege of God, but are subject to His will and the laws of sanctified reason.

But when are the motions of self-love vicious and sinful? I answer, when they go beyond the limits prescribed, when self-love encroaches upon the love of God or the love of our neighbour, when a man loves no other but himself, and makes religion and all stoop to his private pleasure. Aristotle,[122] in his Ethics, defines self-love: "He is a lover of himself that does all he does for his own sake, and with respect to himself, to his own pleasure and profit." But let us rather take the description from the Apostle, in two places: "Those that seek their own things and not the things of Jesus Christ" (see Phi 2:21); and, "That seek their own, and not another's welfare" (see 1Co 10:24), that is, who mind the convenience of their own life, and their own private profit, without

any respect to the glory of God and the salvation of others. This is self-love that is prejudicial[123] both to God and our neighbour, when a man makes himself the center of all his actions, without any respect to God or the good of others.

Now, let me tell you of some particulars.

2. Self-love to Our Persons

This self-love is twofold: to our persons and to our interests. I told you before that "self" is a full word, and not only involves us but that which is ours. First, we manifest self-love to our persons by doting upon and admiring ourselves, and so it is contrary to true humility and lowliness of mind. Second, we manifest self-love to our interests and enjoyments by an inordinate zeal and care of our interests, preferring them before the conscience of our duty to God and our neighbour, being loath to part for God's sake with anything that is ours. I intend to treat this principally as being contrary to God's privilege of being the highest good; for this is preferring something before Him, when we can neglect His glory, or our obedience to His commands, out of a zeal to our own interests.

Self-conceit must be renounced as well as self-interest. When a man thinks of himself beyond what is fitting, and admires his own gifts and excellence, this is to be in love with his own shadow, to become our own parasites[124] and flatterers. Here I shall show you,

1. In what kind of persons this evil occurs,
2. How it shows itself,
3. How odious it is, and
4. Some remedies for it.

[2.1] In whom self-love occurs

Self-love occurs in all men by nature. By long conversation and acquaintance, a man becomes enamoured with himself and has high thoughts and opinions of his own excellence, as Goliath admired his own stature, and Nebuchadnezzar his own Babel that he had built for the honour of his majesty (Dan 4:30). There is a natural disposition this way, and there are none of the sons of Adam who are excluded. But it is most incident in those who are as follows:

(1.) Ignorant of their hearts

Self-love occurs in those that are most ignorant of the state of their own hearts.

> 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: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich. (Rev 3:17-18)

This church of Laodicea doted upon itself; she thought herself rich and lacking nothing, when in fact she lacked all things. Though she was blind and unclean, yet she was miserably conceited. In a transparent glass the least specks are seen, but in a thick bottle we cannot discern the largest clumps.

Certainly those that have the most light have the lowest thoughts of themselves. He that knows himself best loves himself least of all. Self-love is always blind; it is but a fond imagination of that which is not. "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom 7:9). When Paul had but little knowledge, he had great conceit of himself. A shallow understanding of the law would beget a large opinion of our own righteousness. Usually what is lacking in the light of reason is made up in the pride of reason!

(2.) Raised themselves to excellence

Self-love occurs in men who by their own industry have raised themselves to any level of excellence, either in estate, learning, or other endowments. There are none so apt to be puffed up and conceited of themselves as they are, for they look upon themselves as makers of their own fortune; they are not only drunk with their fortune and attainments, but admire their own prudence and diligence by which they have compassed worldly greatness and excellency. It is a question: who are most apt to dote on their own excellence, those who have been perpetually happy, or those lifted up out of misery and a low estate? In a perpetual hereditary happiness there is little of our own accomplishment to be seen; but those that have raised themselves out of a low condition are apt to be puffed up upon a double ground: their happiness and their diligence. They are happy, and they have made themselves so, as they think. And so they dote upon their own prudence and diligence, as well as their fortune and achievements.

(3.) Having great gifts

Self-love occurs in men of great gifts, especially after some public performance and exercise of them. It is hard to exercise our gifts and receive the accolades of men and not to be proud. Our minds are secretly enchanted with self-love and the music of our own praise. Therefore, the apostle forbids those that were newly begotten to Christ to be put into the ministry…"Lest being lifted up with pride, they fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1Ti 3:6). Men of great gifts and unmortified spirits[125] are very apt to fall into pride, and so into condemnation; in a strong wind it is hard to sail steady. It is a question not easily decided: which duties are most difficult, public or private? In private duties there seems to be some difficulty, because there we have no other witness but God, and so we are tempted to slight our duty, for everyone cannot see God. In public duties, we are tempted to pride and self-conceit in the exercise of our abilities.

(4.) Enamoured of own goodness

Self-love occurs in good Christians; they are in danger of being charmed with their own goodness…When men have withstood the "lusts of the flesh," and "the lusts of the eye," yet they may be overcome with "the pride of life" (1Jo 2:16). Look, when a castle cannot be taken by assault, it is often simply blown up; in just the same way, when the devil cannot surprise and take us by open assault, he seeks to puff and blow up the heart. Paul was given a "thorn in the flesh" lest he be puffed up with the abundance of his revelations (2Co 12:7), though he were a sanctified vessel, and though his enjoyments were not of an earthly nature.

It is a sin very common in the children of God to be lifted up with a vain conceit of their own worth; others may not be liable to it so much as they are. It is no wonder for a beggar to call himself poor, or a drunkard to have such low thoughts of himself. They may not be in such danger of this sin as you are.

And it is a sin forsaken only with a great deal of difficulty. God punishes it with other sins. For other sins, God uses the discipline of affliction; but for this self-love, He may punish sin with sin, giving us up to some scandalous fall, so that we might know what is in our own hearts.[126]

[2.2] How it shows itself

I shall mention but two marks for how self-love shows itself.

(1.) Admiring our own excellence

Self-love shows itself in admiring thoughts and reflections upon our own excellence. A man is apt to entertain his spirit with secret whispers of vanity, and to court himself, as it were, with suppositions of approval and honour in the world. "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart" (Luk 1:51). Proud men are full of imaginations and deep thoughts about their own worth, greatness, and excellence. This is the courtship that self-love makes to itself, when men reflect upon the excellence of their gifts and how far they excel others, as the strutting king, when he walked in the palace of Babylon, thought upon the vastness of his

dominion and empire: "Is not this great Babel that I have built for the honour of my majesty and the glory of my magnificence?" (see Dan 4:29-30). When men make an idol of self, they are prone to come and solemnly worship it, to dote and gaze upon their own excellence and achievements. But a sincere Christian's heart is taken up with admiration of Christ and the riches of the covenant, as Abraham must have been when he walked through the land of promise after God had said, "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it" (Gen 13:15).

So carnal men are prone to take a survey of their gifts and excellences, how far they excel others in abilities, prudence, and estate, and so become as parasites to their own hearts.

(2.) Partiality regarding failures

Self-love shows itself by partiality to one's own failings. Man is a very favourable judge to himself. Men favour their own sins, but with bitter censure comment upon the actions of others. "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits" (Pro 16:2). Mark, it is in his own eyes. Man is apt to be partial in his own cause, blinded with self-love. When he comes to weigh his own actions, self-love takes hold of the scale, and so there is no right done. There is a great deal of difference between our scale and the scale of the sanctuary.[127] Men are loath to see an evil in themselves; they can see small specks in the eyes of others and severely censure their failings, but cannot see large beams in their own (Mat 7:3). A sincere heart is most severe against his own sins, and flings the first stone at himself; but self-love is blind and partial.

The Apostle says, "Love covers a multitude of sins." It should do so in our neighbour, but we make it to cover only that which is in ourselves. The cases of Judah and David are very famous. Judah, when he was to sit as judge upon Tamar, would have burned her because she had committed adultery (Gen 38:24); but when he saw the bracelets, signet,[128] and staff, when he understood his own guilt, he becomes more favourable and mild. So David, when the prophet Nathan came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba, and represented the case to him, it is said, "David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die," (2Sa 12:5). But when David was found to be the person, and the prophet tells him, "Thou art the man," then he was not so severe.

In a disease we think our pain the sharpest; so when truly cured of self-love, we think no sins like our own. The Apostle Paul counted himself the chief of sinners (1Ti 1:15)…

[2.3] The offensiveness of self-love

Let me come to the offensiveness of this sin. It is prejudicial to God, to your neighbours, and to yourselves.

(1.) To God

To God, our self-love is flat sacrilege. We detract from God and rob Him of the praise of His gifts, that we may set the crown upon our own head. "They sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag" (Hab 1:16). Instead of acknowledging God, in their greatness they cry up their prudence, valour, and understanding. When we intercept God's praise, this is to deify ourselves and put ourselves in the place of God. Trust and praise are God's own privileges; it is the rent that God, as the great landlord of the world, expects from us. He has leased out mercies and comforts of the world upon this condition: that we should give Him the acknowledgment of praise. To intercept the praise due to Him is to rob Him of His rent and revenue. All creatures are bound to exalt and magnify God.

(2.) To others

Self-love makes men envious and slanderous, when men would shine alone and have all else in the world pay for their failures. Therefore, these men blast the gifts of others with

censure, aggravate others' failings, and broadcast negative opinions, that upon the ruins of all others' good name, they might erect a fabric of praise to themselves. Self-lovers are always bitter censurers; they are so indulgent to their own faults that they must spend their zeal abroad. And therefore, observe it, the apostles, when they would dissuade from the pride of censuring, bid us to consider ourselves: "If any be fallen, restore such a one with the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves" (see Gal 6:1)…If man would look inward, he might judge with more profit and less sin.

(3.) To ourselves

Inordinate self-love will prove the confusion of men. He is the best friend to himself who loves himself least. Carnal self-love is indeed but self-murder; properly, it is the hatred of your soul, which is your true self. As the ape crushes her young ones when she hugs them with too much earnestness, so this self-hugging will be your ruin. 1) Self-love hinders you from the love of God, and those that love not God shall never be happy; and 2) it is the cause of all sin.

Men shall be lovers of themselves (2Ti 3:2-5). This is set in the first place and may be the mother of all the rest. They shall be lovers of themselves, then covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers. [The logic may be,] they shall be lovers of themselves, therefore covetous, seeking to increase their own store, though the means be unjust and irregular. They shall be lovers of themselves, therefore proud, as it is common for such men to gaze upon their own excellence and the idol they set up in their own hearts. They shall be lovers of themselves, therefore boasters. Men draw others to the worship of their own idols, insulting others, because they deify themselves, loving pleasure more than God, gratifying their private appetites, though with the displeasure of God…It were easy to derive their pedigree.

…Self-love is a ground of self-trouble and discontent. When men set a high price upon themselves, and others will not come up to it, then they are troubled and vexed. He that is low in his own eyes is secured against the contempt of others; they cannot think worse of him than he does of himself. It is true, a self-loving man may set himself low in his own expression, and speak as if he were a vile creature; but that is nothing but an artifice[129] of pride, to beat self down so that it may rebound the higher. If others should think of him as he speaks of himself, his life would be much troubled.

[2.4] Remedies against self-love to our persons

If you would not be excessively fond of yourselves, consider the following:

(1.) The vileness of your original condition

It is good to remember the hole of the pit, out of which we were digged (Isa 51:1). Agathocles, a potter's son and afterward king of Sicily, preferred to be served in earthen dishes, so that he might be put in mind of his first condition. We should all consider the baseness of our original condition. Why should we be proud of our own worth? We have been infamous from our birth, tainted in our blood, prisoners to Satan, defiled in nature, and guilty of high treason against God. What a pitiful creature is man by nature! Certainly the angels, if they could be touched with such kind of passions and afflictions, cannot choose but to laugh at us when they see us so fond of ourselves. It is as if a leper should be conceited of the comeliness of his own face, and think every scar a pearl or ruby.

We will limp all our lives from the Fall and the moral disfiguration of our old nature; and the longer we live in the world, we are the more sensible of it. A man who has been sick, and then begins to walk, feels the aches in his bones; so after we are recovered, we feel the disorder of nature. We cannot do the things that we would (Gal 5:17). "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is

good I find not" (Rom 7:18).

(2.) The purity of God

If you would forsake self-love, consider the purity of God. Much acquaintance with God in our thoughts would make us loathe ourselves. How was Job helped? "Mine eyes see thee, and therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (see Job 42:5-6). The only way to loathe and abhor ourselves is to think often of God's holiness. We must be like this God in holiness. When this holy God comes with His impartial balance to weigh the spirits of men, and I come to give an account to Him, what a loathsome creature shall I appear! Whenever your thoughts begin to be tickled, and your hearts enchanted with self-admiration; when you begin to think on how much you excel others in abilities and prudence, turn your thoughts upon the excellence of God and cry out, "O vile, unclean, and unworthy creature!"—as the prophet Isaiah, when he saw God, "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isa 6:5). When you think of the immaculate purity of the holy God, all your proud thoughts will vanish. Daniel says, "I…saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength" (Dan 10:8).[130]

Men are self-conceited because God and their thoughts are total strangers. The stars shine most the farther off they are from the sun; the less light there is, as at night, the more they will shine. One seems to exceed another, "One star differeth from another star in glory" (1Co 15:41). But when the day comes, all the differences of the stars vanish, none "shines"; the heaven seems as if there were no stars at all. So it is when God arises in all His glory, those who are apt to think themselves to be better than others will see that all is nothing but darkness and mere imperfection in comparison to Him.

(3.) The greatness of your obligation

If you would forsake self-love, consider the greatness of your obligation. A man has no cause to love himself the more because he has more gifts than others, but rather to love God the more; great gifts do not argue a good man, but a good God! The apostle says, "Who hath made thee to differ?" (see 1Co 4:7). If you excel others, consider who must have the praise and glory for it. Must you praise yourself, or love God Who made you to differ? The more you have received from Him, the more you are in debt to Him. A man should be humble not only for his sins, but for his gifts and excellences. The greater our gifts, the greater must be our giving account. Gifts and excellences lay a greater obligation upon us. It is not the greatness of gifts that is the glory of the receiver, but the well using of them—this is also from God. If you are gracious and better than others, yet who made you better? If your gifts puff you up, it is an indication that you have them with a curse.

