The Mortification of Sin

Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers: the Necessity, Nature, and Means of It; with a Resolution of Sundry Cases of Conscience Thereunto Belonging

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John Owen



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For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

— Romans 8:13

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Preface

Christian Reader,

I shall in a few words acquaint thee with the reasons that obtained my consent to the publishing of the ensuing discourse. The consideration of the present state and condition of the generality of professors, the visible evidences of the frame of their hearts and spirits, manifesting a great disability of dealing with the temptations wherewith, from the peace they have in the world and the divisions that they have among themselves, they are encompassed, holds the chief place amongst them. This I am assured is of so great importance, that if hereby I only occasion others to press more effectually on the consciences of men the work of considering their ways, and to give more clear direction for the compassing of the end proposed, I shall well esteem of my lot in this undertaking. This was seconded by an observation of some men's dangerous mistakes, who of late days have taken upon them to give directions for the mortification of sin, who, being unacquainted with the mystery of the gospel and the efficacy of the death of Christ, have anew imposed the yoke of a self-wrought-out mortification on the necks of their disciples, which neither they nor their forefathers were ever able to bear. A mortification they cry up and press, suitable to that of the gospel neither in respect of nature, subject, causes, means, nor effects; which constantly produces the deplorable issues of superstition, self-righteousness, and anxiety of conscience in them who take up the burden which is so bound for them.

What is here proposed in weakness, I humbly hope will answer the spirit and letter of the gospel, with the experiences of them who know what it is to walk with God, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. So that if not this, yet certainly something of this kind, is very necessary at this season for the promotion and furtherance of this work of gospel mortification in the hearts of believers, and their direction in paths safe, and wherein they may find rest to their souls. Something I have to add as to what in particular relates unto myself. Having preached on this subject unto some comfortable success, through the grace of Him that administereth seed to the sower, I was pressed by sundry persons, in whose hearts are the ways of God, thus to publish what I had delivered, with such additions and alterations as I should judge necessary. Under the inducement of their desires, I called to remembrance the debt, wherein I have now for some years stood engaged unto sundry noble and worthy Christian friends, as to a treatise of Communion with God, some while since promised to them;[1] and thereon apprehended, that if I could not hereby compound for the greater debt, yet I might possibly tender them this discourse of *variance with themselves*, as interest for their forbearance of that of *peace and communion with God*. Besides, I considered that I had been providentially engaged in the public debate of sundry controversies in religion, which might seem to claim something in another kind of more general use, as a fruit of choice, not necessity. On these and the like accounts is this short discourse brought forth to public view, and now presented unto thee. I hope I may own in sincerity, that my heart's desire unto God, and the chief design of my life in the station

[1] Since the first edition of this treatise; that other also is published.

wherein the good providence of God hath placed me, are, that mortification and universal holiness may be promoted in my own and in the hearts and ways of others, to the glory of God; that so the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may be adorned in all things: for the compassing of which end, if this little discourse (of the publishing whereof this is the sum of the account I shall give) may in any thing be useful to the least of the saints, it will be looked on as a return of the weak prayers wherewith it is attended by its unworthy author,

John Owen.

Chapter I

The foundation of the whole ensuing discourse laid in Rom 8:13 — The words of the apostle opened — The certain connection between true mortification and salvation — Mortification the work of believers — The Spirit the principal efficient cause of it — What meant by "the body" in the words of the apostle — What by "the deeds of the body" — Life, in what sense promised to this duty.

That what I have of direction to contribute to the carrying on of the work of mortification in believers may receive order and perspicuity, I shall lay the foundation of it in those words of the apostle, Rom 8:13, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live;" and reduce the whole to an improvement of the great evangelical truth and mystery contained in them.

The apostle having made a recapitulation of his doctrine of justification by faith, and the blessed estate and condition of them who are made by grace partakers thereof, verses 1–3 of this chapter, proceeds to improve it to the holiness and consolation of believers.

Among his arguments and motives unto holiness, the verse mentioned containeth one from the contrary events and effects of holiness and sin: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." What it is to "live after the flesh," and what it is to "die," that being not my present aim and business, I shall no otherwise explain than as they will fall in with the sense of the latter words of the verse, as before proposed.

In the words peculiarly designed for the foundation of the ensuing discourse, there is, —

First, A *duty* prescribed: "Mortify the deeds of the body."

Secondly, The persons are denoted to *whom* it is prescribed: "Ye," — "if ye mortify."

Thirdly, There is in them a *promise* annexed to that duty: "Ye shall live."

Fourthly, The *cause* or means of the performance of this duty, — the Spirit: "If ye through the Spirit."

Fifthly, The *conditionality* of the whole proposition, wherein duty, means, and promise are contained: "If ye," etc.

1. The first thing occurring in the words as they lie in the entire proposition is the conditional note, Εἰ δὲ, "But if." Conditionals in such propositions may denote two things:—

(1.) The *uncertainty* of the *event* or thing promised, in respect of them to whom the duty is prescribed. And this takes place where the condition is absolutely necessary unto the issue, and depends not itself on any determinate cause known to him to whom it is prescribed. So we say, "If we live, we will do such a thing." This cannot be the intendment of the conditional expression in this place. Of the persons to whom these words are spoken, it is said, verse 1 of the same chapter, "There is no condemnation to them."

(2.) The *certainty* of the *coherence* and connection that is between the things spoken of; as we say to a sick man, "If you will take such a potion, or use such a remedy, you will be well." The thing we solely intend to express is the certainty of the connection that is between the potion or remedy and health. And this is the use of it here. The certain connection that is between the *mortifying* of the deeds of the body and *living* is intimated in this conditional particle.

Now, the connection and coherence of things being manifold, as of cause and effect, of way and means and the end, this between mortification and life is not of cause and effect properly and strictly, — for "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ," Rom 6:23, — but of means and end. God hath appointed this means for the attaining that end, which he hath freely promised. Means, though necessary, have a fair subordination to an end of free promise. A gift, and procuring cause in him to whom it is given, are inconsistent. The intendment, then, of this proposition as conditional is, that there is a certain infallible connection and coherence between true mortification and eternal life: if you use this means, you shall obtain that end; if you do mortify, you shall live. And herein lies the main motive unto and enforcement of the duty prescribed.

2. The next thing we meet withal in the words is the *persons* to whom this duty is prescribed, and that is expressed in the word "Ye," in the original included in the verb, θανατοῦτε "if ye mortify;" — that is, ye believers; ye to whom "there is no condemnation," verse 1; ye that are "not in the flesh, but in the Spirit," verse 9; who are "quickened by the Spirit of Christ," verses 10, 11; to you is this duty prescribed. The pressing of this duty immediately on any other is a notable fruit of that superstition and self-righteousness that the world is full of, — the great work and design of devout men ignorant of the gospel, Rom 10:3, 4; John 15:5. Now, this description of the persons, in conjunction with the prescription of the duty, is the main foundation of the ensuing discourse, as it lies in this thesis or proposition:—

The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin.

3. The principal *efficient cause* of the performance of this duty is the Spirit: Εἰ δὲ Πνεύματι, — "If by the Spirit." The Spirit here is the Spirit mentioned verse 11, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, that "dwells in us," verse 9, that "quickens us," verse 11; "the Holy Ghost," verse 14;[2] the "Spirit of adoption," verse 15; the Spirit "that maketh intercession for us," verse 26. All other ways of mortification are vain, all helps leave us helpless; it must be done by the Spirit. Men, as the apostle intimates, Rom 9:30–32, may attempt this work on other principles, by means and advantages administered on other accounts, as they always have done, and do: but, saith he, "This is the work of the Spirit; by him alone is it to be wrought, and by no other power is it to be brought about." Mortification from a self-strength, carried on by ways of self-invention, unto the end of a self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world. And this is a second principle of my ensuing discourse.

4. The *duty* itself, "Mortify the deeds of the body," is nextly to be remarked.

Three things are here to be inquired into:— (1.) What is meant by *the body*; (2.) What by *the deeds of the body*; (3.) What by *mortifying* of them.

(1.) *The body* in the close of the verse is the same with *the flesh* in the beginning: "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye … mortify the deeds of the body," — that is, of the flesh. It is that which the apostle hath all along discoursed of under the name of *the flesh*; which is evident from the prosecution of the antithesis between the Spirit and the flesh, before and after. *The body*, then, here is taken for that corruption and depravity of our natures whereof the body, in

[2] There seems to be an oversight here, as the expression "Holy Ghost" does not occur in the verse cited. — ED.

a great part, is the seat and instrument, the very members of the body being made servants unto unrighteousness thereby, Rom 6:19. It is indwelling sin, the corrupted flesh or lust, that is intended. Many reasons might be given of this metonymical expression, that I shall not now insist on. The "body" here is the same with παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος, and σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, the "old man," and the "body of sin," Rom 6:6; or it may synecdochically express the whole person considered as corrupted, and the seat of lusts and distempered affections.

(2.) The *deeds of the body*. The word is πράξεις, which, indeed, denoteth the outward actions chiefly, "the works of the flesh," as they are called, τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, Gal 5:19; which are there said to be "manifest," and are enumerated. Now, though the outward deeds are here only expressed, yet the inward and next causes are chiefly intended; the "axe is to be laid to the root of the tree," — the deeds of the flesh are to be mortified in their causes, from whence they spring. The apostle calls them *deeds*, as that which every lust tends unto; though it do but conceive and prove abortive, it aims to bring forth a perfect sin.

Having, both in the seventh and the beginning of this chapter, treated of indwelling lust and sin as the fountain and principle of all sinful actions, he here mentions its destruction under the name of the effects which it doth produce. Πράξεις τοῦ σώματος are, as much as φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός, Rom 8:6, the "wisdom of the flesh," by a metonymy of the same nature with the former; or as the παθήματα and ἐπιθυμίαι, the "passions and lusts of the flesh," Gal 5:24, whence the deeds and fruits of it do arise; and in this sense is *the body* used, Rom 8:10: "The body is dead because of sin."

(3.) To *mortify*. Εἰ θανατοῦτε, — "If ye put to death;" a metaphorical expression, taken from the putting of any living

thing to death. To kill a man, or any other living thing, is to take away the principle of all his strength, vigour, and power, so that he cannot act or exert, or put forth any proper actings of his own; so it is in this case. Indwelling sin is compared to a person, a living person, called "the old man," with his faculties, and properties, his wisdom, craft, subtlety, strength; this, says the apostle, must be killed, put to death, mortified, — that is, have its power, life, vigour, and strength, to produce its effects, taken away by the Spirit. It is, indeed, meritoriously, and by way of example, utterly mortified and slain by the cross of Christ; and the "old man" is thence said to be "crucified with Christ," Rom 6:6, and ourselves to be "dead" with him, verse 8, and really initially in regeneration, Rom 6:3–5, when a principle contrary to it, and destructive of it, Gal 5:17, is planted in our hearts; but the whole work is by degrees to be carried on towards perfection all our days. Of this more in the process of our discourse. The intendment of the apostle in this prescription of the duty mentioned is, — that *the mortification of indwelling sin remaining in our mortal bodies, that it may not have life and power to bring forth the works or deeds of the flesh is the constant duty of believers.*

5. The *promise* unto this duty is life: "Ye shall live." The life promised is opposed to the death threatened in the clause foregoing, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;" which the same apostle expresseth, "Ye shall of the flesh reap corruption," Gal 6:8, or destruction from God. Now, perhaps the word may not only intend eternal life, but also the spiritual life in Christ, which here we have; not as to the essence and being of it, which is already enjoyed by believers, but as to the joy, comfort, and vigour of it: as the apostle says in another case, "Now I live, if ye stand fast," 1 Thess 3:8; — "Now my life will do me good; I shall have joy and comfort with my life;"

— "Ye shall live, lead a good, vigorous, comfortable, spiritual life whilst you are here, and obtain eternal life hereafter."

Supposing what was said before of the connection between mortification and eternal life, as of means and end, I shall add only, as a second motive to the duty prescribed, that, —

The vigour, and power, and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh.

Chapter II

The principal assertion concerning the necessity of mortification proposed to confirmation — Mortification the duty of the best believers, Col 3:5; 1 Cor 9:27 — Indwelling sin always abides; no perfection in this life, Phil 3:12; 1 Cor 13:12; 2 Pet 3:18; Gal 5:17, etc. — The activity of abiding sin in believers, Rom 7:23; Jas 4:5; Heb 12:1 — Its fruitfulness and tendency — Every lust aims at the height in its kind — The Spirit and new nature given to contend against indwelling sin, Gal 5:17; 2 Pet 1:4, 5; Rom 7:23 — The fearful issue of the neglect of mortification, Rev 3:2; Heb 3:13 — The first general principle of the whole discourse hence confirmed — Want of this duty lamented.

Having laid this foundation, a brief confirmation of the forementioned principal deductions will lead me to what I chiefly intend, —

I. *That the choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin.*

So the apostle, Col 3:5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Whom speaks he to? Such as were "risen with Christ," verse 1; such as were "dead" with him, verse 3; such as whose life Christ was, and who should "appear with him in glory," verse 4. Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you. Your being dead with Christ virtually, your being

quickened with him, will not excuse you from this work. And our Saviour tells us how his Father deals with every branch in him that beareth fruit, every true and living branch. "He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit," John 15:2. He prunes it, and that not for a day or two, but whilst it is a branch in this world. And the apostle tells you what was his practice, 1 Cor 9:27, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." "I do it," saith he, "daily; it is the work of my life: I omit it not; this is my business." And if this were the work and business of Paul, who was so incomparably exalted in grace, revelations, enjoyments, privileges, consolations, above the ordinary measure of believers, where may we possibly bottom an exemption from this work and duty whilst we are in this world? Some brief account of the reasons hereof may be given:—

1. Indwelling sin always *abides* whilst we are in this world; therefore it is always to be mortified. The vain, foolish, and ignorant disputes of men about perfect keeping the commands of God, of perfection in this life, of being wholly and perfectly dead to sin, I meddle not now with. It is more than probable that the men of those abominations never knew what belonged to the keeping of any one of God's commands, and are so much below perfection of degrees, that they never attained to a perfection of parts in obedience or universal obedience in sincerity. And, therefore, many in our days who have talked of perfection have been wiser, and have affirmed it to consist in knowing no difference between good and evil. Not that they are perfect in the things we call good, but that all is alike to them, and the height of wickedness is their perfection. Others who have found out a new way to it, by denying original, indwelling sin, and attempering the spirituality of the law of God unto men's carnal hearts, as

they have sufficiently discovered themselves to be ignorant of the life of Christ and the power of it in believers, so they have invented a new righteousness that the gospel knows not of, being vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds. For us, who dare not be wise above what is written, nor boast by other men's lives of what God hath not done for us, we say that indwelling sin lives in us, in some measure and degree, whilst we are in this world. We dare not speak as "though we had already attained, or were already perfect," Phil 3:12. Our "inward man is to be renewed day by day" whilst here we live, 2 Cor 4:16; and according to the renovations of the new are the breaches and decays of the old. Whilst we are here we "know but in part," 1 Cor 13:12, having a remaining darkness to be gradually removed by our "growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Pet 3:18; and "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would," Gal 5:17: and are therefore defective in our obedience as well as in our light, 1 John 1:8. We have a "body of death," Rom 7:24; from whence we are not delivered but by the death of our bodies, Phil 3:21. Now, it being our duty to mortify, to be killing of sin whilst it is in us, we must be at work. He that is appointed to kill an enemy, if he leave striking before the other ceases living, doth but half his work, Gal 6:9; Heb 12:1; 2 Cor 7:1.

2. Sin doth not only still abide in us, but is still *acting*, still labouring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh. When sin lets us alone we may let sin alone; but as sin is never less quiet than when it seems to be most quiet, and its waters are for the most part deep when they are still, so ought our contrivances against it to be vigorous at all times and in all conditions, even where there is least suspicion. Sin doth not only abide in us, but "the law of the members is still rebelling against the

law of the mind," Rom 7:23; and "the spirit that dwells in us lusteth to envy," Jas 4:5. It is always in continual work; "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," Gal 5:17; lust is still tempting and conceiving sin, Jas 1:14; in every moral action it is always either inclining to evil, or hindering from that which is good, or disframing the spirit from communion with God. It inclines to evil. "The evil which I would not, that I do," saith the apostle, Rom 7:19. Whence is that? Why, "Because in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." And it hinders from good: "The good that I would do, that I do not," verse 19; — "Upon the same account, either I do it not, or not as I should; all my holy things being defiled by this sin." "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," Gal 5:17. And it unframes our spirit, and thence is called "The sin that so easily besets us," Heb 12:1; on which account are those grievous complaints that the apostle makes of it, Rom 7. So that sin is always acting, always conceiving, always seducing and tempting. Who can say that he had ever any thing to do with God or for God, that indwelling sin had not a hand in the corrupting of what he did? And this trade will it drive more or less all our days. If, then, sin will be always acting, if we be not always mortifying, we are lost creatures. He that stands still and suffers his enemies to double blows upon him without resistance, will undoubtedly be conquered in the issue. If sin be subtle, watchful, strong, and always at work in the business of killing our souls, and we be slothful, negligent, foolish, in proceeding to the ruin thereof, can we expect a comfortable event? There is not a day but sin foils or is foiled, prevails or is prevailed on; and it will be so whilst we live in this world.

I shall discharge him from this duty who can bring sin to a composition, to a cessation of arms in this warfare; if it will

spare him any one day, in any one duty (provided he be a person that is acquainted with the spirituality of obedience and the subtlety of sin), let him say to his soul, as to this duty, "Soul, take thy rest." The saints, whose souls breathe after deliverance from its perplexing rebellion, know there is no safety against it but in a constant warfare.

3. Sin will not only be striving, acting, rebelling, troubling, disquieting, but if let alone, if not continually mortified, it will *bring forth great, cursed, scandalous, soul-destroying sins.* The apostle tells us what the works and fruits of it are, Gal 5:19–21, "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." You know what it did in David and sundry others. Sin aims always at the utmost; every time it rises up to tempt or entice, might it have its own course, it would go out to the utmost sin in that kind. Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery if it could; every covetous desire would be oppression, every thought of unbelief would be atheism, might it grow to its head. Men may come to that, that sin may not be heard speaking a scandalous word in their hearts, — that is, provoking to any great sin with scandal in its mouth; but yet every rise of lust, might it have its course, would come to the height of villany: it is like the grave, that is never satisfied. And herein lies no small share of the deceitfulness of sin, by which it prevails to the hardening of men, and so to their ruin, Heb 3:13, — it is modest, as it were, in its first motions and proposals, but having once got footing in the heart by them, it constantly makes good its ground, and presseth on to some farther degrees in the same kind. This new acting and pressing forward makes the soul take

little notice of what an entrance to a falling off from God is already made; it thinks all is indifferent well if there be no farther progress; and so far as the soul is made insensible of any sin, — that is, as to such a sense as the gospel requireth, — so far it is hardened: but sin is still pressing forward, and that because it hath no bounds but utter relinquishment of God and opposition to him; that it proceeds towards its height by degrees, making good the ground it hath got by hardness, is not from its nature, but its deceitfulness. Now nothing can prevent this but mortification; that withers the root and strikes at the head of sin every hour, so that whatever it aims at it is crossed in. There is not the best saint in the world but, if he should give over this duty, would fall into as many cursed sins as ever any did of his kind.

4. This is one main reason why the Spirit and the new nature is given unto us, — that we may have a principle within whereby to oppose sin and lust. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." Well! and what then? Why, "The Spirit also lusteth against the flesh," Gal 5:17. There is a propensity in the Spirit, or spiritual new nature, to be acting against the flesh, as well as in the flesh to be acting against the Spirit: so 2 Pet 1:4, 5. It is our participation of the divine nature that gives us an escape from the pollutions that are in the world through lust; and, Rom 7:23, there is a law of the mind, as well as a law of the members. Now this is, first, the most unjust and unreasonable thing in the world, when two combatants are engaged, to bind one and keep him up from doing his utmost, and to leave the other at liberty to wound him at his pleasure; and, secondly, the foolishest thing in the world to bind him who fights for our eternal condition, [salvation?] and to let him alone who seeks and violently attempts our everlasting ruin. The contest is for our lives and souls. Not

to be daily employing the Spirit and new nature for the mortifying of sin, is to neglect that excellent succour which God hath given us against our greatest enemy. If we neglect to make use of what we have received, God may justly hold his hand from giving us more. His graces, as well as his gifts, are bestowed on us to use, exercise, and trade with. Not to be daily mortifying sin, is to sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace, and love of God, who hath furnished us with a principle of doing it.

5. Negligence in this duty casts the soul into a perfect contrary condition to that which the apostle affirms was his, 2 Cor 4:16, "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." In these the inward man perisheth, and the outward man is renewed day by day. Sin is as the house of David, and grace as the house of Saul. *Exercise* and *success* are the two main cherishers of grace in the heart; when it is suffered to lie still, it withers and decays: the things of it are ready to die, Rev 3:2; and sin gets ground towards the hardening of the heart, Heb 3:13. This is that which I intend: by the omission of this duty grace withers, lust flourisheth, and the frame of the heart grows worse and worse; and the Lord knows what desperate and fearful issues it hath had with many. Where sin, through the neglect of mortification, gets a considerable victory, it breaks the bones of the soul, Ps 31:10; 51:8, and makes a man weak, sick, and ready to die, Ps 38:3–5, so that he cannot look up, Ps 40:12, Isa 33:24; and when poor creatures will take blow after blow, wound after wound, foil after foil, and never rouse up themselves to a vigorous opposition, can they expect any thing but to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that their souls should bleed to death? 2 John 8. Indeed, it is a sad thing to consider the fearful issues of this neglect, which lie

under our eyes every day. See we not those, whom we knew humble, melting, broken-hearted Christians, tender and fearful to offend, zealous for God and all his ways, his Sabbaths and ordinances, grown, through a neglect of watching unto this duty, earthly, carnal, cold, wrathful, complying with the men of the world and things of the world, to the scandal of religion and the fearful temptation of them that know them? The truth is, what between placing mortification in a rigid, stubborn frame of spirit, which is for the most part earthly, legal, censorious, partial, consistent with wrath, envy, malice, pride, on the one hand, and pretences of liberty, grace, and I know not what, on the other, true evangelical mortification is almost lost amongst us: of which afterward.

