A TREATISE OF SELF-DENIAL.

By Thomas Manton

Introduction

'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.'
Matth. 16.24

The occasion of these words standeth thus: Christ had foretold his passion, and Peter taketh offence. The cross though it be the badge of christianity, is always displeasing to flesh and blood, and we dislike heaven, not for itself, but for the way we travel to the land of promise, through a howling wilderness. Carnal fancy imagineth a path strewed with lilies and roses: we are too tender-footed to think of briers and thorns.

Peter giveth vent to his distaste by carnal counsel - 'Master, favour thyself.' Peter's speech to his master is much like the voice of the flesh or Satan in our own hearts; when duty cannot be done without difficulty and disadvantages, our carnal hearts say, Favour thyself, let this be far from thee. Christ rebuked Peter, or rather the devil in Peter - 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' God's own children may often play Satan's game. Peter speaketh out of an innocent affection and respect to his Master, and the devil hath a hand in it. And therefore it is a high point of spiritual wisdom to be skilled in his enterprises - 'We are not ignorant of his devices,' saith the apostle, 2 Cor. 2.11. The devil turns and winds on every hand; the same Satan that stirred up the high-priests to crucify Christ, sets his own disciple upon him, to dissuade him from being crucified. He was afraid of the work of redemption, and therefore seeketh either to hinder the sufferings of Christ, or to make them so ignominious that the scandal might take off from the efficacy. When Christ was upon the cross he playeth the same game, but by other instruments: Mat. 27.40, 'If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.' Though he had our Saviour at that pass, yet he was afraid what the work would come to. It is very notable that when Christ rebuketh Peter, he doth with the same severity check the devil, tempting him to idolatry, and Peter dissuading him from sufferings; it is spoken to both, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' compare Mat 4.10, with ver. 23 of this chapter. So strong an inclination had our Lord to die for us, that he looked upon carnal pity to his person with the same indignation and scorn which he doth upon a temptation to idolatry. However, the condescension and tenderness of Christ to his erring disciple is to be observed: he doth not only rebuke him, but instruct him, and the rest of his disciples. Thus can Christ make an advantage of our failings; Peter's carnal counsel was the occasion of this excellent lesson, which Christ by this

means hath for ever consigned to the use and profit of the church - 'if any man will come after me, let him deny himself.'
I shall a little open the words.

Christ saith, 'If **any** man,' to show that the duty is of an unlimited concernment; it involveth all, whosoever will enter themselves in Christ's school, or list themselves in his flock or company; it doth not only concern a few which are called out to be champions for his cause, and to expose their bodies to the cruel flames, but 'if any will come after me.' Will, *thelei*; the word is emphatical, it noteth the full purpose and consent of the will. Whosoever is firmly resolved. 'Come after me;' as a scholar after his teacher, as a sheep after his shepherd, as a soldier after his centurion. Coming after, it is a phrase proper to scholars. The phrase showeth the necessity of the duty, unless you will be disclaimed as none of my followers. Here Christ would give us the main character of his own disciples. Christianity is a school and sect of men that deny themselves and their own conveniences for Christ's sake.

'Let him deny himself;' these are the words which I shall insist upon. And in them there are two things to be observed:
the act - 'Let him deny;' **the object** - 'Himself.'

1. For the act, *aparneisastho*; the word being a compound is the more emphatical; it signifieth *prorsus negare* - Let him utterly deny himself. Denial properly belongeth to speeches, but by a metaphor it may be also applied to things. To speeches it is proper, as to propositions or requests. In propositions we are said to deny when we contradict that which is affirmed; in requests we deny when we refuse to grant what is desired of us. Now by an easy traduction it may also be applied to things, which we are said to deny when we neglect, slight, or oppose them; as denying the power of godliness, neglecting or opposing it; though with propriety enough the word may retain its original sense, because all things are managed in the heart of man by rational debates, counsels, and suggestions, and we are said to deny when we refuse to give assent to fleshly dictates and counsels. The flesh, or corrupt self, hath its propositions, its motions in the soul; it speaks to us by our own thoughts, and puts us upon this or that work. Envy, lust, and corrupt motion have a voice, and an imperious voice, too, that grace is much put to it to give a strong negative. Envy bids Cain, Go kill thy brother; ambition bids Absalom rebel against his father; covetousness bids Judas betray his Lord and Master; so worldly affection bids us pursue present things with all our might. Now because we are wedded to our opinions, and these are the suggestions of our own hearts, therefore they are called self; and we are said to deny when we enter our dissent,

and deny the motion. Flesh, what have I to do with thee? I am not 'a debtor to the flesh,' Rom. 8.12. I will hazard all for Christ, and make it my work to get into covenant with God. This for the act - 'Let him deny.'

2. The object is the next word to be opened - *eauton*, 'Himself,' a capacious word, that doth not only involve our persons, but whatever is ours, so far as it standeth in opposition to God, or cometh in competion. A man and all his lusts, a man and all his relations; a man and all his interests; life, and all the appendages of life, is one aggregate thing which in scripture is called self. In short, whatsoever is of himself, in himself, belonging to himself, as a corrupt or carnal man, all that is to be denied. And indeed, every man hath many a self within himself; his lusts are himself; his life is himself; his name is himself; his wealth, liberty, ease, favour, lands, father, mother, and all relations, they are comprised within the term of self. As when our Lord explaineth it, Luke 14.26, 'If any man will come after me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, nay, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple;' ,*misein* is the same with *aparneisthai*, hating, it is the same with denying or neglecting his duty to them for God's sake, when a higher duty is to take place. I confess, among the things which are called self there is a difference.

[1.] Some are absolutely evil, and must be denied without limitation; as lusts and carnal affections, Tit. 2.12, which are very properly called self, because we are as tender of them as of our own souls; and therefore they are expressed by the terms of the 'right hand,' and the 'right eye,' Mat. 5.29,30. A sinner will as soon part with his eyes as with his lusts, or the pleasure of his senses. And so they are called 'members:' Col. 3.5, 'Mortify your members, which are on the earth.' Sin is riveted in the soul, and it is as irksome to a natural heart, to part with any lust, as with a member or joint of the body; we are willing to hold them by as fast and close a tenure as we hold ourselves; we startle at a reproof, as if a joint were pricked or touched.

[2.] Other things are only evil respectively as they prove idols or snares to us; and so life, and all the ornaments, comforts, and conveniences of life; as liberty, honours, wealth, friends, health, they are all called self. The reason is, because by love, which is the affection of union, they are incorporated with us, and become parts of us: Hosea 4.18, 'Ephraim is joined to idols;' they are cemented with them. Now that which is to be denied in these things is not so much the thing itself, but our corruption that mingleth with them, and causeth them to become a snare to the soul.

The point that I shall insist on out of the whole is -
***Doctrine*. That it is the duty of all that would be Christ's disciples to deny themselves.**

I shall handle the doctrine of self-denial -
1. In general.
2. In its several kinds and subjective parts.

First, In general.
In managing this argument, I shall use this method, viz. -
1. Give the **extent** of self-denial.
2. The **reasons** of this duty, with the most effectual motives and arguments of persuasion.
3. The **signs** by which we may know whether we omit or practise it.
4. The **helps** which the scripture prescribes for our furtherance in so great a work.

The Extent of Self-denial

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

I. For the object - A man's own self, it is a bundle of idols.
Since God was laid aside, self succeeded in the crown; we set up everything that we call our own. Everything before which we may put that possessive 'ours' may be abused and set up as a snare, all the excellences and comforts of human life, both inward and outward.
For the understanding of this, and that you may know how far self is to be denied, I must premise some **general** considerations, and then instance in some **particulars**; for it seemeth harsh and contrary to reason that a man should deny himself, since nature teacheth a man to love himself and cherish himself: Eph. 5.29, 'No man ever hated his own flesh;' and grace doth not disallow it. Therefore -

[1.] In general, you must know when respects to self are culpable. There is a lawful self-love - 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' James 2.8; in which

there is, not only a direction to love our neighbour, but a concession and allowance implied to love ourselves; and in so doing, we do well. By an innocent and natural respect nature fortifies itself, and seeks its own preservation. A man may respect himself in a regular way. That self which we must hate or deny is that self which stands in opposition to God or competition with him, and so jostleth with him for the throne; lay aside God, and self steppeth in as the next heir; it is the great idol of the world, ever since the fall, when men took the boldness to depose and lay aside God, as it were, self succeeded in the throne. Fallen man, like Reuben, went up to his father's bed. Self intercepted all those respects and embraces which were due to God himself, and so man became both his own idol and idolater. It is with God and self as it was with Dagon and the ark; they can never stand together in competition; set up the ark, and Dagon must fall upon his face; set up Dagon, and the ark is deposed and put down. Well then, if we would know when self is sinfully respected, we must consider what are the rights and the undoubted flowers of the crown of heaven; I mean, what are those special privileges and respects that are so appropriated to the godhead, as that they cannot without treason to the King of all the earth, be alienated from him or communicated to any creature. Now these are four: -

(1.) To be the first cause, upon whom all things depend in their being and operation.

(2.) To be the chiefest good, and therefore to be valued above all beings, interests, and concernments in the world.

(3.) To be the highest lord and most absolute sovereign, who swayeth all things by his laws and providence.

(4.) To be the last end, in which all things do at length terminate and centre.

(1.) As God is the first cause, so he would keep up the respects of the world to his majesty by dependence and trust. Now it is the ambition of man to affect an independency, to be a god to himself, sufficient for his own happiness. Our first parents greedily catched at that bait: - Ye shall be as gods,' Gen. 3.5. The devil meant it not in a blessed conformity, but a cursed self-sufficiency; and we are all apt to be taken in the same snare, which certainly is a very grievous sin. Nothing can be more hateful to God. This therefore is a great part of self-denial, to work

us off from other dependences, and to trust in God alone.

(2.) As God is the chiefest good, so he must have the highest esteem. Valuing other things above God is the ground of all miscarriage in the business of religion. When anything is honoured above God, or made equal with God, or indulged against the will of God, Dagon is set up, and the ark is made to fall.

(3.) As God is the highest lord and most absolute sovereign, it is his peculiar prerogative to give laws to the creature; therefore self is not to interpose and give laws to us, but only God; his will must stand. The great contest indeed between God and the creature is, whose will shall stand, God's will or ours; who shall prescribe to us, self or God. Fleshly nature sets up laws against laws, and our fleshly wills set up providence against providence. Self-will is bewrayed by murmuring against God's providence, by rebellion against his laws, and when we are obstinate in our homage and obedience to self: Jer. 18.12, we will walk in the way of our own heart; and Jer. 44.17, whatsoever cometh out of our mouths, that we will do. So James 1.14, the apostle makes it to be the root of all sin when a man is drawn away by his own lusts and his own will, that is set up against the laws of God. So in providence, a stubborn creature will not submit when God's will is declared. It was a great submission, and an act of self-denial in Christ - 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt;' but self saith, Not as thou wilt, but as I will; for we by murmuring set up an anti-providence against God.