(4.) After every duty

If you would forsake self-love, consider that after every duty there is enough to keep you humble. When you have done the duty, either conscience works and smites for some failing, or it does not work. If conscience should not work, there is enough to keep you humble: "I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified" (1Co 4:4). If conscience should not smite you for one straggling thought in prayer, one carnal glance and reflection, yet still you must say, "I am not hereby justified. God knows the secret working of my heart, which is not visible to me. I am apt to be partial in my own cause; this will not acquit me before the tribunal of God." So,

> Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. (Luk 16:15)

He does not say that which is "esteemed" among men, but that which is "highly esteemed." And then He does not say that God may not have such high thoughts of it, but that it is an

“abomination” in the sight of God!

That which men call a rose may be found a weed when it comes to God’s judgment; that which you call spice may be dung when God comes to make a judgment; and your sacrifices may be just a dead and rotting body. But if conscience should work and smite you for failings, then there is enough to humble you and keep down these high thoughts that self-love is apt to put forth. “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” (1Jo 3:20). My heart may now convict me that I have had some vain thoughts and carnal reflections while I have been doing something for God, but will not God much more convict me? God sees with a more clear light. What is the light of my conscience to the pure eyes of His glory? God has an ocean-hatred against sin; I have but a drop. I may hate sin because it is against my interest, but God hates it because it is against His nature. His holiness sets Him against it. God knows the hidden turnings of the heart.

(5.) Failures

Get this advantage of your failures: that you may be the more out of love with yourself. Oh, what foul creatures should we appear if we kept a catalogue of every day’s failings, if all the errors of our lives were but drawn up together. Now, whenever you put yourselves in the balance—graces in the one scale and sins in the other—your evils will much overweigh. We have but a few days in the world, a short life, yet it is long enough for thousands of sins and evils. Our sins are more than our graces, because in every act of grace there is some fleshly attachment.

We think well of ourselves. Why? Because we only take notice of our worth and excellency, and not of our defects, as if the reflected light were nothing else but to see the good that is in us. Consider that conscience was made to censure the evil as well as to approve the good: “Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom 2:15). It should be translated, “accusing and excusing by turns”; accusing must take its turn. You are obligated not only to know your knowledge, but your ignorance; not only to reflect upon your graces, but your sin. It is an easy matter to know our graces, but it requires a great deal of grace to get a humble sense of our continual failings.

3. Self-love to Our Interests and Enjoyments

I come now to the second kind of self-love [the first being self-love to our persons]: self-love to our interests and enjoyments.

There is a lawful respect to the safety and convenience of our lives. As we are bound to love ourselves, so we are bound to love our interests and our relations. The service of Christ requires no violation of the laws of God and nature, but still the greater interest must be preserved. We are bound to love ourselves, but we must love God more than ourselves. He is a true disciple that does not seek his own honour but that of his Master.

Now, the place of Scripture for this is in Luke 14:26, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” To all these relations the Scripture enforces a dear and tender love; and yet in such cases where this love is incompatible with the love of Christ, we should rather hate than love. “Hatred” in this verse compares to “denial” in Matthew 16:24; to deny oneself is to hate one’s own life. All must be renounced for Christ’s sake because there is a higher obligation. We are more obliged to our Creator than to our parents, and we owe more service to our Redeemer than to our greatest friends and benefactors in the world. Let us not love father and mother above Christ (Mat 10:37).

Notice again, all these relations are mentioned because at one time or another they may prove a snare. The frowns of a father or mother are an ordinary temptation. When a child takes

to religion, he exposes himself to the displeasure and browbeating of a carnal father and mother. And so is the insinuation of a wife, the one that lies nearest to our hearts, a great snare. And so is provision for our children and family. And so are brothers and sisters—loss of familiarity with them. When we are to lose our commerce, it is a great temptation. Then consider love to our own lives. Life is the great possession of the creature, by which we hold other things. These are known temptations.

Well then, it is a faulty self-love when we love anything that is ours, and prefer it before the conscience of our duty to God. It is a faulty self-love when we are loath to part with our lives, our relations, or anything that is ours, for Christ's sake or the just reasons of religion.

[3.1] Observations concerning self-love to our interests and enjoyments

Concerning this self-love, I shall observe the following:

(1.) We mistake self.

I observe that we mistake our own identity, and think "self" lies more in the conveniences of the body than of the soul. A man has a soul as well as a body, and he is to seek the welfare of both. Now we love the body and seek the conveniences of the body. Often, self is expressed by the body in Scripture. Naturally our love runs out that way: "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies" (Eph 5:28). Men love this life rather than the next, and their bodies rather than their souls, and pleasure more than their bodies. They waste and harass the body in hunting after riches, pleasure, honour, profit, and such like additions to the outward life.

Now these are mere mistakes. The "self" we are to preserve and maintain is body and soul, in a proper state and constitution to perform duty to God and to attain true happiness. Now when we love only the body, we do not love that which is properly ourselves. The body has more affinity with the beasts, as our souls have with the angels. Our souls are ourselves: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mar 8:36). In another evangelist it is "lose himself" (Luk 9:25). Our souls are regarded chiefly by Christ (Mat 10:28); in the work of redemption He poured out "his soul unto death" for our souls (Isa 53:12).[131]

Therefore in denying yourself this must be distinguished. Whatever you do with the body or the conveniences of the body, do nothing to prejudice the soul and eternal happiness. I ground this observation upon this very context. Christ had spoken something of His bodily sufferings, and Peter in effect said unto His master, "Favour thyself" (Mat 16:22). Then Christ gives this lesson in the text: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Mat 16:24-25). And then Christ explains it, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat 16:26). We lose by saving the body. He who makes his body to be "himself," and the conveniences of the temporal life to be "himself," will deny Christ, but will never deny himself. You must reckon upon and discern this first: what is yourself.

(2.) We misplace self.

We misplace self as well as mistake it. He that loves himself more than God lays God aside, and sets self on the throne in his heart. This is a great crime in the eye of nature. There is a natural reverence to what we conceive to be of divine power. Everyone will say, "I love God best; God forbid, I should love anything above God." We cry out against the Jews for preferring Barabbas before Christ, yet we do the like every day when we prefer a carnal satisfaction before communion with God.

We think the Gadarenes were vile men, who could be content to part with Christ and preferred their swine before Him (Luk 8:26-37). Yet we, who profess to believe the dignity of His

person, do little less much of the time. We look upon it as a great scorn in the Philistines that they should set up Dagon above the ark (1Sa 5:2); yet this is done by carnal persons, but they are not sensible of it because it is done spiritually (as idolatry is, under this light we enjoy).

Look, when a man may give the devil bad words and yet hold the crown upon his own head, it does not exempt him from the devil's power and dominion. Many defy the devil in their words, yet defy him not with their heart; so empty professions do not satisfy. This self-love is not to be measured by naked professions, but by real experiences. If your heart is carried out more to your own person and interests than to God, and if the strength of your spirit runs out to pleasure, and if you spend whole hours and days that way and can find no time for God, then you love yourself more than God, though you do not say so much in obvious language.

[3.2] Signs of self-love to interests and pleasures

But here a question will arise: What are those usual experiences by which self-love is to be measured? I shall answer it in several propositions.

(1.) The comparison of affection with affection

The comparison of affection with affection is the best way to discover the temper and strength of our love, when we compare our affection to Christ with our affection to other matters. We cannot judge of any affection by its single exercises; that is, what it does alone toward one object. [We can judge our affections much better] by observing the difference and disproportion among our respects to several objects. If you observe the vein of marks and signs in Scripture,[132] they put us upon this compounded trial: the disproportion of our respect to God and to the world. We shall examine this both in the pleasure and profit of the world.

In the pleasure of the world, there is a description of very carnal men: "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2Ti 3:4). A man may not be as well tried by considering only his love to God or only his love to pleasure—not by his love to God, because there is in all men a pretence of devotion and service to God; nor by his love to pleasure, because there is a lawful allowance of taking pleasure in created things, provided they do not take and overcome our hearts. But now, when you compare affection with affection, when the strength of a man's heart is carried out to the use of worldly comforts and pleasures, when he neglects God and cannot find any delight in the exercises of religion and the way of communion that God has established between Himself and us—this is an ill note, and, if these reign, shows that we are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

It is the same for the profit of the world. Christ spoke a parable to show who is the covetous man, and concludes it thus, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luk 12:21). A man cannot be judged simply by his laying up of treasures, by hoarding up worldly provision, and by getting increase in the world. Why? Because we are allowed to be active and cheerful in the way of our calling, and God may bless our industry. Neither, on the other hand, [should a man be assured simply] because a man may think he has made some provision for heaven when he waits upon God in some duties of religion, and because of some cold and faint operations, some devout and cold workings of his soul.

But now compare care with care, "He that lays up treasures to himself, and is not rich towards God"; that is, when a man is all for getting wealth for himself, and is not so earnest to get grace and a covenant interest[133] for himself, to be enriched with spiritual and heavenly exercises. When men follow after spiritual things in a formal and careless manner, and after earthly things with the greatest earnestness and strength that may be; when respects to the world are accompanied with the neglect of heaven; when men can be content with a lean soul, so they may have a fat estate; when all their care is to join land to land, and not lay up evidences for heaven—this is a sign the heart is wicked and totally covetous.

(2.) The solid esteem and constitution of the spirit

Though comparison is the best way to discover love, yet this love is not to be measured by the lively stirring acts of love so much as by the solid esteem and constitution of the spirit. Why? Because the act may be more lively where the love is less firm and rooted in the heart. The passions of suitors are greater than the love of the husband, yet not so deeply rooted. The commotion may be greater in less love, but esteem and solid satisfaction are always the fruit of the greater love.

Men often will laugh most when they are not best pleased. A man may laugh at a toy, yet he cannot be said to rejoice more in that toy than in other things just because the act of his joy is more lively than it would be in a solid, serious matter. We laugh more at a trifle, but are better pleased at a great courtesy. The commotion of the body and spirits depends much upon the strength of mental image, and mental image depends much upon the sense and the presence of the object, so that the senses do much affect and urge us in the present state to which we are subjected. We are masses of flesh and blood, and it is our infirmity introduced by sin that the senses and animal spirits are affected with things of sense rather than spiritual things.

For instance, a man may have more affectionate expressions upon the loss of a child or an estate, than at God's dishonour. A man may weep more for a temporal loss than for sin. Why? Because in spiritual things grief does not always vent itself by tears. So a man may seem to have more lively joy in physical blessings than in spiritual, and yet he cannot be concluded to be carnal. Why? Because of the solid estimation of his heart: he could rather part with all these things than offend God—could rather lack this and that comfort than miss the favour of God. David longed and fainted for the waters of Bethlehem as strongly as the spouse who was sick of love longed for Christ (2Sa 23:15; Song 2:5). But he would not have refused the consolations of the Spirit, as he refused the water of Bethlehem when he poured it out. The affections may be violently carried out to a present good, and even though they may have some weakness and sin, yet the affections in this case do not argue a state of sin.

Therefore the judgment you are to make upon your heart, whether you love your relations and satisfactions more than God, is not to be determined by the rapid motion of the heart, but by its constant stream and bent. Your affections may be more vehemently stirred up to outward objects because two streams meeting in one channel run more vehemently and strongly than one stream. It is a duty, required of us by nature and grace, moderately to prize these things: children and friends, outward delights and comforts. Nature craves a part, and grace judges it to be suitable; there may be more sensible stirring in the one, though the solid esteem of the soul be set right.

(3.) The time and care that we give to outward things

As our affection to outward things is not to be judged by the vigorous motion and excitement of the spirits, so neither altogether by the time and care that we give to them. A man may spend more time in the world than in prayer with God, yet he cannot be said to love the world more than God. Why? Because bodily necessities are more pressing than spiritual. In the proportion of time, we see that God allowed six days for man to labour, and appropriated only the seventh to Himself, which seems to indicate that the supply of bodily necessities will require more time than spiritual.

I do not speak this as if in the week a man were free whether he would serve God or no, for as we may do works of necessity on the Sabbath day to preserve ourselves, so we must in the week redeem seasons for spiritual duties. But I speak this to show that the great proportion of time spent in the world does not argue disproportion of affection to God and the world. The body must be maintained; nature and grace have laid a law upon us so to do, and it cannot be maintained without active diligence in our calling. And therefore, though I should give God but

two hours in the day for direct service, and spend the other in my calling and necessary refreshment, yet I cannot be said to love God less and the world more.

This is the case, provided it is with these two cautions.

(a.) Obedience

I must go about the duties of my calling in obedience, upon a principle and for the ends of religion. If a Christian were wise, he might give God all his time, not only that which he spends in the closet, but that which he spends in the shop—as when you go about your worldly business with a heavenly mind, and do it as God's work for His glory. Those that live by manual labour must work not merely to sustain themselves, but to glorify God and do good to their neighbours. "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph 4:28). Mark, if a man were in such necessity, if he lives but from hand to mouth through manual labour, yet he is to have a gracious end to bring glory to God by being useful to his neighbour, to give to him that needs.

In effect, then, God receives the greatest portion, though grace be exercised in temporal rather than spiritual employments, for the difference is not so much in the proportion of time as in the [grace itself]. Grace works in our vocational callings; it keeps the heart right in worldly employments. And grace keeps the heart right in duties of worship. This is so that in worldly business we may have a heavenly mind, and that in spiritual business we may not have carnal minds—that now and then in your vocation you may send a glance to heaven, and in your spiritual duties you may not wander into the world.