6. It is our duty to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor 7:1; to be "growing in grace" every day, 1 Pet 2:2, 2 Pet 3:18; to be "renewing our inward man day by day," 2 Cor 4:16. Now, this cannot be done without the daily mortifying of sin. Sin sets its strength against every act of holiness, and against every degree we grow to. Let not that man think he makes any progress in holiness who walks not over the bellies of his lusts. He who doth not kill sin in his way takes no steps towards his journey's end. He who finds not opposition from it, and who sets not himself in every particular to its mortification, is at peace with it, not dying to it.

This, then, is the first general principle of our ensuing discourse: Notwithstanding the meritorious mortification, if I may so speak, of all and every sin in the cross of Christ; notwithstanding the real foundation of universal mortification laid in our first conversion, by conviction of sin, humiliation for sin, and the implantation of a new principle opposite to it and destructive of it; — yet sin doth so remain, so act and work in the best of believers, whilst they live

in this world, that the constant daily mortification of it is all their days incumbent on them. Before I proceed to the consideration of the next principle, I cannot but by the way complain of many professors of these days, who, instead of bringing forth such great and evident fruits of mortification as are expected, scarce bear any leaves of it. There is, indeed, a broad light fallen upon the men of this generation, and together therewith many spiritual gifts communicated, which, with some other considerations, have wonderfully enlarged the bounds of professors and profession; both they and it are exceedingly multiplied and increased. Hence there is a noise of religion and religious duties in every corner, preaching in abundance, — and that not in an empty, light, trivial, and vain manner, as formerly, but to a good proportion of a spiritual gift, — so that if you will measure the number of believers by light, gifts, and profession, the church may have cause to say, "Who hath born me all these?" But now if you will take the measure of them by this great discriminating grace of Christians, perhaps you will find their number not so multiplied. Where almost is that professor who owes his conversion to these days of light, and so talks and professes at such a rate of spirituality as few in former days were, in any measure, acquainted with (I will not judge them, but perhaps boasting what the Lord hath done in them), that doth not give evidence of a miserably unmortified heart? If vain spending of time, idleness, unprofitableness in men's places, envy, strife, variance, emulations, wrath, pride, worldliness, selfishness, 1 Cor 1, be badges of Christians, we have them on us and amongst us in abundance. And if it be so with them who have much light, and which, we hope, is saving, what shall we say of some who would be accounted religious and yet despise gospel light, and for the duty we have in

hand, know no more of it but what consists in men's denying themselves sometimes in outward enjoyments, which is one of the outmost branches of it, which yet they will seldom practise? The good Lord send out a spirit of mortification to cure our distempers, or we are in a sad condition!

There are two evils which certainly attend every unmortified professor; — the first, in himself; the other, in respect of others:—

1. *In himself.* Let him pretend what he will, he hath *slight thoughts of sin*; at least, of sins of daily infirmity. The root of an unmortified course is the digestion of sin without bitterness in the heart. When a man hath confirmed his imagination to such an apprehension of grace and mercy as to be able, without bitterness, to swallow and digest daily sins, that man is at the very brink of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Neither is there a greater evidence of a false and rotten heart in the world than to drive such a trade. To use the blood of Christ, which is given to *cleanse* us, 1 John 1:7, Titus 2:14; the exaltation of Christ, which is to give us *repentance*, Acts 5:31; the doctrine of grace, which teaches us to *deny all ungodliness*, Titus 2:11, 12, to countenance sin, is a rebellion that in the issue will break the bones. At this door have gone out from us most of the professors that have apostatized in the days wherein we live. For a while they were most of them under convictions; these kept them unto duties, and brought them to profession; so they "escaped the pollutions that are in the world, through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Pet 2:20: but having got an acquaintance with the doctrine of the gospel, and being weary of duty, for which they had no principle, they began to countenance themselves in manifold

neglects from the doctrine of grace. Now, when once this evil had laid hold of them, they speedily tumbled into perdition.

2. *To others.* It hath an evil influence on them on a twofold account:—

(1.) It *hardens* them, by begetting in them a persuasion that they are in as good condition as the best professors. Whatever they see in them is so stained for want of this mortification that it is of no value with them. They have a zeal for religion; but it is accompanied with want of forbearance and universal righteousness. They deny prodigality, but with worldliness; they separate from the world, but live wholly to themselves, taking no care to exercise loving-kindness in the earth; or they talk spiritually, and live vainly; mention communion with God, and are every way conformed to the world; boasting of forgiveness of sin, and never forgiving others. And with such considerations do poor creatures harden their hearts in their unregeneracy.

(2.) They *deceive* them, in making them believe that if they can come up to their condition it shall be well with them; and so it grows an easy thing to have the great temptation of repute in religion to wrestle withal, when they may go far beyond them as to what appears in them, and yet come short of eternal life. But of these things and all the evils of unmortified walking, afterward.

Chapter III

The second general principle of the means of mortification proposed to confirmation — The Spirit the only author of this work — Vanity of popish mortification discovered — Many means of it used by them not appointed of God — Those appointed by him abused — The mistakes of others in this business — The Spirit is promised believers for this work, Ezek 11:19; 36:26 — All that we receive from Christ is by the Spirit — How the Spirit mortifies sin — Gal 5:19–23 — The several ways of his operation to this end proposed — How his work and our duty.

The next principle relates to the great sovereign cause of the mortification treated of; which, in the words laid for the foundation of this discourse, is said to be the Spirit, — that is, the Holy Ghost, as was evinced.

II. *He only is sufficient for this work; all ways and means without him are as a thing of nought; and he is the great efficient of it, — he works in us as he pleases.*

1. In vain do men seek other remedies; they shall not be healed by them. What several ways have been prescribed for this, to have sin mortified, is known. The greatest part of popish religion, of that which looks most like religion in their profession, consists in mistaken ways and means of mortification. This is the pretence of their rough garments, whereby they deceive. Their vows, orders, fastings, penances, are all built on this ground; they are all for the mortifying of sin. Their preachings, sermons, and books of devotion, they

look all this way. Hence, those who interpret the locusts that came out of the bottomless pit, Rev 9:3, to be the friars of the Romish church, who are said to torment men, so "that they should seek death and not find it," verse 6, think that they did it by their stinging sermons, whereby they convinced them of sin, but being not able to discover the remedy for the healing and mortifying of it, they kept them in such perpetual anguish and terror, and such trouble in their consciences, that they desired to die. This, I say, is the substance and glory of their religion; but what with their labouring to mortify dead creatures, ignorant of the nature and end of the work, — what with the poison they mixed with it, in their persuasion of its merit, yea, *supererogation* (as they style their unnecessary merit, with a proud, barbarous title), — their glory is their shame: but of them and their mortification more afterward, ch. 7.

That the ways and means to be used for the mortification of sin invented by them are still insisted on and prescribed, for the same end, by some who should have more light and knowledge of the gospel, is known. Such directions to this purpose have of late been given by some, and are greedily catched at by others professing themselves Protestants, as might have become popish devotionists three or four hundred years ago. Such outside endeavours, such bodily exercises, such self-performances, such merely legal duties, without the least mention of Christ or his Spirit, are varnished over with swelling words of vanity, for the only means and expedients for the mortification of sin, as discover a deep-rooted unacquaintedness with the power of God and mystery of the gospel. The consideration hereof was one motive to the publishing of this plain discourse.

Now, the reasons why the Papists can never, with all their endeavours, truly mortify any one sin, amongst others, are, —

(1.) Because many of the ways and means they use and insist upon for this end were never appointed of God for that purpose. (Now, there is nothing in religion that hath any efficacy for compassing an end, but it hath it from God's appointment of it to that purpose.) Such as these are their rough garments, their vows, penances, disciplines, their course of monastical life, and the like; concerning all which God will say, "Who hath required these things at your hand?" and, "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the traditions of men." Of the same nature are sundry self-vexations insisted on by others.

(2.) Because those things that are appointed of God as means are not used by them in their due place and order, — such as are praying, fasting, watching, meditation, and the like. These have their use in the business in hand; but whereas they are all to be looked on as streams, they look on them as the fountain. Whereas they effect and accomplish the end as means only, subordinate to the Spirit and faith, they look on them to do it by virtue of the work wrought. If they fast so much, and pray so much, and keep their hours and times, the work is done. As the apostle says of some in another case, "They are always learning, never coming to the knowledge of the truth;" so they are always mortifying, but never come to any sound mortification. In a word, they have sundry means to mortify the natural man, as to the natural life here we lead; none to mortify lust or corruption.

This is the general mistake of men ignorant of the gospel about this thing; and it lies at the bottom of very much of that superstition and will-worship that hath been brought into the world. What horrible self-macerations were practised by

some of the ancient authors of monastical devotion! what violence did they offer to nature! what extremity of sufferings did they put themselves upon! Search their ways and principles to the bottom, and you will find that it had no other root but this mistake, namely, that attempting rigid mortification, they fell upon the natural man instead of the corrupt old man, — upon the body wherein we live instead of the body of death.

Neither will the natural Popery that is in others do it. Men are galled with the guilt of a sin that hath prevailed over them; they instantly promise to themselves and God that they will do so no more; they watch over themselves, and pray for a season, until this heat waxes cold, and the sense of sin is worn off: and so mortification goes also, and sin returns to its former dominion. Duties are excellent food for a healthy soul; they are no physic for a sick soul. He that turns his meat into his medicine must expect no great operation. Spiritually sick men cannot sweat out their distemper with working. But this is the way of men who deceive their own souls; as we shall see afterward.

That none of these ways are sufficient is evident from the nature of the work itself that is to be done; it is a work that requires so many concurrent actings in it as no self-endeavour can reach unto, and is of that kind that an almighty energy is necessary for its accomplishment; as shall be afterward manifested.

2. It is, then, the work of the Spirit. For, —

(1.) He is *promised* of God to be given unto us to do this work. The taking away of the stony heart, — that is, the stubborn, proud, rebellious, unbelieving heart, — is in general the work of mortification that we treat of. Now this is still promised to be done by the Spirit, Ezek 11:19; 36:26, "I will

give my Spirit, and take away the stony heart;" and by the Spirit of God is this work wrought when all means fail, Isa 57:17, 18.

(2.) We have all our mortification from the *gift* of Christ, and all the gifts of Christ are communicated to us and given us by the Spirit of Christ: "Without Christ we can do nothing," John 15:5. All communications of supplies and relief, in the beginnings, increasings, actings of any grace whatever, from him, are by the Spirit, by whom he alone works in and upon believers. From him we have our mortification: "He is exalted and made a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto us," Acts 5:31; and of our repentance our mortification is no small portion. How doth he do it? Having "received the promise of the Holy Ghost," he sends him abroad for that end, Acts 2:33. You know the manifold promises he made of sending the Spirit, as Tertullian speaks, "Vicariam navare operam," to do the works that he had to accomplish in us.

The resolution of one or two questions will now lead me nearer to what I principally intend.

The first is, *How doth the Spirit mortify sin?*

I answer, in general, three ways:—

[1.] By causing our hearts to abound in *grace* and the fruits that are contrary to the flesh, and the fruits thereof and principles of them. So the apostle opposes the fruits of the flesh and of the Spirit: "The fruits of the flesh," says he, "are so and so," Gal 5:19–21; "but," says he, "the fruits of the Spirit are quite contrary, quite of another sort," verses 22, 23. Yea; but what if these are in us and do abound, may not the other abound also? No, says he, verse 24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." But how? Why, verse 25, "By living in the Spirit and walking after the Spirit;" — that is, by the abounding of these graces of the

Spirit in us, and walking according to them. For, saith the apostle, "These are contrary one to another," verse 17; so that they cannot both be in the same subject, in any intense or high degree. This "renewing of us by the Holy Ghost," as it is called, Titus 3:5, is one great way of mortification; he causes us to grow, thrive, flourish, and abound in those graces which are contrary, opposite, and destructive to all the fruits of the flesh, and to the quiet or thriving of indwelling sin itself.

[2.] By a *real physical efficiency* on the root and habit of sin, for the weakening, destroying, and taking it away. Hence he is called a "Spirit of judgment and burning," Isa 4:4, really consuming and destroying our lusts. He takes away the stony heart by an almighty efficiency; for as he begins the work as to its kind, so he carries it on as to its degrees. He is the fire which burns up the very root of lust.

[3.] He brings the *cross of Christ* into the heart of a sinner by faith, and gives us communion with Christ in his death, and fellowship in his sufferings: of the manner whereof more afterward.

Secondly. If this be the work of the Spirit alone, how is it that we are exhorted to it? — seeing the Spirit of God only can do it, let the work be left wholly to him.

[1.] It is no otherwise the work of the Spirit but as all graces and good works which are in us are his. He "works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure," Phil 2:13; he works "all our works in us," Isa 26:12, — "the work of faith with power," 2 Thess 1:11, Col 2:12; he causes us to pray, and is a "Spirit of supplication," Rom 8:26, Zech 12:10; and yet we are exhorted, and are to be exhorted, to all these.

[2.] He doth not so work our mortification in us as not to keep it still an act of our *obedience*. The Holy Ghost works in us and upon us, as we are fit to be wrought in and upon;

that is, so as to preserve our own liberty and free obedience. He works upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections, agreeably to their own natures; he works *in us* and *with us*, not *against us* or *without us*; so that his assistance is an encouragement as to the facilitating of the work, and no occasion of neglect as to the work itself. And, indeed, I might here bewail the endless, foolish labour of poor souls, who, being convinced of sin, and not able to stand against the power of their convictions, do set themselves, by innumerable perplexing ways and duties, to keep down sin, but, being strangers to the Spirit of God, all in vain. They combat without victory, have war without peace, and are in slavery all their days. They spend their strength for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which profiteth not.

This is the saddest warfare that any poor creature can be engaged in. A soul under the power of conviction from the law is pressed to fight against sin, but hath no strength for the combat. They cannot but fight, and they can never conquer; they are like men thrust on the sword of enemies on purpose to be slain. The *law* drives them on, and sin beats them back. Sometimes they think, indeed, that they have foiled sin, when they have only raised a dust that they see it not; that is, they distemper their natural affections of fear, sorrow, and anguish, which makes them believe that sin is conquered when it is not touched. By that time they are cold, they must to the battle again; and the lust which they thought to be slain appears to have had no wound.

And if the case be so sad with them who do labour and strive, and yet enter not into the kingdom, what is their condition who despise all this; who are perpetually under the power and dominion of sin, and love to have it so; and

are troubled at nothing, but that they cannot make sufficient provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof?

Chapter IV

The last principle; of the usefulness of mortification — The vigour and comfort of our spiritual lives depend on our mortification — In what sense — Not absolutely and necessarily; Ps 88, Heman's condition — Not as on the next and immediate cause — As a means; by removing of the contrary — The desperate effects of any unmortified lust; it weakens the soul, Ps 38:3, 8, sundry ways, and darkens it — All graces improved by the mortification of sin — The best evidence of sincerity.

The last principle I shall insist on (omitting, first, the necessity of mortification unto life, and, secondly, the certainty of life upon mortification) is, —

III. *That the life, vigour, and comfort of our spiritual life depend much on our mortification of sin.*

Strength and comfort, and power and peace, in our walking with God, are the things of our desires. Were any of us asked seriously, what it is that troubles us, we must refer it to one of these heads:— either we want strength or power, vigour and life, in our obedience, in our walking with God; or we want peace, comfort, and consolation therein. Whatever it is that may befall a believer that doth not belong to one of these two heads, doth not deserve to be mentioned in the days of our complaints.

Now, all these do much depend on a constant course of mortification, concerning which observe, —

1. I do not say they proceed from it, as though they were *necessarily* tied to it. A man may be carried on in a constant

course of mortification all his days; and yet perhaps never enjoy a good day of peace and consolation. So it was with Heman, Ps 88; his life was a life of perpetual mortification and walking with God, yet terrors and wounds were his portion all his days. But God singled out Heman, a choice friend, to make him an example to them that afterward should be in distress. Canst thou complain if it be no otherwise with thee than it was with Heman, that eminent servant of God? and this shall be his praise to the end of the world. God makes it his prerogative to speak peace and consolation, Isa 57:18, 19. "I will do that work," says God, "I will comfort him," verse 18. But how? By an immediate work of the new creation: "I create it," says God. The *use of means* for the obtaining of peace is ours; the *bestowing* of it is God's prerogative.

2. In the ways instituted by God for to give us life, vigour, courage, and consolation, mortification is not one of the immediate causes of it. They are the privileges of our adoption made known to our souls that give us immediately these things. "The Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God," giving us a new name and a white stone, adoption and justification, — that is, as to the sense and knowledge of them, — are the immediate causes (in the hand of the Spirit) of these things. But this I say, —

3. In our ordinary walking with God, and in an ordinary course of his dealing with us, the vigour and comfort of our spiritual lives depend much on our mortification, not only as a "causa sine qua non," but as a thing that hath an effectual influence thereinto. For, —

(1.) This alone keeps sin from depriving us of the one and the other.

Every unmortified sin will certainly do two things:— [1.] It will *weaken* the soul, and deprive it of its vigour. [2.] It will *darken* the soul, and deprive it of its comfort and peace.

[1.] It *weakens* the soul, and deprives it of its strength. When David had for a while harboured an unmortified lust in his heart, it broke all his bones, and left him no spiritual strength; hence he complained that he was sick, weak, wounded, faint. "There is," saith he, "no soundness in me," Ps 38:3; "I am feeble and sore broken," verse 8; "yea, I cannot so much as look up," Ps 40:12. An unmortified lust will drink up the spirit, and all the vigour of the soul, and weaken it for all duties. For, —

1*st*. It *untunes* and unframes the heart itself, by entangling its affections. It diverts the heart from the spiritual frame that is required for vigorous communion with God; it lays hold on the affections, rendering its object beloved and desirable, so expelling the love of the Father, 1 John 2:15; 3:17; so that the soul cannot say uprightly and truly to God, "Thou art my portion," having something else that it loves. Fear, desire, hope, which are the choice affections of the soul, that should be full of God, will be one way or other entangled with it.

2*dly*. It fills the *thoughts* with contrivances about it. Thoughts are the great purveyors of the soul to bring in provision to satisfy its affections; and if sin remain unmortified in the heart, they must ever and anon be making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. They must glaze, adorn, and dress the objects of the flesh, and bring them home to give satisfaction; and this they are able to do, in the service of a defiled imagination, beyond all expression.

3*dly*. It breaks out and actually hinders duty. The ambitious man must be studying, and the worldling must be working or contriving, and the sensual, vain person provid-

ing himself for vanity, when they should be engaged in the worship of God.

Were this my present business, to set forth the breaches, ruin, weakness, desolations, that one unmortified lust will bring upon a soul, this discourse must be extended much beyond my intendment.

[2.] As sin *weakens*, so it *darkens* the soul. It is a cloud, a thick cloud, that spreads itself over the face of the soul, and intercepts all the beams of God's love and favour. It takes away all sense of the privilege of our adoption; and if the soul begins to gather up thoughts of consolation, sin quickly scatters them: of which afterward.

Now, in this regard doth the vigour and power of our spiritual life depend on our mortification: It is the only means of the removal of that which will allow us neither the one nor the other. Men that are sick and wounded under the power of lust make many applications for help; they cry to God when the perplexity of their thoughts overwhelms them, even to God do they cry, but are not delivered; in vain do they use many remedies, — "they shall not be healed." So, Hos 5:13, "Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound," and attempted sundry remedies: nothing will do until they come (verse 15) to "acknowledge their offence." Men may see their sickness and wounds, but yet, if they make not due applications, their cure will not be effected.

(2.) Mortification prunes all the graces of God, and makes room for them in our hearts to grow. The life and vigour of our spiritual lives consists in the vigour and flourishing of the plants of grace in our hearts. Now, as you may see in a garden, let there be a precious herb planted, and let the ground be untilled, and weeds grow about it, perhaps it will live still, but be a poor, withering, unuseful thing. You must look and

search for it, and sometimes can scarce find it; and when you do, you can scarce know it, whether it be the plant you look for or no; and suppose it be, you can make no use of it at all. When, let another of the same kind be set in the ground, naturally as barren and bad as the other, but let it be well weeded, and every thing that is noxious and hurtful removed from it, — it flourishes and thrives; you may see it at first look into the garden, and have it for your use when you please. So it is with the graces of the Spirit that are planted in our hearts. That is true; they *are* still, they abide in a heart where there is some neglect of mortification; but they are ready to die, Rev 3:2, they are withering and decaying. The heart is like the sluggard's field, — so overgrown with weeds that you can scarce see the good corn. Such a man may search for faith, love, and zeal, and scarce be able to find any; and if he do discover that these graces are there yet alive and sincere, yet they are so weak, so clogged with lusts, that they are of very little use; they remain, indeed, but are ready to die. But now let the heart be cleansed by mortification, the weeds of lust constantly and daily rooted up (as they spring daily, nature being their proper soil), let room be made for grace to thrive and flourish, — how will every grace act its part, and be ready for every use and purpose!

(3.) As to our peace; as there is nothing that hath any evidence of sincerity without it, so I know nothing that hath such an evidence of sincerity in it; — which is no small foundation of our peace. Mortification is the soul's vigorous opposition to self, wherein sincerity is most evident.

Chapter V

The principal intendment of the whole discourse proposed — The first main case of conscience stated — What it is to mortify any sin, negatively considered — Not the utter destruction of it in this life — Not the dissimulation of it — Not the improvement of any natural principle — Not the diversion of it — Not an occasional conquest — Occasional conquests of sin, what and when; upon the eruption of sin; in time of danger or trouble.

These things being premised, I come to my principal intention, of handling some questions or practical cases that present themselves in this business of mortification of sin in believers.

The first, which is the head of all the rest, and whereunto they are reduced, may be considered as lying under the ensuing proposal:—

Suppose a man to be a true believer, and yet finds in himself a powerful indwelling sin, leading him captive to the law of it, consuming his heart with trouble, perplexing his thoughts, weakening his soul as to duties of communion with God, disquieting him as to peace, and perhaps defiling his conscience, and exposing him to hardening through the deceitfulness of sin, — what shall he do? what course shall he take and insist on for the mortification of this sin, lust, distemper, or corruption, to such a degree as that, though it be not utterly destroyed, yet, in his contest with it, he may be enabled to keep up power, strength, and peace in communion with God?

In answer to this important inquiry, I shall do these things:—

I. Show what it is to mortify any sin, and that both negatively and positively, that we be not mistaken in the foundation.

II. Give general directions for such things as without which it will be utterly impossible for any one to get any sin truly and spiritually mortified.