(4.) As God is the last end of our beings and actions, the supreme cause is to be the utmost end: Prov. 16.4, 'God made all things for himself.' But now, in all that we do we look to ourselves; vain man sets up self at the end of every action, and jostles out God. In all the actions of life they are but a kind of homage to the idol of self, if they eat and drink, it is to nourish self, a meat-offering and drink-offering to appetite. If they pray or praise, it is but to worship self, to advance the repute of self; the crown is taken off from Gods head, he is not made the utmost end. If they give alms, they are a sacrifice offered to the idol of self-estimation; 'They give alms to be seen of men,' saith Christ, and in this self is set up, and God is deposed and laid aside.

[2.] Let me give you some particular instances. To instance in excellences, moral or natural, or in civil interest.

In moral excellences: righteousness, that is apt to be a snare in point of self-dependence. Paul found it to be *zeimian*, a loss, Phil. 3.7, a hindrance from casting ourselves entirely upon grace. It is the highest point of self-denial for a man to deny his own righteousness, to see the dung and dross that is in himself and all his moral excellences. So also, concerning our own wisdom, that is a self that comes to be denied. It is said to Babylon: Isa. 47, 'Thy understanding hath undone thee.' So of all men, when we presume upon our own sense and apprehension, we soon go wrong. This is the main thing to be considered here; for Peter, out of carnal wisdom, dissuades Christ, and then Christ saith, 'Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself,' deny the dictates of his own reason and will. He that makes his own bosom his oracle, asketh counsel of a fool; we shall be cavilling and disputing till we have disputed ourselves out of all religion: Job. 6.24, 'Cause me to understand wherein I have erred.' Till we come to see by divine light, carnal wisdom is always making lies and ill reports of religion; we think it folly and preciseness to be strict, and that zeal is fury, and it is cowardice and disgrace to put up wrong. We shall still be calling good evil, and evil good, because we are wise in our own eyes; there is a woe pronounced upon such' Isa. 5.21,22, 'Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes. and prudent in their own sight!' etc. It is an excellent point of self-denial to 'become a fool, that we may be wise,' 1 Cor. 3.18. As when we look in a perspective-glass we wink with one eye, that we may see the more clearly with the other; so here we must put out the eye of carnal wisdom, and become fools, that we may be wise for Christ.

So for all civil interests: life, that is the most precious possession of the creature, and yet not too good to be denied: ver. 25, Christ instanceth - 'Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.' That is the gospel way of thriving, to lose all for God. Now this is to be denied, not only in purpose and vow, but when it comes to trial; as it is said of the saints: Rev 12.11, 'They loved not their lives to the death.' When it comes to a point, either they must leave their God or lose their lives on the account of religion. The loving-kindness of God is better than life. So for estate: Mat. 19.27, 'We have left all and followed thee,' say the disciples; we must leave our coat, as Joseph did, that we may keep our conscience whole. The best usury in the world; ten in the hundred would in the world be counted an oppression; but now here is a hundred for one, Mark 10.32. So also for fame and

esteem in the world; though to an ingenious spirit this is exceeding precious, yet John the Baptist, speaking of Christ, saith, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' We must be content to be ciphers, that Christ may rise up into the greater sum; as one in a crowd that holds another upon his shoulders, he is lost in the throng, but the other is exposed to the view of all. So for our friends: Luke xiv. 26, 'Whosoever hates not his father, and his mother,' etc. There are many cases wherein we are to deny our friends; as suppose, when we shall incur their displeasure, out of faithfulness to Christ. Carnal parents will frown upon us, and, it may be, withdraw maintenance, and other conveniences of life; but it is better an earthly father should frown than that God should frown, it will be made up in spiritual relations. So in case of doing justice and right we must not own father, mother, brothers, or sisters, for this is but more handsome and natural bribery. Levi was commended for this by the Lord: Deut. 33.9, 'He saith to his father and mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children, but observed my word, saith the Lord.' It is good to be blind and deaf to all relations in this case. Asa spared not his own mother, but deposed her, being idolatrous. See Deut. 13.6-9, 'If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thy own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers,...thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thy eye pity him; neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him; thy hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and after-ward the hand of all the people,' etc. We are apt to look upon these rules as calculated for Utopia, and have but a grammatical knowledge of them. So also for carnal things: if it be a right hand or a right eye, it must be plucked out, and cut off, Mat.5. If it be as gainful and as profitable a sin as the right hand is profitable to us, yet it must not be spared. 'We must deny all ungodliness,' Titus 2.12, though ever so pleasing. Thus for the object, it extendeth to all things.

II. For the subject: see the extent of it, it reacheth all sorts of men; Christ saith, 'If any will come after me, he must deny himself.' It is notable, that circumstance in Mark, when Christ gives the lesson of self-denial: Mark 8.34, 'When he had called

the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself.' There is no calling, no sex, no age, no duty, no condition of life that is excluded, but one way or other, they are put upon self-denial. No calling: magistrates, and those who are called to public trust, they are most obliged, in regard of God and men, to deny themselves. It is notable, the self-denial of Joseph, though he were a great officer in Egypt, yet his family ran the same lot with other tribes. And Joshua, in the division of the land, he took his own lot and share last, Joshua 19.49. Men in public places are most liable to mind private interest, to the neglect of the public; but they ought not to feather their nests with public spoils.

So for men of private stations. It is not the duty of public persons only, all conditions are liable to self-seeking; many times your private callings may be against the public interest, either of religion or civil welfare, as they that made shrines for Diana, when the gospel came, and reformation likely to be wrought, Acts 19.24, they cried, 'Our gain will be gone.' Therefore in this case you should be content to sink and to suffer loss, as the lighter elements descend to conserve the universe. Or, it may be, you have thriven by iniquity of traffic; now you are to deny yourselves by making restitution: Luke 19.8, 'I will restore fourfold, and give to the poor.' Restitution is a hard duty, but a necessary one; and you must vomit up your sweet morsels wherewith you have surefeited, or else conscience will not be healthy. And so for other callings and relations: minister and people. Ministers, of all men, had most need to practise this duty. We are to deny our own ends. How many carnal ends may a man promote by his service in the ministry? Fame, applause, the satisfying of our necessity; we are not to preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. We are to deny ourselves in our learning and parts; we are debtors to the learned and unlearned, we are to become all things to all; and Christ hath lambs as well as sheep. We must be content to go back ten degrees, that we may condescend to all, not to soar aloft in speculation; possibly this may be more for our fame and repute of learning, but less for profit. So for people: in hearing you must deny the curiosity of the ear, that others may profit by plainer lessons, and that every one may have his portion in due season.

It is a great part of self-denial to suffer the words of exhortation. Guilt is apt to recoil when tender parts are touched. Now you are to deny yourselves, to love

tho reproof as well as the comfort, and count it precious oil. Consider the submission that was in Hezekiah when the prophet came with the bitter threatening of a curse that should cleave to his posterity - 'Good is the word of the Lord!' a sweet submission of a sanctified judgment. Isa. 39.8. All that was good in it was, that it should not come in his days. So also for all sexes: it is a duty for men; not only for men, who are called out to public actions, but for women also, they are to deny themselves in their delicacies of life, that they may exercise themselves in the grave duties of religion, that they may not wax wanton. It is necessary also in all duties; to instance in those two great ones which do divide and take up the whole christian life, prayer and praise, both of them should be practised with self-denial. When we come for grace, we should deny our own merit - O Lord, not for our own righteousness. And when grace is received, when we come to praise God, self must vanish, that God may have all the praise, Mat. 16. When the good servant gives an account of his faithfulness, he saith, 'Not my industry, but thy pound hath gained ten pounds;' he gives it all to grace. So 1 Cor. 15.10, the apostle checks himself, as if he had spoken unbeseeming - 'I laboured more than you all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me;' so Gal. 2.20, 'I live,' then presently draws in his words again, 'not I, but Christ liveth in me.' As the elders throw their crowns at the Lamb's feet, so all our excellences must be laid at the feet of Christ; as the stars disappear when the sun ariseth, so we must shrink into nothing in our own thoughts. When Joab had conquered Rabba, he sent for David to take the garland of honour; so when we have done anything by grace, we must send for Christ to take the honour. Prayer is the humble appeal to mercy, disclaiming of merit; and praise is the setting of the crown upon Christ's head; not I, but the grace of God that is wrought in me.

To apply this, all men are to practise this duty, in all things, at all times, and with all their hearts.

[1.] All men are to practise it. Oh! do not put it off to others; no man can exempt himself. Usually, when these duties are pressed, we think they are calculated for men in great places, and rich men; but it is a duty that lies upon all, all are apt to seek themselves. When Christ spake something concerning Peter, it is said, 'Peter looked about on the disciple Jesus loved.' So we are apt to look about to others.

Look for it, before you die you will be eminently called to this service. Never christian went out of this world, but, one time or other, God tried him in some eminent point of self-denial. As it is said, God tempted Abraham, tried him in that difficult point of offering his son, Gen. 22.1; so Christ tried the young man - 'Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor,' Mat. 22.

[2.] For the object - in all things. Let not your self-denial be partial and halting; as Saul slew some of the cattle, but spared the fat, and Agag. Many can deny themselves in many things, but they are loth to give up all to God without bounds and reservations. As Joshua deposed all the kings of Canaan, so every lust is to be cast out of the throne. He that denies himself only in some things, really he denies himself in none. Jehu put Baal's priests to death, but continued the calves in Dan and Bethel, out of interest and reasons of state. Herod denied himself in many things, but could not part with his Herodias.

[3.] You must deny yourself always; it must not be temporary and vanishing. In a good mood we can give up and renounce all, and be humble, and ascribe all to grace. We may hang the head for a day like a bulrush, Isa.58. There should be a constant sense of our unworthiness kept up, and a purpose of renouncing all and giving up all. It is not enough to deny a man's self in a thing wherein there is no pleasure, and when his soul abhors dainty food, but it must be in things which are desirable, and this must be constantly practised too. Ahab humbled himself for a few days.

[4.] It must be with all our heart. Which signifies that it must not be done by a mere constraint of providence, as a mariner in a storm casts away his goods by force, but as a bride leaves her father's house: Ps. 45.10, 'Forget thy father's house;' it must be out of a principle of grace, and out of love to Christ. Now you must not do it politicly, but with your whole heart. There is no such great self-seeking as is carried on usually under the colour of self-denial. As the apostle speaks of some, 2 Cor. 11.12, that would preach the gospel freely, to shame and cast contempt upon Paul. The devil disguiseth himself into all forms and shapes. As Jacob put on Esau's clothes that he might appear rough and hairy, and so get the blessing; so many seem to deny themselves of the comforts of life, but it is but for their own praise. The Pharisees were liberal in alms; they could deny themselves in giving, which others could not do; but it was to be seen of men.