(b.) Grace

My next caution is that you sometimes will make the world give way to grace, and encroach rather upon your temporal than your spiritual necessities. Too, too often we find the lean cows devour the fat (Gen 41:20). Now it is good sometimes to take revenge,[134] and let grace encroach upon the world for special and solemn duties. Look, as it is a sin to eat without gratefulness to God for providing the food, so it is a sin to work without reverence to God, lest we should be too much in the world. Remember, "we are debtors, not to the flesh" (Rom 8:12). Did we promise we would be all for the flesh? No, but rather we are debtors to the Spirit…It is better to make business give way to spiritual duty, than duty to business. Bernard has a pretty[135] expression: "That is a happy family where Martha is complaining about Mary"; that is, when the world complains of spiritual duty,[136] rather than duty complains of the world, for…our time and care should be spent in the work of God.

(4.) When duty and self-interest are utterly severed

The great trial of our esteem and love to God is when spiritual duty and self-interest are required to be utterly severed, when we are put upon a great difficulty requiring us to deny either ourselves or Christ. It is as a dog following two men: when they walk together in company, we do not know to whom the dog belongs, but the matter is settled when they part. God and mammon may sometimes walk together; but when they part company, you are put to your choice, whether you will leave God or the company of mammon. I leave all upon this decision, because such difficult cases are called trials: "Knowing the trial of your faith worketh patience," and, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials" (see Jam 1:2-3). Our affections are brought into the ranks, and God and angels behold the combat. Here is a deliberate debate; and when in a deliberate debate the world gets the victory of conscience, it is an ill sign. Here you show whether your esteem and a solid satisfaction is in God or not.

The things of religion seem best in the absence of a temptation. But when you are brought to an actual choice, either of duty or sin—when duty is left without sensible encouragement, or loaded with sensible discouragement—what will you do then? Which will you prefer? "They loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev 12:11) when it came to the crisis. A temptation, represented

in imagination and speculation, is nothing so terrible as it is in its actual appearance. We may be of great confidence in our own imaginations, as Peter was; but when we are called out to death itself, then not to love our friends or lives, to risk the frowns of a father, the familiarity of kindred, provisions for your children—is a sign your love to God is real. It is true, in such a case as this, a child of God may be overcome by the violence of such a temptation, but speedily he repents. Here is the great trial: when we are called out to break a law or risk an interest (as we will be sooner or later), to please men or to please God, then we are tested to see if we will deny ourselves or Christ.

The high priest under the Law had the names of the tribes upon his breast, but the name of God on his front or forehead (Exo 28:29, 36-38)…An emblem of every Christian should be this: if his relations be on his breast, yet the honour of God must be on his forehead. That interest must be chief and predominant. When we can habitually venture upon the displeasure of God to gratify our interest, this is to love ourselves more than God.

But you will say, "Many of us are still left in the dark, everyone is not called to martyrdom and public contests. How shall we judge of our own hearts, and know whether we have this kind of faulty self-love; whether we mistake and misplace ourselves, or not?" I answer, we need not wish for these cases, they will come fast enough before we come to heaven. But if they come not, there are a great many other cases by which you may try your souls—cases that do not belong to martyrdom. I shall,

- Show what are the acts of self-love,
- Clarify what shows the reign and state of self-love, and
- Give some remedies for self-love.

[3.3] The acts of self-love to our interests and enjoyments

The acts of this kind of self-love are many. All sins are a diversion of love from God to the creature; and so far as we sin, we prefer the creature before God. But there are some special acts of sin that are to be censured upon this occasion.

(1.) When a man makes duty to give way to relations

When a man can break a law to salvage an interest, and makes duty to give way to relations, this is to venture on God's displeasure in order to gratify a friend. No affection to the creature should draw us to offend God. So it is said to Eli, "Thou honourest thy sons above me" (see 1Sa 2:29)…This was God's interpretation of his act. By virtue of his office, he should have put them out of the priesthood; but he chose rather to please his sons than God, and was more careful of the reputation of his sons than of the reputation of God's worship, which was extremely scandalised. For parents to prepare their children for the Christian ministry, or continue them there merely for the income,[137] though otherwise unfit and unworthy, is to honour their sons above God. God is to have the highest honour and respect.

(2.) When we can part with spiritual prerogatives for a more free enjoyment of carnal pleasures

When we make pleasures to be the business of our lives, and are motivated to them with great affection, but are cold and careless in the service of God, this is to love pleasures more than God (2Ti 3:4). It is a sin that does not deserve to be stroked with only a gentle censure. There is much irreverence shown when duty and pleasure come in competition, and when we cannot find any contentment in communion with God, but can part with it to gratify the senses. The temptation is so low, that the sin rises the higher. When the consolations of God are exchanged for the pleasures of sin, it is a sorry exchange, like Esau's selling his birthright for a mess of pottage (Heb 12:16).

When the temptation is small, and yet prevalent,[138] it is a sign the natural inclinations are

very great. They are carried downwards by their own weight, as heavy bodies; they are not forced, but inclined. A little sinful delight and satisfaction draws them out of the way and makes them risk the love of God, the consolations of the Spirit, and whatever is dear and precious to Christ. Now this is aggravated when, upon serious debates and struggles of conscience, men do not do what is best, but what is sweetest. It is a very dangerous symptom of this evil, because debate argues something of choice and full consent—not only doing evil, but preferring it!

(3.) When men have an actual conviction upon them, and out of carnal reasons think of delays

"They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise" (Mat 22:5; cf. Luk 14:18); they were loath to part from those things. Christ not only calls from sin but from the world. They do not send a denial, but an excuse. Some neglect, others oppose. They do not kill the preachers, yet they prefer these paltry matters before the king's grace tendered to them. When their hearts are affixed on worldly affairs, they will not leave them for heavenly offers. A too great care for the business of the world works a neglect of God. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb 2:3). Though we do not openly despise or oppose, yet if we neglect, we think the world better and will not be called off to higher things.

(4.) When men have a greater savour in worldly gain than in the ordinances of God

Self-love of their own interests is shown when they think all the time that is spent in spiritual duties is lost. For those wretches who said, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" (Amo 8:5), it was a hindrance and loss to them to lose a day; it was irksome to have to fast from gain. It is an irreverent spirit that continually begrudges God His time, and thinks that all is lost that is spent in duty and service to Him. This is to love the world more than God.

This savour is betrayed by self-denial, when we can deny ourselves more for pleasure than for God. It is an ill sign when we count nothing too much for our lusts, and everything too much for God. When we spend our lives in the world (Psa 127:2) in pleasure, counting it a pleasure to riot[139] in the day-time (2Pe 2:13)—this is to love pleasure more than God. When we habitually cut God short of the duties that we owe Him, and do not keep the soul healthy, and are loath to redeem time so that we can participate in the ordinances, yet can spend time freely and without remorse in sinful pleasures, and this is our joy and rejoicing; and when men can rack their brains and waste their strength in worldly business, yet will not take pains in a godly life—it shows that the world, not God, is uppermost in the heart.

(5.) When we do many things that are contrary to conscience

Self-love of our own interests is shown when, for our ambition to attain the favour of men, we do many things that are contrary to the conscience of our duty to God. It is an ill sign when men cannot satisfy themselves in the approval of Christ; He should be first to us instead of all else. It were a great folly in a race to make the people judges; it is no matter what by-standers say, so long as the judges of the race do concur.

Yet thus too many do; they are convinced of the excellence of the ways of God, yet dare not profess them, lest they should lose the praise of men (Joh 12:42-43). Their consciences were sufficiently convinced, but their heart was not subdued and weaned from self-respect. Thus it falls out: men are hardened, not so much for lack of light, as lack of love to God; they will not bow to truth. When such a spirit reigns, it is wholly inconsistent with grace, for so Christ charges it: "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?" (Joh 5:44). Men are loath to lose credit with their own group. Hear Paul: "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal 1:10). As a Pharisee, Paul was carried with a wild zeal and animated with a false fire.

(6.) When we are more satisfied with outward enjoyments

Self-love of our own interests is shown when we find more contentment in outward enjoyments and are more satisfied with them than with God's love and favour—when men cannot find any sweetness in communion with God, but are wonderfully drawn out in fleshly delights. This is contrary to the dispositions of God's people: "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere" (see Psa 84:10). Oh, that is a day of a thousand that is spent in free access to God in His ordinances! Wherever there is a new heart, it must have new desires and new delights. But carnal men, like swine, find more pleasure in swill than in better food. To them, it is irksome to converse with God in spiritual duties; they find no more pleasure than in the white of an egg.[140] As those who brought the sick and lame animals for sacrifice, yet they count it a great burden and say, "What a weariness is it!" (Mal 1:13). They puffed and blew and said, "How weary am I with bringing this sacrifice!" This is an ill note, and does in effect proclaim that the life of pleasures is more excellent and satisfying to them than that which is spent in the exercises of religion.

(7.) When men envy them that have outward increase

It argues a trace of this carnal self-love when men envy them who have an outward increase, as if they had the better portion. This is an evil with which the children of God may be surprised when Satan is at their elbows. They may have admiring thoughts of the world, and think it a brave thing to milk out the breasts of worldly consolations.

To emphasize this evil, consider, the devil himself is not taken with material things, carnal pleasure, or the delight of the senses. Why? because he is a spiritual being. Christians are made partakers of a divine nature (2Pe 1:4); therefore when carnal men increase in wealth, or grow fat and flourish in outward pleasure, they should not envy them. The people of God have always disclaimed this evil, as the psalmist does in Psalm 4:7, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." If they grow fat upon common mercies, should I wax lean upon spiritual mercies? So it is in Psalm 17:15, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Those that bear down all before them with violence may be filled with treasures—they may provide for their babes—but I do not envy them their portion. I have a better that is provided. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

(8.) When men are more troubled for worldly losses than they are for sins against God

When men are more troubled for worldly losses than they are for sins against God, this is also to love created things more than God. All affections follow love, and so does grief; and therefore it is notable when it is said, "Jesus wept," and then follows that they said, "Behold how he loved him!" (Joh 11:35-36). The greatness of our grief will reveal the greatness of our love; therefore, when we grieve more for worldly losses than for sins, this is an act of self-love. I confess, in crosses[141] there may be a greater commotion, but there should not be a more solid grief. A Christian's sorrow is consecrated; it is water for the uses of the sanctuary. We should not lavish out our tears, but reserve them. Men may spend their affections on carnal matters, and then, when they should mourn for sin, they have no tenderness left. Most of our grief should be for the insult we put upon God's grace. It is an argument that men love something else more than God, when they can grieve more for a temporal loss than for a departure of [God's presence].

[3.4] The reign and state of self-love in our interests

What shows the reign and state of self-love? Most of the marks already given are convincing, yet you must know that a man is not tried by what he does during a particular temptation; but a man is to be measured by the constant course of his life. When a man makes the scope of his

life to be pleasures and earthly advantages rather than God's service, lets all care of heaven go, constantly consults with flesh and blood, and is ruled and guided by the love of the creature and respect to his own interest, rather than the love of God—this shows his state. Many a man, in fact and by the interpretation of his actions, may be said to love the creature more than God.

But his state is to be measured by the esteem and solid constitution of his soul. When a man's bent is to the carnal life, when he is prejudiced against the strict part of religion, when he has neither hope, desire, nor estimation for Christ as the pearl of greatest price (Mat 13:46), when he is put to the test, he falls away from Christ to the "present world" (2Ti 4:10). Men seek to provide for their safety and profit rather than their peace of conscience, and they never, unless in a slight manner, look after their true self or grieve for the failings in their actions. This shows that it is a habitual disposition. Self is on the throne and not God!

[3.5] Remedies for self-love in our interests and enjoyments

I come now to offer some remedies. Herein I shall speak 1) something by way of consideration and 2) something by way of means…To inform the judgment is not so necessary; everyone will confess that it is not fit to prefer himself before God. My focus, however, is to impress an awe upon the heart, and to awaken faith and meditation.

(1.) Things to consider in order to deny self-love

(a.) Consider how you differ from God's children.

Consider how much you differ from the character of God's children when you prefer self before God, and esteem the outward appendages of life rather than that which is properly yourself. The children of God count the worst part of godliness better than the best of worldly pleasures. They prefer Christ even at the worst of times. When obedience puts them upon inward trouble or outward suffering, yet they think it is fit that Christ should have the honour. They count the groans of prayer better than the acclamations of the theatre. The very tears of God's children are blessed, and they look upon the most burdensome and difficult duties as sweet. They cannot only say, "Thy love is better than wine" (Song 1:2)—that is, the manifestations of God's grace are choicer than his own best refreshments—but, "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand" (Psa 84:10). Galeacius Carracciolus[142] said, "Cursed be the man that thinks all the world worth one hour's communion with God."

Now when you habitually prefer your pleasure and contentment, what a vast difference is there between you and Christians! It is recorded of Moses that he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb 11:26)…Thuanus[143] reports that Lewis Marsae, a French nobleman, when he was condemned to suffer for religion, and because of the nobility of his blood was not bound with ropes as others were, said, "Give me my chain also, and make me a knight too of this excellent order." The reproaches of Christ are better than all the pleasures of the world!

(b.) Consider the Day of Judgment.

Consider how you will be able to look Jesus Christ in the face on the day of recompenses, when you have such cheap and low thoughts of Him for trifles, when you are content to part with God and Christ, and all the comfort and hope of the Spirit, for a trifle, for worldly concerns, for base and worthless pleasures. The Day of Judgment is one of the enforcements of self-denial. When Christ laid down this doctrine of self-denial, He said, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Mat 16:27)…Because you would forsake Christ upon so small a temptation, and would sell all the excellent things of religion for a toy, a matter of nothing, how will you look the blessed companions of Christ in the face: angels and those self-denying saints who could give up every concern and count not their lives dear? You will become the scorn of saints and angels, "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and

strengthened himself in his wickedness" (Psa 52:7). This is the man that would not make God his portion, that preferred his body before his soul, and his wealth and pleasure before Christ; this is he that would not part with a little comfort in the world for Christ's sake!

(c.) We should love our best self.