III. Draw out the particulars whereby this is to be done; in the whole carrying on this consideration, that it is not of the doctrine of mortification in general, but only in reference to the particular case before proposed, that I am treating.

I. What It Is to Mortify a Sin

1. Negatively: What It Is Not

(1.) To mortify a sin is not utterly to *kill*, root it out, and destroy it, that it should have no more hold at all nor residence in our hearts. It is true this is that which is aimed at; but this is not in this life to be accomplished. There is no man that truly sets himself to mortify any sin, but he aims at, intends, desires its utter destruction, that it should leave neither root nor fruit in the heart or life. He would so kill it that it should never move nor stir any more, cry or call, seduce or tempt, to eternity. Its *not-being* is the thing aimed at. Now, though doubtless there may, by the Spirit and grace of Christ, a wonderful success and eminency of victory against any sin be attained, so that a man may have almost constant triumph over it, yet an utter killing and destruction of it, that it should not be, is not in this life to be expected. This Paul assures us of, Phil 3:12, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." He was a *choice saint*, a pattern for

believers, who, in faith and love, and all the fruits of the Spirit, had not his fellow in the world, and on that account ascribes perfection to himself in comparison of others, verse 15; yet he had not "attained," he was not "perfect," but was "following after:" still a vile body he had, and we have, that must be changed by the great power of Christ at last, verse 21. This we would have; but God sees it best for us that we should be complete in nothing in ourselves, that in all things we must be "complete in Christ;" which is best for us, Col 2:10.

(2.) I think I need not say it is not the *dissimulation* of a sin. When a man on some outward respects forsakes the practice of any sin, men perhaps may look on him as a changed man. God knows that to his former iniquity he hath added cursed hypocrisy, and is got in a safer path to hell than he was in before. He hath got another heart than he had, that is more cunning; not a new heart, that is more holy.

(3.) The mortification of sin consists not in the improvement of a *quiet, sedate* nature. Some men have an advantage by their natural constitution so far as that they are not exposed to such violence of unruly passions and tumultuous affections as many others are. Let now these men cultivate and improve their natural frame and temper by discipline, consideration, and prudence, and they may seem to themselves and others very mortified men, when, perhaps, their hearts are a standing sink of all abominations. Some man is never so much troubled all his life, perhaps, with anger and passion, nor doth trouble others, as another is almost every day; and yet the latter hath done more to the mortification of the sin than the former. Let not such persons try their mortification by such things as their natural temper gives no life or vigour to. Let them bring themselves to self-denial,

unbelief, envy, or some such spiritual sin, and they will have a better view of themselves.

(4.) A sin is not mortified when it is only diverted. Simon Magus for a season left his *sorceries*; but his *covetousness and ambition*, that set him on work, remained still, and would have been acting another way. Therefore Peter tells him, "I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness;" — "Notwithstanding the profession thou hast made, notwithstanding thy relinquishment of thy sorceries, thy lust is as powerful as ever in thee; the same lust, only the streams of it are diverted. It now exerts and puts forth itself another way, but it is the old gall of bitterness still." A man may be sensible of a lust, set himself against the eruptions of it, take care that it shall not break forth as it has done, but in the meantime suffer the same corrupted habit to vent itself some other way; as he who heals and skins a running sore thinks himself cured, but in the meantime his flesh festereth by the corruption of the same humour, and breaks out in another place. And this diversion, with the alterations that attend it, often befalls men on accounts wholly foreign unto grace: change of the course of life that a man was in, of relations, interests, designs, may effect it; yea, the very alterations in men's constitutions, occasioned by a natural progress in the course of their lives, may produce such changes as these. Men in age do not usually persist in the pursuit of youthful lusts, although they have never mortified any one of them. And the same is the case of bartering of lusts, and leaving to serve one that a man may serve another. He that changes pride for worldliness, sensuality for Pharisaism, vanity in himself to the contempt of others, let him not think that he hath mortified the sin that he seems to have left. He hath changed his master, but is a servant still.

(5.) *Occasional conquests* of sin do not amount to a mortifying of it.

There are two occasions or seasons wherein a man who is contending with any sin may seem to himself to have mortified it:—

[1.] When it hath had some sad *eruption*, to the disturbance of his peace, terror of his conscience, dread of scandal, and evident provocation of God. This awakens and stirs up all that is in the man, and amazes him, fills him with abhorrency of sin, and himself for it; sends him to God, makes him cry out as for life, to abhor his lust as hell, and to set himself against it. The whole man, spiritual and natural, being now awaked, sin shrinks in its head, appears not, but lies as dead before him: as when one that hath drawn nigh to an army in the night, and hath killed a principal person, — instantly the guards awake, men are roused up, and strict inquiry is made after the enemy, who, in the meantime, until the noise and tumult be over, hides himself, or lies like one that is dead, yet with firm resolution to do the like mischief again upon the like opportunity. Upon the sin among the Corinthians, see how they muster up themselves for the surprisal and destruction of it, 2 Epist. ch. 7:11. So it is in a person when a breach hath been made upon his conscience, quiet, perhaps credit, by his lust, in some eruption of actual sin; — carefulness, indignation, desire, fear, revenge, are all set on work about it and against it, and lust is quiet for a season, being run down before them; but when the hurry is over and the inquest past, the thief appears again alive, and is as busy as ever at his work.

[2.] In a time of some *judgment*, calamity, or pressing affliction; the heart is then taken up with thoughts and contrivances of flying from the present troubles, fears, and

dangers. This, as a convinced person concludes, is to be done only by relinquishment of sin, which gains peace with God. It is the anger of God in every affliction that galls a convinced person. To be quit of this, men resolve at such times against their sins. Sin shall never more have any place in them; they will never again give up themselves to the service of it. Accordingly, sin is quiet, stirs not, seems to be mortified; not, indeed, that it hath received any one wound, but merely because the soul hath possessed its faculties, whereby it should exert itself, with thoughts inconsistent with the motions thereof; which, when they are laid aside, sin returns again to its former life and vigour. So they Ps 78:32–37, are a full instance and description of this frame of spirit whereof I speak: "For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." I no way doubt but that when they sought, and returned, and inquired early after God, they did it with full purpose of heart as to the relinquishment of their sins; it is expressed in the word "returned." To turn or return to the Lord is by a relinquishment of sin. This they did "early," — with earnestness and diligence; but yet their sin was unmortified for all this, verses 36, 37. And this is the state of many humiliations in the days of affliction, and a great deceit in the hearts of believers themselves lies oftentimes herein.

These and many other ways there are whereby poor souls deceive themselves, and suppose they have mortified their

lusts, when they live and are mighty, and on every occasion break forth, to their disturbance and disquietness.

Chapter VI

The mortification of sin in particular described — The several parts and degrees thereof — The habitual weakening of its root and principle — The power of lust to tempt — Differences of that power as to persons and times — Constant fighting against sin — The parts thereof considered — Success against it — The sum of this discourse considered.

2. Positively: What It Is

WHAT it is to mortify a sin in general, which will make farther way for particular directions, is nextly to be considered.

The mortification of a lust consists in three things:—

(1.) An *habitual* weakening of it. Every lust is a depraved habit or disposition, continually inclining the heart to evil. Thence is that description of him who hath no lust truly mortified, Gen 6:5, "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." He is always under the power of a strong bent and inclination to sin. And the reason why a natural man is not always perpetually in the pursuit of some one lust, night and day, is because he hath many to serve, every one crying to be satisfied; thence he is carried on with great variety, but still in general he lies towards the satisfaction of self.

We will suppose, then, the lust or distemper whose mortification is inquired after to be in itself a strong, deeply-rooted, habitual inclination and bent of will and affections unto some actual sin, as to the matter of it, though not, under

that formal consideration, always stirring up imaginations, thoughts, and contrivances about the object of it. Hence, men are said to have their "hearts set upon evil," the bent of their spirits lies towards it, to make "provision for the flesh."[3] And a sinful, depraved habit, as in many other things, so in this, differs from all natural or moral habits whatever: for whereas they incline the soul gently and suitably to itself, sinful habits impel with violence and impetuousness; whence lusts are said to fight or wage "war against the soul,"[4] 1 Pet 2:11, — to rebel or rise up in war with that conduct and opposition which is usual therein,[5] Rom 7:23, — to lead captive, or effectually captivating upon success in battle, — all works of great violence and impetuousness.

I might manifest fully, from that description we have of it, Rom 7, how it will darken the mind, extinguish convictions, dethrone reason, interrupt the power and influence of any considerations that may be brought to hamper it, and break through all into a flame. But this is not my present business. Now, the first thing in mortification is the weakening of this habit of sin or lust, that it shall not, with that violence, earnestness, frequency, rise up, conceive, tumultuate, provoke, entice, disquiet, as naturally it is apt to do, Jas 1:14, 15.

I shall desire to give one caution or rule by the way, and it is this: Though every lust doth in its own nature equally, universally, incline and impel to sin, yet this must be granted with these two limitations:—

[1.] *One lust*, or a lust in one man, may receive many accidental improvements, heightenings, and strengthenings, which may give it life, power, and vigour, exceedingly above

[3] Rom 13:14.

[4] Στρατεύονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς.

[5] Ἀντιστρατευόμενον, αἰχμαλωτίζοντα.

what another lust hath, or the same lust (that is, of the same kind and nature) in another man. When a lust falls in with the natural constitutions and temper, with a suitable course of life, with occasions, or when Satan hath got a fit handle to it to manage it, as he hath a thousand ways so to do, that lust grows violent and impetuous above others, or more than the same lust in another man; then the steams of it darken the mind so, that though a man knows the same things as formerly, yet they have no power nor influence on the will, but corrupt affections and passions are set by it at liberty.

But especially, lust gets strength by *temptation.* When a suitable temptation falls in with a lust, it gives it a new life, vigour, power, violence, and rage, which it seemed not before to have or to be capable of. Instances to this purpose might be multiplied; but it is the design of some part of another treatise to evince this observation.

[2.] Some lusts are far more sensible and discernible in their violent actings than others. Paul puts a difference between uncleanness and all other sins: 1 Cor 6:18, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." Hence, the motions of that sin are more sensible, more discernible than of others; when perhaps the love of the world, or the like, is in a person no less habitually predominant than that, yet it makes not so great a combustion in the whole man.

And on this account some men may go in their own thoughts and in the eyes of the world for mortified men, who yet have in them no less predominancy of lust than those who cry out with astonishment upon the account of its perplexing tumultuatings, yea, than those who have by the power of it been hurried into scandalous sins; only their lusts are in and

about things which raise not such a tumult in the soul, about which they are exercised with a calmer frame of spirit, the very fabric of nature being not so nearly concerned in them as in some other.

I say, then, that the first thing in mortification is the *weakening* of this habit, that it shall not impel and tumultuate as formerly; that it shall not entice and draw aside; that it shall not disquiet and perplex; the killing of its life, vigour, promptness, and readiness to be stirring. This is called "crucifying the flesh with the lusts thereof," Gal 5:24; that is, taking away its blood and spirits that give it strength and power, — the wasting of the body of death "day by day," 2 Cor 4:16.

As a man *nailed to the cross*; he first struggles, and strives, and cries out with great strength and might, but, as his blood and spirits waste, his strivings are faint and seldom, his cries low and hoarse, scarce to be heard; — when a man first sets on a lust or distemper, to deal with it, it struggles with great violence to break loose; it cries with earnestness and impatience to be satisfied and relieved; but when by mortification the blood and spirits of it are let out, it moves seldom and faintly, cries sparingly, and is scarce heard in the heart; it may have sometimes a dying pang, that makes an appearance of great vigour and strength, but it is quickly over, especially if it be kept from considerable success. This the apostle describes, as in the whole chapter, so especially, Rom 6:6.

"Sin," saith he, "is crucified; it is fastened to the cross." To what end? "That the body of death may be destroyed," the power of sin weakened and abolished by little and little, that "henceforth we should not serve sin;" that is, that sin might not incline, impel us with such efficacy as to make us servants to it, as it hath done heretofore. And this is spoken not only with respect to carnal and sensual affections, or desires of

worldly things, — not only in respect of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, — but also as to the flesh, that is, in the mind and will, in that opposition unto God which is in us by nature. Of what nature soever the troubling distemper be, by what ways soever it make itself out, either by impelling to evil or hindering from that which is good, the rule is the same; and unless this be done effectually, all after-contention will not compass the end aimed at. A man may beat down the bitter fruit from an evil tree until he is weary; whilst the root abides in strength and vigour, the beating down of the present fruit will not hinder it from bringing forth more. This is the folly of some men; they set themselves with all earnestness and diligence against the appearing eruption of lust, but, leaving the principle and root untouched, perhaps unsearched out, they make but little or no progress in this work of mortification.

(2.) In constant *fighting* and *contending* against sin. To be able always to be laying load on sin is no small degree of mortification. When sin is strong and vigorous, the soul is scarce able to make any head against it; it sighs, and groans, and mourns, and is troubled, as David speaks of himself, but seldom has sin in the pursuit. David complains that his sin had "taken fast hold upon him, that he could not look up," Ps 40:12. How little, then, was he able to fight against it! Now, sundry things are required unto and comprised in this fighting against sin:—

[1.] To *know* that a man hath such an enemy to deal withal, to take notice of it, to consider it as an enemy indeed, and one that is to be destroyed by all means possible, is required hereunto. As I said before, the contest is vigorous and hazardous, — it is about the things of eternity. When, therefore, men have slight and transient thoughts of their lusts, it is no great

sign that they are mortified, or that they are in a way for their mortification. This is every man's "knowing the plague of his own heart," 1 Kgs 8:38, without which no other work can be done. It is to be feared that very many have little knowledge of the main enemy that they carry about with them in their bosoms. This makes them ready to justify themselves, and to be impatient of reproof or admonition, not knowing that they are in any danger, 2 Chr 16:10.

[2.] To labour to be acquainted with the ways, wiles, methods, advantages, and occasions of its *success*, is the beginning of this warfare. So do men deal with enemies. They inquire out their counsels and designs, ponder their ends, consider how and by what means they have formerly prevailed, that they may be prevented. In this consists the greatest skill in conduct. Take this away, and all waging of war, wherein is the greatest improvement of human wisdom and industry, would be brutish. So do they deal with lust who mortify it indeed. Not only when it is actually vexing, enticing, and seducing, but in their retirements they consider, "This is our enemy; this is his way and progress, these are his advantages, thus hath he prevailed, and thus he will do, if not prevented." So David, "My sin is ever before me," Ps 51:3. And, indeed, one of the choicest and most eminent parts of practically spiritual wisdom consists in finding out the subtilties, policies, and depths of any indwelling sin; to consider and know wherein its greatest strength lies, — what advantage it uses to make of occasions, opportunities, temptations, — what are its pleas, pretences, reasonings, — what its stratagems, colours, excuses; to set the wisdom of the Spirit against the craft of the *old man*; to trace this serpent in all its turnings and windings; to be able to say, at its most secret and (to a common frame of heart) imperceptible actings, "This is your old way and

course; I know what you aim at;" — and so to be always in readiness is a good part of our warfare.

[3.] To load it daily with all the things which shall after be mentioned, that are grievous, killing, and destructive to it, is the height of this contest. Such a one never thinks his lust dead because it is quiet, but labours still to give it new wounds, new blows every day. So the apostle, Col 3:5.

Now, whilst the soul is in this condition, whilst it is thus dealing, it is certainly uppermost; sin is under the sword and *dying*.

(3.) In *success*. Frequent success against any lust is another part and evidence of mortification. By success I understand not a mere disappointment of sin, that it be not brought forth nor accomplished, but a victory over it, and pursuit of it to a complete conquest. For instance, when the heart finds sin at any time at work, seducing, forming imaginations to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, it instantly apprehends sin, and brings it to the law of God and love of Christ, condemns it, follows it with execution to the uttermost.

Now, I say, when a man comes to this state and condition, that lust is weakened in the root and principle, that its motions and actions are fewer and weaker than formerly, so that they are not able to hinder his duty nor interrupt his peace, — when he can, in a quiet, sedate frame of spirit, find out and fight against sin, and have success against it, — then sin is mortified in some considerable measure, and, notwithstanding all its opposition, a man may have peace with God all his days.

Unto these heads, then, do I refer the mortification aimed at; that is, of any one perplexing distemper, whereby the

general pravity and corruption of our nature attempts to exert and put forth itself:—

First, The *weakening* of its indwelling disposition, whereby it inclines, entices, impels to evil, rebels, opposes, fights against God, by the implanting, habitual residence, and cherishing of a principle of grace that stands in direct opposition to it and is destructive of it, is the foundation of it. So, by the implanting and growth of humility is pride weakened, passion by patience, uncleanness by purity of mind and conscience, love of this world by heavenly-mindedness: which are graces of the Spirit, or the same habitual grace variously acting itself by the Holy Ghost, according to the variety or diversity of the objects about which it is exercised; as the other are several lusts, or the same natural corruption variously acting itself, according to the various advantages and occasions that it meets withal.

The *promptness, alacrity, vigour* of the Spirit, or new man, in contending with, cheerful fighting against, the lust spoken of, by all the ways and with all the means that are appointed thereunto, constantly using the succours provided against its motions and actings, is a second thing hereunto required.

Success unto *several degrees* attends these two. Now this, if the distemper hath not an unconquerable advantage from its natural situation, may possibly be to such a *universal* conquest as the soul may never more sensibly feel its opposition, and shall, however, assuredly arise to an allowance of peace to the conscience, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace.

Chapter VII

General rules, without which no lust will be mortified — No mortification unless a man be a believer — Dangers of attempting mortification of sin by unregenerate persons — The duty of unconverted persons as to this business of mortification considered — The vanity of the Papists' attempts and rules for mortification thence discovered.

II. General Rules

The *ways* and *means* whereby a soul may proceed to the mortification of any particular lust and sin, which Satan takes advantage by to disquiet and weaken him, come next under consideration.

Now, there are some general considerations to be premised, concerning some principles and foundations of this work, without which no man in the world, be he never so much raised by convictions, and resolved for the mortification of any sin, can attain thereunto.

General rules and principles, without which no sin will be ever mortified, are these:—

First Rule: Only a Believer Can Mortify Sin

Unless a man be a believer, — that is, one that is truly ingrafted into Christ*, — he can never mortify any one sin*; I do not say, unless he know himself to be so, but unless indeed he be so.

Mortification is the work of believers: Rom 8:13, "If ye through the Spirit," etc., — ye *believers*, to whom there is no

condemnation, verse 1. They alone are exhorted to it: Col 3:5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Who should mortify? You who "are risen with Christ," verse 1; whose "life is hid with Christ in God," verse 3; who "shall appear with him in glory," verse 4. An unregenerate man may do something like it; but the work itself, so as it may be acceptable with God, he can never perform. You know what a picture of it is drawn in some of the philosophers, — Seneca, Tully, Epictetus; what affectionate discourses they have of contempt of the world and self, of regulating and conquering all exorbitant affections and passions! The lives of most of them manifested that their maxims differed as much from true mortification as the sun painted on a sign-post from the sun in the firmament; they had neither light nor heat. Their own Lucian sufficiently manifests what they all were. There is no death of sin without the death of Christ. You know what attempts there are made after it by the Papists, in their vows, penances, and satisfactions. I dare say of them (I mean as many of them as act upon the principles of their church, as they call it) what Paul says of Israel in point of righteousness, Rom 9:31, 32, — They have followed after mortification, but they have not attained to it. Wherefore? "Because they seek it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." The same is the state and condition of all amongst ourselves who, in obedience to their convictions and awakened consciences, do attempt a relinquishment of sin; — they follow after it, but they do not attain it.

It is true, it *is*, it *will be*, required of every person whatever that hears the law or gospel preached, that he mortify sin. It is his *duty*, but it is not his *immediate duty*; it is his duty to do it, but to do it in God's way. If you require your servant to pay so much money for you in such a place, but first to

go and take it up in another, it is his duty to pay the money appointed, and you will blame him if he do it not; yet it was not his immediate duty, — he was first to take it up, according to your direction. So it is in this case: sin is to be mortified, but something is to be done in the first place to enable us thereunto.

1. I have proved that it is the Spirit alone that can mortify sin; he is promised to do it, and all other means without him are empty and vain. How shall he, then, mortify sin that hath not the Spirit? A man may easier see without eyes, speak without a tongue, than truly mortify one sin without the Spirit. Now, how is he attained? It is the Spirit of Christ: and as the apostle says, "If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his," Rom 8:9; so, if we are Christ's, have an interest in him, we have the Spirit, and so alone have power for mortification. This the apostle discourses at large, Rom 8:8, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." It is the inference and conclusion he makes of his foregoing discourse about our natural state and condition, and the enmity we have unto God and his law therein. If we are in the flesh, if we have not the Spirit, we cannot do any thing that should please God. But what is our deliverance from this condition? Verse 9, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you;" — "Ye believers, that have the Spirit of Christ, ye are not in the flesh." There is no way of deliverance from the state and condition of being in the flesh but by the Spirit of Christ. And what if this Spirit of Christ be in you? Why, then, you are mortified; verse 10, "The body is dead because of sin," or unto it; mortification is carried on; the new man is quickened to righteousness. This the apostle proves, verse 11, from the union we have with Christ by the Spirit, which will produce suitable operations in us to what

it wrought in him. All attempts, then, for mortification of any lust, without an interest in Christ, are vain. Many men that are galled with and for sin, the arrows of Christ for conviction, by the preaching of the word, or some affliction having been made sharp in their hearts, do vigorously set themselves against this or that particular lust, wherewith their consciences have been most disquieted or perplexed. But, poor creatures! they labour in the fire, and their work consumeth. When the Spirit of Christ comes to this work he will be "like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap," and he will purge men as gold and as silver, Mal 3:2, 3, — take away their dross and tin, their filth and blood, as Isa 4:4; but men must be gold and silver in the bottom, or else refining will do them no good. The prophet gives us the sad issue of wicked men's utmost attempts for mortification, by what means soever that God affords them: Jer 6:29, 30, "The bellows are burned, and the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them." And what is the reason hereof? Verse 28, They were "brass and iron" when they were put into the furnace. Men may refine brass and iron long enough before they will be good silver.