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

The Reasons for Self-denial

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

1. We cannot else be conformed to our great Master. Jesus Christ came from heaven on purpose to teach us the lesson of self-denial; his birth, his life, his death, was a pattern of self-denial. His birth, it was a great step from God's bosom into the virgin's lap; a great condescension: 2 Cor. 8.9, 'When he was rich, he became poor, that we might be rich.' None can deny themselves so much as Christ did, because none was so rich as he. We may talk of flocks and herds, and the poor ornaments and supplies of a frail life; but he had the possession of a perfect happiness and glory in the divine nature, he was rich indeed. He needed not to have the respect of the creature to make him more happy; he was the lord of glory, and heir of all things. Yet when he was thus rich he made himself poor. He did not only subject himself to the law, and abject condition of the creature, but came in a poor, mean way, not in pomp, not in a princely equipage. As soon as he took our nature, he would have a feeling of our wants and miseries, therefore was born in a mean, obscure way. Born of a poor mother, in a poor place, wrapt up in cheap and unworthy swaddling-clothes, the fellow of God, the heir of all things, the lord of angels, he is thrust out among beasts in a stable. Christ would not come in pomp, but with slender provision and furniture, to put a disgrace upon worldly greatness and bravery. He would overturn the idol of the world, not only by power, but by the choice of his life. And as his birth, so was his life; he was exercised with sorrows and labours. **Christ was not a man of pleasure, but a man of sorrow.** Rom. 15.3, the apostle saith, 'Christ pleased not himself,' neither in the choice of his own life, nor in any delights that he could propose to himself of his own profit aud advantage, he was happy enough without them. So in his death. If any had reason or cause to love his natural life, Jesus Christ had. His soul dwelt with God in such a fellowship as we are not

capable of; and yet he gave up himself to redeem us from the present world, Gal.1.4 It is but ridiculous to profess Jesus Christ to be our master, and not to conform to his example. We have no reason to be more tender and delicate of our interest than Christ was. What is our self to Christ's self? We are poor creatures under a law; Christ was God over all, blessed for ever. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord - 'It is enough for the disciple to be as his master, the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household!' Mark 10.25. We should not murmur, we cannot be worse used than Christ was; we have no cause to complain if we be reduced to a coarse robe, when we remember Christ's swaddling clothes; to complain of a hard bed or prison, when Christ was laid in a manger. Certainly an innocent poverty is more comfortable than all the pomp in the world, if we would but choose what Christ chose. Christ was a pattern of suffering from the cradle to the cross. **They that caress themselves in all the delights of the world seem to profess another master than Christ.** We are of a base condition, but two or three degrees distant from dust and nothing. The sun can go back ten degrees; Christ, the Lord of glory, might go back ten degrees, but we have not so much to lose.

2. This hath been practised, not only by the master, but by all the fellows in the same school. Christ set the first copy, and all the saints have written after it, some better, some worse: Rom. 14.7, 'None of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself, for whether we live, we live to the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord.' In the context the apostle speaks of the difference of weak and strong believers; some weak, some strong, but they all agree in this, none of us, not one that hath given up his name to Christ is allowedly a self-seeker; none live to themselves. The example of the saints is to be considered, lest we should think it exceeds the capacity of the creature, and that only Christ could practise it. We find the children of God, those among them that have made the highest progress in Christ's school, they have had lowest thoughts of self. Paul, that was a glorious apostle, yet he saith in one place, 1 Tim. 1.15, that 'he was the greatest of sinners;' and in another place, Eph. 3.8, that 'he was less than the least of saints.' A man would have thought that Paul, with more congruity of speech, might have

said, the greatest of saints and least of sinners, but he saith, the greatest of sinners, and the least of saints; not to lessen grace, but still to lessen self, and put a disgrace upon it. They that are the best scholars in this school most abhor self-conceit and self-seeking. As the laden boughs hang the head and bend downward, so do the children of God that have been most fruitful in the christian course; as the aim, the higher it is, doth cast the least shadows; so for self-seeking. I wonder how a man can look upon these two great instances of Moses and Paul without blushing. Of Moses: Num. 32.32, 'Blot me out of thy book,' upon condition he would save the people; as if he could take no comfort in his great spiritual privileges, when the glory of God should suffer loss by the loss of his people. So Rom. 9.3, 'Let me be accursed from Christ, for my brethren that are in the flesh.' Paul, in an excess of zeal, could be willing to bear the common punishment for a common good. We, that are so tender of our honour and respect, so wedded to our ease and private interests, how can we look upon these without shame? Can Paul and Moses wish to be a common sacrifice for God's glory, and for the redemption of others, and we be so tender to our own respects? Moses speaketh to God himself, and Paul calls God to witness - 'I lie not:' Rom. 11.1, 'I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost.' There is a treble oath and asseveration - 'I speak the truth,' 'I lie not,' 'the Spirit bears witness with my conscience.' Or rather, there is a double asseveration. with an appeal to two witnesses, both to the Spirit and conscience, Not as if they could wish for hardness of heart; but with an excess of zeal they were carried so high in imitation of Christ, to part with their own happiness for a public good.

3. Jesus Christ may justly require it; all the idols of the world expect it from their votaries. In nature we are sensible that all respects to divine powers are commended by self-denial. We see it in pagans; when Baal was silent, his priests gashed themselves, 1 Kings 18.28; they cut themselves, after their manner, with knives and lances, so that the blood gushed out; to gratify their idol, they would not spare their own blood. So those hypocrites, Micah 6.6-8, see how liberal they are - 'Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil,' etc. To part with a beast in sacrifice, they thought it

was not self-denial enough; they devise something more costly, all their flocks and herds, their children, the fruit of their womb, their whole substance. So superstitious votaries among the papists, they mangle their flesh with scourges and whips, use excessive fasting and abstinence from meat, pinch their own flesh. And we fatten and feed ourselves, and cannot deny ourselves for Christ. See the instance in spiritual idols, how worldly and carnal men can deny themselves to compass their ends: Pa. 127.2, 'They rise early, go to bed late, eat the bread of sorrow;' they can deny themselves of sleep, and food, and rest, and all in a devotion to worldly interests: Eccles. 4.8, 'He bereaves his soul of all good.' There is no end of their toil; with an unwearied patience they lay out their strength in vain pursuits. Many a covetous man doth shame many a godly moan. Religion is a better thing; shall lust do more with them than the love of Christ with thee? Lust that will make a man labour in the very fire, though it be but for a thing of nought, to deny himself of the necessary support and conveniences of life. Consider the tyranny of worldly affection. Certainly we should have a stronger impulse, for we have a better reward; we are acted with a more mighty spirit. It is true, in carnal men it is not self-denial so much as the obstinacy of self-will and stomach. The kingdom of Satan is divided; self-will is set up against self-delight or ease. Nay, in pleasure, which doth seem of all vanities to be most soft and effeminate, yet men can deny themselves for their pleasure, their credit, estate, their conscience, and all sacrificed to the gullet of that great idol and Moloch-god, their belly.

4. Because self is the greatest enemy both to God and man.

(1.) It robs God of his honour. Self, it is a near and dear word to man; it is both the idol and the idolater. It receives the worship which it performeth; as the sea sends out waves to the shore, and then sucks them in again. Self is made a god, and then god is made an idol; Phil. 3.20, 'Whose god is their belly.' All their toil and labour is to feed and delight themselves, and to exalt themselves. Self hath such sacrifices and devotions as God requires. Self hath solemn worship. A carnal man prays, and what then? He makes God the object, and self the end; so that self is the god. So self hath private and closet duties, vain thoughts, and musings, in which we lift up ourselves in our own conceit - 'Is not this great Babel that I have built?' Some time of the day we consecrate to the great idol self, to puff up

ourselves with the conceit of our own worth. This is a more secret worship of self. The public worship of self is in self-seeking, and the private in self-conceit, when we feast and entertain our spirits with whispers of vanity, and suppositions of our own excellency and greatness.

(2.) As it is God's, so it is man's enemy. Self parts itself against itself, and is its own greatest enemy. Not only they of a man's own house are his enemies, as Christ speaks, but his own heart is his enemy; self-will, self-wit are the greatest foes you have in the world. Look, as the ape doth crush out the bowels of her young ones while she embraceth them, so man wrongs himself when he overloves himself; a man need fear and suspect no creature in the world so much as himself, and that when we most respect self. The world and the devil may trouble thee, but cannot hurt thee without thyself. No enemy can hurt us so much as we hurt ourselves; therefore, if we would take revenge of them that hate us most, we should begin with our own hearts. Men trust their hearts as their best friends, and so they are deceived. It is the greatest judgment that God can lay upon any creature, to give him up to himself: Ps. 81.12, 'So I gave them up to their own heart's lusts, and they walked in their own counsels.' Oh! it is a sad doom to be given up to self. On the other side, it is the greatest conquest that can be, to conquer self; it is an enemy that will hardly be subdued: Prov.16.32, 'Better is he that overcometh himself than he that conquereth a city;' *i.e*., he that is able to conquer the masterless bosom enemy, self, that is so apt to betray us.

5. Because those that are Christ's disciples are not their own men: Rom. 14.6, 'We are not our own, but the Lord's.' Our will should not be our own law, nor our profit our aim, because we are not our own. There are many relations between us and Christ which take away all the property we have in ourselves. We cannot say that our tongues are our own, to speak what we please, nor our works our own, nor our interests our own; no, thy tongue when thou speakest, it is not thine, but Christ's; and so thy estate when thou tradest, remember it is not thine, but Christ's; thy prayer, thy public service, they are not thine, but Christ's. Remember, thy strength is not thine own when thou art wasting it in lust and vanity: it is not thine, but Christ's. So our several relations. I have showed you before the title God hath to us; now let me open the several relations. We are but servants; now

servants are not *sui juris*, masters of their own will, but subject to the will of another, by whose command and for whose profit they are to act. The property of servants, saith Aristotle, is not to do their own will and pleasure; they have given up themselves to another. So we are children, and God is our Father, and children are under government, they are to be guided by their father. Then the most honourable relation is that of a spouse, 1 Tim. 2.12. Now the woman, saith the apostle, must not rule over her own head; we are to be guided and directed by him. The most honourable relations put us upon self-denial.

6. Because it is the most gainful project in the world, therefore we must deny self. Self-denial is the true way of self-advancing. Leave as much as you can for Christ, you will lose nothing - 'He that loseth his life shall find it:' Mark 10.29,30, 'Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mother, and children, and lands, with persecution, and in the world to come, eternal life.' Though we have it not in specie, in kind, we shall have it over and above in value. God will not weary us with expecting too much. Here we have peace of conscience, and hereafter life eternal; others do but gain a shadow to the loss of the substance. They have neither quiet of conscience nor the hopes of glory: Mat. 16.26, 'What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' etc. And the evangelist Luke hath it, chap. 9.25, 'Lose himself.' To seek the good of our souls, that is indeed to seek ourselves. Every man's mind, his soul, is himself; to lose his soul, that is indeed to lose himself; and when we lose ourselves, we lose all. When a man hath most need, riches fly away; you cannot bribe divine justice, nor keep the soul from hell. Therefore if you would seek yourselves indeed, seek yourselves in God.