If we would love ourselves, we should love our "best" self. The dignity of the soul requires the best care to keep and save it. The body was made to be the soul's instrument to work by, therefore the body is inferior to the soul. We should look principally to the safety of the soul. Besides, the bodily life may be lost, but the soul endures to eternity; the bodily life may be repaired to health, while the soul is sick. Therefore it is best to secure the soul in the hands of Christ, and then you cannot fail. Alas, the body is but the outward casing of the soul! Anaxarchus,[144] when he was put into a great mortar and pounded with brazen pestles, cried out to his tormentor, "Beat on, beat on the bag of Anaxarchus; you cannot hurt himself!" Now, who would preserve the casing and lose the treasure?

(d.) You must first look to your soul.

You may seek self[145] with more allowance from God and conscience, yea, and with more success, when the better part of self is once secured and made safe. Self-love is not removed by grace, but overruled and put in its proper place. We are first to look after the necessities, and then the conveniences of life. We are bound to look after the necessities and conveniences of the body, but first we must look to the soul.

One thing is necessary (Luk 10:42). It is a necessary thing to secure the soul. It should be the main care of a Christian to obtain what is necessary for the salvation of his soul; this will secure you in life and death. This one thing is simply necessary. This one thing is necessary for itself, and all other things are necessary in order to it. You are to maintain your body that it may be an instrument for your soul while you work toward true happiness.

Seek first the kingdom of God (Mat 6:33). First seek to get into a state of grace. The kingdom of God represents the whole state of evangelical grace. The first thing the Israelites did in the morning was to seek manna. This kept them alive. So the first thing, and your primary care and work, should be to secure your soul, and then all other things will be added, so far as they are proper.

(e.) The very motives and reasons that draw us to self-love, draw us to better things.

He who loves anything would love the best of the kind; and therefore, if we love anything that is good, let us love that which is eternally good. What do we love? Is it friends, life, glory, pleasure, substance? When we love friends, let us love the best of friends—an eternal friend such as God is. We should please them most with whom we are to live longest. If we love long life, let us love eternity; if glory and praise, remember that there is no praise like that which is given us before God and angels out of Christ's own mouth; vain glory, it is nothing to everlasting glory. If we love pleasure, let us love the best of the kind, those pleasures that are at God's right hand—the nearer the fountain, the sweeter the water. If we love wealth, let us love "enduring substance" (Heb 10:34), the joy of heaven. All earthly things are but perishing movables.[146]

(f.) Consider what reason we have to love God above all things.

Not only in point of deserving are we more obliged to God than to all things in the world, and not only in point of law and duty, which we shall be responsible for, but in point of natural reason. All the creatures are but the image and shadow of that goodness that is in God. The good of the creature is but a ray or beam of the chief good. God has given some of His goodness to us…Why should we give much attention to the image and neglect the substance? Why should we love other things, and not God much more—and chase after the shadow as does a dog but let go the substance? It is true, in the creature there are some evidences of God's goodness that should serve to put us in mind of God, not to capture our affections, but to proclaim to us that God is more worthy of our respect and esteem. God has put some of His

goodness in all the creatures to admonish us, not to satisfy us.[147]

Consider, all these things stand in need of God to preserve them. They need other things, but now, God alone is enough, and He Himself can satisfy you without created things. He that has God has all things; he that possesses Him "possesseth all things" (1Co 3:21-23, 2Co 6:10). They are more yours when you do not have them than when you enjoy them without God, for then they are less of a snare to you. So then, say to God, with indignation to all other loves, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Psa 73:25).

(g.) Consider trials.

It is a very great honour when you are called out to any actual trial, so that you can show how much you love God above the creature. There is no cause of grief in such a case, if our eyes were opened and our affections mortified. Certainly it is better to give up our concerns to God freely than to have them taken away from us by force; to offer them up to God, than to have them snatched from us.

It is a great honour that God will have our will exercised and our loyalty manifested. He might take away our pleasant things by the dominion of His providence. They might be taken away in punishment. It is an honour when we can sacrifice them by way of thanksgiving. Death will take us from them, and God may take them from us. It is an honour that we may resign them before we die, and that by an act of choice and consent we may render them to God for the sake of a good conscience. To you, it is given to suffer (Phi 1:29), says the apostle; your gain will be more than your loss.

(2.) The means to denial of self-love

The means that may enable you to obtain this self-denial follow.

(a.) See that you take heed of being overly focused on or absorbed with yourself.[148]

We are apt to make ourselves too large; take heed what you count yourself. There is an old and corrupt self, which we should not own. Consider that your comfort, your safety, and your value and acceptance with God do not depend upon these things (Luk 12:4-7, 15). Your safety does not lie in them; they are only pipes to convey the blessing of God to you. You do not live upon abundance, but upon providence; otherwise your bread would be as a turf of earth to you, not your comfort.

A man may have happiness enough in God alone, without the creature (Hab 3:17-19)… Neither your value and esteem with God, nor your eternal life, lies in it. God loves you, though naked, stripped of all temporal gifts and favours; He does not love yours, but you! Jesus Christ died not for your goods and estate, but for your person. And when God looks for you in heaven, He does not look that you should come with a train of outward comforts; for when we go to the grave, we go naked; we leave these things behind us.

(b.) Exercise faith upon the blessed recompenses.

What is the reason men give too much attention to the creature? They do so because they are not acquainted with a higher glory. Carnal men are near-sighted; they cannot "see afar off" (2Pe 1:9). They look upon the things of heaven as golden dreams, as pleasing delusions; therefore they cannot be divorced, nor separate their affections, from present comforts. It is notable that, when Christ said to Zaccheus, "Salvation is come to thy house," Zaccheus said, "Half of my goods I give to the poor" (see Luk 19:8-9). As good almost bid men pluck themselves asunder, as press them to such a thing. It may be as difficult as rending the body from itself, yet the sight of heaven will do this.

(c.) Faith must be employed to judge rightly of present sufferings and encumbrances.

Faith must count losses to be savings. As we are not to believe human reason alone, so also we are not to believe our senses against the articles of faith. Why do we believe the glorious mystery of the Trinity, three in one? We believe this doctrine because Christ has revealed it to

us. The same Jesus has revealed, “Blessed are they that suffer persecution; and he that loseth his life shall save it” (see Mat 5:10-12; Mar 8:35). Why should we count as grievous that which Christ has called blessed? Why should we count as loss that which indeed is the greatest gain? We are as much bound to believe persecutions will make us blessed, and losing will be saving, as we are bound to believe that God is three in one, and that there is a union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ.[149] Faith is as much seen in practical matters as it is in abstract doctrines…

(d.) Let us love ourselves, and all things else, in God and for God’s sake.

When God is made ours, we love ourselves in loving God. We should love nothing but for God’s sake; we should do all to His glory, and with aims and ends of religion (1Co 10:31). Certainly God does all things for Himself. We should not love any other—no, not even ourselves —but for God’s sake and the accomplishing of His holy will. If we love the godly, we should love them because they bear His image. Our enemies we should love because of God’s command, and our relations and comforts because they are God’s gifts to us. God must have all the heart; and in those affections that are carried out to other things, the supreme reason must be taken from God. That is the law still in force: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” (Deu 6:4-5). And it is often repeated in the New Testament.[150]

We are to reserve no part for idols, for creatures; all is too little for so great a God, though it be more than we can perform. When a great prince on a journey comes to an inn, he takes up all the rooms in the house, believing it inconsistent with his state to have a stranger share with him. All our respect must either be carried out to God, or to other things for God’s sake. Certainly this will be a means to keep ourselves from such a degree of affection to them, as may alienate and divide our souls from God. Yea, in whatever we love, it will make us tend to the service and glory of God.

As when a compass is fixed in the center, it gives strength and direction to the other part that moves about the circumference; so it is when the heart is fixed in God, resolved to love God alone, we shall receive strength and direction from Him. Our love will be rightly set. The saints and angels above love God with all their hearts and all their souls, therefore they cannot sin. Love is their rule and guide, they can do nothing inordinately; in the same way we should labour to come up to that level…

II. Self-denial in Respect to God

D. God the Last End

Denying Self-seeking

The fourth branch of self-denial is against self-seeking, by which I mean a denial of our own ends, goals, and purposes, for God must be the utmost end of all the creature's actions.

Here I shall show,

1. What this self-seeking is,
2. The evidences through which it shows itself,
3. How necessary it is to handle it,
4. How difficult it is to deny this part of self, and
5. Some remedies by way of consideration and practice.

1. What Self-seeking Is

Self-seeking is a sin by which men refer all they do, or can do, to their own glory and advancement. There is a double self-seeking, which reflects the double end of the creature's being and operation: 1) one by which we aim at our ownprofit, and 2) another by which we aim at our ownglory. For the two great ends of the creature's being are that we may enjoy God, and then that we may glorify God.

[1.1] When we aim at our own profit, and are satisfied with it without God

Our great aim should be to enjoy God, that is, the happiness to which we are inclined by the bent of nature. An immortal soul was made for an eternal good; nothing beneath God will satisfy it (Ecc 5:10). The heaven that we expect is the filling up of the soul with God (Eph 3:19). In this world, while we are here below, there is a great controversy between God and self; but in heaven the quarrel will be resolved, and we and God will be united in the nearest and closest way of union and communion, so that we may enjoy Him forever.

Now, when we rest in any low enjoyment, and are satisfied with it without God, that is self-seeking; in effect, it is self-destroying and self-losing (Mat 16:25). But the Scripture speaks according to our aim and intention; we intend to seek ourselves, though in effect we do but lose ourselves. Scripture speaks, "All seek their own, and not that which is Jesus Christ's" (Phi 2:21). Of this kind of self-seeking, some who do God's work are guilty—they do not do it for God's end, to enjoy Him, but rather to enjoy [profit of] the world. Some make a mere merchandise of obedience. If they have worldly gain, they are satisfied…"They have their reward" (Mat 6:2).

They will acquit and release God of all the grant and promise that He has made of heaven to them in the covenant of grace, if God will give them a patent to enjoy as much of the world as they can. This indicates a sordid and base spirit.

They are such as "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom 16:18). The Apostle speaks of false

teachers who did not make God their end, but were wholly bent upon their secular profit. Such may not reprove men for their sin, but soothe men in their sin. In their preaching there is no salt, and in their private visits there is a great deal of worldly compliance. This is all because they have set up another god, such a base thing as the belly, instead of Christ.

[1.2] When the aim of the heart is at our own glory

The next aim of the creature should be to glorify God in all the motions and operations of the soul. This must be the settled frame and constitution of the soul. To enjoy God is our happiness; to glorify God is our work; and, therefore, when the aim of the heart is at our own glory and praise, this is self-seeking.

Now, so that you may discern it the better and see when the soul is guilty of it, I shall show you how far we are to intend the glory of God in every action of ours. I shall do it in the following propositions:

(1.) In all civil[151] actions

The glory of God must be the end we propose to ourselves in all our civil actions. Though the action be civil, yet the end must be religious—that I may glorify God and do good to others, though it be but in such natural actions as eating and drinking. This must be the fixed aim, to do all to the glory of God (1Co 10:31); otherwise you set up another god, a Moloch instead of God (Jer 32:35). When merely you eat to gratify your own flesh, it may be a meat-offering and drink-offering to appetite. So also for your business: if it be merely for wealth, it is but consecrating yourselves to mammon and setting the world in the place of God.

This is the great mercy of God, that, considering our necessity, He has so wisely ordered the world that He might lose no part of our time. Even our natural actions may be religious. Works of nature may become acts of grace, and our business dealings may be a kind of worship, when our ends are to glorify Him. Otherwise we set up self in His place. Your very eating is idolatry when it is merely to please and gratify self; your table is a table of devils—"whose God is their belly" (Phi 3:19). And then, as for your business, when you trade in the world merely to grow rich, and have not an aim at the glory and service of God, you set up another god: mammon is your god. "No man can serve two masters…Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat 6:24).

But here a question arises that is worthy of discussion: whether in every action we are bound actively to intend God's glory? I answer, we should labour as much as we can to make our very thoughts active (2Co 10:5). This is the very vitality and vigour of the spiritual life, when all our natural actions are raised up to a supernatural intention. As a Christian is not to have evil aims, so also he is not to be like a blind archer, to shoot at random and without a mark.

Why should we at any time forget God, Who always remembers us? There is not a moment that passes but God looks after you, or else you could not live (Psa 3:5; Col 1:17)…There is not a good thought of yours forgotten. The spiritual life seems to be asleep when we do not think of God. We are obliged to gratitude.

Certainly an active elevation of the soul should be of no great labour and trouble, because thoughts are quick and sudden. It will not hinder us, or be a burden to us, to look up with the eye of our soul, but it would be of great profit! It would make the actions of the mind more acceptable to God (1Pe 2:5), and the soul would the better be kept upright. This will be as a golden crown upon the head of every action, and will be an excellent means to prevent carnal injections.[152]

However, because of our infirmities in the lesser actions of life,…a Christian may not always actually think of heaven, yet his heart is set that way…

In the noble actions of life that require more labour and difficulty, our thoughts should be explicit. The reason is because Satan is ready to blast every serious duty with the injection of

carnal thoughts. The devil is not only with you in the shop, but in the closet and at religious duty. Many times, though we begin "in the spirit," yet we are apt to end "in the flesh" (Gal 3:3). Self recoils upon us! When Abraham had quartered the sacrifices the fowls came down, but he drove them away (Gen 15:11). When we think of offering duty to God, carnal thoughts are apt to rush into the mind; so that without this actual intention we may easily begin for God, and yet notwithstanding end for self-interest!

(2.) In all sacred actions

In sacred actions—in the higher operations of the soul, be they either internal or external—the utmost end must be the glory of God.