I say, then, mortification is not the *present* business of *unregenerate* men. God calls them not to it as yet; *conversion* is their work, — the conversion of the *whole* soul, — not the mortification of *this* or *that particular* lust. You would laugh at a man that you should see setting up a great fabric, and never take any care for a foundation; especially if you should see him so foolish as that, having a thousand experiences that what he built one day fell down another, he would yet continue in the same course. So it is with convinced persons; though they plainly see, that what ground they get against

sin one day they lose another, yet they will go on in the same road still, without inquiring where the destructive flaw in their progress lies. When the Jews, upon the conviction of their sin, were cut to the heart, Acts 2:37, and cried out, "What shall we do?" what doth Peter direct them to do? Does he bid them go and mortify their pride, wrath, malice, cruelty, and the like? No; he knew that was not their present work, but he calls them to conversion and faith in Christ in general, verse 38. Let the soul be first thoroughly converted, and then, "looking on Him whom they had pierced," humiliation and mortification will ensue. Thus, when John came to preach repentance and conversion, he said, "The axe is now laid to the root of the tree," Matt 3:10. The Pharisees had been laying heavy burdens, imposing tedious duties, and rigid means of mortification, in fastings, washings, and the like, all in vain. Says John, "The doctrine of conversion is for you; the axe in my hand is laid to the root." And our Saviour tells us what is to be done in this case; says he, "Do men gather grapes from thorns?" Matt 7:16. But suppose a thorn be well pruned and cut, and have pains taken with him? "Yea, but he will never bear figs," verses 17, 18; it cannot be but every tree will bring forth fruit according to its own kind. What is then to be done, he tells us, Matt 12:33, "Make the tree good, and his fruit will be good." The root must be dealt with, the nature of the tree changed, or no good fruit will be brought forth.

This is that I aim at: unless a man be *regenerate*, unless he be a believer, all attempts that he can make for mortification, be they never so specious and promising, — all means he can use, let him follow them with never so much diligence, earnestness, watchfulness, and intention of mind and spirit, — are to no purpose. In vain shall he use many remedies; he shall not be healed. Yea, there are sundry desperate evils

attending an endeavour in convinced persons, that are no more but so, to perform this duty:—

(1.) The mind and soul is taken up about that which is not the man's *proper business*, and so he is diverted from that which is so. God lays hold by his word and judgments on some sin in him, galls his conscience, disquiets his heart, deprives him of his rest; now other diversions will not serve his turn; he must apply himself to the work before him. The business in hand being to awake the whole man unto a consideration of the state and condition wherein he is, that he might be brought home to God, instead hereof he sets himself to mortify the sin that galls him, — which is a pure issue of self-love, to be freed from his trouble, and not at all to the work he is called unto, — and so is diverted from it. Thus God tells us of Ephraim, when he "spread his net upon them, and brought them down as the fowls of heaven, and chastised them," Hos 7:12, caught them, entangled them, convinced them that they could not escape; saith he of them, "They return, but not to the Most High;" — they set themselves to a relinquishment of sin, but not in that manner, by *universal conversion*, as God called for it. Thus are men diverted from coming unto God by the most glorious ways that they can fix upon to come to him by. And this is one of the most common deceits whereby men ruin their own souls. I wish that some whose trade it is to daub with untempered mortar in the things of God did not teach this deceit, and cause the people to err by their ignorance. What do men do, what ofttimes are they directed unto, when their consciences are galled by sin and disquietment from the Lord, who hath laid hold upon them? Is not a relinquishment of the sin, as to practice, that they are, in some fruits of it, perplexed withal, and making head against it, the sum of what they apply themselves unto?

and is not the gospel end of their convictions lost thereby? Here men abide and perish.

(2.) This duty being a thing good in itself, in its proper place, a duty evidencing sincerity, bringing home peace to the conscience; a man finding himself really engaged in it, his mind and heart set against this or that sin, with purpose and resolution to have no more to do with it, — he is ready to conclude that his state and condition is good, and so to delude his own soul. For, —

[1.] When his conscience hath been made sick with sin, and he could find no rest, when he should go to the great Physician of souls, and get healing in his blood, the man by this engagement against sin pacifies and quiets his conscience, and sits down without going to Christ at all. Ah! how many poor souls are thus *deluded* to eternity! "When Ephraim saw his sickness, he sent to king Jareb," Hos 5:13; which kept him off from God. The whole bundle of the popish religion is made up of designs and contrivances to pacify conscience without Christ; all described by the apostle, Rom 10:3.

[2.] By this means men *satisfy* themselves that their state and condition is good, seeing they do that which is a work good in itself, and they do not do it to be seen. They know they would have the work done in sincerity, and so are hardened in a kind of self-righteousness.

(3.) When a man hath thus for a season been deluded, and hath deceived his own soul, and finds in a *long course* of life that indeed his sin is *not mortified*, or if he hath changed one he hath gotten another, he begins at length to think that all contending is in vain, — he shall never be able to prevail; he is making a dam against water that increaseth on him. Hereupon *he gives over*, as one despairing of any success,

and yields up himself to the power of sin and that habit of formality that he hath gotten.

And this is the usual issue with persons attempting the mortification of sin without an interest in Christ first obtained. It *deludes* them, *hardens* them, — *destroys* them. And therefore we see that there are not usually more vile and desperate sinners in the world than such as, having by conviction been put on this course, have found it fruitless, and deserted it without a discovery of Christ. And this is the substance of the religion and godliness of the choicest formalists in the world, and of all those who in the Roman synagogue are drawn to mortification, as they drive Indians to baptism or cattle to water. I say, then, that mortification is the work of believers, and believers only. To kill sin is the work of living men; where men are *dead* (as all unbelievers, the best of them, are dead), sin is *alive*, and will live.

2. It is the work of *faith*, the *peculiar* work of faith. Now, if there be a work to be done that will be effected by one only instrument, it is the greatest madness for any to attempt the doing of it that hath not that instrument. Now, it is faith that purifies the heart, Acts 15:9; or, as Peter speaks, we "purify our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit," 1 Pet 1:22; and without it, it will not be done.

What hath been spoken I suppose is sufficient to make good my first *general rule*:— *Be sure to get an interest in Christ; if you intend to mortify any sin without it, it will never be done.*

Obj. You will say, "What, then, would you have unregenerate men that are convinced of the evil of sin do? Shall they cease striving against sin, live dissolutely, give their lusts their swing, and be as bad as the worst of men? This were a way to set the whole world into confusion, to bring all things into darkness, to set open the flood-gates of lust, and lay the

reins upon the necks of men to rush into all sin with delight and greediness, like the horse into the battle."

Ans. 1. God forbid! It is to be looked on as a great issue of the wisdom, goodness, and love of God, that by manifold ways and means he is pleased to restrain the sons of men from running forth into that compass of excess and riot which the depravedness of their nature would carry them out unto with violence. By what way soever this is done, it is an issue of the care, kindness, and goodness of God, without which the whole earth would be a hell of sin and confusion.

2. There is a peculiar *convincing* power in the word, which God is oftentimes pleased to put forth, to the wounding, amazing, and, in some sort, humbling of sinners, though they are never converted. And the word is to be preached though it hath this end, yet not with this end. Let, then, the word be preached, and the sins of men [will be] rebuked, lust will be restrained, and some oppositions will be made against sin; though that be not the effect aimed at.

3. Though this be the *work* of the word and Spirit, and it be good in itself, yet it is not profitable nor available as to the main end in them in whom it is wrought; they are still in the gall of bitterness, and under the power of darkness.

4. Let men know it is their *duty*, but in its proper place; I take not men from mortification, but put them upon conversion. He that shall call a man from mending a hole in the wall of his house, to quench a fire that is consuming the whole building, is not his enemy. Poor soul! it is not thy sore finger but thy hectic fever that thou art to apply thyself to the consideration of. Thou settest thyself against *a particular* sin, and dost not consider that thou art *nothing* but sin.

Let me add this to them who are preachers of the word, or intend, through the good hand of God, that employment: It

is their duty to plead with men about their sins, to lay load on particular sins, but always remember that it be done with that which is the proper end of law and gospel; — that is, that they make use of the sin they speak against to the discovery of the state and condition wherein the sinner is; otherwise, haply, they may work men to formality and hypocrisy, but little of the true end of preaching the gospel will be brought about. It will not avail to beat a man off from his drunkenness into a sober formality. A skilful master of the assemblies lays his axe at the root, drives still at the heart. To inveigh against particular sins of ignorant, unregenerate persons, such as the land is full of, is a good work; but yet, though it may be done with great efficacy, vigour, and success, if this be all the effect of it, that they are set upon the most sedulous endeavours of mortifying their sins preached down, all that is done is but like the beating of an enemy in an open field, and driving him into an impregnable castle, not to be prevailed against. Get you at any time a sinner at the advantage, on the account of any one sin whatever? have you any thing to take hold of him by? — bring it to his state and condition, drive it up to the head, and there deal with him. To break men off particular sins, and not to break their hearts, is to deprive ourselves of advantages of dealing with them.

And herein is the Roman mortification grievously peccant; they drive all sorts of persons to it, without the least consideration whether they have a principle for it or no. Yea, they are so far from calling on men to believe, that they may be able to mortify their lusts, that they call men to mortification instead of believing. The truth is, they neither know what it is to *believe* nor what *mortification* itself intends. Faith with them is but a general assent to the doctrine taught in their church; and mortification the betaking of a man by a vow to some

certain course of life, wherein he denies himself something of the use of the things of this world, not without a considerable compensation. Such men know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. Their boasting of their mortification is but their glorying in their shame. Some casuists among ourselves, who, overlooking the necessity of regeneration, do avowedly give this for a direction to all sorts of persons that complain of any sin or lust, that they should vow against it, at least for a season, a month or so, seem to have a scantling of light in the mystery of the gospel, much like that of Nicodemus when he came first to Christ. They bid men vow to abstain from their sin for a season. This commonly makes their lust more impetuous. Perhaps with great perplexity they keep their word; perhaps not, which increases their guilt and torment. Is their sin at all mortified hereby? Do they find a conquest over it? Is their condition changed, though they attain a relinquishment of it? Are they not still in the gall of bitterness? Is not this to put men to make brick, if not without *straw*, yet, which is worse, without *strength*? What promise hath any unregenerate man to countenance him in this work? what assistance for the performance of it? Can sin be killed without an interest in the death of Christ, or mortified without the Spirit? If such directions should prevail to change men's lives, as seldom they do, yet they never reach to the change of their hearts or conditions. They may make men self-justiciaries or hypocrites, not Christians. It grieves me ofttimes to see poor souls, that have a zeal for God and a desire of eternal welfare, kept by such directors and directions under a hard, burdensome, outside worship and service of God, with many specious endeavours for mortification, in an utter ignorance of the righteousness of Christ, and unacquaintedness with his Spirit, all their days. Persons

and things of this kind I know too many. If ever God shine into their hearts, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of his Son Jesus Christ, they will see the folly of their present way.

Chapter VIII

The second general rule proposed — Without universal sincerity for the mortifying of every lust, no lust will be mortified — Partial mortification always from a corrupt principle — Perplexity of temptation from a lust oftentimes a chastening for other negligences.

Second Rule: Sincerity in a Universal Obedience

The second principle which to this purpose I shall propose is this:—

Without sincerity and diligence in a universality of obedience, there is no mortification of any one perplexing lust to be obtained.

The other was to the person; this to the thing itself. I shall a little explain this position.

A man finds any lust to bring him into the condition formerly described; it is powerful, strong, tumultuating, leads captive, vexes, disquiets, takes away peace; he is not able to bear it; wherefore he sets himself against it, prays against it, groans under it, sighs to be delivered: but in the meantime, perhaps, in other duties, — in constant communion with God, — in reading, prayer, and meditation, — in other ways that are not of the same kind with the lust wherewith he is troubled, — he is loose and negligent. Let not that man think that ever he shall arrive to the mortification of the lust he is perplexed withal. This is a condition that not seldom befalls men in their pilgrimage. The Israelites, under a sense of their sin, drew nigh to God with much diligence and earnestness,

with fasting and prayer, Isa 58: many expressions are made of their earnestness in the work, verse 2 "They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." But God rejects all. Their fast is a remedy that will not heal them, and the reason given of it, verses 5–7, is, because they were particular in this duty. They attended diligently to that, but in others were negligent and careless. He that hath a "running sore" (it is the Scripture expression) upon him, arising from an ill habit of body, contracted by intemperance and ill diet, let him apply himself with what diligence and skill he can to *the cure of his sore*, if he leave *the general habit of his body* under distempers, his labour and travail will be in vain. So will his attempts be that shall endeavour to stop a bloody issue of sin and filth in his soul, and is not equally careful of his universal spiritual temperature and constitution. For, —

(1.) This kind of endeavour for mortification proceeds from a *corrupt principle*, ground, and foundation; so that it will never proceed to a good issue. The true and acceptable principles of mortification shall be afterward insisted on. Hatred of sin as sin, not only as galling or disquieting, a sense of the love of Christ in the cross, lie at the bottom of all true spiritual mortification. Now, it is certain that that which I speak of proceeds from *self-love*. Thou settest thyself with all diligence and earnestness to mortify such a lust or sin; what is the reason of it? It disquiets thee, it hath taken away thy peace, it fills thy heart with sorrow, and trouble, and fear; thou hast no rest because of it. Yea; but, friend, thou hast neglected prayer or reading; thou hast been vain and loose in thy conversation in other things, that have not been of the same nature with that lust wherewith thou art perplexed. These are no less sins and evils than those under

which thou groanest. Jesus Christ bled for them also. Why dost thou not set thyself against them also? If thou hatest sin as sin, every evil way, thou wouldst be no less watchful against every thing that grieves and disquiets the Spirit of God, than against that which grieves and disquiets thine own soul. It is evident that thou contendest against *sin* merely because of thy own *trouble* by it. Would thy conscience be quiet under it, thou wouldst let it alone. Did it not disquiet thee, it should not be disquieted by thee. Now, canst thou think that God will set in with such hypocritical endeavours, — that ever his Spirit will bear witness to the treachery and falsehood of thy spirit? Dost thou think he will ease thee of that which perplexeth thee, that thou mayst be at liberty to that which no less grieves him? No. Says God, "Here is one, if he could be rid of this lust I should never hear of him more; let him wrestle with this, or he is lost." Let not any man think to do his own work that will not do God's. God's work consists in *universal obedience*; to be freed of the present perplexity is their own only. Hence is that of the apostle, 2 Cor 7:1, "Cleanse yourselves from all pollution of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." If we will do any thing, we must do all things. So, then, it is not only an intense opposition to this or that peculiar lust, but a universal humble frame and temper of heart, with watchfulness over every evil and for the performance of every duty, that is accepted.

(2.) How knowest thou but that God hath suffered the lust wherewith thou hast been perplexed to get strength in thee, and power over thee, to chasten thee for thy other negligences and common lukewarmness in walking before him; at least to awaken thee to the consideration of thy ways, that thou mayst make a thorough work and change in thy course of walking with him?

The rage and predominancy of a particular lust is commonly the fruit and issue of a careless, negligent course in general, and that upon a double account:—

[1.] As its *natural effect*, if I may so say. Lust, as I showed in general, lies in the heart of every one, even the best, whilst he lives; and think not that the Scripture speaks in vain, that it is subtle, cunning, crafty, — that it seduces, entices, fights, rebels. Whilst a man keeps a diligent watch over his heart, its root and fountain, — whilst above all keepings he keeps his heart, whence are the issues of life and death, — lust withers and dies in it. But if, through negligence, it makes an eruption any particular way, gets a passage to the thoughts by the affections, and from them and by them perhaps breaks out into open sin in the conversation, the strength of it bears that way it hath found out, and that way mainly it urgeth, until, having got a passage, it then vexes and disquiets, and is not easily to be restrained: thus, perhaps, a man may be put to wrestle all his days in sorrow with that which, by a strict and universal watch, might easily have been prevented.

[2.] As I said, God oftentimes suffers it to *chasten* our other negligences: for as with wicked men, he gives them up to *one* sin as the judgment of another, *a greater for the punishment of a less*, or one that will hold them more firmly and securely for that which they might have possibly obtained a deliverance from;[6] so even with his own, he may, he doth, leave them sometimes to some vexatious distempers, either to prevent or cure some other evil. So was the messenger of Satan let loose on Paul, that he "might not be lifted up through the abundance of spiritual revelations."[7] Was it not a correction to Peter's vain confidence, that he was left to

[6] Rom 1:26.

[7] 2 Cor 12:7.

deny his Master? Now, if this be the state and condition of lust in its prevalency, that God oftentimes suffers it so to prevail, at least to admonish us, and to humble us, perhaps to chasten and correct us for our general loose and careless walking, is it possible that the *effect* should be removed and the *cause* continued, — that the *particular* lust should be mortified and the *general* course be unreformed? He, then, that would really, thoroughly, and acceptably mortify any disquieting lust, let him take care to be equally diligent in all parts of obedience, and know that every lust, every omission of duty, is burdensome to God, though but one is so to him.[8] Whilst there abides a treachery in the heart to indulge to any negligence in not pressing universally to all perfection in obedience, the soul is *weak*, as not giving faith its whole work; and *selfish*, as considering more the trouble of sin than the filth and guilt of it; and lives under a constant *provocation* of God: so that it may not expect any comfortable issue in any spiritual duty that it doth undertake, much less in this under consideration, which requires another principle and frame of spirit for its accomplishment.

[8] Isa 43:24.

Chapter IX

Particular directions in relation to the foregoing case proposed — First. Consider the dangerous symptoms of any lust — 1. Inveterateness — 2. Peace obtained under it; the several ways whereby that is done — 3. Frequency of success in its seductions — 4. The soul's fighting against it with arguments only taken from the event — 5. Its being attended with judiciary hardness — 6. Its withstanding particular dealings from God — The state of persons in whom these things are found.

III. Particular Directions

The foregoing *general rules* being supposed, *particular directions* to the soul for its guidance under the sense of a disquieting lust or distemper, being the main thing I aim at, come next to be proposed. Now, of these some are previous and preparatory, and in some of them the work itself is contained. Of the *first sort* are these ensuing:—

First Direction: Consider the Dangerous Symptoms of the Lust

First. Consider what dangerous *symptoms* thy lust hath attending or accompanying it, — whether it hath any deadly mark on it or no; if it hath, *extraordinary* remedies are to be used; an ordinary course of mortification will not do it.

You will say, "What are these dangerous marks and *symptoms*, the desperate *attendancies* of an indwelling lust, that you intend?" Some of them I shall name:—

1. *Inveterateness.* — If it hath lain long corrupting in thy heart, if thou hast suffered it to abide in power and prevalency, without attempting vigorously the killing of it, and the healing of the wounds thou hast received by it, for some long season, thy distemper is dangerous. Hast thou permitted worldliness, ambition, greediness of study, to eat up other duties, the duties wherein thou oughtest to hold constant communion with God, for some long season? or uncleanness to defile thy heart with vain, and foolish, and wicked imaginations for many days? Thy lust hath a dangerous symptom. So was the case with David: Ps 38:5, "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness." When a lust hath lain long in the heart, corrupting, festering, cankering, it brings the soul to a woful condition. In such a case an ordinary course of humiliation will not do the work: whatever it be, it will by this means insinuate itself more or less into all the faculties of the soul, and habituate the affections to its company and society; it grows familiar to the mind and conscience, that they do not startle at it as a strange thing, but are bold with it as that which they are wonted unto; yea, it will get such advantage by this means as oftentimes to exert and put forth itself without having any notice taken of it at all, as it seems to have been with Joseph in his swearing by the life of Pharaoh. Unless some extraordinary course be taken, such a person hath no ground in the world to expect that his latter end shall be peace.

For, first, How will he be able to distinguish between the long abode of an *unmortified lust* and the *dominion of sin*, which cannot befall a regenerate person? Secondly, How can he promise himself that it shall ever be otherwise with him, or that his lust will cease tumultuating and seducing, when he sees it fixed and abiding, and hath done so for many days,

and hath gone through a *variety* of conditions with him? It may be it hath tried *mercies* and *afflictions*, and those possibly so remarkable that the soul could not avoid the taking special notice of them; it may be it hath weathered out many a storm, and passed under much variety of gifts in the administration of the word; and will it prove an easy thing to dislodge an inmate pleading a title by prescription? Old neglected wounds are often mortal, always dangerous. Indwelling distempers grow rusty and stubborn by continuance in ease and quiet. Lust is such an inmate as, if it can plead time and some prescription, will not easily be ejected. As it never dies of itself, so if it be not daily killed it will always gather strength.

2. Secret pleas of the heart for the *countenancing* of itself, and keeping up its peace, notwithstanding the abiding of a lust, without a vigorous gospel attempt for its mortification, is another dangerous symptom of a deadly distemper in the heart. Now, there be several ways whereby this may be done. I shall name some of them; as, —

(1.) When upon *thoughts*, perplexing thoughts about sin, instead of applying himself to the destruction of it, a man searches his heart to see what evidences he can find of a good condition, notwithstanding that sin and lust, so that it may go well with him.

For a man to gather up his experiences of God, to call them to mind, to collect them, consider, try, improve them, is an excellent thing, — a duty practised by all the saints, commended in the Old Testament and the New. This was David's work when he "communed with his own heart," and called to remembrance the former loving-kindness of the Lord.[9] This is the duty that Paul sets us to practise, 2 Cor 13:5. And as it

[9] Ps 77:6–9.

is in itself excellent, so it hath beauty added to it by a proper season, a time of trial or temptation, or disquietness of the heart about sin, — is a picture of silver to set off this golden apple, as Solomon speaks. But now to do it for this end, to satisfy conscience, which cries and calls for another purpose, is a desperate device of a heart in love with sin. When a man's conscience shall deal with him, when God shall rebuke him for the sinful distemper of his heart, if he, instead of applying himself to get that sin *pardoned* in the blood of Christ and *mortified* by his Spirit, shall relieve himself by any *such other evidences* as he hath, or thinks himself to have, and so disentangle himself from under the yoke that God was putting on his neck, his condition is very dangerous, his wound hardly curable. Thus the Jews, under the gallings of their own consciences and the convincing preaching of our Saviour, supported themselves with this, that they were "Abraham's children," and on that account accepted with God; and so countenanced themselves in all abominable wickedness, to their utter ruin.

This is, in some degree, a blessing of a man's self, and saying that upon one account or other he shall have peace, "although he adds drunkenness to thirst." Love of sin, undervaluation of peace and of all tastes of love from God, are inwrapped in such a frame. Such a one plainly shows, that if he can but keep up hope of escaping the "wrath to come," he can be well content to be unfruitful in the world, at any distance from God that is not final separation. What is to be expected from such a heart?