7. Because otherwise a man can be nothing in religion, neither do nor suffer; and therefore we must resolve either to deny ourselves or to deny Christ. Before we go out of the world, we shall be put upon the trial. Peter denied his master, because he could not deny himself. All duties in religion put us upon self-denial - private duties upon the denial of lusts, and public upon the denial of interests;

therefore we read of 'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,' Titus 2.12. In private duties: whenever you go to pray, private duties are contrary to the inclinations and dispositions of the heart, which are for ease and pleasure, and the gratifications of the flesh. If thou hast no self-denial, thou wilt never bring thy heart to God in them. Then in public duties we must look for opposition. Advancers of public good are usually exposed to public hatred, they are sure to be spoken against; when the devil cannot prevail with instruments to slacken the work of God, then he stirs up the world against it. That must be a complete action wherein malice cannot find fault. It is true, we are not always exposed to persecution, but always to censure. Many that have neither heart nor hands to do good, yet have tongues to censure those that do it, magistrates and ministers. Therefore we must look for trouble, if not from malice, yet from envy. Who can stand before envy? If persecutors be under restraint, yet carnal professors will be apt to blemish what is not done by themselves. Therefore whosoever would be a disciple to God and Christ, this is his first lesson; this is the A B C of religion. We shall never digest the inconveniences of a spiritual life till we resolve upon it. We must make over our interests in our lives, and whatever is dear to us, reckon the charges, Luke 14.26. A builder spends cheerfully as long as his charges are within his allowance; but when that is exceeded, and he goes beyond what he hath reckoned upon, then every penny is disbursed with grudging. Most resolve upon little or no trouble in religion, and from thence it comes to pass that when they are crossed, they prove faint-hearted. Therefore put your life in your hand, and resolve to follow Christ wheresoever he goeth.

8. Every one must deny himself, because it is a special part of faith. Faith looks upon God's mercy in Christ, not only as true, but as good; better than life, and better than all the contentments of it, else it is not faith: 1 Tim. 1.15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.' It doth not only look upon it as a wise and faithful saying, but as a thing of choice. There is not only assent to what is true, but there is consent and choice. Faith is an inclination of the soul to true worth, and therefore, with a resting upon the mercies of Christ there is a renouncing of interest; Mat 13.46, the merchant that found the rich pearl 'went and sold all to buy it' This is faith, to come and traffic with God for his mercy in

Christ, to part with all, whatever is pleasant and profitable in the world, rather than be deprived of his grace: Luke 14.27-29, 'He that hates not his father and mother, yea, and his own life, cannot be my disciple;' and then our Lord brings the similitude of a man that goes about to build, and sits him down and counts the charge. In faith there is a sitting down and accounting the charges, or considering what it is to take Christ. The comforts of christianity we prize much, but they are only necessary to be propounded in case of distress of conscience. But he that desires to be a christian indeed is seriously to cast up his reckoning, what is required at his hands, thoroughly to examine whether he be willing to forego such hopes and contentments as are incompatible with the life he seeketh, or to endure all crosses and calamities wherewith he may be encumbered. The builder that goes hand over head to work, lays the foundation of his disgrace in the loss of his cost. Men labour to fortify their actual persuasion of the mercies of Christ before the carnal life be renounced. **It is a mistake to look to faith first, and the settling our particular assurance, as if that were the difficultest thing in religion. The great difficulty lies in self-denial.** As Christ put the young man in Mat. 19.26, upon the trial, Canst thou leave all, and follow me? so we are to put ourselves upon the trial, otherwise our application to God's mercy, and settling our particular persuasion, will be but a rash confidence. Every one hath some tender parts, and usually at first conviction our tender parts are touched. When God begins to work upon the heart, we should say, Soul, thou hast busied thyself in a wrong way, there is one thing necessary: come out of that way, or thou shalt never be happy. Forsake thy father's house: we are apt to stick at this, we are not able to renounce all for him. As when God called Abraham, he called him from his father's house; so when we are called to God, we are called from something pleasant and profitable to self.

Notes and Signs of Self-denial

Thirdly, The **notes and signs** of self-denial.
There are **exclusive** and **inclusive** marks. Exclusive marks will show us when self is not denied; then inclusive marks follow, wherein we may take comfort.

1. Exclusive notes for conviction, how we may know when self is in dominion and sovereignty. It is a sign self is exalted and in dominion -

[1.] When a man did never set himself to thwart his own desires. Carnal indulgence makes lust a wanton. When we cocker our lusts, they grow contumacious and stubborn. They that gratify their senses and wallow in all fleshly delights, never knew what it was to be exercised in Christ's school; a man that cannot deny his ease and pleasure is not fit for Christ: Eccles. 2.11, 'Whatever my eyes desired, I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy.' When men can remit nothing of their vanity and luxury they make christianity to be but a notion and an empty pretence; they are men and women of pleasure, when Jesus Christ was a man of sorrows. The children of God are always wont to cross themselves in things which they most affect; as David poured out the water of Bethlehem when he longed for it. It is good sometimes to make such an experiment upon ourselves; we may find out many images of jealousy, if we would try whether we could deny ourselves in what we most affect.

[2.] By an impatience in our natures when we are crossed by others. Self seems to be a very delicate and tender thing; we cannot endure to he crossed in our opinions and interests, or in the accomplishment of our lusts. Haman is sick, and cast upon his bed, because he wanted Mordecai's knee. Always our affliction argues the greatness of our affection. It should be the *elachiston*, 'the smallest thing,' as the apostle saith, 'to be judged of men,' 1 Cor. 4.3. When men have set a high price and value upon themselves, they are vexed when others will not come up to their price. John died for crossing Herod in his Herodias; Jonah made his gourd to be a piece of himself, he prized it too much, as appears by his great vexation when God had smitten it. Fretting and murmuring show what is the tender part of our souls, and what we have made as part of ourselves.

[3.] When a man is loath to be a loser by religion. Some are of cheap and vile spirits, they love a gospel without charges, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 9.18, can be content to serve God so as they may be at no expense for God. Look, as we should count and reckon upon the charges before we profess religion; so after profession we should ask conscience what it hath cost us to be godly, at what

expense we have been at for Jesus Christ, since we have espoused Christ and religion. David would not serve God with that which cost him nought. If a man were told that his way to such a place is encumbered with briers and thorns, and that he must ride through many dirty lanes, and must look for scratching brambles, and many miry places, now when he seeth nothing but a green and pleasant path, he would think he had mistaken and lost his way; so when you are told your way to heaven is a strait way, and that religion will put you upon self-denial of your pleasure, profit, and carnal desires, and yet you never wrestled with your lusts, nor quitted anything for Christ, and meet with nothing, but pleasure, profit and delight in the profession of religion, you may well think that you are mistaken in the way, and it is a great sign you are yet to seek in the duty which Christ's scholars must practise.

[4.] When the heart is grieved for the good of others, it is a sign self is then in dominion. Many can rejoice and please themselves when God hath been glorified by some act of their own, but they are grieved when the work is done by others; selfish and carnal men would fain make a monopoly of religion. Oh! consider, such a temper is a sign that self is too dear and near to us. We should be as glad if God be glorified by others as when ourselves are the instruments of his glory. Luther said, *Si nos non sumus digni,fiat per alios* - My design is, that the work of God may be done; and if I be not worthy, let the work of God be done by others. So Paul; Phil. 1.15,16, Many preach the gospel, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; yet if the gospel is preached, I therein rejoice, and will rejoice. It is a Pharisee's spirit to malign and envy the good of others: John 12.19, 'Behold, all the world goes after him, and we prevail nothing;' they were vexed Christ had so much of the respects of the people. Men would monopolise all respect to their faction, and keep up a devotion to their interest; this made the elder brother envy at the prodigal's return, Luke 15. When we envy the gifts and graces of others, and their esteem in the world, it is a sign self remains in sovereignty and dominion. Many, because they would shine alone, are apt to blast and censure the repute of others, and malign the grace wrought in them, whereas we should rather rejoice therein.

[5.] When men care not how it goeth with the public so they may promote their private interest. I mention this because, as self is to be denied for God's sake, so it is to be denied for the good of others. There is self in opposition to God, and self in opposition to the good of others: 1 Cor. 10.14, 'Let no man seek his own, but every one the good of others;' as we are bound to promote the glory of God, so the good of one another too, especially the public good. Therefore the children of God have no heart or regard to their private conveniences with the loss of the public. Moses, when God promiseth to prefer him, Exod. 32.10,11, 'Let me alone, do not beseech me for this people, and I will make of thee a great nation.' God offers him a composition, if he would cease his prayers, and tells him the holy seed should be continued in his line, instead of the line of Abraham, and all the rest of the tribes should be abolished; yet it is said, Moses besought the Lord, and desired mercy for the people, O Lord, let not thine anger kindle against thy heritage; it is no matter what becometh of me, so the people be safe. So Neh. 5.18, 'I took not the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy on the people;' he would not take the necessary support and maintenance whereby the greatness of his place might be borne out, because there was affliction upon the children of God. But now carnal men care not how they embroil a nation, nor how it goes with the public affairs, so they may promote their own interest, and set up self in place and honour. The children of God are wont to yield up all their own interest for a public good: Jonah 1.10, 'Cast me into the sea;' so the tempest may be still, no matter what becomes of me. So Nazianzen, when there was a great trouble and contest about his place - 'Doth my honour trouble you? Let me go aside in obscure silence, and live neglected, and die, and my bones be thrown into the dark, where they may not be found nor known.'

2. As there are exclusive marks, so there are inclusive also. I shall name but three.

[1.] When a man in all his purposes, in every actual choice, is swayed by reasons of conscience rather than by reasons of interest; when he is contented to be anything, so as he may be serviceable to God's glory, and Jesus Christ may be all in all. Thus Paul, when he was in a strait whether to be dissolved or stay in the flesh, it is no matter which it be, so Christ be magnified, whether it be by life or

death, Phil. 1.23. If my body be spent with labour, or fall as a burnt-offering, in martyr-dom, it is no matter, so Christ still be magnified ; when we are contented that self should vanish, so as Christ may appear, and shine in all his glory. As when the sun displays its beams the stars vanish; when we are put upon any choice of life, whether we shall do this or that, still we are to measure it, not by self-interest, but with respect to God's glory. Seneca saith, A magnanimous man cares not, doth not look, where he may live most safely, but most honestly. A child of God looks, in the disposal of his affairs, where he may have most work, and do most service, and not merely to provide for ease and safety. As a traveller, when two ways are proposed to him, one pleasant, the other very craggy and dangerous, he doth not look which way is most pleasant, but which way conduceth to his journey's end; so a child of God doth not look to what is most grateful to the flesh, but how he may do most work and service, and glorify God upon earth.