(a.) In internal actions

In internal actions, in desires of grace and salvation, our only end must not be self. Our motions are proper when they are conformed to God, when we have the same end and aim as God has. Now whatsoever God does, both within and without, in creation and grace, it is for Himself, "The LORD hath made all things for himself" (Pro 16:4). Well then, we should seek grace and glory with the same aim that God gives it: the praise of the glory of his grace (Eph 1:5-6). God's aim is that grace may be glorified in your salvation and in your acceptance of Jesus Christ. I desire my salvation, but I should not rest there; instead, my utmost aim should be that God may be glorified in my salvation.

Some question whether or not we may look to the reward; but those that do so seem to misunderstand heaven. They have a carnal notion of the reward of the gospel, and dream of the Muslim heaven, not the heaven of the gospel. What is the heaven of the gospel but to enjoy God forever, in the way of a blessed and daily communion? Now, can any man be so irrational to conceive that we should not aim at the inheritance of the saints in light, as well as at the vision and enjoyment of God? This of necessity must be a high act of grace, to seek my own happiness in the highest way of communion with God. They misunderstand the nature of the covenant, or the way with which God would deal with men, for God has invested His precept with a promise, and men would seem wiser than God.

We may use the Spirit's motives without sin, as the saints have done throughout history. It was a foolish modesty in Ahaz, when God bade him ask, and he would not ask a sign (Isa 7:10-12); so it is a foolish modesty when men will not act their faith upon the blessed rewards. Christ used this way, as it is said, "for the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb 12:2).

And truly all creatures, as they are now made, must take this course: to look at the glory, so that they may discharge the duty and endure the cross. No created agent can rest merely in the beauty and goodness of his own action. It is folly to say that virtue is a reward to itself, if you speak of eternal reward. Rather, [eternal reward to His children] is God's covenant way. We are not only to regard duty, but the encouragement of duty.

However, the reward must not be the chief cause, but only the encouragement. The ultimate reason must be the glory of God. When we make the reward the ultimate end of all we desire, this is to respect self above God. Rather, the glory of God must be the mainspring of all our desires and hopes. To look after happiness is an innocent aim of nature, but to glorify God is the aim of grace. Now, only to aim at happiness is the mere motion of nature and our own will; but it is our duty to have a further aim at the glory of God. By the law of our creation we were bound to aim at the glory of God—even if our happiness were not subordinate to it—for God "made all things for himself" (Pro 16:4).

(b.) In external actions

In external actions and in duties of worship, we must have a good aim. It is dangerous in sacred things to be insincere, and by the temple to serve the concerns of the shop. This is to put

dung in God's own cup; this is to make God serve with our iniquities; and to use worship as a pretence and cover to our own interest. When we pervert things from their proper use, we do them an injury. If a cup were made for a king to drink in, and we should use it as a vessel to keep dung, it would be a high affront…Duties of worship were made for the special honour of God by His appointment, therefore they should have no end beneath themselves.

(c.) In all conditions of life

In all conditions of life, a Christian should be indifferent to every condition so that God may be glorified. He should be like a die in the hand of God: let providence cast him high or low, as it pleases God. So be it, that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death (Phi 1:20). I am indifferent; my aim is only to magnify Christ. This is the temper of a Christian. Things may fall out, not as we think but always as we would, if our general aim is to God's glory, for in providence we are required only to be passive. There is nothing left to our choice; we are to resign up our wills to His good pleasure. Our duty is submission. Events must be left to God Himself, and in these things He will provide for His own glory.

Well then, whether your condition is prosperous or adverse, pleasing or displeasing, if it is for God's glory, it should be all the same to you. When a traveller asks the way, it is all the same to him if you direct him to the right hand or left, just as long as he may accomplish his journey. So it is to a Christian: whether his way to heaven lies by sickness or health, by quiet or trouble, by living at home or in exile and banishment, abased or abounding, by possessions or poverty, a Christian is content, as long as God may be glorified. Thus should we, in all conditions of life, submit ourselves to the disposal of God, that He might be glorified in us.

Some say that we should think about the eternal state of our souls in a particular way: that it should make no difference to us whether He will damn us or save us, just as long as He may be glorified. I answer, No; this seems to be extremely harsh, and God does not put us upon that trial…Such a trial was only required of Christ, that He should lay down His soul for a while without the consolations of the Godhead...God in His covenant seeks to draw on men to be earnest for the everlasting welfare of their souls, rather than to leave it at His disposal (Act 2:40).

By this you may see what is self-seeking: when we do not make it our aim to enjoy God and glorify Him.

2. The Evidences of Self-seeking

Now to give you three signs by which a self-seeker may be discovered. The best judge is his own conscience, yet [we shall mention some things in order] to revive conviction.

[2.1] When a man professes godliness for worldly advantage

A man is guilty of this self-seeking when he makes a profession of godliness because of the promise of some worldly advantage. Observe the argument of the Hamor and Shechem; they would yield to circumcision upon this supposition: "Shall not all their cattle, and all that they have be ours?" (see Gen 34:20-24)—a brutish argument, and yet this is very common, especially in times of public changes. It is common for men to follow a dying church for a legacy,[153] as vultures for a carcase; the change may be good, but their end is stark wickedness. There may be a great idol in their own hearts. Men may follow Christ "for the loaves" (Joh 6:26); they did not value His person, but they would live at ease and be fed with miracles. Seldom is Jesus valued for His own sake. Men seek temporal conveniences in the practice and profession of the gospel—ease, peace, wealth, credit—and so they appropriate Jesus Christ to secular uses. It was an inestimable mercy that God should send His Son, yet they looked no further than the loaves!

[2.2] When a man cannot endure to be crossed for his religion

Carnal professors are enemies to Christ's cross (Phi 3:18-19); their lamp will not burn, unless it be fed with the oil of praise and profit. A godly man is contented to be neglected and abased for Christ, and yet still is satisfied with Christ's workings…A horse that has a nail in his foot may travel well upon soft ground, but in a hard and gravelly path he halts. So men may like religion as long as it is accompanied with convenience, but they are "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phi 3:18-19).[154] They are but hirelings, and will soon prove to be changelings: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?" (Job 2:9). When men are delicate and tender, and cannot endure the cross (Mat 16:24), it is a sign they had other aims of credit and profit in their profession of faith.

[2.3] When a man envies others in the same profession

We should rejoice in others' gifts and graces, and be glad that God may be honoured through them as well as ourselves. But proud men would shine alone; they envy the gifts and graces of others. This is a sure note of self-seeking. It is not grace they look after, but carnal advantage. This is the practice of the elder brother, whom Christ exposes (Luk 15:25-32). He who is truly gracious desires that others may partake of the same grace, for he knows that God is thereby the more glorified. But when we are covetous of reputation and design our own honour, then the fewer [who partake of the same grace], the greater is our advantage. These men know that their own stream will suffer some loss when it is diffused into so many channels.

What Paul says is notable: "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another" (Gal 5:26). Self-seeking puts men upon passions and envy. They are touchy because they are jealous of their own interest, and they are envious because they think the commonness of gifts and graces detracts from their esteem.

3. The Necessity of Denying Self-seeking

Now I will show you how necessary it is that you should practise, and that we should preach, this part of self-denial. How necessary it is appears enough already, but we will encourage you yet further.

[3.1] The necessity of practicing self-denial

(1.) That you do not rob God of His essential honour

You should deny self-seeking, partly, so that you may not rob God of His essential honour. There is nothing that alienates a man from God so much as self-seeking…When men look to the world and the approval of men, they do not care for God. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1Jo 2:15). Christ is troublesome to such, not welcome, because of the debt they know they owe Him.

Brethren, it is no small matter I am speaking about; self-seeking abuses God exceedingly. It is one of His prerogatives to be the utmost end of the creature's being and operation, and you therefore usurp that which is proper to God. When self has a pre-eminence above God, God is kept out of the throne. Pharaoh reserved only this: to be greater in the throne than Joseph. You may do much that is good—clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give your body to be burnt—but all this while self is greater than God in the throne of your life.

(2.) That you do not rob God of His tribute from His creatures

Denying self-seeking is very necessary, that you may not rob God of His tribute from the creatures. God has given us many things, but reserved this: "My glory will I not give to another" (Isa 42:8). He has given us the profit, that we may give Him the glory. God has given us a loan of the comforts of the world; but this has He reserved as His rent and acknowledgment: that He will be glorified in all our actions and honoured in all our blessings. God has made us, and has a

right and title to us (1Co 6:20). He that planted the tree has a right in the fruit. God, Who made us, certainly expects some fruit from us. God gave us talents to this purpose, or rather lends us; we are but servants to employ the talents to our Master's use. A Christian has given himself up to God as a "living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1). You are not your own; God has a right and title to you. Therefore do not rob Him of His glory. A sacrifice under the Law was no more his that offered it, but the Lord's.

[3.2] The necessity of preaching self-denial

As it is necessary you should practise the denial of self-seeking, so it is necessary we should press it again and again upon you. Self-seeking is a secret evil, as well as a dangerous and heinous one. Two things I observe.

(1.) The greatest self-seeking may be carried on under the colour of self-denial.

As the Gibeonites put on old shoes and old garments to make a league with Joshua (Jos 9:3-6), so too many pretend mortification and self-denial to endear themselves to others, for worldly profit and advantage. Carnal designs of men have been carried on under a pretence and veil of religion. Herod pretended to worship, but afterward sought to have Christ destroyed (Mat 2:8-16); Jezebel proclaimed a fast to destroy Naboth (1Ki 21:9-10); and Simeon and Levi pressed the Shechemites to be circumcised out of revenge (Gen 34:13-29). A crocodile weeps and then catches a prey. Carnal ends are often shrouded under religious pretences.

(2.) We are more apt to accuse others out of envy than to reflect upon ourselves.

Many think self-seeking is a sin only incident to those who are called to public employment, either in the church or commonwealth. Now, we may warn others, but we cannot judge them; for self-seeking lies in the aim of the spirit, and is liable to the censure and judgment of God alone. When Job's action was fair, yet it was Satan's accusation, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" (Job 1:9). You should not out of envy accuse others, but rather reflect on your own heart. We may not have such opportunity as they to enrich ourselves, and that may make us envious; but are you not a self-seeker so far as you can reach? Oh, the envy that is in our hearts, and the pride that is in our prayers and conferences, which we do not take notice of! If you would be thought well of in your place, as Simon Magus would be "some great one" (Act 8:9), then you may be guilty of simony,[155] as they may be guilty of hypocrisy, bribery, and purloining from the public.

4. The Difficulty of Denying Self-seeking

To deny self-seeking is a difficult and hard piece of self-denial. Self-seeking is natural to us: "All seek their own" (Phi 2:21). All our aims, naturally, are at our own profit or credit. Self-seeking is laid aside with great difficulty, for base and unworthy desires are very persistent, and recoil upon us even after mortification and after resolutions to the contrary. We often find that we begin well. We aim at the glory of God; it is our habitual aim. But then thoughts of pride grow upon us in the very middle of the action, or else after it is ended. It is an impudent sin that will assault us again and again.

5. Remedies for Self-seeking

Let me give you some remedies against this sin, by way of consideration and practice.

[5.1] By way of consideration

(1.) Consider, self is unworthy.

Self is a base and unworthy mark to be aimed at. He that shoots at a shrub will never aim so high as he that shoots at a star. That service necessarily must be base that does not intend

Christ and center in Him. All actions reflect their end. How low-spirited are they that seek themselves! How soon they are apt to further turn aside!

Self-seeking only exposes you to temptation. They who have an ill end will not be bothered by an ill way. He that has a right aim in mind will hardly fail so much as he that has a wrong aim.

(2.) Consider the greatness of the sin

Consider the greatness of the sin in making other things our end besides God. You use the name of God that you may enjoy the world; you make Him a minister of sin! You make religion a bait, and Christ a means to accomplish your carnal purposes. It is a question who sins more: he who makes use of wrong means,[156] or he who proposes a wrong goal. He who makes use of wrong means makes the devil serve God, but he who has a wrong end makes God serve the devil. You make the end serve the means!

Though it be but in a glance and in a thought, it is a degree of whoredom! God would have Israel [sew a blue fringe on their garments] (Num 15:39), that they might look upon it, and remember the commandments of the Lord, and "do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring." You know that the glance of the eye outwardly, and a thought in the heart, is whoredom: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mat 5:28). Evil imaginations that draw us away from God are whoredom; you break the vows of loyal love affection to Christ. As a man may be an adulterer in thought, so he may be a spiritual adulterer too: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (Jam 4:4). The devil, for one sin of thought, for desiring the dignity of God for himself, was turned out of heaven.[157] Now, in your own thoughts, you make your own praise your end.

(3.) It is an ill sign.

To know the purpose for an action distinguishes a man from a beast, and to choose his purpose distinguishes one man from another. Survey all the world, wherever the name of Christ is heard, you will find that here is the great difference between man and man: in what they make their utmost end and chief good. Therefore, when you make self your end, it is an ill character and sign.

(4.) No man less enjoys himself than he that most seeks himself.

Self-seeking is always attended with self-losing, for we cannot expect rewards from God and mammon too. And material rewards are very uncertain. God tends to disappoint carnal aims…

(5.) You shall have the greater judgment.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Mat 23:14)…All sin is out of measure sinful, this sort especially. Pretence, when you would seem to be good and are in fact very wicked, aggravates the sin before God. If we would be accounted good when we have an evil aim within ourselves, when we take up religion for an ill purpose or only for a disguise, then the sin is the greater—and so also will be the judgment.

(6.) Consider the dishonour that comes to Christ by self-seeking.

Among the greatest enemies of the gospel are self-seeking Christians. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly" (Phi 3:18-19). There are few enemies of God greater than those who make a god of their belly. What is the reason few are now converted, and that ordinances are not so powerful as they used to be, but because many hide themselves under the name of "Christian," and yet mind nothing but their own profit and gain? We must testify against them, though with grief, so that we may keep up the honour and

reputation of religion, which is mightily stained by them.