(2.) By applying *grace and mercy* to an unmortified sin, or one not *sincerely* endeavoured to be mortified, is this deceit carried on. This is a sign of a heart greatly entangled with the love of sin. When a man hath secret thoughts in his heart, not

unlike those of Naaman about his worshipping in the house of Rimmon,[10] "In all other things I will walk with God, but in this thing, God be merciful unto me," his condition is sad. It is true, indeed, a resolution to this purpose, to indulge a man's self in any sin on the account of mercy, seems to be, and doubtless in any course is, altogether inconsistent with Christian sincerity, and is a badge of a hypocrite, and is the "turning of the grace of God into wantonness;"[11] yet I doubt not but, through the craft of Satan and their own remaining unbelief, the children of God may themselves sometimes be ensnared with this deceit of sin, or else Paul would never have so cautioned them against it as he doth, Rom 6:1, 2. Yea, indeed, there is nothing more natural than for fleshly reasonings to grow high and strong upon this account. The flesh would fain be indulged unto upon the account of grace, and every word that is spoken of mercy, it stands ready to catch at and to pervert it, to its own corrupt aims and purposes. To apply mercy, then, to a sin not vigorously mortified is to fulfil the end of the flesh upon the gospel.

These and many other ways and wiles a deceitful heart will sometimes make use of, to countenance itself in its abominations. Now, when a man with his sin is in this condition, that there is a secret liking of the sin prevalent in his heart, and though his will be not wholly set upon it, yet he hath an imperfect velleity towards it, he would practise it were it not for such and such considerations, and hereupon relieves himself other ways than by the mortification and pardon of it in the blood of Christ; that man's "wounds stink and are corrupt," and he will, without speedy deliverance, be at the door of death.

[10] 2 Kgs 5:18.
[11] Jude 4.

3. *Frequency of success* in sin's seduction, in obtaining the prevailing consent of the will unto it, is another dangerous symptom. This is that I mean: When the sin spoken of gets the consent of the will with some *delight*, though it be not actually outwardly perpetrated, yet it hath success. A man may not be able, upon outward considerations, to go along with sin to that which James calls the "finishing" of it,[12] as to the outward acts of sin, when yet the will of sinning may be actually obtained; then hath it, I say, success. Now, if any lust be able thus far to prevail in the soul of any man, as his condition may possibly be very bad and himself be unregenerate, so it cannot possibly be very good, but dangerous; and it is all one upon the matter whether this be done by the choice of the will or by inadvertency, for that inadvertency itself is in a manner chosen. When we are inadvertent and negligent, where we are bound to watchfulness and carefulness, that inadvertency doth not take off from the voluntariness of what we do thereupon; for although men do not choose and resolve to be negligent and inadvertent, yet if they choose the things that will make them so, they choose inadvertency itself as a thing may be chosen in its cause.

And let not men think that the evil of their hearts is in any measure extenuated because they seem, for the most part, to be surprised into that consent which they seem to give unto it; for it is negligence of their duty in watching over their hearts that betrays them into that surprisal.

4. When a man fighteth against his sin only with *arguments from the issue* or the punishment due unto it, this is a sign that sin hath taken great possession of the will, and that in the heart there is a superfluity of naughtiness. Such

[12] Jas 1:14, 15.

a man as opposes nothing to the seduction of sin and lust in his heart but fear of shame among men or hell from God, is sufficiently resolved to do the sin if there were no punishment attending it; which, what it differs from living in the practice of sin, I know not. Those who are Christ's, and are acted in their obedience upon gospel principles, have the death of Christ, the love of God, the detestable nature of sin, the preciousness of communion with God, a deep-grounded abhorrency of sin *as sin*, to oppose to any seduction of sin, to all the workings, strivings, fightings of lust in their hearts. So did Joseph. "How shall I do this great evil," saith he, "and sin against the Lord?" my good and gracious God.[13] And Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth us;"[14] and, "Having received these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all pollution of the flesh and spirit," 2 Cor 7:1. But now if a man be so under the power of his lust that he hath nothing but law to oppose it withal, if he cannot fight against it with gospel weapons, but deals with it altogether with hell and judgment, which are the proper arms of the law, it is most evident that sin hath possessed itself of his will and affections to a very great prevalency and conquest.

Such a person hath cast off, as to the particular spoken of, the conduct of *renewing* grace, and is kept from ruin only by *restraining* grace; and so far is he fallen from grace, and returned under the power of the law. And can it be thought that this is not a great provocation to Christ, that men should cast off his easy, gentle yoke and rule, and cast themselves under the iron yoke of the law, merely out of indulgence unto their lusts?

[13] Gen 39:9.
[14] 2 Cor 5:14.

Try thyself by this also: When thou art by sin driven to make a stand, so that thou must either serve it and rush at the command of it into folly, like the horse into the battle, or make head against it to suppress it, what dost thou say to thy soul? what dost thou expostulate with thyself? Is this all, — "Hell will be the end of this course; vengeance will meet with me and find me out?" It is time for thee to look about thee; evil lies at the door. Paul's main argument to evince that sin shall not have dominion over believers is, that they "are not under the law, but under grace," Rom 6:14. If thy contendings against sin be all on legal accounts, from legal principles and motives, what assurance canst thou attain unto that sin shall not have dominion over thee, which will be thy ruin?

Yea, know that this reserve will not long hold out. If thy lust hath driven thee from stronger gospel forts, it will speedily prevail against this also. Do not suppose that such considerations will deliver thee, when thou hast voluntarily given up to thine enemy those helps and means of preservation which have a thousand times their strength. Rest assuredly in this, that unless thou recover thyself with speed from this condition, the thing that thou fearest will come upon thee. What *gospel principles* do not, *legal motives* cannot do.

5. When it is probable that there is, or may be, somewhat of judiciary hardness, or at least of chastening punishment, in thy lust as disquieting. This is another dangerous symptom. That God doth sometimes leave even those of his own under the perplexing power at least of some lust or sin, to correct them for former sins, negligence, and folly, I no way doubt. Hence was that complaint of the church, "Why hast thou hardened us from the fear of thy name?" Isa 63:17. That this is his way of dealing with unregenerate men no man questions.

But how shall a man know whether there be any thing of God's chastening hand in his being left to the disquietment of his distemper? *Ans.* Examine thy heart and ways. What was the state and condition of thy soul before thou fellest into the entanglements of that sin which now thou so complainest of? Hadst thou been negligent in duties? Hadst thou lived inordinately to thyself? Is there the guilt of any great sin lying upon thee unrepented of? A *new sin may be permitted*, as well as a *new affliction sent*, to bring an old sin to remembrance.

Hast thou received any eminent mercy, protection, deliverance, which thou didst not improve in a due manner, nor wast thankful for? or hast thou been exercised with any affliction without labouring for the appointed end of it? or hast thou been wanting to the opportunities of glorifying God in thy generation, which, in his good providence, he had graciously afforded unto thee? or hast thou conformed thyself unto the world and the men of it, through the abounding of temptations in the days wherein thou livest? If thou findest this to have been thy state, awake, call upon God; thou art fast asleep in a storm of anger round about thee.

6. When thy lust hath already *withstood* particular dealings from God against it. This condition is described, Isa 57:17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." God had dealt with them about their prevailing lust, and that several ways, — by affliction and desertion; but they held out against all. This is a sad condition, which nothing but *mere sovereign grace* (as God expresses it in the next verse) can relieve a man in, and which no man ought to promise himself or bear himself upon. God oftentimes, in his providential dispensations, meets with a man, and speaks particularly to the evil of his heart, as he

did to Joseph's brethren in their selling of him into Egypt. This makes the man reflect on his sin, and judge himself in particular for it. God makes it to be the voice of the danger, affliction, trouble, sickness that he is in or under. Sometimes in reading of the word God makes a man stay on something that cuts him to the heart, and shakes him as to his present condition. More frequently in the hearing of the word preached, his great ordinance for conviction, conversion, and edification, doth he meet with men. God often hews men by the sword of his word in that ordinance, strikes directly on their bosom-beloved lust, startles the sinner, makes him engage unto the mortification and relinquishment of the evil of his heart. Now, if his lust have taken such hold on him as to enforce him to break these bands of the Lord, and to cast these cords from him, — if it overcomes these convictions, and gets again into its old posture, — if it can cure the wounds it so receives, — that soul is in a sad condition.

Unspeakable are the evils which attend such a frame of heart. Every particular warning to a man in such an estate is an inestimable mercy; how then doth he despise God in them who holds out against them! And what infinite patience is this in God, that he doth not cast off such a one, and swear in his wrath that he shall never enter into his rest!

These and many other evidences are there of a lust that is dangerous, if not mortal. As our Saviour said of the evil spirit, "This kind goes not out but by fasting and prayer," so say I of lusts of this kind. An ordinary course of mortification will not do it; extraordinary ways must be fixed on.

This is the first particular direction: Consider whether the lust or sin you are contending with hath any of these dangerous symptoms attending of it.

Before I proceed I must give you one caution by the way, lest any be deceived by what hath been spoken. Whereas I say the things and evils above-mentioned may befall true believers, let not any that finds the same things in himself thence or from thence conclude that he is a true believer. These are the evils that believers may fall into and be ensnared withal, not the things that constitute a believer. A man may as well conclude that he is a believer because he is an adulterer, because David that was so fell into adultery, as conclude it from the signs foregoing; which are the evils of sin and Satan in the hearts of believers. The seventh chapter of the Romans contains the description of a regenerate man. He that shall consider what is spoken of his dark side, of his unregenerate part, of the indwelling power and violence of sin remaining in him, and, because he finds the like in himself, conclude that he is a regenerate man, will be deceived in his reckoning. It is all one as if you should argue: A wise man may be sick and wounded, yea, do some things foolishly; therefore, every one who is sick and wounded and does things foolishly is a wise man. Or as if a silly, deformed creature, hearing one speak of a beautiful person, should say that he had a mark or a scar that much disfigured him, should conclude that because he hath himself scars, and moles, and warts, he also is beautiful. If you will have evidences of your being believers, it must be from those things that constitute men believers. He that hath these things in himself may safely conclude, "If I am a believer, I am a most miserable one." But that any man is so, he must look for other evidences if he will have peace.

Chapter X

The SECOND particular direction: Get a clear sense of, — 1. The guilt of the sin perplexing — Considerations for help therein proposed — 2. The danger manifold — (1.) Hardening — (2.) Temporal correction — (3.) Loss of peace and strength — (4.) Eternal destruction — Rules for the management of this consideration — 3. The evil of it — (1.) In grieving the Spirit — (2.) Wounding the new creature — [(3.) Taking away a man's usefulness.]

Second Direction: A Clear Sense of the Guilt, Danger, and Evil of the Sin

THE SECOND direction is this: *Get a clear and abiding sense upon thy mind and conscience of the guilt, danger, and evil* of that sin wherewith thou art perplexed:—

1. Of the *guilt* of it. It is one of the deceits of a prevailing lust to extenuate its own guilt. "Is it not a little one?" "When I go and bow myself in the house of Rimmon, God be merciful to me in this thing." "Though this be bad, yet it is not so bad as such and such an evil; others of the people of God have had such a frame; yea, what dreadful actual sins have some of them fallen into!" Innumerable ways there are whereby sin diverts the mind from a right and due apprehension of its guilt. Its noisome exhalations darken the mind, that it cannot make a right judgment of things. Perplexing reasonings, extenuating promises, tumultuating desires, treacherous purposes of relinquishment, hopes of mercy, all have their share in disturbing the mind in its con-

sideration of the guilt of a prevailing lust. The prophet tells us that lust will do thus wholly when it comes to the height: Hos 4:11, "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart," — the heart, that is the understanding, as it is often used in the Scripture. And as they accomplish this work to the height in unregenerate persons, so in part in regenerate also. Solomon tells you of him who was enticed by the lewd woman, that he was "among the simple ones;" he was "a young man void of understanding," Prov 7:7. And wherein did his folly appear? Why, says he, in the 23d verse, "He knew not that it was for his life;" he considered not the guilt of the evil that he was involved in. And the Lord, rendering a reason why his dealings with Ephraim took no better effect, gives this account: "Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart," Hos 7:11; — had no understanding of his own miserable condition. Had it been possible that David should have lain so long in the guilt of that abominable sin, but that he had innumerable corrupt reasonings, hindering him from taking a clear view of its ugliness and guilt in the glass of the law? This made the prophet that was sent for his awaking, in his dealings with him, to shut up all subterfuges and pretences by his parable, that so he might fall fully under a sense of the guilt of it. This is the proper issue of lust in the heart, — it darkens the mind that it shall not judge aright of its guilt; and many other ways it hath for its own extenuation that I shall not now insist on.

Let this, then, be the first care of him that would mortify sin, — to fix a right judgment of its guilt in his mind. To which end take these considerations to thy assistance:—

(1.) Though the power of sin be weakened by *inherent grace* in them that have it, that sin shall not have dominion over them as it hath over others, yet *the guilt of sin that doth yet abide and remain is aggravated and heightened by it*: Rom

6:1, 2, "What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" — "How shall we, that are dead?" The emphasis is on the word "we." How shall *we* do it, who, as he afterward describes it, have received grace from Christ to the contrary? We, doubtless, are more evil than any, if we do it. I shall not insist on the special aggravations of the sins of such persons, — how they sin against more love, mercy, grace, assistance, relief, means, and deliverances than others. But let this consideration abide in thy mind, — there is inconceivably more evil and guilt in the evil of thy heart that doth remain, than there would be in so much sin if thou hadst no grace at all. Observe, —

(2.) That as God sees abundance of beauty and excellency in the desires of the heart of his servants, more than in any the most glorious works of other men, yea, more than in most of their own outward performances, which have a greater mixture of sin than the desires and pantings of grace in the heart have; so God sees *a great deal of evil in the working of lust in their hearts, yea, and more than in the open, notorious acts of wicked men*, or in many outward sins whereinto the saints may fall, seeing against them there is more opposition made, and more humiliation generally follows them. Thus Christ, dealing with his decaying children, goes to the root with them, lays aside their profession: Rev 3:15, "I know thee;" — "Thou art quite another thing than thou professest; and this makes thee abominable."

So, then, let these things, and the like considerations, lead thee to a clear sense of the guilt of thy indwelling lust, that there may be no room in thy heart for extenuating or excusing thoughts, whereby sin insensibly will get strength and prevail.

2. Consider the *danger* of it, which is manifold:—

(1.) Of being *hardened by the deceitfulness*. This the apostle sorely charges on the Hebrews, ch. 3:12, 13, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." "Take heed," saith he, "use all means, consider your temptations, watch diligently; there is a treachery, a deceit in sin, that tends to the hardening of your hearts from the fear of God." The hardening here mentioned is to the utmost, — utter obduration; sin tends to it, and every distemper and lust will make at least some progress towards it. Thou that wast tender, and didst use to melt under the word, under afflictions, wilt grow as some have profanely spoken, "sermon-proof and sickness-proof." Thou that didst tremble at the presence of God, thoughts of death, and appearance before him, when thou hadst more assurance of his love than now thou hast, shalt have a stoutness upon thy spirit not to be moved by these things. Thy soul and thy sin shall be spoken of and spoken to, and thou shalt not be at all concerned, but shalt be able to pass over duties, praying, hearing, reading, and thy heart not in the least affected. Sin will grow *a light thing* to thee; thou wilt pass it by as a thing of nought; this it will grow to. And what will be the end of such a condition? Can a sadder thing befall thee? Is it not enough to make any heart to tremble, to think of being brought into that estate wherein he should have slight thoughts of sin? Slight thoughts of grace, of mercy, of the blood of Christ, of the law, heaven, and hell, come all in at the same season. Take heed, this is that thy lust is working towards, — the hardening of the heart, searing of the conscience, blinding of the mind, stupifying of the affections, and deceiving of the whole soul.

(2.) The danger of some great *temporal correction*, which the Scripture calls "vengeance," "judgment," and "punishment." Ps 89:30–33, Though God should not utterly cast thee off for this abomination that lies in thy heart, yet he will visit thee with the rod; though he pardon and forgive, he will take vengeance of thy inventions. O remember David and all his troubles! look on him flying into the wilderness, and consider the hand of God upon him. Is it nothing to thee that God should kill thy child in anger, ruin thy estate in anger, break thy bones in anger, suffer thee to be a scandal and reproach in anger, kill thee, destroy thee, make thee lie down in darkness, in anger? Is it nothing that he should punish, ruin, and undo others for thy sake? Let me not be mistaken. I do not mean that God doth send all these things always on *his* in anger; God forbid! but this I say, that when he doth so deal with thee, and thy conscience bears witness with him what thy provocations have been, thou wilt find his dealings full of bitterness to thy soul. If *thou fearest* not these things, *I fear* thou art under hardness.

(3.) *Loss of peace and strength* all a man's days. To have peace with God, to have strength to walk before God, is the sum of the great promises of the covenant of grace. In these things is the life of our souls. Without them in some comfortable measure, to live is to die. What good will our lives do us if we see not the face of God sometimes in peace? if we have not some strength to walk with him? Now, both these will an unmortified lust certainly deprive the souls of men of. This case is so evident in David, as that nothing can be more clear. How often doth he complain that his bones were broken, his soul disquieted, his wounds grievous, on this account! Take other instances: Isa 57:17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and hid myself." What peace,

I pray, is there to a soul while God hides himself, or strength whilst he smites? Hos 5:15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face;" — "I will leave them, hide my face, and what will become of their peace and strength?" If ever, then, thou hast enjoyed peace with God, if ever his terrors have made thee afraid, if ever thou hast had strength to walk with him, or ever hast mourned in thy prayer, and been troubled because of thy weakness, think of this danger that hangs over thy head. It is perhaps but a little while and thou shalt see the face of God in peace no more. Perhaps by to-morrow thou shalt not be able to pray, read, hear, or perform any duties with the least cheerfulness, life, or vigour; and possibly thou mayst never see a quiet hour whilst thou livest, — that thou mayst carry about thee broken bones, full of pain and terror, all the days of thy life. Yea, perhaps God will shoot his arrows at thee, and fill thee with anguish and disquietness, with fears and perplexities; make thee a terror and an astonishment to thyself and others; show thee hell and wrath every moment; frighten and scare thee with sad apprehensions of his hatred; so that thy sore shall run in the night season, and thy soul shall refuse comfort; so that thou shalt wish death rather than life, yea, thy soul may choose strangling. Consider this a little, — though God should not utterly destroy thee, yet he might cast thee into this condition, wherein thou shalt have quick and living apprehensions of thy destruction. Wont thy heart to thoughts hereof; let it know what is like to be the issue of its state. Leave not this consideration until thou hast made thy soul to tremble within thee.

(4.) There is the danger of *eternal destruction*.

For the due management of this consideration, observe, —

[1.] That there is such a *connection* between a *continuance in sin* and *eternal destruction*, that though God does resolve to deliver some from a continuance in sin that they may not be destroyed, yet he will deliver none from destruction that continue in sin; so that whilst any one lies under an abiding power of sin, the threats of destruction and everlasting separation from God are to be held out to him. So Heb 3:12; to which add ch. 10:38. This is the rule of God's proceeding: If any man "depart" from him, "draw back" through unbelief, "God's soul hath no pleasure in him;" — "that is, his indignation shall pursue him to destruction:" so evidently, Gal 6:8.

[2.] That he who is *so entangled*, as above described, under the power of any corruption, can have at that present no clear prevailing evidence of his interest in the covenant, by the efficacy whereof he may be delivered from fear of destruction; so that destruction from the Lord may justly be a terror to him; and he may, he ought to look upon it, as that which will be *the end of his course and ways*. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom 8:1. True; but who shall have the comfort of this assertion? who may assume it to himself? "They that walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh." But you will say, "Is not this to persuade men to unbelief?" I answer, No. There is a twofold judgment that a man may make of himself, — first, of his *person*; and, secondly, of his *ways*. It is the judgment of his ways, not his person, that I speak of. Let a man get the best evidence for his person that he can, yet to judge that an evil way will end in destruction is his duty; not to do it is atheism. I do not say, that in such a condition a man ought to throw away the evidences of his personal interest in Christ; but I say, he cannot keep them. There is a twofold condemnation of a man's self:— First, In respect of *desert*, when the soul concludes that it deserves to

be cast out of the presence of God; and this is so far from a business of unbelief that it is an effect of faith. Secondly, With respect to the *issue and event*, when the soul concludes it shall be damned. I do not say this is the duty of any one, nor do I call them to it; but this I say, that the end of the way wherein a man is ought by him to be concluded to be death, that he may be provoked to fly from it. And this is another consideration that ought to dwell upon such a soul, if it desire to be freed from the entanglement of its lusts.

3. Consider the *evils* of it; I mean its *present evils*. Danger respects what is to come; evil, what is present. Some of the many evils that attend an unmortified lust may be mentioned:—

(1.) It *grieves* the holy and blessed Spirit, which is given to believers to dwell in them and abide with them. So the apostle, Eph 4:25–29, dehorting them from many lusts and sins, gives this as the great motive of it, verse 30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." "Grieve not that Spirit of God," saith he, "whereby you receive so many and so great benefits;" of which he instances in one signal and comprehensive one, — "sealing to the day of redemption." He is grieved by it. As a tender and loving friend is grieved at the unkindness of his friend, of whom he hath well deserved, so is it with this tender and loving Spirit, who hath chosen our hearts for a habitation to dwell in, and there to do for us all that our souls desire. He is grieved by our harbouring his enemies, and those whom he is to destroy, in our hearts with him. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve us," Lam 3:33; and shall we daily grieve him? Thus is he said sometimes to be "vexed," sometimes "grieved at his heart," to express the greatest sense of our provocation. Now, if there be any thing of gracious ingenuity left in the soul, if it be

not utterly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, this consideration will certainly affect it. Consider who and what thou art; who the Spirit is that is grieved, what he hath done for thee, what he comes to thy soul about, what he hath already done in thee; and be ashamed. Among those who walk with God, there is no greater motive and incentive unto universal holiness, and the preserving of their hearts and spirits in all purity and cleanness, than this, that the blessed Spirit, who hath undertaken to dwell in them as temples of God, and to preserve them meet for him who so dwells in them, is continually considering what they give entertainment in their hearts unto, and rejoiceth when his temple is kept undefiled. That was a high aggravation of the sin of Zimri, that he brought his adulteress into the congregation in the sight of Moses and the rest, who were weeping for the sins of the people, Num 25:6. And is it not a high aggravation of the countenancing a lust, or suffering it to abide in the heart, when it is (as it must be, if we are believers) entertained under the peculiar eye and view of the Holy Ghost, taking care to preserve his tabernacle pure and holy?