[2.] By an humble submission to God's will. It is a great conquest over ourselves when we can conquer our own will. Now the children of God speak as if they had no will of their own at all. Before providence is past, they absolutely give up themselves to God's disposal, either for deliverance or trouble. In 2 Sam. 15.25,26, 'The king said unto Zadock, Carry back the ark of God into the city; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation; but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let him do to me, as seemeth good unto him.' David speaks as if he had no will of his own, and gives up himself to the disposal of God. So also after the event, when God hath declared his will, they silence all the murmuring of their spirits: 1 Sam. 3.18, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' There is enough to calm all the discontent of their mind, there is God in the providence. A child of God can lose nothing by force. Men may take away his estate by violence, but he resigns it to God. God may take away his friends, but he resigns them, they are taken away by the consent and resignation of a sanctified will. So for their lives, they resign themselves up to God. Therefore it is notable, when the scripture speaks of wicked men, it is said, 'What hope hath the hypocrite, when God shall take away his soul?' and Luke 12.19, This night shall thy soul be required of thee.'

The children of God consent to give up their souls, estates, and friends, upon the call of providence. There is a subscription to God's will - 'It is the Lord.' Nay, there is not only patience, but they can even bless God, because his will is accomplished: Job 1.21, 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' They can see as much cause of blessing God, not only when he doth enrich them, hut when he doth impoverish them, and lays his hand upon them; this is to cause our wills to be swallowed up in the will of God, and this is to be like the great pattern Christ himself - 'Not my will, but thine be done;' we should not be like our great master if we did not this. Christ indeed prays against affliction, so may we. We should not have known the greatness of his self-denial if he had not manifested his natural desires, but he refers himself to God. And so must we also.

[3.] When a man is vile in his own eyes, and reflecteth with most indignation upon his own sins. There are none that pass a severer doom than the children of God do upon themselves when they have sinned against God; they need no other judge than their own consciences to pass a sentence upon them. Men naturally are apt to favour themselves; they are slight in self-humiliation, and deep in censure of others. With indignation they reflect upon the sins of others, but with indulgence upon their own. As Judah, when it was told him, 'Tamar thy daughter hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. Judah said, bring her forth, and let her be burnt,' Gen.38.24. But when she showed him the tokens, and that he had defiled her, then he was calm enough. It is otherwise with God's children, no sins so odious to them as their own: 1 Tim. 1.15, 'Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' Oh, there is no such sinner in the world as I am, saith Paul. So Prov. 30.2, 'Surely I am more brutish than any man, and I have not the understanding of a man.' How could a godly man say so? It is the fruit of spiritual indignation. A godly man spends the most of his revenge and spiritual indignation upon himself. Oh, there cannot be a more brutish person than I have been, that have sinned against so many mercies, so many obligations, and so much light! These are not compliments, but they speak them with bitter feeling. Saith Chrysostom, They do not only speak it in humility, but in truth. They can but know the sins of others by guess and imagination, but they feel their own

sins, they know them by sense. As in sorrow we are apt to say, There is none like mine. Why? Because we feel the gripes of our own pains. So the children of God, they feel how grievously they have sinned against God. Saith David, Ps. 73.23, 'I was as a beast before thee.' They know they have more mercies than others, and more obligations than others, therefore their offences seem to them to be more grievous. Well, if the heart be brought to this pass, that the heat of indignation is spent upon thy own sins, and these things be spoken not by rote and imitation, but out of deep sense and feeling, it is a comfortable sign that self is dethroned in thee.

Means of Self-denial

Fourthly, To give you the **means** of self-denial, whereby this work may be made more easy.

1. If you would deny yourselves, lessen your esteem and your affection to worldly things.

I join them together because affection follows esteem. If you would deny yourself for Christ, you must prize the worst of Christ before the best of the world, See Ps. 84.10, 'I had rather,' saith David, 'be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' When an earthen pitcher is broken, a man is not troubled at it, because he hath not set his esteem and heart upon it, being but a trifle. What made Moses so eminent for self-denial that he could refuse all the honours of Pharaoh's court, and choose rather 'to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season'? It is said, 'He esteemed the reproach of Christ to be greater riches, than the treasures of Egypt,' Heb. 11.25. Moses' esteem was set right. Again, lessen the affection; the greatness of our affection causeth the greatness of our affliction. Therefore we are so troubled to part with things, because our hearts are too much set upon them. We greaten the things of the world in our esteem and affection; then it is a trouble to part with them for Christ's sake. Alas! all these outward things, they serve but to prop up a tabernacle that is always falling. But how shall we lessen our esteem and affection; is that in our power? I answer, You may do much, deny lusts in their first motion, ere they grow upon your esteem and affection, and prevail by delight

in the soul. When anything begins to sit too close and too near the heart, it is good for a christian then to be wary, and ask this question, How shall I deny this for God? I Cor. 6.12, 'I would not he brought under the power of anything.' Though the objects you converse withal be lawful, yet when they encroach upon thy spirit, then deny them. And then take heed what thou dost account thyself. It is a great part of christian prudence to know what is ourselves. Do not count sin thyself. See how the apostle parts it, Rom. 7.17, 'It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me.' Thou shouldest be able to say concerning all carnal desires, It is not I, but sin. There is an old and corrupt self. So thou shouldst not count the world thyself, that is none of thee: Luke 12.15, 'Take heed, and beware of covetousness.' What is the reason? 'For man's life consisteth not in the abundance of what he possesseth.' It is not thyself, thou are neither further from the grave nor the nearer to true contentment; I may be happy without this.

2. Seek self in God, this is an innocent diversion. When we cannot weaken the affection, let us change the object. What is it that is so near to thee? Is it honour? seek honour in God. Do but change vain glory for eternal glory. That is a lawful seeking of self when we seek it in God: John 5.44, 'How can ye believe that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God?' You may change your desires from vain glory into everlasting glory: John 12.43, 'For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.' If a man did desire praise, where can we have better than to be praised with God's own mouth, in the face of all the world, at the great day of accounts, when Christ shall proclaim you to be an heir of the crown of heaven? So for pleasure; if thy soul be drawn out to it, oh! remember, there are no pleasures like to those chaste delights thou mightest enjoy by communion with God, the pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore. Affections are not abrogated, but preferred; and we transplant our desires, that they may flourish in a better soil, if thou desirest riches, turn out thy heart toward the good treasure God hath opened in the covenant, to be rich in grace, rich towards God.

3. If thou wouldst deny thyself, resolve upon the worst, to please God, though it be with the displeasure of yourselves and all the world. Usually we do not sit down and count the charges, we do not make our resolution large enough. When

we take up the profession of religion, we look for but little trouble, therefore are soon discouraged. Usually we give God but small allowance; we do not carry our lives and our estates in our hands, as we should do, when we take religion upon us. A man never comes to Christ rightly, unless he gives up himself and friends, and bids Christ take all. Till it comes to such a resolution as Nazianzen had concerning his human learning - I never affected riches, nor greatness in the world, only I have affected a little eloquence, and I will tell you how far I have affected it, that I have something of value to esteem as nothing for Christ. So men should give Christ liberal allowance; then when it comes to trial, thou wilt not be grudging; it is that thou didst count upon, to part with for Christ's sake.

4. Take heed of confining thy welfare to outward means, as if thou couldst not be happy without such an estate, without so many hundreds in the world; beware of binding up thy life and contentment with the creature, for when we come to part with it, we can as soon part with our lives. The children of God resolve, 'Though the fig-tree do not blossom, and the labour of the olive fail, yet to rejoice in the Lord,' Hab. 3.17, 18. This should be a Christian's resolution, not to trust to the creatures, but in God, though all these things are gone. This is a holy independency, when our hearts are taken off from the creature. The men of the world have only a candle which is soon blown out, an estate that may easily be blasted: but the children of God have the sun, which can stead them without a candle. The Lord saith, Hosea 2.11,12, 'I will cause their mirth to cease,' speaking of the carnal Jews. Why? 'I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees.' All the wicked man's happiness is bound up with the vine and fig-tree, with his estate. Consider, your happiness doth not lie within yourselves, nor in any other creature, but in God alone. God in himself is much better than God in the creature; now carnal men, they prize God in the creature, but not God in himself. And therefore the first thing we must depend upon is that God is an all-sufficient God in himself; not God in friends, not God in wealth, but God in himself. We cannot see how it can be well without friends, and wealth, and liberty, therefore our hearts are glued to them. Oh, take heed of this. All these things are but several pipes to deliver and convey to us the influence of the supreme cause; therefore still prize God in himself before God in the creature.

5. Direction: often act faith, and look within the veil. Send thy thoughts as spies and messengers into the land of promise. A man will better quit that he hath upon earth when he hath strong expectations of heaven, Rom. 8.18. When a man seeth that God hath laid up a more excellent glory for him, he will reckon these things are not to be named the same day: 2 Cor. 4.16, 'For which cause we faint not: but thought our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.' The apostle gives an account of his valour and resolution; how he was able to withstand the discouragements of the world - 'We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen.' Heaven will satisfy all losses and then the world is quitted with ease. Look, as the woman left her pitcher when she was acquainted with Christ; so when a man is acquainted with better things, his heart is taken off from these outward things. When Christ said to Zaccheus, salvation is come to thy house, then he presently added, 'Half of my goods I give to the poor.' **When the heart is much in heaven, the earth will seem a small thing.** When we look upon the stars, they seem but as so many sparks and spangles; but if we were above the earth, the world would seem but like a little black spot.

6. In all debates between conscience and interest, be sure to observe God's special providence to thyself. When conscience and interest are a struggling, consider, whence hadst thou that which thou art so unwilling to part withal, but from the Lord? Distrust is the ground of self-seeking. We do not consider the providence of God to us, and that all changes are in his hands, and therefore we cannot deny our-selves. Who is that which gave thee such an estate that thou art loth to lose? or such a comfort thou art unwilling to part withal? When Amaziah the king of Judah was admonished by the prophet not to let the army of Israel go with him, 'What shall I do,' saith he, 'for the hundred talents? ' 2 Chron. 25.9, the sum for which he had hired them; and the man of God answered, 'The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.' So when thou art troubled, How shall I do to live? what shall I do for an estate? The Lord is able to give thee more than this. It is God's blessing that maketh rich, and he can supply thee with a great deal more

if he see fit. Men think it is their own providence that doth all, and so they are loth to part with what they have. Consider, thou couldst not have this if God had not given it thee. So when men are loth to lose their friends, when, by the profession of religion, they may be in danger thereof, remember who brought them to be thy friends. Prov. 15.7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes his very enemies to be his friends.' Piety will do more than carnal compliance. Thou mayst by this hazard God and thy friends too.