It is an honour to God when we serve Him out of pure love, not for pay and gain. But when men merely make a market of religion, Satan and his instruments take advantage of this. They will say they profess religion only to get great places. God may have servants enough upon such terms. “Doth Job fear God for nought?” (Job 1:9), as if to say, “It is true, Job is diligent and zealous, but Job has not lost anything by his profession!” So carnal men will say, “Is it for nought?” They hunt after great places and preferred positions in the world.

It was an old complaint of the heathen, “Lo, those that talk of their being freed from the tyranny of the devil, of being dead to the world and alive to Christ, yet we see them to be as base and self-seeking as any. In vain do they talk of baptism, the gospel, and the Holy Ghost (by which they think they are ruled in all their actions), when their whole life is nothing else but a contradiction to the rules of the gospel.” It is a mighty prejudice to religion and a dishonour to God when men hide themselves under the name of Christian and zealous persons but secretly aim at their private profit.

[5.2] Be more frequent in prayer and praise.

To remedy this evil by way of practice, be more frequent in prayer and praise. Be frequent in prayer in order to be purged from self-seeking and wrong motives; carnal affection will be persistent. Then for praises, cast the honour upon God Himself. When men would have given the apostles divine honour, they cried out, “We are men of like passions with yourselves.” (see Act 14:9-15). In the same way, when we meet with praise from the world and are apt to be puffed up, we should cast it back, and remember that God is to have this praise. As Joab sent for David that he might have honour in taking the royal city (2Sa 12:27-28), so should you give God all the glory and praise.

III.
Self-denial in Respect to Our Neighbour

Having considered self-denial in reference to God, I shall now speak of it with respect to our neighbour. As there is a carnal self in opposition to God, so there is also a carnal self in opposition to the good of others, to the duty we owe to our neighbour. In a moral consideration, there are three general beings: God, your neighbour, and yourself. Now, self is ravenous; it devours the respects due to both the others. It seeks to intercept and take to itself the rights of the Godhead, and to divert and absorb the respects that are due to our neighbour.

I shall now speak of self-denial with reference to our neighbour, because it is established by God's Law in the next place to our respects of God: "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1Jo 4:21). The Scripture speaks very little of love to ourselves, because of the strong bent of nature that way; there is merely somewhat of allowance, but nothing of precept. Self-love is not commanded in Scripture, but regulated. The commandment takes notice of our love to God, and then of our love to our neighbour. This grant we have, that we should love ourselves; but this by commandment, to love our neighbour.

A. Love to Our Neighbour Is a Means to Preserve Our Respects to God.

We must deny ourselves by loving our neighbour, partly because love to our neighbour is a means to preserve our respects to God, and partly because He tries us by this sensible way. God needs nothing from us; He is elevated far above our bounty and kindness. Therefore, it would have been easy to pretend love to God, if God had not delegated His own right upon our neighbours, and made them His agents to receive those respects, that we cannot so well bestow upon God Himself. God needs not our love, but His servants do! Therefore it is made the test of our love to God that we love our brother. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (1Jo 4:20); if a man loves not his brother, "how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1Jo 3:17). We cannot love God aright without loving our brother, and we cannot love our brother aright if we love not God. We must love our brother for God's sake. Therefore, our pretensions are mere lies when we pretend to be open to God, and yet our hearts are shut against our brethren…

B. The Depth of Love to Our Neighbour

A man is bound with many engagements 1) to love his neighbour, 2) to love his neighbour as himself, and 3) in some cases, to love his neighbour morethan himself.

1. Love his neighbour

A man is by many engagements bound to love his neighbour. No man is born for himself.

Nature teaches this, and grace establishes this dictate of nature. This is pressed earnestly in Scripture: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Gal 5:14). Now, how can the apostle say, "All the law," for there are respects due to God, as well as to man, that are established by the Law? The meaning may be all the civil part of the Law, the whole second table, or else all the Law, as we obey God in loving man for God's sake, so we turn the duties of the second table into duties of the first, and make all of life to be a kind of worship.

Besides, this is Christ's solemn command: "These things I command you, that ye love one another" (Joh 15:17). This is the sum of Christ's charge to His disciples. By way of special charge, it is ranked with faith: "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (1Jo 3:28). Here are great commandments: faith in God, and love of the brethren—the great charge of Christ that He left at His death (Joh 13:34; 14:1).

It is therefore a legacy as well as a precept. Speeches of dying men tend to be received with the most veneration and reverence, but especially the charge of dying friends. When the brethren of Joseph were afraid that he would remember the injuries they had shown to his person, they sent messengers unto him, saying, "Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, forgive the trespass" (Gen 50:16-17). Oh, let us fulfil the will of Him Who died! When Jesus Christ took His leave of His disciples, this was what He gave in charge: that we should have special respect to the good of one another. Therefore, when you are prone to quarrel with others or to neglect them, say to yourself, "What love do I bear to Christ, since I do forget the solemn charge the dying Jesus left to His disciples!"

Christ calls this His new commandment: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another" (Joh 13:34). How could He say so, since it was as old as the moral Law or the law of nature? It is "new" because it is excellent, as a new song among the Hebrews is an excellent song. Or, it is "new" because it is solemnly and specially renewed by Him and commended to their care. New things and laws are much esteemed and prized; so it is as if Christ were saying, "let this my new commandment be held in high esteem and regard."[158]

Let me add further, one reason why Christ came from heaven was to propound to us a pattern of charity,…to elevate duty between man and man, and therefore is His example so often urged in this case: "That ye love one another; as I have loved you" (Joh 13:34), and, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph 5:2). Christ would come from heaven to show us the highest pattern of self-denial: He revealed to us the love of His Father, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you" (Joh 15:9). The Father loved Him with an infinite love, yet parted with Him for the salvation of mankind. He parted with His dear Son to be treated unworthily in the world for our sakes. And Jesus Christ parted with Himself[159] and all, to raise our love to God and men. Therefore we ought to "walk in love," as Christ has loved us (Eph 5:2).

2. Love his neighbour as himself

The ordinary measure of our respect to our neighbour is the love that we bear to ourselves, "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well" (Jam 2:8). This is the royal law, the solemn standard of equity and the measure of all respects between man and man, like the king's highway and road of duty. Self and neighbour being equal in the balance, they are therefore to have the same respect.

Now this rule, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," implies two things.

[2.1] Do them no more hurt than I would do to myself.

"Love thy neighbour as thyself" implies that I am to do them no more hurt than I would do to

myself. “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat 7:12), that is, this is the sum of the whole Word concerning moral duties. As I would not have them to injure me, so must I not injure them nor wish them any more hurt than to my own soul. I must hide their defects and infirmities as I would hide and conceal my own. And in all contracts and acts of commerce, I am to put my soul in their soul’s stead. In short, to wish or to do them no more evil than by a lawful act of self-love I would wish or do to myself.

[2.2] Promote their good as my own.

“Love thy neighbour as thyself” implies that I am as ready to promote their good as my own: “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth” (1Co 10:24)—that is, not seek his own wealth so as to exclude another. Seeking another’s wealth is not to be understood simply by itself, for a man is to seek his own things; but let him not seek his own things so as to neglect his care of another’s welfare.

We are to perform all offices of humanity suitably to their necessities; we are to wish them all spiritual graces and eternal blessings as we would to ourselves, “I would to God, that all that hear me this day were such as I am” (see Act 26:29). We are not only to wish but to procure their good…

But in expressing the effects of this love, by industry, care, and bounty, there is a method and order prescribed by God; and so I am first to love my own body; next, my near relations, the wife of my bosom and children; then neighbours; then strangers; then enemies. “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies” (Eph 5:28). It is made the rule of marriage; therefore there must be a subordination: first wife, then children, then kindred, then neighbours. Therefore, the apostle said, “But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1Ti 5:8)…The effects of bounty and love are to be dispensed to the urgency of necessities. The necessities of those who dwell about us and are more frequent with us provoke us more to acts and expressions of love towards them.

3. Love his neighbour more than himself

In some cases a man is bound to love his neighbour more than himself. In the Law it is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”; but in the gospel we have a higher pattern: “As I have loved you, so ought you also to love one another” (see Joh 13:34). Now the Lord Jesus has loved us with a high love: He has laid down His life for us. And it is no strain to apply this in some cases to love to our neighbours: “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1Jo 3:16). He shed His precious blood, which was more valuable than all the world, therefore we should not refuse to give anything, not even life, which is our most precious possession! Life and all must go for our neighbour’s sake.

But you will say, “In what cases?”

[3.1] To save the whole community

First, I am to give my single life, when necessary, to save the whole community and society. It is a constant rule that all private things must give way to public, for God’s glory is more promoted and concerned in a public good than in any private. Therefore a public good is better and more considerable in itself than any particular happiness of our own. In the whole business of self-denial, the great question is, which shall take place, God’s glory or my own profit? Thus Jonah,[160] to save the company, says, “Cast me forth into the sea” (Jon 1:12). When he was discovered and found out by lot, it was, not only an act of patience and submission to the sentence of God, but also an act of charity to save those that sailed with him. Men should be contented to be sacrificed for a real public good…

[3.2] To help another's spiritual good

We ought to help one another's spiritual good with the loss of our material things—which are temporary—and to venture person and estate for the propagation of the gospel. We are in some degree to imitate the glorious excess of charity in Paul, who could wish himself to be cursed from Christ for his brethren and kinsmen in the flesh (Rom 9:3); and Moses, who asked God to blot his name out of His book if God would spare His people (Exo 32:32). With our loss we are to promote the spiritual good of others. We have a high instance in our Lord Jesus Christ: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2Co 8:9). When He was rich, rich in the glory of the Godhead, yet He would come in the form of a servant.

But, alas, who becomes poor for Christ now? Who is willing to go back any degree of his own pomp and pleasure, that he may advance the public good and promote the glory of Christ? Public spiritual good is far more valuable than any temporal good.

[3.3] To assist another in certain danger

It is a necessary act of our love to God when we expose ourselves to uncertain dangers to assist another in certain danger. If a man were assaulted by thieves and ruffians, to prevent murder I am bound to endanger my own life. If I may possibly contribute help, by the laws of God, I am to help the wronged party though it be to my own hazard. Thus Esther said, "If I perish, I perish," when she went into the king (Est 4:16). There was a double ground of that resolution; one was, she preferred the public good before her own private life; the other, the cause was not only dangerous but also likely to result in tragedy.

Now this case is the more binding, if it be the life of a public person, of a minister or magistrate. A subject is bound to preserve the life of a magistrate more than his own; the hand will put up itself to save the head. So also with ministers, as Romans 16:4, "For my life [they] laid down their own necks." Paul speaks of Aquila and Priscilla, who exposed themselves to danger of death to save him in some tumult. Therefore he says, "Not only do I give them thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles give them thanks!"

If it be but the life of a private friend that is in danger, I am bound to expose myself to some hazard for his sake: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Joh 15:13). Christ speaks of it as an act of love. For though my life and his are of a like value, and mine may be more dear to myself than his, yet my duty to him and his life must overrule—especially if the case is dangerous, as to rescue him from an assassin.

C. Application

I shall conclude all with a word of application, which is to condemn two sorts of persons: self-lovers and self-seekers.

1. Warnings to self-lovers

First, the doctrine of self-denial condemns self-lovers. There are several sorts of them.

[1.1] When men seek their own contentment above the public benefit

They care not how it goes with the public, just so their private interest flourishes. The sin is more aggravated if men are neglectful in times of public danger. Among the Romans, men would leave their shops and trade, and venture all for the common good. But when in dangerous cases men are diverted from public service by a zeal to private interest, this is a foolish course—like to those that would look to their own cabins aboard ship, when the vessel itself is in danger.

When Israel was under the oppression of Jabin, those who were lacking in public duty were

blasted with infamy and shame: Dan and Ashur, that had their country near the sea (Jdg 5:17-18). And at the same time the tribe of Reuben, which lived on the other side of Jordan, stayed at home unworthily, to tend their cattle and flocks; and they were more affected with the bleating of the sheep, than with the groans and complaints of their brethren, under the oppression of Jabin. Those that did not come out for the help of God, they are cursed (Jdg 5:23)…

[1.2] When men mind only their own things

The doctrine of self-denial condemns men who in the course of their lives do mind only their own things, and are wholly taken up in fulfilling their own wills and desires. This is the temper of most men, they are of a narrow private heart and do not seek the welfare of others. It is both against nature and grace.

(1.) Against nature

No man is born for himself. His country has a share in him; his friends, and the persons with whom he lives, also have a share, for by nature man was made to be helpful to others. Man by nature is a sociable creature who is made for commerce.[161] If man could live of himself, he might live to himself. Now human society is built upon communion and commerce. The eye cannot say to the foot, "I have no need of thee" (1Co 12:14-27); and we cannot say of the most common person, "We have no need of thee." It is the wisdom of providence to cast the frame of the world into mountains and valleys, to make some poor and some rich. The poor are as necessary…as are the rich. It is against nature when men wholly live to themselves.

(2.) Against grace

So it is also against grace, which casts us into one mystical body. The Apostle has a notable expression, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom 12:5). There is a greater "self" we are to regard, and that is the societies to which we belong; the welfare of this great body we must seek and promote. As in a clock, one wheel moves another; each part gives and receives help one from the other. So should everyone be serviceable, and put his heart, hand, and head to the common good, and be sensible of the common evil. As in the natural body, there is no disaster that happens to any one member but all the rest are affected also. The tongue cries out when we tread upon the toe, "You have hurt me"; or if the foot be pricked with a thorn, the rest of the members will testify their compassion. The tongue complains, the eyes shed tears, the head considers how to remove the thorn, and the hands provide assistance.

[1.3] Three ways to serve one another

There are three ways in which we are especially to serve one another: by prayers, by counsel, and by outward actions of relief.

(1.) By prayers

We are to mind in our prayers the good of one another, and labour for it with God, as we would seek His face for our own souls. This is an act of charity that costs us no money, and using another's need as an occasion to go to God is both an advantage to us and a benefit to them. David, you know, fasted for his enemies (Psa 35:1-16), and Abraham prayed for Sodom (Gen 18). But, alas, few are nowadays touched with the miseries of others! If we be free from trouble, we care not what others suffer.