(2.) The *Lord Jesus Christ is wounded afresh* by it; his new creature in the heart is wounded; his love is foiled; his adversary gratified. As a total relinquishment of him, by the deceitfulness of sin, is the "crucifying him afresh, and the putting of him to open shame;" so every harbouring of sin that he came to destroy wounds and grieves him.

(3.) It will *take away a man's usefulness* in his generation. His works, his endeavours, his labours, seldom receive blessing from God. If he be a preacher, God commonly blows upon his ministry, that he shall labour in the fire, and not be honoured with any success or doing any work for God; and the like may be spoken of other conditions. The world is at

this day full of poor withering professors. How few are there that walk in any beauty or glory! how barren, how useless are they, for the most part! Amongst the many reasons that may be assigned of this sad estate, it may justly be feared that this is none of the least effectual, — many men harbour spirit-devouring lusts in their bosoms, that lie as worms at the root of their obedience, and corrode and weaken it day by day. All graces, all the ways and means whereby any graces may be exercised and improved, are prejudiced by this means; and as to any success, God blasts such men's undertakings.

This, then, is my second direction, and it regards the opposition that is to be made to lust in respect of its habitual residence in the soul:— Keep alive upon thy heart these or the like considerations of its guilt, danger, and evil; be much in the meditation of these things; cause thy heart to dwell and abide upon them; engage thy thoughts into these considerations; let them not go off nor wander from them until they begin to have a powerful influence upon thy soul, — until they make it to tremble.

Chapter XI

The THIRD direction proposed: Load thy conscience with the guilt of the perplexing distemper — The ways and means whereby that may be done — The FOURTH direction: Vehement desire for deliverance — The FIFTH: Some distempers rooted deeply in men's natural tempers — Considerations of such distempers; ways of dealing with them — The SIXTH direction: Occasions and advantages of sin to be prevented — The SEVENTH direction: The first actings of sin vigorously to be opposed.

Third Direction: Load the Conscience with Its Guilt

THIS is my THIRD direction, —

Load thy conscience with the guilt of it. Not only consider that it hath a guilt, but load thy conscience with the guilt of its actual eruptions and disturbances.

For the right improvement of this rule I shall give some particular directions:—

1. Take *God's method* in it, and begin with generals, and so descend to particulars:—

(1.) Charge thy conscience with that guilt which appears in it *from the rectitude and holiness of the law.* Bring the holy law of God into thy conscience, lay thy corruption to it, pray that thou mayst be affected with it. Consider the holiness, spirituality, fiery severity, inwardness, absoluteness of the law, and see how thou canst stand before it. Be much, I say, in affecting thy conscience with the terror of the Lord in the law, and how righteous it is that every one of thy trans-

gressions should receive a recompense of reward. Perhaps thy conscience will invent shifts and evasions to keep off the power of this consideration; — as, that the condemning power of the law doth not belong to thee, thou art set free from it, and the like; and so, though thou be not conformable to it, yet thou needest not to be so much troubled at it. But, —

[1.] Tell thy conscience that it cannot manage any evidence to the purpose that thou art free from the *condemning* power of sin, whilst thy *unmortified* lust lies in thy heart; so that, perhaps, the law may make good its plea against thee for a full dominion, and then thou art a lost creature. Wherefore it is best to ponder to the utmost what it hath to say.

Assuredly, he that pleads in the most secret reserve of his heart that he is freed from the condemning power of the law, thereby secretly to countenance himself in giving the least allowance unto any sin or lust, is not able, on gospel grounds, to manage any evidence, unto any tolerable spiritual security, that indeed he is in a due manner freed from what he so pretends himself to be delivered.

[2.] Whatever be the *issue*, yet the law hath commission from God to seize upon transgressors wherever it find them, and so bring them before his throne, where they are to plead for themselves. This is thy present case; the law hath found thee out, and before God it will bring thee. If thou canst plead a pardon, well and good; if not, the law will do its work.

[3.] However, this is the *proper work* of the law, to discover sin in the guilt of it, to awake and humble the soul for it, to be a glass to represent sin in its colours; and if thou deniest to deal with it on this account, it is not through faith, but through the hardness of thy heart and the deceitfulness of sin.

This is a door that too many professors have gone out at unto open apostasy. Such a deliverance from the law they

have pretended, as that they would consult its guidance and direction no more; they would measure their sin by it no more. By little and little this principle hath insensibly, from the notion of it, proceeded to influence their practical understandings, and, having taken possession there, hath turned the will and affections loose to all manner of abominations.

By such ways, I say, then, as these, persuade thy conscience to hearken diligently to what the law speaks, in the name of the Lord, unto thee about thy lust and corruption. Oh! if thy ears be open, it will speak with a voice that shall make thee tremble, that shall cast thee to the ground, and fill thee with astonishment. If ever thou wilt mortify thy corruptions, thou must tie up thy conscience to the law, shut it from all shifts and exceptions, until it owns its guilt with a clear and thorough apprehension; so that thence, as David speaks, thy "iniquity may ever be before thee."

(2.) Bring *thy lust to the gospel*, — not for relief, but for farther conviction of its guilt; look on Him whom thou hast pierced, and be in bitterness. Say to thy soul, "What have I done? What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on! Is this the return I make to the Father for his *love*, to the Son for his *blood*, to the Holy Ghost for his *grace*? Do I thus requite the Lord? Have I defiled the heart that Christ died to wash, that the blessed Spirit hath chosen to dwell in? And can I keep myself out of the dust? What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus? How shall I hold up my head with any boldness before him? Do I account communion with him of so little value, that for this vile lust's sake I have scarce left him any room in my heart? How shall I escape if I neglect so great salvation? In the meantime, what shall I say to the Lord? Love, mercy, grace, goodness, peace, joy, consolation, — I have despised them all, and esteemed

them as a thing of nought, that I might harbour a lust in my heart. Have I obtained a view of God's fatherly countenance, that I might behold his face and provoke him to his face? Was my soul washed, that room might be made for new defilements? Shall I endeavour to disappoint the end of the death of Christ? Shall I daily grieve that Spirit whereby I am sealed to the day of redemption?" Entertain thy conscience daily with this treaty. See if it can stand before this aggravation of its guilt. If this make it not sink in some measure and melt, I fear thy case is dangerous.

2. Descend to *particulars*. As under the general head of the gospel all the benefits of it are to be considered, as redemption, justification, and the like; so, in particular, consider the management of the love of them towards thine own soul, for the aggravation of the guilt of thy corruption. As, —

(1.) Consider *the infinite patience and forbearance* of God towards thee in particular. Consider what advantages he might have taken against thee, to have made thee a shame and a reproach in this world, and an object of wrath for ever; how thou hast dealt treacherously and falsely with him from time to time, flattered him with thy lips, but broken all promises and engagements, and that by the means of that sin thou art now in pursuit of; and yet he hath spared thee from time to time, although thou seemest boldly to have put it to the trial how long he could hold out. And wilt thou yet sin against him? wilt thou yet weary him, and make him to serve with thy corruptions?

Hast thou not often been ready to conclude thyself, that it was utterly impossible that he should bear any longer with thee; that he would cast thee off, and be gracious no more; that all his forbearance was exhausted, and hell and wrath was even ready prepared for thee? and yet, above all thy

expectation, he hath returned with visitations of love. And wilt thou yet abide in the provocation of the eyes of his glory?

(2.) How often hast thou been *at the door of being hardened* by the deceitfulness of sin, and by the infinite rich grace of God hast been recovered to communion with him again?

Hast thou not found grace decaying; delight in duties, ordinances, prayer and meditation, vanishing; inclinations to loose careless walking, thriving; and they who before were entangled, almost beyond recovery? Hast thou not found thyself engaged in such ways, societies, companies, and that with delight, as God abhors? And wilt thou venture any more to the brink of hardness?

(3.) All God's gracious dealings with thee, in providential dispensations, deliverances, afflictions, mercies, enjoyments, all ought here to take place. By these, I say, and the like means, load thy conscience; and leave it not until it be thoroughly affected with the guilt of thy indwelling corruption, until it is sensible of its wound, and lie in the dust before the Lord. Unless this be done to the purpose, all other endeavours are to no purpose. Whilst the conscience hath any means to alleviate the guilt of sin, the soul will never vigorously attempt its mortification.

Fourth Direction: A Constant Longing for Deliverance

Fourthly. Being thus affected with thy sin, in the next place get *a constant longing, breathing after deliverance from the power of it.* Suffer not thy heart one moment to be contented with thy present frame and condition. Longing desires after any thing, in things natural and civil, are of no value or consideration, any farther but as they incite and stir up the person in whom they are to a diligent use of means for the bringing about the thing aimed at. In spiritual things it is

otherwise. Longing, breathing, and panting after deliverance is a grace in itself, that hath a mighty power to conform the soul into the likeness of the thing longed after. Hence the apostle, describing the repentance and godly sorrow of the Corinthians, reckons this as one eminent grace that was then set on work, "Vehement desire," 2 Cor 7:11. And in this case of indwelling sin and the power of it, what frame doth he express himself to be in? Rom 7:24. His heart breaks out with longings into a most passionate expression of desire of deliverance. Now, if this be the frame of saints upon the general consideration of indwelling sin, how is it to be heightened and increased when thereunto is added the perplexing rage and power of any particular lust and corruption! Assure thyself, unless thou *longest* for deliverance thou shalt not have it.

This will make the heart watchful for all opportunities of advantage against its enemy, and ready to close with any assistances that are afforded for its destruction. Strong desires are the very life of that "praying always" which is enjoined us in all conditions, and in none is more necessary than in this; they set faith and hope on work, and are the soul's moving after the Lord.

Get thy heart, then, into a panting and breathing frame; long, sigh, cry out. You know the example of David; I shall not need to insist on it.

Fifth Direction: Consider Whether It Is Rooted in the Nature

The FIFTH direction is, —

Consider whether the distemper with which thou art perplexed be not rooted in thy *nature*, and cherished, fomented, and heightened from thy *constitution*. A proneness to some

sins may doubtless lie in the natural temper and disposition of men. In this case consider, —

1. This is not in the least an *extenuation* of the guilt of thy sin. Some, with an open profaneness, will ascribe gross enormities to their temper and disposition; and whether others may not relieve themselves from the pressing guilt of their distempers by the same consideration, I know not. It is from the fall, from the original depravation of our natures, that the *fomes* and nourishment of any sin abides in our natural temper. David reckons his being shapen in iniquity and conception in sin[15] as an aggravation of his following sin, not a lessening or extenuation of it. That thou art peculiarly inclined unto any sinful distemper is but a peculiar breaking out of original lust in thy nature, which should peculiarly abase and humble thee.

2. That thou hast to *fix* upon on this account, in reference to thy walking with God, is, that so great an advantage is given to sin, as also to Satan, by this thy temper and disposition, that without extraordinary watchfulness, care, and diligence, they will assuredly prevail against thy soul. Thousands have been on this account hurried headlong to hell, who otherwise, at least, might have gone at a more gentle, less provoking, less mischievous rate.

3. For the mortification of any distemper so rooted in the nature of a man, unto all other ways and means already named or farther to be insisted on, there is one *expedient* peculiarly suited; this is that of the apostle, 1 Cor 9:27, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." The bringing of the very body into subjection is an ordinance of God tending to the mortification of sin. This gives check unto the natural

[15] Ps 51:5.

root of the distemper, and withers it by taking away its fatness of soil. Perhaps, because the Papists, men ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, the work of his Spirit, and whole business in hand, have laid the whole weight and stress of mortification in voluntary services and penances, leading to the subjection of the body, knowing indeed the true nature neither of sin nor mortification, it may, on the other side, be a temptation to some to neglect some means of humiliation which by God himself are owned and appointed. The bringing of the body into subjection in the case insisted on, by cutting short the natural appetite, by fasting, watching, and the like, is doubtless acceptable to God, so it be done with the ensuing limitations:—

(1.) That the outward weakening and impairing of the body be not looked upon as a thing good in itself, or that any mortification doth consist therein, — which were again to bring us under carnal ordinances; but only as a means for the end proposed, — the weakening of any distemper in its natural root and seat. A man may have leanness of body and soul together.

(2.) That the means whereby this is done, — namely, by fasting and watching, and the like, — be not looked on as things that in themselves, and by virtue of their own power, can produce true mortification of any sin; for if they would, sin might be mortified without any help of the Spirit in any unregenerate person in the world. They are to be looked on only as ways whereby the Spirit may, and sometimes doth, put forth strength for the accomplishing of his own work, especially in the case mentioned. Want of a right understanding and due improvement of these and the like considerations, hath raised a mortification among the Papists that may be

better applied to horses and other beasts of the field than to believers.

This is the sum of what hath been spoken: When the distemper complained of seems to be rooted in the natural temper and constitution, in applying our souls to a participation of the blood and Spirit of Christ, an endeavour is to be used to give check in the way of God to the natural root of that distemper.

Sixth Direction: Watch Against Its Occasions and Advantages

The sixth direction is, —

Consider what *occasions*, what *advantages* thy distemper hath taken to exert and put forth itself, and watch against them all.

This is one part of that duty which our blessed Saviour recommends to his disciples under the name of *watching*: Mark 13:37, "I say unto you all, Watch;" which, in Luke 21:34, is, "Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged." Watch against all eruptions of thy corruptions. I mean that duty which David professed himself to be exercised unto. "I have," saith he, "kept myself from mine iniquity." He watched all the ways and workings of his iniquity, to prevent them, to rise up against them. This is that which we are called unto under the name of "considering our ways." Consider what ways, what companies, what opportunities, what studies, what businesses, what conditions, have at any time given, or do usually give, advantages to thy distempers, and set thyself heedfully against them all. Men will do this with respect unto their bodily infirmities and distempers. The seasons, the diet, the air that have proved offensive shall be avoided. Are the things of the soul of less importance? Know that he that

dares to dally with occasions of sin will dare to sin. He that will venture upon temptations unto wickedness will venture upon wickedness. Hazael thought he should not be so wicked as the prophet told him he would be. To convince him, the prophet tells him no more but, "Thou shalt be king of Syria." If he will venture on temptations unto cruelty, he will be cruel. Tell a man he shall commit such and such sins, he will startle at it. If you can convince him that he will venture on such occasions and temptations of them, he will have little ground left for his confidence. Particular directions belonging to this head are many, not now to be insisted on. But because this head is of no less importance than the whole doctrine here handled, I have at large in another treatise, about entering into temptations, treated of it.

Seventh Direction: Rise Mightily Against Its First Actings

The SEVENTH direction is, —

Rise mightily against *the first actings* of thy distemper, its first conceptions; suffer it not to get the least ground. Do not say, "Thus far it shall go, and no farther." If it have allowance for one step, it will take another. It is impossible to fix bounds to sin. It is like water in a channel, — if it once break out, it will have its course. Its not acting is easier to be compassed than its bounding. Therefore doth James give that gradation and process of lust, ch. 1:14, 15, that we may stop at the entrance. Dost thou find thy corruption to begin to entangle thy thoughts? rise up with all thy strength against it, with no less indignation than if it had fully accomplished what it aims at. Consider what an unclean thought would have; it would have thee roll thyself in folly and filth. Ask *envy* what it would have; — *murder* and *destruction* is at the end of it.

Set thyself against it with no less vigour than if it had utterly debased thee to wickedness. Without this course thou wilt not prevail. As sin gets ground in the affections to delight in, it gets also upon the understanding to slight it.

Chapter XII

The EIGHTH direction: Thoughtfulness of the excellency of the majesty of God — Our unacquaintedness with him proposed and considered.

Eighth Direction: Meditations That Fill the Soul with Self-Abasement

EIGHTHLY, Use and exercise thyself to such meditations as may serve to fill thee at all times with *self-abasement* and thoughts of thine own vileness; as, —

1. Be much in thoughtfulness of the *excellency* of the majesty of God and thine infinite, inconceivable distance from him. Many thoughts of it cannot but fill thee with a sense of thine own vileness, which strikes deep at the root of any indwelling sin. When Job comes to a clear discovery of the greatness and the excellency of God, he is filled with self-abhorrence and is pressed to humiliation, Job 42:5, 6. And in what state doth the prophet Habakkuk affirm himself to be cast, upon the apprehension of the majesty of God? ch. 3:16. "With God," says Job, "is terrible majesty."[16] Hence were the thoughts of them of old, that when they had seen God they should die. The Scripture abounds in this self-abasing consideration, comparing the men of the earth to "grasshoppers," to "vanity," the "dust of the balance," in respect of God.[17] Be much in thoughts of this nature, to abase the pride of thy heart, and to keep thy soul humble within thee. There

[16] Job 37:22.

[17] Isa 40:12–25.

is nothing will render thee a greater indisposition to be imposed on by the deceits of sin than such a frame of heart. Think greatly of the greatness of God.

2. Think much of thine *unacquaintedness* with him. Though thou knowest enough to keep thee low and humble, yet how little a portion is it that thou knowest of him! The contemplation hereof cast that wise man into that apprehension of himself which he expresses, Prov 30:2–4, "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. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" Labour with this also to take down the pride of thy heart. What dost thou know of God? How little a portion is it! How immense is he in his nature! Canst thou look without terror into the abyss of eternity? Thou canst not bear the rays of his glorious being.

Because I look on this consideration of great use in our walking with God, so far as it may have a consistency with that filial boldness which is given us in Jesus Christ to draw nigh to the throne of grace, I shall farther insist upon it, to give an abiding impression of it to the souls of them who desire to walk humbly with God.

Consider, then, I say, to keep thy heart in continual awe of the majesty of God, that persons of the most high and eminent attainment, of the nearest and most familiar communion with God, do yet in this life know but a very little of him and his glory. God reveals his name to Moses, — the most glorious attributes that he hath manifested in the covenant of grace, Exod 34:5, 6; yet all are but the "back parts" of God. All that

he knows by it is but little, low, compared to the perfections of his glory. Hence it is with peculiar reference to Moses that it is said, "No man hath seen God at any time," John 1:18; of him in comparison with Christ doth he speak, verse 17; and of him it is here said, "No man," no, not Moses, the most eminent among them, "hath seen God at any time." We speak much of God, can talk of him, his ways, his works, his counsels, all the day long; the truth is, we know very little of him. Our thoughts, our meditations, our expressions of him are low, many of them unworthy of his glory, none of them reaching his perfections.

You will say that Moses was under the law when God wrapped up himself in darkness, and his mind in types and clouds and dark institutions; — under the glorious shining of the gospel, which hath brought life and immortality to light, God being revealed from his own bosom, we now know him much more clearly, and as he is; we see his *face* now, and not his *back parts* only, as Moses did.

Ans. 1. I acknowledge a vast and almost inconceivable difference between the acquaintance we now have with God, after his speaking to us by his own Son,[18] and that which the generality of the saints had under the law; for although their eyes were as good, sharp, and clear as ours, their faith and spiritual understanding not behind ours, the object as glorious unto them as unto us, yet our day is more clear than theirs was, the clouds are blown away and scattered,[19] the shadows of the night are gone and fled away, the sun is risen, and the means of sight is made more eminent and clear than formerly. Yet, —

[18] Heb 1:2.
[19] Song 4:6.

2. That peculiar sight which Moses had of God, Exod 34, was a *gospel-sight*, a sight of God as "gracious," etc., and yet it is called but his "back parts;" that is, but low and mean, in comparison of his excellencies and perfections.

3. The apostle, exalting to the utmost this glory of light above that of the law, manifesting that now the "vail" causing darkness is taken away, so that with "open" or uncovered "face[20] we behold the glory of the Lord," tells us how: "As in a glass," 2 Cor 3:18. "In a glass," how is that? Clearly, perfectly? Alas, no! He tells you how that is, 1 Cor 13:12, "We see through a glass, darkly," saith he. It is not a telescope that helps us to see things afar off, concerning which the apostle speaks; and yet what poor helps are they! how short do we come of the truth of things notwithstanding their assistance! It is a looking-glass whereunto he alludes (where are only obscure species and images of things, and not the things themselves), and a sight therein that he compares our knowledge to. He tells you also that all that we do see, δι' ἐσόπτρου, "by" or "through this glass," is in αἰνίγματι, — in "a riddle," in darkness and obscurity. And speaking of himself, who surely was much more clear-sighted than any now living, he tells us that he saw but ἐκ μέρους, — "in part." He saw but the back parts of heavenly things, verse 12, and compares all the knowledge he had attained of God to that he had of things when he was a child, verse 11. It is a μέρος, short of the τὸ τέλειον· yea, such as καταργηθήσεται, — "it shall be destroyed," or done away. We know what weak, feeble, uncertain notions and apprehensions children have of things of any abstruse consideration; how when they grow up with any improvements of parts and abilities, those conceptions

[20] Ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ.

vanish, and they are ashamed of them. It is the commendation of a child to love, honour, believe, and obey his father; but for his science and notions, his father knows his childishness and folly. Notwithstanding all our confidence of high attainments, all our notions of God are but childish in respect of his infinite perfections. We lisp and babble, and say we know not what, for the most part, in our most accurate, as we think, conceptions and notions of God. We may love, honour, believe, and obey our Father; and therewith he accepts our childish thoughts, for they are but childish. We see but his back parts; we know but little of him. Hence is that promise wherewith we are so often supported and comforted in our distress, "We shall see him as he is;" we shall see him "face to face;" "know as we are known; comprehend that for which we are comprehended," 1 Cor 13:12, 1 John 3:2; and positively, "Now we see him not;" — all concluding that here we see but his back parts; not as he is, but in a dark, obscure representation; not in the perfection of his glory.

The queen of Sheba had heard much of Solomon, and framed many great thoughts of his magnificence in her mind thereupon; but when she came and saw his glory, she was forced to confess that the one half of the truth had not been told her. We may suppose that we have here attained great knowledge, clear and high thoughts of God; but, alas! when he shall bring us into his presence we shall cry out, "We never knew him as he is; the thousandth part of his glory, and perfection, and blessedness, never entered into our hearts."