7. Consider the right God hath in all that is thine; he hath a natural right, and a right by contract. A natural right to all thou hast: he made it, and he gave it thee. No creature can be *sui juris*, at his own power and disposal. Riches are not thy own, but God's bounty to thee. Foolish men account all that they have their own, they think they may do with it as they list: Ps. 12.4, 'Our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us?' Consider, thy tongue is not thy own, for it was not made by thee; and when it is blasted, thou canst not repair it. A prodigal that is not able to deny his pleasure, speak to him about it, and he will answer, I hope that which I spend is my own. Thy estate is not thy own, to spend it as thou pleasest. So covetous men think they are absolute lords of what they have: 1 Sam. 25.11, 'Shall I take my bread, and my drink, and give it to strangers?' Goods must be laid out according to the owner's will, else it is robbery. Now all that thou hast is God's, therefore thou art to part with every interest and concernment of thine, as it may be for his glory. God hath a right also by contract: thou hast given up thyself, and all that is thine, to God, Rom. 12.1; and do but consider the danger of alienating things that are once consecrated. Consider, what was the end of Ananias and Sapphira.

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

If you would deny yourselves,

[1.] Every one must observe his temper, and the particular constitution of his own soul. There are several ways of sinning; let every one look to his own way, Isa. 53.6. God knows, we are all out of the way, but usually there is some particular way of sin into which our hearts do wander and digress. Now when God

tries any man, he tries him in his Isaac; therefore self-denial must be considered according to the kind of self-love. Which way doth self-love most of all bend and incline your souls. The observation is necessary, because there may be some kind of shadow of self-denial in carnal men. Lusts are obstinate, and because their contrariety will not give way one to the other, therefore, for the convenience of the grand lust, a man may deny himself in something. A covetous man bereaves his soul of good, and may be rigid and sullen to his nature, yet he may not deny himself. He may deny himself of pleasure, but not of worldly profit. Others, that are of a dreggy and voluptuous constitution of spirit, they may be slight as to worldly profit, when their hearts are caught by another snare: Ps. 18.23, 'I kept myself from mine iniquity.' Usually there is some special sin, which, by the frequency of temptation that often occurs, and our desires that way, we may call our sin. Now herein is our uprightness tried, when we can deny our sin.

[2.] Many may deny themselves in purpose, that yet fail when they come to act. Certainly, in purpose we must deny ourselves. Whenever we come to Christ, we must bring our lives and our comforts in our hands; we must come with a resolution to part with all. Though every Christian be not a martyr in effect and act, yet he must be in vow and purpose, and resolve to renounce all upon the just and convenient reasons of religion. Now the trial is when we are put upon these particular cases. We cannot so well judge of an affection by its single exercise, as when it is brought to a direct conflict and trial, The things of religion, in the absence of a temptation, may seem best to the soul; but the spirit is never discovered till we come to an actual choice, and particulars are compared with particulars; then desires, which before lay hid and dormant, rouse themselves and oppugn grace in the civil wars of the soul. When there is a conflict between conscience and interest, then are we tried. Now you need not wish for these cases, for before you go out of the world you will find they will come fast enough. Many cases will happen when duty is without encouragement, and all self-respects fail; nay, when for conscience' sake you are put upon visible disadvantage, Rev. 12.11. It is said of the children of God, that 'they loved not their lives to the death.' When it came to this pinch, that either they must deny life or deny Christ, then they loved not their lives. Many may in a prodigality of

resolution, seem to lay all at Christ's feet, as Peter in his confidence talked high - 'I will not deny thee,' but yet afterward they may fail, when they come to resist unto blood: Heb. 12.4, 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.' When you must make choice of the world or Christ, then are the best discoveries made.

[3.] They are nothing in religion that cannot deny pleasure and the delicacy of life. For this is the constant and private self-denial of a Christian, which is always necessary. All sin is rooted in a love of pleasure more than of God; for therefore do we sin, because of the contentment we do imagine to be in sin, that draws on the heart to the practice of it. Now he that cannot abjure his contentment is nothing: Prov. 25.28, 'He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.' The meaning is, he that cannot subdue his inclination to pleasure, doth lie open to every temptation. As an unwalled town in time of war receives every army that comes; so is his soul, it lies obvious to temptation. And besides, pleasures will necessarily bring a brawn upon the heart, they are so contrary to the severity of religion. Seneca said, Certainly, it is necessary that he should have low thoughts of duty that hath high thoughts of pleasure, and to gratify his senses. If God had required nothing of us but the perfection of reason, if we were only to show ourselves men, there must be a bridle upon appetite and sensual desires. There is an old quarrel between appetite and reason. Nature itself would suggest such arguments to us as would put us upon the mortification of the senses.

[4.] We must deny ourselves in point of desire as well as in point of enjoyment: Titus 2.12, 'Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.' The great part of this duty consists in mortifying and subduing worldly lusts, that we may be content with our portion, though but a little of the world, if God seeth us fit for no more. It is a high point of self-denial, not only to part with what we have, but to be content with what we have; when the soul comes to this, to say, I have enough, because I have as much as God allotteth me, and because God seeth it fit I should have no more. To be content with a little of the world, and not to desire more, it is the poor man's duty as well as the rich. As a rich man is to quit his possessions when God calls him, so a poor man is to quit, mortify, and subdue his desires.

Covetousness, when once it prevails upon the heart, it desires, it grasps, it aims at the whole world; therefore Christ saith, Mat. 16.26, If a man should gain the whole world,' implying, that is in the aims of men. When a man's corruptions break out that way, he will never be satisfied. Solomon saith Eccles. 5.10, 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver.' The heart of man is largely drawn out, so that like the grave, we shall never be able to say, It is enough. To enjoy complacency in our portion, it is a great part of self-denial. To desire more, it is but to desire more snares. If I had more, I should have more trouble, more snares, more duty; greater gates do but open to more care; I should have more to account for, more time, and more opportunity; and alas! I cannot answer for what I have already. If a plant be starved in the valleys, it will never thrive on the mountains; so if in a low condition we are not able to conquer the temptation of it, what shall we do if we had more, if we cannot be responsible to God for what we have?

[5.] Vainglory is as sordid a piece of self, and as much to be denied, as affectation of riches and worldly greatness. Covetousness, that carries a man to another object, but vainglory to another end; the one makes us idolaters, and the other hypocrites; an idolater sets up another God, and a hypocrite denies the true God. For mark, God, by reason of the excellency of his being, is to be the highest object of our respect; and because he is the supreme cause, he is to be the ultimate end of all our actions; and when we set up another end, we deny God his prerogative.

[6.] We are to deny ourselves, not only in case of temptation to direct sin, when either we must thus deny ourselves or actually sin, but also for the general advantage of duty and obedience, and the conveniency of a holy life; for instance, I am to deny my pleasure, not only when reason may be grossly discomposed, not only by refusing such works of the flesh as stink in the nostrils of nature, but lest I be unfitted for duty, lest insensibly I contract a distemper and brawn upon my heart. And so I am to deny riches, not only not to seek them by unlawful means, and when I cannot keep them with a good conscience, but not to lay out the strength of my spirits in the pursuit of the world, that it may not intercept the vigour and strength of my soul, which should be reserved for

communion with God. So I am to deny honours, that is, not only ambitious affectation of them, but when they will make me to lose the pleasant opportunity of devout retirement, and a religious privacy with God. And riches are to be denied, not only when they choke conscience, but when they choke the word.

[7.] In the work of self-denial there must special regard be had to the seasons wherein we live, in several cases.

(1.) In doubtful times when God seems to threaten judgment, then our heart must be more loose from worldly comforts than at other times, and we must deny ourselves of those comforts which at other times a man may take. Our Saviour reproacheth the scribes and pharisees for not discerning the seasons. It is a great fault of Christians when they do not regard the season and time of God's displeasure; for instance Jer. 45.4,5, 'That which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.' I am pulling down, saith God, and plucking up, and for men to mind worldly greatness, and honours, and the conveniences of the outward life, when the face of the times looks towards a judgment, when we may see a storm in the black clouds, then to think of building, planting, and advancing ourselves, it is most unseasonable and horrid security. This the Spirit of God takes notice of in the men that lived in the days of Noah: it is said, 'They ate and drank, and married.' All these things, you know, are necessary for the supportation of mankind; but when they minded these things, and had no regard to the season, did not see the storm in the clouds, at such a time when God seems to begin his controversy with a nation, whatever we do, we should do it with caution and fear; for the more we busy ourselves in the world, the more snares do we draw upon ourselves. God looketh, that we should be observant of the season, and not seek after honours, and ease, and plenty. When judgments are coming, our hearts should be most weaned then, when the face of the sky doth begin to lower and thicken towards a storm.

(2.) When we are like to put a stumbling-block in the way of a new convert, 2 Kings 5.26. The prophet speaking to Gehazi, when he ran after Naaman for a gift - 'Is this a time,' saith the prophet, 'to receive money, and to think of vineyards and olive-yards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants?' Simply to

receive a gift had not been unlawful, but Elisha was resolved to take none, to show he did not make a trade of miracles for his private gain, but it was God's honour he aimed at; it was enough for him that the God of Israel was acknowledged by Naaman the Syrian to be the true God, he would allure him by the freeness of the gift. The prophet doth not so much rebuke Gehazi for the lie, as for the unseasonableness of the motion, that it might bring disgrace upon the honour and high calling of the prophet, and dishonour the God of Israel. We must depart from our own conveniency in such cases; it is a great stumbling-block to the world when they that pretend to reformation seek honours, profits, great places, and preferments for themselves and their families. All pious designs must have a suitable carriage. In Austin's time it was a scandal against the Christians, and the heathens soon took up that reproach, that they overturned the idols, not out of any piety or devotion, but covetousness, that they might have the gold. Reformers of all men should be content with the goodness of the action.

(3.) In prosperous times of the church there is much self-denial to be practised. I confess, self-denial is chiefly for suffering times, for so it is in the text - 'Let him deny himself, and take up the cross;' these two are coupled together, that when a cross meets us in our way, which we cannot avoid without some hazard of conscience, then we must deny ourselves. But, however, it is a duty that is always in season. I shall show you wherein this self-denial is to be practised in prosperous times.

1st. We must deny ourselves in charity, and in a constant improvement of our substance to God's glory. Charity, it is the constant vent of christian affection, a holy emptying out of self in liberal and charitable distributions, and it is the only cure and preservative we can have against self-seeking, if done out of sincere aims: Mark 10.31, 'Go sell all that thou hast,' saith Christ to the young man, and 'give to the poor, and come and follow me, taking up thy cross,' but he was sad at that saying. There is somewhat extraordinary in that trial, 'Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor.' This is the self-denial Christ calleth for. Can we trust him upon a bill of exchange to be paid in heaven? How much is to be given is hard to define, somewhat must be done worthy of the gospel, and that you may have more comfort within yourselves, otherwise you may be as great a self-seeker as those that get goods by rapine, when you possess them with avarice. He is not

only a covetous self-seeker that takes away other men's goods, but he that penuriously keeps his own, if he holdeth more than is meet; we are to go back some degrees in pomp and pleasure. Take the example of Jesus Christ, how many degrees he went back: 2 Cor. 8.9, 'When he was rich, he became poor, that we might be rich.'