Now the apostle says, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (Heb 13:3). We who are at liberty must not forget them who are in bonds, but esteem the bonds as our own, until God sets them free. Can you be a member and not be affected? The children of God, when they have been in a flourishing condition themselves, have always laid to heart the miseries of others of God's children who have been in a suffering condition. Nehemiah was a favourite at court, the king's cupbearer, yet he was sensible of the affliction of his country (Neh 1). And Daniel was a great

prince in Babylon, yet how he pleads with God for Zion (Dan 9). We are to plead their case with God, though we are never so well.

(2.) By counsel

Another way to serve one another is by counsel. You are not to suffer sin upon your brother, no more than upon your own soul, for every man is made his brother's guardian and keeper. "Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb 3:13). Take heed lest, not only you yourselves, but any of your body and society, be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin…Therefore, we should be much in spiritual counsel, though we spend ourselves and be spent. This is a great part of self-denial that is required of us. Jesus Christ was weary, yet He speaks with the woman of Samaria about conversion (Joh 4).

(3.) By outward acts of relief

This love is to be manifested by sensible acts of charity and relief. You need to be much in this, for Christ takes notice of it as if it were done to Himself. If Christ lay languishing upon His bed, we all pretend we would go and visit Him. But Christ said, "What you do to the least of these my brethren you do to me" (see Mat 25:40). He tries the young man by the same: "Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor" (see Mar 10:21). It is the doctrine of self-denial to the young man, as if self-denial and giving to the poor were equivalent terms.

I emphasize it to you because men love a cheap religion. They pretend to pray for others, but yet refuse those costly acts of charity; they can give good words and counsel, but will not relieve and clothe. But we cannot satisfy God with mere words, as we cannot pay debts with the noise of money. There must be some real bounty[162] by which you should prove your heart to God. Christ takes notice of this in the Day of Judgment (Mat 25:31-46).

[1.4] When men give only to their own friends

When, in acts of charity to others, men only regard their own relations and friends, this is but a natural love to self, because relations and friends are but self-multiplied. "If you only love them that love you, what reward have you?" (see Mat 5:43-48). Who will give you thanks for the mere motion of nature? But it is according to Christ's pattern when you can "love your enemies" and love those that wrong you. Christ loved us when we were His enemies and children of wrath. When we had offended God, He loved us and gave His Son to be the propitiation[163] for our sins (1Jo 4:10). Therefore you are not only to love your own relations and allies, but also your enemies, who may qualify as your neighbour (Luke 10:29). It is a high privilege to be a forgiver. Therefore, let us not lose this crown of honour. Let us test who will hold out the longest, they in offending, or we in pardoning.

2. Warnings to self-seekers

The doctrine of self-denial reproves not only self-lovers, but also self-seekers.

[2.1] When men first serve themselves

Self-seekers are they who feather their own nests with public spoils, set a house on fire to cook their eggs, and start schemes to promote themselves. Men had better be careful in such cases…Nehemiah took not the allowance of a governor (Neh 5:14-15). We should not carve out such large portions to ourselves in times of distress and calamity…Therefore, it is the glory of a man in a public place rather to depart from his own rights than to make a merchandise of the times and a prey of his brethren.

[2.2] When men make merchandises of their private courtesies, and aim only at their own praise

When men eye self in all they do, and in all the public good they do have an aim only to advance themselves in the esteem of others, these are self-seekers indeed. The heathen poet could say, "For a man to give something as alms that will not bring a profit in business brings no

benefit to him at all." Still, we must look to the pattern of Jesus Christ: when He loved us, He pleased not himself (Rom 15:3)…

[2.3] When men envy others

These are envious persons who would have a monopoly of gifts to set off themselves, and envy the gifts and graces of others; whereas God would have us rejoice in one another's grace and labours. What is theirs by labour is ours by love, by virtue of the mystical body. Whatever members do, the glory and good rebounds to all. We, being in the body, should not envy them, as the foot doth not envy the eye because it is seated in a higher place. Envious persons are not members of the body, but leeches that grow monstrous by sucking. They seek to draw all to themselves, therefore they cannot rejoice in the good of others.

THE END.

About the Author

Thomas Manton (1620-1677) − English Puritan, Presbyterian, preacher, author; participated in the Westminster Assembly and served under Oliver Cromwell; appointed lecturer at Westminster Abbey and Rector of St. Paul's in Covent Garden. He opposed the execution of Charles I, participated in the Savoy Convention, and supported the restoration of Charles II. He resigned his position at St. Paul's due to the attack of Reformed principles under the Act of Uniformity, yet still continued to minister. He was imprisoned for violation of the Conventicle Act, yet continued to write. His wife and three children survived him. J. C. Ryle said, "Manton was a Calvinist in his theology...He maintained and taught personal election, the perseverance of the saints, the absolute necessity of a regeneration evidenced by its fruits, as well as salvation by free grace, justification by faith alone...As an expositor of Scripture, I regard Manton with unmingled admiration."

About This Edition

Manton's original manuscript had been prepared for press, but was somehow completely lost. After he had passed away, the text was "collected from his own notes" by William Taylor.

All Scripture quotations are either from the King James Version or the author's approximate quotation of the KJV to fit his context. The outline numbering has been retained from Manton's original. This edition has been slightly and carefully edited to smooth difficult language while retaining the original meaning: a) verbs ending in "th" have been replaced with the standard English verb forms, b) pronouns thee, thou, thy, and thine have been replaced with you and your, c) word orders in some complex sentences have been rearranged for better readability, d) archaic and many difficult words have been replaced with modern synonyms,

e) supplementary words have been inserted to clarify meaning, marked with brackets [ ] when they are longer phrases, and f) judicious omission of obscure or possibly unclear material has been indicated by dots of ellipsis. The five page section II.A.3.2 from the original has been omitted due to its obscurity as perceived by the editors. Section II.A.3.3 becomes II.A.3.2 in this edition.

Notes

[← 1]
carnality – a state of being fleshly, sensual, not spiritual.

[←2]
imperious - arrogantly domineering; overbearing; commanding.

[←3]
Regarding these four points see Col 3:16-18; Rom 11:33-36; Heb 2:10; Dan 4:35; Eph 1:11.

[←4]
oracle - source of divine revelation.

[←5]
usury - interest paid for the use of money.

[←6]
ciphers - zeroes.

[←7]
carnal – fleshly, possibly lustful.

[←8]
own ends - personal benefit.

[←9]

go back ten degrees – reference to the backward movement of the shadow as a sign to King Hezekiah (2Ki 20:10), used as a figure for humbly setting back instead of advancing our own interests.

[← 10]
wanton - immodest; promiscuous.

[← 11]
politically - craftily; cunningly.

[← 12]
pretence – false profession or claim.

[← 13]

condescension – stooping to the same level or below that of an inferior.

[← 14]
pomp – magnificent outward display.

[← 15]
fellow - companion; equal.

[← 16]

The assumption here is that Micah is describing the actual practice of some idolaters. This may be true, but it is not explicitly stated in the passage.

[← 17]

Yet, submission to the will of God is the best way to seek one's own profit (Mat 6:31-34; 1Ti 4:8).

[←18]

Aristotle (384-322 BC) – Greek philosopher, logician, author, scientist; student of Plato. His writings influenced medieval scholars and Roman Catholicism.

[← 19]

carnal professors – those who make an outward profession that they believe in Jesus Christ, but who do not have new hearts given by God.

[←20]

faith – The author is not defining faith when he says, "This is faith…to thus part with all"; rather, he is showing the inevitable fruit of true faith. Faith in Christ justifies the sinner, not the sinner's good disposition toward God (Rom 3-4). However, the sinner who truly believes will bear the fruit of being ready to value Christ above all else.

[←21]

The builder who goes hand over head to work – one who gets busy building without first using his head to plan or count the cost.

[←22]

Let the reader take care. Self-denial is demanded, as well as holiness “without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Yet assurance is connected to faith (1Jo 5:3) and the promise of God (Heb 6:13-20). Real faith evidences a new birth (1Jo 5:1-4). In fact, since God “justifieth the ungodly” (Rom 4:5) it appears important to emphasize this evidence of salvation to the new believer (without neglecting the evidences of love and obedience that inevitably follow true salvation).

[←23]
remit - lay aside.

[←24]

Martin Luther (1483-1546) – German Roman Catholic monk, theologian, university professor, who rediscovered the doctrine of justification by faith alone and became a reformer whose ideas inspired the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of Western civilization.

[←25]

Gregory of Nazianzen (c. AD 329-390) – also known as Gregory the Theologian or Gregory Nazianzus; 4th century Archbishop of Constantinople; widely considered the most accomplished trinitarian theologian of the early church, successfully influencing both the eastern and western churches.

[←26]

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

[←27]
brutish - stupid.

[←28]

John Chrysostom (c. 347-407) – Bishop of Constantinople, an important early church father; known for his eloquence in preaching and public speaking and his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders.

[←29]
gripes - sharp spasms.

[←30]
See Col 3:1-2; Mat 6:19-21; Luk 12:29-34.

[←31]

That is, by the grace of Christ. Without Christ you can do nothing (Joh 15:5). It is through the Spirit that you kill sin (Rom 8:13).

[←32]
quit - leave, relinquish.

[←33]
alienating – withdrawing; transferring ownership to someone else.

[←34]

self-respects – things considered in relation to self; our desires, ambitions, expectations regarding these things.

[←35]

brawn – strong muscles; in this context: a thick coating that causes less spiritual sensitivity; a hard heart.

[←36]
vainglory – foolish pride; empty conceit (Gal 5:26; Rom 12:3).

[←37]
lower - darken; cloud over.

[←38]

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

[←39]
clamorous – loud; in this context, proclaimed forcefully when we are held accountable for all sin at the Last Judgment.

[←40]

Remember that one of the ways in which we serve God is by glorifying Him for the things He has given us for our enjoyment (1Ti 6:17). The author's words should not be taken as precluding lawful pleasure as part of an obedient life.

[←41]

Mere opinion must be distinguished from the gospel, which must not be compromised (compare Gal 1:6-10 with Rom 14:1-15:7).

[←42]

That is, God and His glory are the goal of all created things; they begin and end, finding the purpose of their existence in Him (Isa 43:7; Col 1:16).

[←43]

covenant of grace – Differing views exist among those who believe in God's eternal purpose of salvation through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Some believe that God's eternal purpose is expressed in two covenants: (1) a Covenant of Redemption, which is made in eternity among the members of the Godhead, which is the foundation for (2) a Covenant of Grace, which is made in history between God and His elect (i.e., John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Charles Hodge, R. L. Dabney, etc.). Of those who believe in the Covenant of Redemption, some believe that it is between the Father and the Son, while others include all the members of the Trinity. However, some believe that God's eternal purpose is expressed in only one Covenant of Grace, which has an eternal aspect between the members of the Trinity and an historical aspect between God and His elect (i.e., Edmund Calamy, Thomas Boston, John Brown of Haddington, John Gill, Hugh Martin, Benjamin Keach, etc.). For helpful discussions on this subject, consult Joel Beeke and Mark Jones, A Puritan Theology, Reformation Heritage Books, 237-278; Greg Nichols, Covenant Theology: A Reformed and Baptistic Perspective on God's Covenants, Solid Ground Christian Books; David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson, From Heaven He Came and Bought Her, Crossway Books, 201-223.

[←44]
closing with Christ − coming to Him, believing on Him.

[←45]

copy and tenure – natural pattern and permanent attitude; in this context, working for recognition and to earn God's favor is part of man's nature after the Fall—men prefer to be self-sufficient and independent from God.

[←46]

russet – course, homespun cloth that is scratchy and uncomfortable.

[←47]
in forma pauperis – legal, obtaining exemption from paying court fees due to poverty.

[←48]
offals - entrails; waste parts.

[←49]

Further, their outward righteousness is defiled by sin and deserves God's wrath (Pro 15:8; Isa 64:6; Mat 23:27-28).

[←50]

That is, they view their obedience as something to atone for their sins rather than as thanksgiving to God for His mercy received freely from Christ (Rom 12:1-2).

[←51]

John Foxe (1516/17-1587) – English historian and martyrologist; the author of Actes and Monuments (popularly known as Foxe's Book of Martyrs), an account of Christian martyrs throughout Western history.

[←52]

merit-mongers - those depending upon their own good works to earn God's favor.

[←53]

horns of God's mercy – allusion to the horns associated with the altar of sacrifice in the Old Testament (Psa 118:27). The sacrifices under the Old Testament pointed to Christ' sacrifice on the cross, which alone atones for sin (Heb 10:1-18).

[←54]

winding-sheet – cloth in which the body of a dead person is wrapped for burial.

[←55]

papists – those who give allegiance to the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church; the reference here is to those who depend upon outward religious acts to earn God's grace.

[←56]

by interpretation – for example, though one may not articulate in his mind or to others the false view of salvation by their own works, yet the way they behave, when rightly understood or interpreted, reveals this to be their view.

[←57]

fruit of their doings – the result of their actions. This is only one of several possible reasons for God to bring afflictions into the lives of believers; others include growing their faith and giving them experience so that they can give wise counsel to others in similar situations.

[←58]

covenant of grace – In the covenant of grace, God “freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.” (The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith, 1689, 7.2)

[←59]

See Numbers 20:7-12: Examination of this passage shows Moses' sin also included unbelief. Anger is not explicitly mentioned. This example reminds us that our sins are always very serious though outwardly they may appear small.

[←60]

Yet all we do, because marred with sin, renders us guilty of all the Law (Jam 2:10-11). Our good works make no "payment" of the righteousness we owe to God.