The apostle tells us, 1 John 3:2, that we know not what we ourselves shall be, — what we shall find ourselves in the issue; much less will it enter into our hearts to conceive what God is, and what we shall find him to be. Consider either him

who is to be known, or the way whereby we know him, and this will farther appear:—

(1.) We know so little of *God*, because it is *God* who is thus to be known, — that is, he who hath described himself to us very much by this, that we *cannot* know him. What else doth he intend where he calls himself invisible, incomprehensible, and the like? — that is, he whom we do not, cannot, know as he is. And our farther progress consists more in knowing what he is not, than what he is. Thus is he described to be immortal, infinite, — that is, he is not, as we are, mortal, finite, and limited. Hence is that glorious description of him, 1 Tim 6:16, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." His light is such as no creature can approach unto. He is not seen, not because he cannot be seen, but because we cannot bear the sight of him. The light of God, in whom is no darkness, forbids all access to him by any creature whatever. We who cannot behold the sun in its glory are too weak to bear the beams of infinite brightness. On this consideration, as was said, the wise man professeth himself "a very beast, and not to have the understanding of a man," Prov 30:2; — that is, he knew nothing in comparison of God; so that he seemed to have lost all his understanding when once he came to the consideration of him, his work, and his ways.

In this consideration let our souls descend to some particulars:—

[1.] For the *being* of God; we are so far from a knowledge of it, so as to be able to instruct one another therein by words and expressions of it, as that to frame any conceptions in our mind, with such species and impressions of things as we receive the knowledge of all other things by, is to make an idol to ourselves, and so to worship a god of our own making,

and not the God that made us. We may as well and as lawfully hew him out of wood or stone as form him a being in our minds, suited to our apprehensions. The utmost of the best of our thoughts of the being of God is, that we can have no thoughts of it. Our knowledge of a being is but low when it mounts no higher but only to know that we know it not.

[2.] There be *some* things of God which he himself hath taught us to speak of, and to regulate our expressions of them; but when we have so done, we see not the things themselves; we know them not. To *believe* and *admire* is all that we attain to. We profess, as we are taught, that God is infinite, omnipotent, eternal; and we know what disputes and notions there are about omnipresence, immensity, infiniteness, and eternity. We have, I say, words and notions about these things; but as to the things themselves what do we know? what do we comprehend of them? Can the mind of man do any more but swallow itself up in an infinite abyss, which is as nothing; give itself up to what it cannot conceive, much less express? Is not our understanding "brutish" in the contemplation of such things, and is as if it were not? Yea, the perfection of our understanding is, not to understand, and to rest there. They are but the back parts of eternity and infiniteness that we have a glimpse of. What shall I say of the Trinity, or the subsistence of distinct persons in the same individual essence, — a mystery by many denied, because by none understood, — a mystery, whose every letter is mysterious? Who can declare the generation of the Son, the procession of the Spirit, or the difference of the one from the other? But I shall not farther instance in particulars. That infinite and inconceivable distance that is between him and us keeps us in the dark as to any sight of his face or clear apprehension of his perfections.

We know him rather by what he does than by what he is, — by his doing us good than by his essential goodness; and how little a portion of him, as Job speaks, is hereby discovered!

(2.) We know little of God, because it is *faith* alone whereby here we know him. I shall not now discourse about the remaining impressions on the hearts of all men by nature that there is a God, nor what they may rationally be taught concerning that God from the works of his creation and providence, which they see and behold. It is confessedly, and that upon the woful experience of all ages, so weak, low, dark, confused, that none ever on that account glorified God as they ought, but, notwithstanding all their knowledge of God, were indeed "without God in the world."

The chief, and, upon the matter, almost only acquaintance we have with God, and his dispensations of himself, is by faith. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb 11:6. Our knowledge of him and his rewarding (the bottom of our obedience or coming to him), is believing. "We walk by faith, and not by sight," 2 Cor 5:7; — Διὰ πίστεως οὐ διὰ εἴδους· by faith, and so by faith as not to have any express idea, image, or species of that which we believe. Faith is all the argument we have of "things not seen," Heb 11:1. I might here insist upon the nature of it; and from all its concomitants and concernments manifest that we know but the back parts of what we know by faith only. As to its rise, it is built purely upon the testimony of Him whom we have not seen: as the apostle speaks, "How can ye love him whom ye have not seen?" — that is, whom you know not but by faith that he is. Faith receives all upon *his* testimony, whom it receives to be only on his own testimony. As to its nature, it is an assent upon testimony, not an evidence upon demonstration; and

the object of it is, as was said before, above us. Hence our faith, as was formerly observed, is called a "seeing darkly, as in a glass." All that we know this way (and all that we know of God we know this way) is but low, and dark, and obscure.

But you will say, "All this is true, but yet it is only so to them that know not God, perhaps, as he is revealed in Jesus Christ; with them who do so it is otherwise. It is true, 'No man hath seen God at any time,' but 'the only-begotten Son, he hath revealed him,' John 1:18; and 'the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true,' 1 John 5:20. The illumination of 'the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God,' shineth upon believers, 2 Cor 4:4; yea, and 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into their hearts, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of his Son,' verse 6. So that 'though we were darkness,' yet we are now 'light in the Lord,' Eph 5:8. And the apostle says, 'We all with open face behold the glory of the Lord,' 2 Cor 3:18; and we are now so far from being in such darkness, or at such a distance from God, that 'our communion and fellowship is with the Father and with his Son,' 1 John 1:3. The light of the gospel whereby now God is revealed is glorious; not a star, but the sun in his beauty is risen upon us, and the vail is taken from our faces. So that though unbelievers, yea, and perhaps some weak believers, may be in some darkness, yet those of any growth or considerable attainments have a clear sight and view of the face of God in Jesus Christ."

To which I answer, —

[1.] The truth is, we all of us know *enough* of him to love him more than we do, to delight in him and serve him, believe him, obey him, put our trust in him, above all that we have hitherto attained. Our darkness and weakness is no

plea for our negligence and disobedience. Who is it that hath walked up to the knowledge that he hath had of the perfections, excellencies, and will of God? God's end in giving us any knowledge of himself here is that we may "glorify him as God;" that is, love him, serve him, believe and obey him, — give him all the honour and glory that is due from poor sinful creatures to a sin-pardoning God and Creator. We must all acknowledge that we were never thoroughly transformed into the image of that knowledge which we have had. And had we used our talents well, we might have been trusted with more.

[2.] *Comparatively*, that knowledge which we have of God by the revelation of Jesus Christ in the gospel is exceeding eminent and glorious. It is so in comparison of any knowledge of God that might otherwise be attained, or was delivered in the law under the Old Testament, which had but the shadow of good things, not the express image of them; this the apostle pursues at large, 2 Cor 3. Christ hath now in these last days revealed the Father from his own bosom, declared his name, made known his mind, will, and counsel in a far more clear, eminent, distinct manner than he did formerly, whilst he kept his people under the pedagogy of the law; and this is that which, for the most part, is intended in the places before mentioned. The clear, perspicuous delivery and declaration of God and his will in the gospel is expressly exalted in comparison of any other way of revelation of himself.

[3.] The difference between believers and unbelievers as to knowledge is not so much in the *matter of their knowledge* as in *the manner of knowing*. Unbelievers, some of them, may know more and be able to say more of God, his perfections, and his will, than many believers; but they know nothing as they ought, nothing in a right manner, nothing spiritually

and savingly, nothing with a holy, heavenly light. The excellency of a believer is, not that he hath a large apprehension of things, but that what he doth apprehend, which perhaps may be very little, he sees it in the light of the Spirit of God, in a saving, soul-transforming light; and this is that which gives us communion with God, and not prying thoughts or curious-raised notions.

[4.] Jesus Christ by his word and Spirit reveals to the hearts of all his, God as a Father, as a God in covenant, as a rewarder, every way sufficiently to teach us to obey him here, and to lead us to his bosom, to lie down there in the fruition of him to eternity. But yet now,

[5.] Notwithstanding all this, it is but a *little portion* we know of him; we see but his back parts. For, —

1*st*. The intendment of all gospel revelation is, not to *unvail God's essential glory*, that we should see him as he is, but merely to declare so much of him as he knows sufficient to be a bottom of our faith, love, obedience, and coming to him, — that is, of the faith which here he expects from us; such services as beseem poor creatures in the midst of temptations. But when he calls us to eternal admiration and contemplation, without interruption, he will make a new manner of discovery of himself, and the whole shape of things, as it now lies before us, will depart as a shadow.

2*dly*. We are dull and slow of heart to receive the things that are in the word revealed; God, by our infirmity and weakness, keeping us in continual dependence on him for teachings and revelations of himself out of his word, never in this world bringing any soul to the utmost of what is from the word to be made out and discovered: so that although the way of revelation in the gospel be clear and evident, yet we know little of the things themselves that are revealed.

Let us, then, revive the use and intendment of this consideration: Will not a due apprehension of this inconceivable greatness of God, and that infinite distance wherein we stand from him, fill the soul with a holy and awful fear of him, so as to keep it in a frame unsuited to the thriving or flourishing of any lust whatever? Let the soul be continually wonted to reverential thoughts of God's greatness and omnipresence, and it will be much upon its watch as to any undue deportments. Consider him with whom you have to do, — even "our God is a consuming fire;" and in your greatest abashments at his presence and eye, know that your very nature is too narrow to bear apprehensions suitable to his essential glory.

Chapter XIII

The NINTH direction: When the heart is disquieted by sin, speak no peace to it until God speak it — Peace, without detestation of sin, unsound; so is peace measured out unto ourselves — How we may know when we measure our peace unto ourselves — Directions as to that inquiry — The vanity of speaking peace slightly; also of doing it on one singular account, not universally.

Ninth Direction: Speak No Peace Until God Speaks It

NINTHLY, In case God disquiet the heart about the guilt of its distempers, either in respect of its root and indwelling, or in respect of any eruptions of it, *take heed thou speakest not peace to thyself before God speaks it; but hearken what he says to thy soul.* This is our next direction, without the observation whereof the heart will be exceedingly exposed to the deceitfulness of sin.

This is a business of great importance. It is a sad thing for a man to deceive his own soul herein. All the warnings God gives us, in tenderness to our souls, to try and examine ourselves, do tend to the preventing of this great evil of speaking peace groundlessly to ourselves; which is upon the issue to bless ourselves, in an opposition to God. It is not my business to insist upon the danger of it, but to help believers to prevent it, and to let them know when they do so.

To manage this direction aright observe, —

1. That as it is the great *prerogative and sovereignty* of God to give grace to whom he pleases ("He hath mercy on whom

he will," Rom 9:18; and among all the sons of men, he calls whom he will, and sanctifies whom he will), so among those so called and justified, and whom he will save, he yet reserves this privilege to himself, to speak peace to whom he pleaseth, and in what degree he pleaseth, even amongst them on whom he hath bestowed grace. He is the "God of all consolation," in an especial manner in his dealing with believers; that is, of the good things that he keeps locked up in his family, and gives out of it to all his children at his pleasure. This the Lord insists on, Isa 57:16–18. It is the case under consideration that is there insisted on. When God says he will heal their breaches and disconsolations, he assumes this privilege to himself in an especial manner: "I create it," verse 19; — "Even in respect of these poor wounded creatures I create it, and according to my sovereignty make it out as I please."

Hence, as it is with *the collation of grace* in reference to them that are in the state of nature, — God doth it in great curiosity, and his proceedings therein in taking and leaving, as to outward appearances, quite besides and contrary ofttimes to all probable expectations; so is it in his *communications* of peace and joy in reference unto them that are in the state of grace, — he gives them out ofttimes quite besides our expectation, as to any appearing grounds of his dispensations.

2. As God *creates it for whom he pleaseth*, so it is the prerogative of Christ to speak it home to the conscience. Speaking to the church of Laodicea, who had healed her wounds falsely, and spoke peace to herself when she ought not, he takes to himself that title, "I am the Amen, the faithful Witness," Rev 3:14. He bears testimony concerning our condition as it is indeed. We may possibly mistake, and trouble ourselves in vain, or flatter ourselves upon false grounds, but he is the "Amen, the faithful Witness;" and what he speaks of our state

and condition, that it is indeed. Isa 11:3, He is said not to "judge after the sight of his eyes," — not according to any outward appearance, or any thing that may be subject to a mistake, as we are apt to do; but he shall judge and determine every cause as it is indeed.

Take these two previous observations, and I shall give some rules whereby men may know whether God speaks peace to them, or whether they speak peace to themselves only:—

1. Men certainly speak peace to themselves when their so doing is *not attended with the greatest detestation* imaginable of that sin in reference whereunto they do speak peace to themselves, and abhorrency of themselves for it. When men are wounded by sin, disquieted and perplexed, and knowing that there is no remedy for them but only in the mercies of God, through the blood of Christ, do therefore look to him, and to the promises of the covenant in him, and thereupon quiet their hearts that it shall be well with them, and that God will be exalted, that he may be gracious to them, and yet their souls are not wrought to the greatest detestation of the sin or sins upon the account whereof they are disquieted, — this is to heal themselves, and not to be healed of God. This is but a great and strong wind, that the Lord is nigh unto, but the Lord is not in the wind. When men do truly "look upon Christ whom they have pierced," without which there is no healing or peace, they will "mourn," Zech 12:10; they will mourn for him, even upon this account, and detest the sin that pierced him. When we go to Christ for healing, faith eyes him peculiarly as one pierced. Faith takes several views of Christ, according to the occasions of address to him and communion with him that it hath. Sometimes it views his holiness, sometimes his power, sometimes his love,

[sometimes] his favour with his Father. And when it goes for healing and peace, it looks especially on the blood of the covenant, on his sufferings; for "with his stripes we are healed, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him," Isa 53:5. When we look for healing, his stripes are to be eyed, — not in the outward story of them, which is the course of popish devotionists, but in the love, kindness, mystery, and design of the cross; and when we look for peace, his chastisements must be in our eye. Now this, I say, if it be done according to the mind of God, and in the strength of that Spirit which is poured out on believers, it will beget a detestation of that sin or sins for which healing and peace is sought. So Ezek 16:60, 61, "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." And what then? "Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed." When God comes home to speak peace in a sure covenant of it, it fills the soul with shame for all the ways whereby it hath been alienated from him. And one of the things that the apostle mentions as attending that godly sorrow which is accompanied with repentance unto salvation, never to be repented of, is revenge: "Yea, what revenge!" 2 Cor 7:11. They reflected on their miscarriages with indignation and revenge, for their folly in them. When Job comes up to a thorough healing, he cries, "Now I abhor myself," Job 42:6; and until he did so, he had no abiding peace. He might perhaps have made up himself with that doctrine of free grace which was so excellently preached by Elihu, ch. 33 from verse 14 unto 30; but he had then but skinned his wounds: he must come to self-abhorrency if he come to healing. So was it with those in Psalm 78:33–35, in their great trouble and perplexity, for and upon the account of sin. I doubt not but upon the address

they made to God in Christ (for that so they did is evident from the titles they gave him; they call him their Rock and their Redeemer, two words everywhere pointing out the Lord Christ), they spake peace to themselves; but was it sound and abiding? No; it passed away as the early dew. God speaks not one word of peace to their souls. But why had they not peace? Why, because in their address to God, they flattered him. But how doth that appear? Verse 37: "Their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast;" they had not a detestation nor relinquishment of that sin in reference whereunto they spake peace to themselves. Let a man make what application he will for healing and peace, let him do it to the true Physician, let him do it the right way, let him quiet his heart in the promises of the covenant; yet, when peace is spoken, if it be not attended with the detestation and abhorrency of that sin which was the wound and caused the disquietment, this is no peace of *God's creating*, but of *our own purchasing*. It is but a skinning over the wound, whilst the core lies at the bottom, which will putrefy, and corrupt, and corrode, until it break out again with noisomeness, vexation, and danger. Let not poor souls that walk in such a path as this, who are more sensible of the trouble of sin than of the pollution of uncleanness that attends it; who address themselves for mercy, yea, to the Lord in Christ they address themselves for mercy, but yet will keep the sweet morsel of their sin under their tongue; — let them, I say, never think to have true and solid peace. For instance, thou findest thy heart running out after the world, and it disturbs thee in thy communion with God; the Spirit speaks expressly to thee, — "He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him."[21] This

[21] 1 John 2:15.

puts thee on dealing with God in Christ for the healing of thy soul, the quieting of thy conscience; but yet, withal, a thorough detestation of the evil itself abides not upon thee; yea, perhaps that is liked well enough, but only in respect of the consequences of it. Perhaps thou mayst be saved, yet as through fire, and God will have some work with thee before he hath done; but thou wilt have little peace in this life, — thou wilt be sick and fainting all thy days, Isa 57:17. This is a deceit that lies at the root of the peace of many professors and wastes it. They deal with all their strength about mercy and pardon, and seem to have great communion with God in their so doing; they lie before him, bewail their sins and follies, that any one would think, yea, they think themselves, that surely they and their sins are now parted; and so receive in mercy that satisfies their hearts for a little season. But when a thorough search comes to be made, there hath been some secret reserve for the folly or follies treated about, — at least, there hath not been that thorough abhorrency of it which is necessary; and their whole peace is quickly discovered to be weak and rotten, scarce abiding any longer than the words of begging it are in their mouths.

2. When men measure out peace to themselves upon the conclusions that their *convictions and rational principles* will carry them out unto, this is a false peace, and will not abide. I shall a little explain what I mean hereby. A man hath got a wound by sin; he hath a conviction of some sin upon his conscience; he hath not walked uprightly as becometh the gospel; all is not well and right between God and his soul. He considers now what is to be done. Light he hath, and knows what path he must take, and how his soul hath been formerly healed. Considering that the promises of God are the outward means of application for the healing of his sores

and quieting of his heart, he goes to them, searches them out, finds out some one or more of them whose literal expressions are directly suited to his condition. Says he to himself, "God speaks in this promise; here I will take myself a plaster as long and broad as my wound;" and so brings the word of the promise to his condition, and sets him down in peace. This is another appearance upon the mount; the Lord is near, but the Lord is not in it. It hath not been the work of the Spirit, who alone can "convince us of sin, and righteousness, and judgment,"[22] but the mere actings of the intelligent, rational soul. As there are three sorts of lives, we say, — the vegetative, the sensitive, and the rational or intelligent, — some things have only the vegetative; some the sensitive also, and that includes the former; some have the rational, which takes in and supposes both the other. Now, he that hath the rational doth not only act suitably to that principle, but also to both the others, — he grows and is sensible. It is so with men in the things of God. Some are mere *natural* and rational men; some have a *superadded* conviction with illumination; and some are truly *regenerate*. Now, he that hath the latter hath also both the former; and therefore he acts sometimes upon the principles of the rational, sometimes upon the principles of the enlightened man. His true spiritual life is not the principle of all his motions; he acts not always in the strength thereof, neither are all his fruits from that root. In this case that I speak of, he acts merely upon the principle of conviction and illumination, whereby his first naturals are heightened; but the Spirit breathes not at all upon all these waters. Take an instance: Suppose the wound and disquiet of the soul to be upon the account of relapses, — which, whatever the evil or

[22] John 16:8.

folly be, though for the matter of it never so small, yet there are no wounds deeper than those that are given the soul on that account, nor disquietments greater; — in the perturbation of his mind, he finds out that promise, Isa 55:7, "The LORD will have mercy, and our God will abundantly pardon," — he will multiply or add to pardon, he will do it again and again; or that in Hosea 14:4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." This the man considers, and thereupon concludes peace to himself; whether the Spirit of God make the application or no, whether that gives life and power to the letter or no, that he regards not. He doth not hearken whether God the Lord speak peace. He doth not wait upon God, who perhaps yet hides his face, and sees the poor creature stealing peace and running away with it, knowing that the time will come when he will deal with him again, and call him to a new reckoning;[23] when he shall see that it is in vain to go one step where God doth not take him by the hand.

I see here, indeed, sundry other questions upon this arising and interposing themselves. I cannot apply myself to them all: one I shall a little speak to.

It may be said, then, "Seeing that this seems to be the path that the Holy Spirit leads us in for the healing of our wounds and quieting of our hearts, how shall we know when we go alone ourselves, and when the Spirit also doth accompany us?"

Ans. (1.) If any of you are out of the way upon this account, God will speedily let you know it; for besides that you have his promise, that the "meek he will guide in judgment and teach them his way," Ps 25:9, he will not let you always err. He will, I say, not suffer your nakedness to be covered with

[23] Hos 9:9.

fig-leaves, but take them away and all the peace you have in them, and will not suffer you to settle on such lees. You shall quickly know your wound is not healed; that is, you shall speedily know whether or no it be thus with you by the event. The peace you thus get and obtain will not abide. Whilst the mind is overpowered by its own convictions, there is no hold for disquietments to fix upon. Stay a little, and all these reasonings will grow cold and vanish before the face of the first temptation that arises. But, —

(2.) This course is commonly taken without *waiting*; which is the grace, and that peculiar acting of faith which God calls for, to be exercised in such a condition. I know God doth sometimes come in upon the soul instantly, in a moment, as it were, wounding and healing it, — as I am persuaded it was in the case of David, when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment; but ordinarily, in such a case, God calls for[24] waiting and labouring, attending as the eye of a servant upon his master. Says the prophet Isaiah, ch. 8:17, "I will wait upon the LORD, who hideth his face from the house of Jacob." God will have his children lie a while at his door when they have run from his house, and not instantly rush in upon him; unless he take them by the hand and pluck them in, when they are so ashamed that they dare not come to him. Now, self-healers, or men that speak peace to themselves, do commonly make haste; they will not tarry; they do not hearken what God speaks, but on they will go to be healed.[25]

(3.) Such a course, though it may quiet the conscience and the mind, the rational concluding part of the soul, yet it doth not *sweeten* the heart with rest and gracious contentation. The answer it receives is much like that Elisha gave Naaman,

[24] Ps 130:6; 123:2.

[25] Isa 28:16.

"Go in peace;"[26] it quieted his mind, but I much question whether it sweetened his heart, or gave him any joy in believing, other than the natural joy that was then stirred in him upon his healing. "Do not my words do good?" saith the Lord, Mic 2:7. When God speaks, there is not only truth in his words, that may answer the conviction of our understandings, but also they do good; they bring that which is sweet, and good, and desirable to the will and affections; by them the "soul returns unto its rest," Ps 116:7.