2d. In obedience to the word in the strictest inward duties. Many duties go against the bent of a carnal heart, as inward mortification, meditation, self-examination. There is no outward glory in these things, and they are painful and distasteful to flesh and blood. Now in this case you must deny yourselves, for the free practice of these holy duties. Cornelius, when he came to Peter, he and his family, say they, Acts 10.33, 'Here we are all before the Lord, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God;' we are contented to hear whatever God will be pleased to teach. The ministers of the gospel are factors for heaven, they drive God's bargain and covenant with the world. Now the Lord cannot endure any reservation, and withdrawing the shoulder from any known duties; how contrary and distasteful soever they are to flesh and blood, you must practise them. We are all afraid of sins against conscience, and certainly they will be very clamorous. But now the world is mistaken in sins against light and conscience; we think that sins of commission are only sins against conscience; as when a man commits adultery, tells a lie against a check of conscience; but, oh! let me tell you, sins of omission may be sins against conscience too: James 4.17, mark, the apostle doth not say, To him that knows it is evil, it is sin; but 'he that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin;' when you are convinced of any duty, and do not practise it; you are not come up to Christ's rules. Sins of omission are sins against knowledge, as well as sins of commission.

3d. In the uprightness of our aims, to see that we be not guided by aims that flow from self-love. A man had more need to fear his heart in prosperous times than in times of persecution, that he be not led with perverse respects, with the outward countenance of religion, with respect to his own interest, that you be not lovers of yourselves, under 'a form of godliness,' as the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. 3.1. That you do not merely hold out a pretence of religion, upon those undue motives. There are no greater enemies to Christ than those that profess Christ upon self-interest, Phil. 3.18,19. The apostle speaks of some that preached Christ

crucified, whose God is their belly, and who minded earthly things; all their aim was to flow in abundance of wealth and pleasure. They really oppose the virtue and power of his cross, as much as those that openly do call him a seducer.

4th. In prosperous times you are to deny yourselves, in mortifying earthly pleasures and carnal desires, how dear soever they be to the soul, though our lusts be as near and dear as the right hand and the right eye. In times of danger God takes away the fuel of our lusts; but in times of peace we are to take away the desires and lusts themselves; and indeed that is hardest. It is easier to quit life than one lust for Christ; these being more rooted in our nature, are more hardly overcome; enduring of hardships is nothing to the overcoming of lusts. We are to crucify and deaden these desires to the world, how sweet soever they be. Men think there can be no pleasure, but in the accomplishment of their carnal desires. It is pleasant, no doubt, to a woman with child, to have what she longs for; but yet it is more pleasant not to be troubled with those longings; so when these lusts are gone, it will be exceeding pleasant and comfortable to the soul. Your great work then is to take heed that you do not live as those that are debtors to the flesh, Rom. 8.12. You owe no suit, and service to your carnal desires. We are bound to clothe and feed the body, that it may be an instrument to serve God, but no further; you are not debtors to it, you owe it nothing and therefore if those desires encroach upon you, you must renounce them. The conveniences of the present life, these things serve only as ballast to a ship in the passage, we are bound for a city whose commodities cannot be purchased for gold or silver. You can not buy repentance, faith, pardon, or glory, with gold or silver.

5th. This public self-denial is required of you in seeking to promote the common salvation and public benefit of the saints, without any partial respect to your own interest and opinion. Usually this is the fault of the children of God, saith Nazianzen, when they begin to grow well, then they are factious and divided, as green timber that lies in the sunshine is apt to warp; so when we enjoy the sunshine of prosperity, we are apt to divide and grow turbulent: Rom. 15. 2, the apostle saith, Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good, to edification.' We are not to please ourselves, not to look to the gratification of our own opinions, not to be privately urging our own opinions to the tormenting of interests and the breach of christian charity; it is a most spiritual kind of self-

denial to be ever ruled by respects to the general interests of religion more than by private affection to our own party. Look, as the elements leave their proper motion; the water will ascend, and the air descend, to conserve the universe, and that there may be no vacuum and emptiness in the world; so it is good not to be partial to our own private interest, and at least to forbear censures and exasperations, and drawing everything to the height.

God the First Cause - Denying Self-dependence

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

1. As **God is the first cause**, upon whom all things depend in their being and operation, and so we are to deny self, that is, self-dependence.
2. **God is, and he alone, the highest lord and most absolute sovereign**, who swayeth all things by his laws and providence, and so we are to deny self, that is, self-will, by a willing and full obedience to his laws, and by an absolute subjection to the dominion of his providence; the one is holiness, and the other is patience; the one relateth to his governing, the other to his disposing will.
3. **God is the chiefest good**, and therefore to be valued above all beings, interests and concernments in the world, and so we are to deny self, that is, self-love.
4. **God is the last end**, in which all things do at length terminate, and so we are to deny self, that is, self-seeking. According to these considerations is the doctrine of self-denial.

As God is the first cause, so he would keep up the respects of the world to his majesty by dependence and trust. It is the ambition of man to affect an independency, to be a god to himself, sufficient to his own happiness. Now nothing can be to God more hateful than this. The main thing that preserves and maintains our allegiance and respect to the crown of heaven, is a constant dependence upon God for all things. For we find by experience that the heart is never kept in a right frame but when we look for our all from God. And therefore it is notable that in the covenant of grace, wherein the Lord would repair the ruins

of the fall, and bring the creature into a new obligation to himself, God represents himself as all-sufficient, when he came to make a covenant with Abraham: Gen. 17.1, 'I am God all-sufficient;' we bring nothing to the covenant but all-necessity, and we come to meet with all-sufficiency in God. Now a great part of self-denial is to work us off from all other dependencies. We are marvellously apt to depend upon our own righteousness, our own wit and wisdom, our own spiritual strength, and the supplies of outward life. Therefore I shall in the succeeding discourse, seek to draw off the heart from these things, that so our trust and dependence may entirely be fixed upon God himself

That which I shall first persuade you unto is -

First, To deny our own righteousness. For this we have a pregnant example, and that is the example of the apostle Paul: Phil. 3.9, 'I count all things but dung and dross, that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness.' Look into the context, and you will find it express to the purpose. In the 4th verse. he saith, 'If any might have confidence in the flesh, I might much more.' It is no great matter for those to deny themselves that have nothing to trust to; but now, who could display such a banner of his own excellency as Paul could? Besides his other external privileges, take notice of his moral qualification: verse 6, 'That he was, touching the righteousness of the Law, blameless;' that is, whilst a pharisee, he was a man of a strict and severe life, for outward conformity and righteousness of life altogether blameless. Who so strict, so just, and temperate as Paul? Nay, after he was a Christian: ver. 8, 'I have suffered the loss of all things for Christ;' credit and interest, honours among the Jews, friends, country, all things, in the behalf of the gospel. Now what is his judgment upon all? See ver. 7, 'Those things which were gain to me I counted loss.' Naturally, he was apt to count those things gain, to look upon them as rare and singular grounds of confidence. If any might expect to be saved, certainly Paul might; you would have wished your soul in his soul's stead, if you had been acquainted with him. But saith Paul, 'I counted them to be loss,' that is, through the treachery of my heart would prove hindrances from closing with Christ, and dangerous allurements to hypocrisy and self confidence. Nay, he repeats it again in the 8th verse for the greater emphasis - 'Yea, doubtless, and I do account all things but loss,' to show that he made this

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

Now, upon this eminent example, let me press you to this kind of self-denial, to draw off your hearts from your own righteousness. My method shall be this -
1. I shall show you how hard a matter it is to bring men off from dependence upon our own righteousness.
2. The danger of leaning upon our own righteousness.
3. Some discoveries of those that are taken in this snare of death, that are carried away by a vain trust and presumption of righteousness in themselves.
4. Some remedies and cures.

[1.] I shall show it is a very hard matter to bring men off from a dependence upon their own righteousness.
(1.) Because by nature it is incident to all men. This is an evil that is natural to us. Works are our natural copy and tenure. 'Do this, and live,' it was the covenant made with Adam, and it is written upon the heart of all men. We all seek to be saved by doing. Therefore upon conviction, as soon as we begin to be serious, as soon as the conscience is awakened, the first question is, 'What shall I do to be saved?' John 6.28, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' They imagined that life eternal might he gained by the works of the law, without Christ. Now this natural disposition is confirmed and strengthened, partly by ignorance and security. Men do not know what is necessary to true righteousness: Rom. 10.3, 'Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to the righteousness of Christ.' They do not know what is necessary to the justifying of a soul in God's sight. None are so apt to rest in their own righteousness as those that have least reason - viz,

persons ignorant and formal. The apostle Paul saith, Phil. 3.4, 'If any might have confidence in the flesh, much more I.' As those that have little learning will be showing of it on all occasions; so persons that do but regard the outside of religion, and practise formal duties, are most apt to rest in them. Why? For formal duties do not discover weakness, and so puff men up. Carnal men search little, and blind conscience is soon pacified; usually, men that are ignorant, and go on in a dead course without feeling defects and needing the supplies of heaven, they are most confident. So partly by natural pride and self-conceit. Man is a proud creature, and loth to be beholden to another. A russet coat patched of our own seems better than a silken garment that is borrowed. Our righteousness! What a poor, filthy, tattered thing it is! Yet our hearts run upon it more than on the righteousness of Christ, that is so excellent and glorious. We are loth to submit and yield to this borrowed righteousness. That is the reason why the apostle useth that expression, Rom, 10.3, 'They have not submitted to the righteousness of God.' it needs a great deal of submission and condescension to be content to be beholden to divine grace. Men would fain maintain the dignity of works, and are loth to stoop and sue in *forma pauperis*, to come as beggars to God; we would rather come as creditors, to challenge a debt which we suppose he oweth to us. And partly, it is confirmed and strengthened by natural ease and laziness. That which is our own costs no waiting. Paul saith, Phil. 3.8. 'I have suffered the loss of all things, that I might win Christ.' Ere Paul could be secured against his own fears, he ran through a great many hazards, he suffered much. We have not the comfort of Christ's righteousness, but after much waiting and prayer. But now, when we seek it in ourselves, blind conscience will take hold of anything. And partly too, because God doth follow such kind of men with prosperity in this world; therefore they think the Lord is well pleased with them, till the hour of death comes, then they find all to be but froth, and that no man is a loser by God. Outward religion bringeth outward blessing. Dogs have crumbs that fall from the table; they have the offals of mercy; therefore they that depend upon their own righteousness cannot say God is in their debt, for they have outward prosperity.