[←61]

reason – Not that Scripture is illogical. Logic or reason must be used in our study of it (Isa 1:18) But rather, biblical wisdom includes things inaccessible to mankind's observation and contrary to their sinful inclinations (1Cor 2). These are two reasons why people reject the Word of God: it is foreign to their interpretation of their very limited experience and contrary to their depraved desires. These tendencies still plague the true believer and must be resisted.

[←62]
strike sail – to lower one's sail in token of surrender during a sea battle.

[←63]

Understanding results from faith (Heb 11:3). Faith is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) and is seen by good works (Jam 2:18). This is important to remember, for lost people may have a natural understanding of some things Scripture says, but they either do not truly believe it or misuse it or both. Herod believed the chief priests and scribes when they said that Christ was born in Bethlehem (Mat 2:1-16), but he used that knowledge to attempt Christ's destruction.

[←64]

enmity – hostility resulting in a deep-rooted attitude of hatred.

[←65]

in all cases of religion…blood - The author is cautioning against placing human counsel above the authority of the Scriptures. The author does not mean to exclude wise and godly counsel of mature Christians who are fully submitted to the authority of Scripture.

[←66]
shifts - deceptive or evasive tactics.

[←67]

bosom your oracle – taking the thoughts of your heart as your authority for believing and acting.

[←68]

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) – sometimes anglicized as Tully; a Roman philosopher, politician, lawyer, orator, political theorist, consul, and constitutionalist.

[←69]
sacrilege − irreverence.

[←70]

superstition – in religion: the doing of things not required by God, or abstaining from things not forbidden, in order to earn His favor; an opinion held without or against biblical evidence.

[←71]
event - result.

[←72]
expedient - proper.

[←73]

men who will be theirown carvers – those who would shape their lives according to their own wisdom and desires, as a man carves a piece of wood to shape it according to his wishes, or as one who prefers at the table to carve the meat himself, to ensure his getting just the big piece he desires.

[←74]
are interested in - derive benefit from.

[←75]

Menedemus (345-261 BC) - Greekphilosopher of Eretria; of his writings only a few instances remain, contained in the remarks of others.

[←76]
bladder – Wine was often stored and transported in prepared animal bladders.

[←77]

constant concurrence – continual working both of God and the saint together.

[←78]

ordinances – The author appears to be using the term similarly to the modern usage of the “means of grace,” the things God has appointed to communicate His grace to the hearts of men, such as the Scriptures, prayer, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper.

[←79]

date their happiness – count the time their wealth increased as the point their happiness began.

[←80]

Recorded in “Life of Pelopidas,” Plutarch’s Lives Translated from the Greek with Notes and a Life of Plutarch, Aubrey Stewart and George Long, George Bell & Sons, London, 1899, 1.

[←81]

spiritually we worship – that is, in our spirit, inwardly, in the mind and heart as contrasted with outward rituals.

[←82]
dote - show excessive fondness and care.

[←83]

worldling – one who loves the ungodly aspects of this present world (1Jo 2:15-17).

[←84]

God's allowance - God's provision through His providence.

[←85]
Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) – French monastic reformer known for his devotion.

[←86]

It appears he meant that such a family is blessed to have someone like Mary in their number, one so devoted to Christ. This is a blessing indeed, and uncommon in this world.

[←87]

Gregory, also Pope Gregory I and Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) – well-known for his prolific writings; he was the first of the popes to come from a monastic background, one of the six Latin Fathers in church history, and considered a saint in the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox traditions.

[←88]

All godly work we do originates from God in His grace working in us (1Co 15:10).

[←89]
secure - careless.

[←90]

Manton's times were politically and economically turbulent; refer to the short introduction to his life on the copyright page.

[←91]

will not consent to ratify the decrees of heaven – The author is focusing on man's responsibility to come to Christ; he does not deny God's sovereign rule. The decrees of heaven will stand regardless of man's response. What is in question is whether a particular person will show himself to be among God's elect children (Eph 1:4), by coming to Christ.

[←92]

The author apparently uses the word convinced in the sense of convicted; a person may be convicted that what he or she is hearing is true, but is not yet converted.

[←93]

In Romans 8:7 the “carnal mind” is set forth as God’s enemy and the will as insubordinate. It should be remembered that both the mind and will of the unconverted are totally depraved. He is so permeated with sin that there is nothing about him that may be described as good according to the Law of God (Gen 6:5, 8:21; Rom 3:10-18).

[←94]

The soul is never renewed until the will be tamed – The author is not advocating that submission is a condition we must meet in order to merit salvation. Rather, he is emphasizing that, as a result of regeneration, the will is submitted to God in all those who are truly saved.

[←95]

The Scriptures often make heart and mind (the place of our thoughts) synonymous (Mat 15:19; Mar 7:21; Luk 5:22; Act 8:22; Heb 4:12; Gen 6:5; Deu 15:9; Jdg 5:15). Setting them against each other, as the author does here, can cause confusion. Biblically speaking, God opens our minds/hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit and moves our wills by appealing to our minds with His truth (Act 16:14).

[←96]

Note, when Christ prayed for the cup to pass from Him, He used the petition “nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luk 22:42). This illustrates both that Christ had a will and that it was in submission to His Father.

[←97]
eccentric – different; strange.

[←98]
exorbitant - going beyond what is proper.

[←99]
low - weak or lean by less feeding.

[←100]

solemn vow – In baptism we did, by solemn vow and profession, bind ourselves to look after the effects of Christ's death, to mortify the deeds of the body, or, which is all one, renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh; the devil, as the great architect and principle of all wickedness; the world, as the great bait and snare; the flesh, as the rebelling principle. Our baptism is certainly an avowed death to sin; it implies a renunciation by way of vow, for it is the answer of a good conscience towards God. (Thomas Manton, Sermons upon 2 Corinthians 5, Sermon 28, in The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, Vol. 13, James Nisbet & Co., London, 194)

[←101]

To be perfectly conformed to the will of God is certainly a true believer's desire, but he daily falls short; there is another law at work in him (Rom 7:14-25).

[←102]

The world may kill us, but cannot harm us in ultimate sense. It cannot send us to hell (Mat 10:28).

[← 103]

We come to Christ willingly, but this willingness is God's gift to us. Apart from this, we would never come (Joh 6:37-40, 44-45).

[←104]

Parents and masters are not explicitly mentioned in the passage cited above, but we find that the principle here is extended to them in other Scriptures (Eph 6:1; Col 3:20; Rom 1:30; 2Ti 3:2; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22; 1Ti 6:2; Ti 2:9; 1Pe 2:18).

[← 105]
proper - suited to.

[← 106]

gangrened – having decayed or dead tissue caused by a restriction of the blood supply due to injury or disease.

[← 107]
accidents - events; occurrences.

[←108]
drenching - forceful oral administration of medicinal liquid.

[← 109]
dispensation – divinely ordered or arranged event.

[←110]
equal - appropriate.

[←111]
charge - care.

[←112]
generosity - nobility.

[←113]

articles – items God writes on the “blank sheet” of our life.

[←114]

grace – used in the sense of gifts of grace: “virtuous or religious affection or disposition, as a liberal disposition, faith, meekness, humility, patience, etc. proceeding from divine influence.” (Noah Webster, An American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828)

[←115]

tasted – original was, “hath been our taster,” referring to the practice of a king’s cupbearer tasting the wine to prevent possible poisoning. Christ has already tasted and proved this bitter cup of God’s withdrawal.

[←116]

self-conceits - thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought (Rom 12:3).

[←117]

dispensations – acts of divine ordering and arrangements of events. For more on God's sovereign rule over all things, see The Sovereignty of God by A.W. Pink; The Sovereignty of God in Providence by John Reisinger; Does God Rule Everything? by A. Dent; God's Providence by C. H. Spurgeon—all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

[←118]
shillings - silver coins of Great Britain; twenty shillings equal one pound.

[←119]

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

[←120]
solicitous - concerned.

[←121]

He that wills…nothing to trouble him – The believer may have things in the world that trouble him when he follows God's will, but he is not troubled by God's good will itself.

[← 122]

Aristotle (384-322 BC) – Greek philosopher, pupil of Plato, tutor of Alexander the Great, and author of works on logic, ethics, natural sciences, and politics.

[← 123]
prejudicial - against.

[← 124]

parasites – persons who live at the expense of others without making any useful contribution in return.

[←125]

unmortified spirits – those that do not by the power of God kill (i.e. mortify) sin (Rom 8:13).

[←126]
See 2Ch 32:31 and 2Ki 20:12-18; Pro 16:18; 1Tim 3:6.

[←127]

the balance of the sanctuary – the accurate official scales used in the Temple for exchanging money, which came to be the standard for calibrating other scales used in trade.

[←128]
signet - seal; seal-ring.

[←129]
artifice - clever or cunning trick.

[←130]

Not to imply that no believer may be assaulted with proud thoughts even while thinking of God's holiness (Rom 7:18-25).

[←131]

The body is also important and shall be raised and redeemed (Rom 8:23; 1Cor 15; Act 24:15).

[←132]

vein of marks and signs in Scripture - those portions of the Bible instructing us how to recognize our true spiritual condition.

[← 133]

covenant interest – part in the rich blessings of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:10-12).

[←134]

revenge - in this context, taking time from your work to devote directly to God, as in prayers of thanks and asking for aid.

[← 135]
pretty - clever.

[← 136]

Because spiritual duties are given a high priority.

[← 137]

income - financial security one might enjoy as a member of the Anglican clergy.

[←138]

small yet prevalent – if motivation to comply with the temptation is not to gain some great thing, like our lives, but small (like an incidental comfort or convenience), yet we find this temptation prevails over us.

[← 139]
riot - be excessive in indulgence.

[← 140]

The white of an egg had the reputation of being tasteless.

[← 141]
crosses - trials.

[← 142]

Galeacius Carracciolus - 16th century Italian, converted through the ministry of Peter Martyr, left Italy for Geneva because of his faith. Calvin dedicated the 2nd edition of his commentary on 1 Corinthians to him, saying, "For although you do not court public applause—satisfied to have God alone as your witness—and though it is not my design to herald your praises, yet it were not proper to conceal altogether from my readers what is useful and profitable to be known: that a man, sprung from a family of the first rank, prosperous in honors and wealth, blest with a spouse of the noblest descent and strictest virtue, a numerous offspring, domestic quiet and harmony, and happy in his entire condition in life, has, of his own accord, with the view of joining the camp of Christ, quitted his native country, has left behind him a fertile and lovely domain, a splendid patrimony, and a residence not less commodious than delightful, has stript himself of domestic splendor, has left father, wife, children, relatives, and connections, and after bidding farewell to so many worldly allurements, satisfied with our mean style, adopts our frugal and homely way of living, just as if he were one of ourselves."

[← 143]

Thuanus (1553-1617) – full name: Jacques Auguste de Thou; a French historian, nobleman, and president of the Parlement de Paris.

[← 144]

Anaxarchus (c.380-c.320 B.C.) - Greek philosopher; valued contentment based on indifference to the value of things in this world.

[←145]

self - in the context, lawful temporal and/or bodily interests.

[← 146]

movables – relating to portable personal property. Here the emphasis appears to be on the instability of earthly, temporal possessions.

[← 147]

The unregenerate man can, through common grace, love his family, and he may be a good citizen. He may give a million dollars to build a hospital, but he cannot give even a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of Jesus. If a drunkard, he may abstain from drink for utilitarian purposes, but he cannot do it out of love for God. All of his common virtues or good works have a fatal defect in that his motives which prompt them are not to glorify God...It matters not how good the works may be in themselves, for so long as the doer of them is out of harmony with God, none of his works are spiritually acceptable. (Loraine Boettner, Total Depravity)

For more on the vital biblical doctrine of total depravity see Rom 3:10-20; 8:7-8; Heb 11:6; and The Doctrine of Human Depravity, A. W. Pink, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

[←148]

The original phrase is “complicating and folding up yourself with yourself.”

[←149]

union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ – This is the doctrine of "hypostatic" union: "The doctrine of the hypostatic union, first set forth officially in the definition of faith produced by the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), concerns the union of the two natures of deity and humanity in the one hypostasis or person of Jesus Christ. It can be stated as follows: In the incarnation of the Son of God, a human nature was inseparably united forever with the divine nature in the one person of Jesus Christ, yet with the two natures remaining distinct, whole, and unchanged, without mixture or confusion, so that the one person, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly man." (Walter Elwell, ed., Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, 583)

[←150]
See Mat 22:37; Mar 12:30; Luk 10:27.

[←151]

civil - done for or in relation to other people.

[←152]
carnal injections - occurrences of sinful thoughts in the mind.

[← 153]

follow a dying church for a legacy – The 17th century saw significant shifts in ecclesiastical and political power in Britain. Manton appears to be referring here to some in his day who opposed the established church in Britain just so they might benefit on the establishment of a new order, not for the glory of God and the advance of the truth.

[←154]

Some explain cross to mean the whole mystery of redemption, and they explain that this is said of them, because, by preaching the Law, they made void the benefit of Christ's death. Others, however, understand it as meaning that they shunned the cross and were not prepared to expose themselves to dangers for the sake of Christ. I understand it, however, in a more general way, as meaning that, while they pretended to be friends, they were, nevertheless, the worst enemies of the gospel. For it is no unusual thing for Paul to employ the term cross to mean the entire preaching of the gospel. (John Calvin, Commentaries on Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, 107)

[←155]
simony - buying or selling of religious benefits.

[← 156]

means – instruments and methods for accomplishing a goal.

[←157]
Derived by many from an interpretation of Isaiah 14:12-13.

[←158]

The newness of the precept here promulgated is evident from the fact that Jesus requires that His disciples shall love one another as He loved them! (William Hendriksen, Gospel According to John, Vol. 2, 253)

[←159]
parted with Himself - He laid down His life.

[←160]

However, Jonah, as the Scriptures make clear, was the cause of this calamity because of his disobedience.

[← 161]
commerce - social exchange.

[← 162]
bounty - gift given; generosity.

[← 163]
propitiation - sin offering that turns away wrath; appeasement.