(4.) Which is worst of all, it *amends not the life*, it heals not the evil, it cures not the distemper. When God speaks peace, it guides and keeps the soul that it "turn not again to folly."[27] When we speak it ourselves, the heart is not taken off the evil; nay, it is the readiest course in the world to bring a soul into a trade of backsliding. If, upon thy plastering thyself, thou findest thyself rather animated to the battle again than utterly weaned from it, it is too palpable that thou hast been at work with thine own soul, but Jesus Christ and his Spirit were not there. Yea, and oftentimes nature having done its work, will, ere a few days are over, come for its reward; and, having been active in the work of healing, will be ready to reason for a new wounding. In God's speaking peace there comes along so much sweetness, and such a discovery of his love, as is a strong obligation on the soul no more to deal perversely.[28]

3. We speak peace to ourselves when we do it *slightly*. This the prophet complains of in some teachers: Jer 6:14, "They have healed the wound of the daughter of my people slightly." And it is so with some persons: they make the healing of

[26] 2 Kgs 5:19.
[27] Ps 85:8.
[28] Luke 22:32.

their wounds a slight work; a look, a glance of faith to the promises does it, and so the matter is ended. The apostle tells us that "the word did not profit" some, because "it was not mixed with faith," Heb 4:2, — μὴ συγκεκραμένος· "it was not well tempered" and mingled with faith. It is not a mere look to the word of mercy in the promise, but it must be mingled with faith until it is incorporated into the very nature of it; and then, indeed, it doth good unto the soul. If thou hast had a wound upon thy conscience, which was attended with weakness and disquietness, which now thou art freed of, how camest thou so? "I looked to the promises of pardon and healing, and so found peace." Yea, but perhaps thou hast made too much haste, thou hast done it overly, thou hast not fed upon the promise so as to mix it with faith, to have got all the virtue of it diffused into thy soul; only thou hast done it slightly. Thou wilt find thy wound, ere it be long, breaking out again; and thou shalt know that thou art not cured.

4. Whoever speaks peace to himself upon any one account, and at the same time hath another evil of *no less importance* lying upon his spirit, about which he hath had no dealing with God, that man cries "Peace" when there is none. A little to explain my meaning: A man hath neglected a duty again and again, perhaps, when in all righteousness it was due from him; his conscience is perplexed, his soul wounded, he hath no quiet in his bones by reason of his sin; he applies himself for healing, and finds peace. Yet, in the meantime, perhaps, worldliness, or pride, or some other folly, wherewith the Spirit of God is exceedingly grieved, may lie in the bosom of that man, and they neither disturb him nor he them. Let not that man think that any of his peace is from God. Then shall it be well with men, when they have an equal respect to all God's commandments. God will justify us *from* our sins, but

he will not justify the least sin *in* us: "He is a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

5. When men of themselves speak peace to their consciences, it is seldom that God speaks *humiliation* to their souls. God's peace is humbling peace, melting peace, as it was in the case of David;[29] never such deep humiliation as when Nathan brought him the tidings of his pardon.

But you will say, "When may we take the comfort of a promise as our own, in relation to some peculiar wound, for the quieting the heart?"

First, In general, when God speaks it, be it when it will, sooner or later. I told you before, he may do it in the very instant of the sin itself, and that with such irresistible power that the soul must needs receive his mind in it; sometimes he will make us wait longer: but when he speaks, be it sooner or later, be it when we are sinning or repenting, be the condition of our souls what they please, if God speak, he must be received. There is not any thing that, in our communion with him, the Lord is more troubled with us for, if I may so say, than our unbelieving fears, that keep us off from receiving that strong consolation which he is so willing to give to us.

But you will say, "We are where we were. When God speaks it, we must receive it, that is true; but how shall we know *when he speaks*?"

(1.) I would we could all practically come up to this, to receive peace when we are convinced that God speaks it, and that it is our duty to receive it. But, —

(2.) There is, if I may so say, a secret instinct in faith, whereby it knows the voice of Christ when he speaks indeed; as the babe leaped in the womb when the blessed Virgin

[29] Ps 51:1.

came to Elisabeth, faith leaps in the heart when Christ indeed draws nigh to it. "My sheep," says Christ, "know my voice," John 10:4; — "They know my voice; they are used to the sound of it;" and they know when his lips are opened to them and are full of grace. The spouse was in a sad condition, Song 5:2, — asleep in security; but yet as soon as Christ speaks, she cries, "It is the voice of my beloved that speaks!" She knew his voice, and was so acquainted with communion with him, that instantly she discovers him; and so will you also. If you exercise yourselves to acquaintance and communion with him, you will easily discern between his voice and the voice of a stranger. And take this κριτήριον with you: When he doth speak, he speaks as never man spake; he speaks with power, and one way or other will make your "hearts burn within you," as he did to the disciples, Luke xxiv. He doth it by "putting in his hand at the hole of the door," Song 5:4, — his Spirit into your hearts to seize on you.

He that hath his senses exercised to discern good or evil, being increased in judgment and experience by a constant observation of the ways of Christ's intercourse, the manner of the operations of the Spirit, and the effects it usually produceth, is the best judge for himself in this case.

Secondly, If the word of the Lord doth good to your souls, he speaks it; if it humble, if it cleanse, and be useful to those ends for which promises are given, — namely, to endear, to cleanse, to melt and bind to obedience, to self-emptiness, etc. But this is not my business; nor shall I farther divert in the pursuit of this direction. Without the observation of it, sin will have great advantages towards the hardening of the heart.

Chapter XIV

The general use of the foregoing directions — The great direction for the accomplishment of the work aimed at: Act faith on Christ — The several ways whereby this may be done — Consideration of the fulness in Christ for relief proposed — Great expectations from Christ — Grounds of these expectations: his mercifulness, his faithfulness — Event of such expectations; on the part of Christ; on the part of believers — Faith peculiarly to be acted on the death of Christ, Rom 6:3–6 — The work of the Spirit in this whole business.

Now, the considerations which I have hitherto insisted on are rather of things *preparatory* to the work aimed at than such as will *effect* it. It is the heart's due preparation for the work itself, without which it will not be accomplished, that hitherto I have aimed at.

Directions for the work itself are very few; I mean that are peculiar to it. And they are these that follow:—

The Work Itself: Act Faith on Christ

1. Set faith at work on Christ for the *killing* of thy sin. His blood is the great sovereign remedy for sin-sick souls. Live in this, and thou wilt die a conqueror; yea, thou wilt, through the good providence of God, live to see thy lust dead at thy feet.

But thou wilt say, "How shall faith act itself on Christ for this end and purpose?" I say, Sundry ways:—

(1.) By faith fill thy soul with a due consideration of that *provision* which is laid up in Jesus Christ for this end and purpose, that all thy lusts, this very lust wherewith thou art entangled, may be mortified. By faith ponder on this, that though thou art no way able in or by thyself to get the conquest over thy distemper, though thou art even weary of contending, and art utterly ready to faint, yet that there is enough in Jesus Christ to yield thee relief, Phil 4:13. It staid the prodigal, when he was[30] ready to faint, that yet there was bread enough in his father's house; though he was at a distance from it, yet it relieved him, and staid him, that there it was. In thy greatest distress and anguish, consider that fulness of grace, those riches, those[31] treasures of strength, might, and help, that are laid up in him for our support, John 1:16, Col 1:19. Let them come into and abide in thy mind. Consider that he is "exalted and made a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel," Acts 5:31; and if to give repentance, to give mortification, without which the other is not, nor can be. Christ tells us that we obtain purging grace by abiding in him, John 15:3. To act faith upon the fulness that is in Christ for our supply is an eminent way of abiding in Christ, for both our insition and abode is by faith, Rom 11:19, 20. Let, then, thy soul by faith be exercised with such thoughts and apprehensions as these: "I am a poor, weak creature; unstable as water, I cannot excel. This corruption is too hard for me, and is at the very door of ruining my soul; and what to do I know not. My soul is become as parched ground, and an habitation of dragons. I have made promises and broken them; vows and engagements have been as a thing of nought. Many persuasions have I had that I had got

[30] Luke 15:17.

[31] Isa 40:28–31.

the victory and should be delivered, but I am deceived; so that I plainly see, that without some eminent succour and assistance, I am lost, and shall be prevailed on to an utter relinquishment of God. But yet, though this be my state and condition, let the hands that hang down be lifted up, and the feeble knees be strengthened. Behold,[32] the Lord Christ, that hath all fulness of grace in his heart, all fulness of power in his hand, he is able to slay all these his enemies. There is sufficient provision in him for my relief and assistance. He can take my drooping, dying soul and make me more than a conqueror.[33] 'Why sayest thou, O my soul, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint,' Isa 40:27–31. He can make the 'dry, parched ground of my soul to become a pool, and my thirsty, barren heart as springs of water;' yea, he can make this 'habitation of dragons,' this heart, so full of abominable lusts and fiery temptations, to be a place for 'grass' and fruit to himself," Isa 35:7. So God staid Paul, under his temptation, with the consideration of the sufficiency of his grace: "My grace is sufficient for thee," 2 Cor 12:9. Though he were not immediately so far made partaker of it as to be freed from his temptation, yet the sufficiency of it in God,

[32] John 1:16; Matt 28:18.
[33] Rom 8:37.

for that end and purpose, was enough to stay his spirit. I say, then, by faith, be much in the consideration of that supply and the fulness of it that is in Jesus Christ, and how he can at any time give thee strength and deliverance. Now, if hereby thou dost not find success to a conquest, yet thou wilt be staid in the chariot, that thou shalt not fly out of the field until the battle be ended; thou wilt be kept from an utter despondency and a lying down under thy unbelief, or a turning aside to false means and remedies, that in the issue will not relieve thee. The efficacy of this consideration will be found only in the practice.

(2.) Raise up thy heart by faith to an *expectation of relief* from Christ. Relief in this case from Christ is like the prophet's vision, Hab 2:3, "It is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, yet wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Though it may seem somewhat long to thee, whilst thou art under thy trouble and perplexity, yet it shall surely come in the appointed time of the Lord Jesus; which is the best season. If, then, thou canst raise up thy heart to a settled expectation of relief from Jesus Christ, — if thine eyes are towards him "as the eyes of a servant to the hand of his master,"[34] when he expects to receive somewhat from him, — thy soul shall be satisfied, he will assuredly deliver thee; he will slay the lust, and thy latter end shall be peace. Only look for it at his hand; expect when and how he will do it.[35] "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

But wilt thou say, "What ground have I to build such an expectation upon, so that I may expect not to be deceived?"

[34]Ps 123:2.

[35]Isa 7:9.

As thou hast necessity to put thee on this course, thou must be relieved and saved this way or none. To[36] whom wilt thou go? So there are in the Lord Jesus innumerable things to encourage and engage thee to this expectation.

For the necessity of it, I have in part discovered it before, when I manifested that this is the work of faith and of believers only. "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing," John 15:5; speaking with especial relation to the purging of the heart from sin, verse 2. Mortification of any sin must be by a supply of grace. Of ourselves we cannot do it. Now, "it hath pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell," Col 1:19; that "of his fulness we might receive grace for grace," John 1:16. He is the head from whence the new man must have influences of life and strength, or it will decay every day. If[37] we are "strengthened with might in the inner man," it is by "Christ's dwelling in our hearts by faith," Eph 3:16, 17. That this work is not to be done without the Spirit I have also showed before. Whence, then, do we expect the Spirit? from whom do we look for him? who hath promised him to us, having procured him for us? Ought not all our expectations to this purpose to be on Christ alone? Let this, then, be fixed upon thy heart, that if thou hast not relief from him thou shalt never have any. All ways, endeavours, contendings, that are not animated by this expectation of relief from Christ and him only are to no purpose, will do thee no good; yea, if they are any thing but supportments of thy heart in this expectation, or means appointed by himself for the receiving help from him, they are in vain.

Now, farther to engage thee to this expectation, —

[36] John 6:68.
[37] Col 1:11.

(1.) Consider his *mercifulness*, tenderness, and kindness, as he is our great High Priest at the right hand of God. Assuredly he pities thee in thy distress; saith he, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you," Isa 66:13. He hath the tenderness of a mother to a sucking child. Heb 2:17, 18, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." How is the ability of Christ upon the account of his suffering proposed to us? "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able." Did the sufferings and temptations of Christ add to his ability and power? Not, doubtless, considered absolutely and in itself. But the ability here mentioned is such as hath readiness, proneness, willingness to put itself forth, accompanying of it; it is an ability of will against all dissuasions. He is able, having suffered and been tempted, to break through all dissuasions to the contrary, to relieve poor tempted souls: Δύναται βοηθῆσαι, — "He is able to help." It is a metonymy of the effect; for, he can now be moved to help, having been so tempted. So ch. 4:15, 16: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The exhortation of verse 16 is the same that I am upon, — namely, that we would entertain expectations of relief from Christ, which the apostle there calls χάριν εἰς εὔκαιρον βοήθειαν, "grace for seasonable help." "If ever," says the soul, "help were seasonable, it would be so to me in my present condition. This is that which I long for, — grace for

seasonable help. I am ready to die, to perish, to be lost for ever; iniquity will prevail against me, if help come not in." Says the apostle, "Expect this help, this relief, this grace from Christ." Yea, but on what account? That which he lays down, verse 15. And we may observe that the word, verse 16, which we have translated to "obtain," is λάβωμεν. Ἵνα λάβωμεν ἔλεον, "That we may receive it;" suitable and seasonable help will come in. I shall freely say, this one thing of establishing the soul by faith in expectation of relief from Jesus Christ,[38] on the account of his mercifulness as our high priest, will be more available to the ruin of thy lust and distemper, and have a better and speedier issue, than all the rigidest means of self-maceration that ever any of the sons of men engaged themselves unto. Yea, let me add, that never any soul did or shall perish by the power of any lust, sin, or corruption, who could raise his soul by faith to an expectation of relief from Jesus Christ.[39]

(2.) Consider His *faithfulness* who hath promised; which may raise thee up and confirm thee in this waiting in an expectation of relief. He hath promised to relieve in such cases, and he will fulfil his word to the utmost. God tells us that his covenant with us is like the "ordinances" of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, which have their certain courses, Jer 31:36. Thence David said that he watched for relief from God "as one watched for the morning,"[40] — a thing that will certainly come in its appointed season. So will be thy relief from Christ. It will come in its season, as the dew and rain upon the parched ground; for faithful is he who hath promised. Particular promises to this purpose are innumerable; with

[38]Matt 11:28.
[39]Isa 55:1–3; Rev 3:18.
[40]Ps 130:6.

some of them, that seem peculiarly to suit his condition, let the soul be always furnished.

Now, there are two eminent advantages which always attend this expectation of succour from Jesus Christ:—

[1.] It engages him to a full and speedy assistance. Nothing doth more engage the heart of a man to be useful and helpful to another than his expectation of help from him, if justly raised and countenanced by him who is to give the relief. Our Lord Jesus hath raised our hearts, by his kindness, care, and promises, to this expectation; certainly our rising up unto it must needs be a great engagement upon him to assist us accordingly. This the Psalmist gives us as an approved maxim, "Thou, LORD, never forsakest them that put their trust in thee." When the heart is once won to rest in God, to repose himself on him, he will assuredly satisfy it. He will never be as water that fails; nor hath he said at any time to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain." If Christ be chosen for the foundation of our supply, he will not fail us.

[2.] It engages the heart to attend diligently to all the ways and means whereby Christ is wont to communicate himself to the soul; and so takes in the real assistance of all graces and ordinances whatever. He that expects any thing from a man, applies himself to the ways and means whereby it may be obtained. The beggar that expects an alms lies at his door or in his way from whom he doth expect it. The way whereby and the means wherein Christ communicates himself is, and are, his ordinances ordinarily; he that expects any thing from him must attend upon him therein. It is the expectation of faith that sets the heart on work. It is not an idle, groundless hope that I speak of. If now there be any vigour, efficacy, and power in prayer or sacrament to this end of mortifying sin, a man will assuredly be interested in it all by this expectation

of relief from Christ. On this account I reduce all particular actings, by prayer, meditation, and the like, to this head; and so shall not farther insist on them, when they are grounded on this bottom and spring from this root. They are of singular use to this purpose, and not else.

Now, on this direction for the mortification of a prevailing distemper you may have a thousand "probatum est's." Who have walked with God under this temptation, and have not found the use and success of it? I dare leave the soul under it, without adding any more. Only some particulars relating thereunto may be mentioned:—

First, Act faith *peculiarly upon the death*, blood, and cross of Christ; that is, on Christ as crucified and slain. Mortification of sin is peculiarly from the death of Christ. It is one peculiar, yea, eminent end of the death of Christ, which shall assuredly be accomplished by it. He died to destroy the works of the devil. Whatever came upon our natures by his first temptation, whatever receives strength in our persons by his daily suggestions, Christ died to destroy it all. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus 2:14. This was his aim and intendment (wherein he will not fail) in his giving himself for us. That we might be freed from the power of our sins, and purified from all our defiling lusts, was his design. "He gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish," Eph 5:25–27. And this, by virtue of his death, in various and several degrees, shall be accomplished. Hence our washing, purging, and cleansing is everywhere ascribed to his blood, 1 John 1:7; Heb 1:3; Rev 1:5. That being sprinkled on us, "purges

our consciences from dead works to serve the living God," Heb 9:14. This is that we aim at, this we are in pursuit of, — that our consciences may be purged from dead works, that they may be rooted out, destroyed, and have place in us no more. This shall certainly be brought about by the death of Christ; there will virtue go out from thence to this purpose. Indeed, all supplies of the Spirit, all communications of grace and power, are from hence; as I have elsewhere[41] showed. Thus the apostle states it; Rom 6:2, is the case proposed that we have in hand: "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" — "Dead to sin by profession; dead to sin by obligation to be so; dead to sin by participation of virtue and power for the killing of it; dead to sin by union and interest in Christ, in and by whom it is killed: how shall we live therein?" This he presses by sundry considerations, all taken from the death of Christ, in the ensuing verses. This must not be: verse 3, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" We have in baptism an evidence of our implantation into Christ; we are baptized into him: but what of him are we baptized into an interest in? "His death," saith he. If indeed we are baptized into Christ, and beyond outward profession, we are baptized into his death. The explication of this, of one being baptized into the death of Christ, the apostle gives us, verses 4, 6: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." "This is," saith he, "our being baptized into the

[41] Communion with Christ, chapters vii. viii.

death of Christ, namely, our conformity thereunto; to be dead unto sin, to have our corruptions mortified, as he was put to death for sin: so that as he was raised up to glory, we may be raised up to grace and newness of life." He tells us whence it is that we have this baptism into the death of Christ, verse 6; and this is from the death of Christ itself: "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed;" συνεσταυρώθη, "is crucified with him," not in respect of time, but causality. We are crucified with him *meritoriously*, in that he procured the Spirit for us to mortify sin; *efficiently*, in that from his death virtue comes forth for our crucifying; in the way of a *representation* and *exemplar* we shall assuredly be crucified unto sin, as he was for our sin. This is that the apostle intends: Christ by his death destroying the works of the devil, procuring the Spirit for us, hath so killed sin, as to its reign in believers, that it shall not obtain its end and dominion.

Secondly, Then act faith on the death of Christ, and that under these two notions, — first, In expectation of *power*; secondly, In endeavours for *conformity*.[42] For the first, the direction given in general may suffice; as to the latter, that of the apostle may give us some light into our direction, Gal 3:1. Let faith look on Christ in the gospel as he is set forth dying and crucified for us. Look on him under the weight[43] of our sins, praying, bleeding, dying; bring him in that condition into thy heart by faith; apply his blood so shed to thy corruptions: do this daily. I might draw out this consideration to a great length, in sundry particulars, but I must come to a close.

[42] Phil 3:10; Col 3:3; 1 Pet 1:18, 19.

[43] 1 Cor 15:3; 1 Pet 1:18, 19; 5:1, 2; Col 1:13, 14.

The Work of the Spirit

2. I have only, then, to add the heads of the work of the Spirit in this business of mortification, which is so peculiarly ascribed to him.

In one word: This whole work, which I have described as our duty, is effected, carried on, and accomplished by the power of the Spirit, in all the parts and degrees of it; as, —

(1.) He alone *clearly and fully convinces* the heart of the evil and guilt and danger of the corruption, lust, or sin to be mortified. Without this conviction, or whilst it is so faint that the heart can wrestle with it or digest it, there will be no thorough work made. An unbelieving heart (as in part we have all such) will shift with any consideration, until it be overpowered by clear and evident convictions. Now this is the proper work of the Spirit: "He convinces of sin," John 16:8; he alone can do it. If men's rational considerations, with the preaching of the letter, were able to convince them of sin, we should, it may be, see more convictions than we do. There comes by the preaching of the word an apprehension upon the understandings of men that they are sinners, that such and such things are sins, that themselves are guilty of them; but this light is not powerful, nor doth it lay hold on the practical principles of the soul, so as to conform the mind and will unto them, to produce effects suitable to such an apprehension. And therefore it is that wise and knowing men, destitute of the Spirit, do not think those things to be sins at all wherein the chief movings and actings of lust do consist. It is the Spirit alone that can do, that doth, this work to the purpose. And this is the first thing that the Spirit doth in order to the mortification of any lust whatever, — it convinces the soul of all the evil of it, cuts off all its pleas, discovers all its deceits, stops all its evasions, answers its

pretences, makes the soul own its abomination, and lie down under the sense of it. Unless this be done all that follows is in vain.

(2.) The Spirit alone reveals unto us *the fulness of Christ* for our relief; which is the consideration that stays the heart from false ways and from despairing despondency, 1 Cor 2:8.

(3.) The Spirit alone *establishes* the heart in expectation of relief from Christ; which is the great sovereign means of mortification, as hath been discovered, 2 Cor 1:21.

(4.) The Spirit alone brings the *cross* of Christ into our hearts with its sin-killing power; for by the Spirit are we baptized into the death of Christ.

(5.) The Spirit is the author and finisher of our *sanctification*; gives new supplies and influences of grace for holiness and sanctification, when the contrary principle is weakened and abated, Eph 3:16–18.

(6.) In all the soul's addresses to God in this condition, it hath *supportment* from the Spirit. Whence is the power, life, and vigour of prayer? whence its efficacy to prevail with God? Is it not from the Spirit? He is the "Spirit of supplications" promised to them "who look on him whom they have pierced," Zech 12:10, enabling them "to pray with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered," Rom 8:26. This is confessed to be the great medium or way of faith's prevailing with God. Thus Paul dealt with his temptation, whatever it were: "I besought the Lord that it might depart from me."[44] What is the work of the Spirit in prayer, whence and how it gives us in assistance and makes us to prevail, what we are to do that we may enjoy his help for that purpose, is not my present intendment to demonstrate.

[44] 2 Cor 12:8.