(2.) It is most incident to persons after first conviction. When conscience is first opened, men fetch their comfort from their own duties. The law leaves them wounded and low, and they lick themselves whole again by some offers and

resolutions of obedience. Usually, observe it, carnal men are only sensible of, or careful about religion upon some gripes of conscience; they use duties as men do strongwaters in a pang. Nature is more prone to a sin-offering than to a thank-offering. Duties should be a thank-offering, and they make them a sin-offering. As in an outward case, when men have offended their superiors, for a while they become more pliant and obsequious, that they may redeem their fault by their after diligence, so it is here, when conscience comes and arrests men in the name of God, then men will run to duties till conscience be asleep again. Therefore it is good in all gripes of conscience, and whenever we come to settle our peace, to observe from whence you fetch your comfort, and how it grows upon you: Ps. 92.19, etc., 'In the midst of my sad thoughts, thy comforts delight my soul.' It is very sweet when a Christian can see he hath fetched his comfort from Christ and not merely from some out-ward observances and formal duties. Inquire how thou didst come to be satisfied with thy estate. Usually when conviction is not very deep, men blind and choke conscience with their own endeavours, and their resolution of growing better. When they are wounded with sin, then they are apt to run to self for a plaster.

(3.) After conversion the children of God are very subject to it, to lessen their esteem of Christ by overvaluing their own righteousness. As long as we live in the world we are apt to set up a righteousness of our own. When the apostle would give us a catalogue of sins, pride of life is last mentioned, because, when other sins are subdued, pride remains, it grows upon the ruin of other sins. Now of all the pieces of pride, this is the most dangerous, to pride ourselves in our own righteousness. The apostle Paul doth not only say, I count my righteousness, when a pharisee, loss: but now that I am a Christian, I yet 'account all things loss.' It is storied of Mr Fox, that he was wont to say he was more afraid of his graces than of his sins, as being in danger to be puffed up, lest they should tempt him to a self-confidence. Our Saviour prescribes it as a general rule, whenever we have done any-thing for God, he would still have us cherish thoughts of our own nothingness: Luke 13.10, 'When you have done all, say you are unprofitable servants;' herein I have merited nothing. And that possibly may be the reason, why the children of God, in the fairest view of their graces, do so solemnly disclaim their own righteousness; as 1 Cor. 4.4, the apostle Paul saith, 'I know

nothing by myself, yet am I not thereby justified.' Paul knew no unfaithfulness and no negligence in himself in the work of the ministry, yet am 'I not justified for this before God.' When you have done your utmost, still run to grace, and make grace your claim: Neh. 13.22, 'I caused the Levites to sanctify themselves ; remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy.' It was an excellent work, 'yet spare me,' saith he, 'according to the greatness of thy mercy.'

[2.] I shall show how dangerous it is to lean upon our own righteousness.
(1.) We shall not prize Jesus Christ; Christ is outed of the heart by the confidence that men have in their works. Because Paul disesteemed works and counted 'all things dung,' the more excellent did Jesus Christ seem to him - 'All is dung for the excellency of the knowledge of my Lord.' So, on the contrary, when men esteem works, they are sure to disesteem Christ. Now it is the highest profaneness in the world not to esteem Christ. It is not only profaneness to be drunk, commit adultery, or steal, but not to prize the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the apostle speaks of not prizing Christ, 1 Cor. 16.22, saith he, 'Let him be accursed till the Lord come;' and Heb. 12.15, 'Let there be no profane person, as was Esau, who despised the birthright' The birthright, it was a pledge of the grace we have by Christ, and therein lay Esau's profaneness, he did despise his spiritual privileges; therefore nothing is more dangerous than the conceit of our own righteousness.
(2.) It will certainly be a great loss to you, it will deprive you of many precious experiences. God is very tender of the trust of the creature; when men stand upon their own bottom, they turn the back upon their own mercies, they will soon grow dead and careless, and religion will not be carried on in such a sweet and sensible way, because grace is obstructed, for that you depend upon yourselves. But now by disclaiming works you will lose nothing, but you will gain Christ, and in him find comfort and grace. When once we are interested in the righteousness of Christ, then we shall have the proof and virtue of the Spirit of Christ for the mortifying of sin and quickening the soul to holiness: see Phil. 3.10, 'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.'
(3) Dependence upon our own righteousness, it will draw the heart to demure hypocrisy, by making men contented with an imperfect resemblance and dead

picture of righteousness. There are none that trust more in works than those that are most defective in them. If we come to perform duties indeed, we cannot but be sensible of the weakness of them, and so we shall fly to mercy. None are so truly godly as those that cast their whole dependence upon grace; none perform duties with more care, and overlook them with more self-denial; none have greater care of duty, and lower thoughts of it when it is performed. Who more strict and laborious than Paul? yet all is nothing but dung and dog's meat. In the scheme of judgment, and at the last day. Mat. 25.37, when Christ saith to the sheep, 'Stand on my right hand, you have fed me,' etc., they say, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee? etc. They wondered that God should take notice of such worthless services. The goats were apt to plead for themselves, but the sheep admire at God's thoughts of their charity. Carnal men, when they are pressed to strict duties, they choke conscience with maxims of grace; but when they look for blessing, then they build upon works. **Now the godly are quite contrary, they work as if there were no grace; and yet they expect all from grace, as if there were no works.**

(4.) It will make the promise to be of no effect to you. All our comfort lies in the acceptance of the gospel, we are undone by the old law. Now when you depend upon works, you cut off yourselves from those hopes, and are obnoxious to the rigour of the law. God puts it to your choice at what court you will stand; will you plead at the tribunal of justice, or of grace? Rom. 11.6, 'If it be of works, it is no more of grace; and if of grace, it is no more of works.' Either it must be wholly of grace or wholly of works. So Gal. 3.18; if you build upon the law, you will evacuate and make void the promise to you. The covenant will not be mixed, no more than gold or clay, no tempering of these things. Gal. 5.2-4, those that would establish works, the apostle tells them they are 'fallen from grace,' are 'debtors to the whole law,' and that 'Christ profits them nothing.' God doth not love a patched righteousness. New cloth upon an old garment will make the rent worse. Your souls must be entirely carried out to the righteousness of Christ.

(5.) We shall best know the danger of self-dependence when wrath doth actually make pursuit after sinners, either in pangs of conscience, or in the hour of death, or at the day of judgment. Phil. 3.9, 'O that I might be found in him;' the expression 'found' implies that there is a time when God will search Jerusalem

with candles. When wrath makes inquisition for sinners, oh, it is an excellent thing to be sheltered under the buckler of grace! Merit-mongers are best confuted by experience. Certainly, they that cry up works seldom look into their own conscience. However men may babble in the schools, yet when they come to plead with God, then they will see there is no claim will serve their turn but the righteousness of Christ. They may dispute with men such as themselves, but when they come to dispute with their own consciences in the agonies of death, then they will cry out it is best to lean upon the merit of Christ. Let a man plead with God, Give me not a crumb of mercy, unless I be found worthy; do not save and justify me, unless I deserve it. Yet, when conscience arrests men, and cites them before the tribunal of God, then they tremblingly fly to the horns of God's mercy, and to his free acceptation in Jesus Christ. Therefore this will be comfortable to you in the hour of death. You cannot have a better winding-sheet than to be wrapt up in Christ's righteousness; it is only that will bear you out.

[3.] To give some discoveries of the depending upon our own righteousness. Because men are doctrinally right, and disclaim the opinion of merit and works, they do not discern this secret vein of guilt that runs throughout the soul. There are practical papists, as well as practical atheists. Thou shalt not be judged by thy naked opinion, but by the disposition of thine heart. A man may own grace in pretence, yet trust in himself all the while. Luke 18.9, compared with the 11th. verse. In the 9th verse it is said, 'Jesus spake this parable against those that trusted in themselves that they were righteous;' there he brings the instance of the Pharisee; yet in verse 11, he saith, 'God, I thank thee;' he talks of grace, of blessing God and owning God, but he was proud and puffed up by the conceit of his own righteousness, his secret confidence was built upon his own works. So Deut. 9.4. 'Say not in thine heart, this is for my righteousness.' Though we do not say it with the tongue, and plead for merit, yet there may be a saying in the heart; there is a language which God understands, in the secret dispositions of the soul. All thoughts are not *explicite*, and impressed upon the conscience; some are *implicite*, thoughts by interpretation. **How shall we find this difference out?**
(1.) When there is a secret blessing of ourselves in our performance of good duties, without humiliation for defects. The children of God, the more they do,

the more they abhor themselves and hunger after Christ. It is a notable passage of Nehemiah, chap. 13.22. 'And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should sanctify the sabbath-day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.' It was an excellent work he had done here, to put them upon sanctifying the sabbath, yet 'spare me.' When the children of God do anything worthy and excellent, they the more hunger after grace as having sensible experience of their own defects, whenever they come into God's presence. They have more cause to be humbled than lifted up, though carried on with much activity and life in a holy service. There is much weakness, much want of zeal, and want of affection or attention; therefore they have still cause to reflect even upon their holy things. But now, when there is no actual humiliation, when men perform duties, and grow more proud and conceited, their duties prove loss to them, not gain. This is one advantage we have by holy ordinances, to grow more vile in our own eyes. Nothing makes the children of God to abhor themselves so much as their duties, because there they converse with a holy God, and that puts them upon the remembrance of their defects, and there they discern the weakness of their graces. As we feel the lameness of the arm in labour and exercise, so in those spiritual exercises they discern the feebleness of their graces. Nay, there their corruptions are irritated, and make resistance, and therefore they come to see that their natures are full of sin and their services are full of weakness. And so they cry out with David, Ps. 143.2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!' He doth not say with thy enemies, with unbelievers, but with 'thy servant.' Self-conceit then is a sure argument of self-dependence. When men think much of what they have done for God, and do not break out into actual humiliation, certainly it is a sign their hearts do run upon the merit of their actions. Secretly they say in their hearts, This is my righteousness, which is against the standing rule of Christ: Luke 17. 10, 'When you have done all you can, say you are unprofitable servants.'

(2.) When men grow vain and wanton after solemn duties, as if their former strictness should bear them out: Ezek. 13.33, 'He that trusts to his righteousness, and commits iniquity,' etc. Usually men that trust to their righteousness indulge themselves in vanity and sin with the more licence and boldness, as if one part of

obedience would recompense and make amends for the defect of another. This is grossly done by carnal men; as the Jews hoped to repair their want of mercy, by the multitude of their sacrifices, as if that would make amends for their defect in the weighty things of the law, by tithing mint and cummin. It is true the children of God may be surprised, as good Josiah was, his breach with God was after he had prepared the temple, 2 Chron. 35.20, when he went out to fight against Necho, king of Egypt. Now suitably, and like to this, is when the indulgence goes before the duty; it is all one, only it is more carnal, as when men give up themselves to a greater liberty in sinning, out of pretence that their repentance shall make amends for all. As those in the primitive times that delayed their baptism, When I am baptized, I will leave off my vicious course of life; or, as men give up themselves to youthful follies upon a dream of a religious old age, and upon a pretence of a devout retirement and that hereafter they will sequester themselves from the world.

(3.) When men would have some worth in themselves before they come to God for mercy. He comes to God most worthy that comes most sensible of his unworthiness, Luke 18.9. Read the parable that Christ spake against those that were 'righteous in themselves;' the one would come to God with something of his own, the other would come as a beggar - 'God be merciful to me a sinner;' the one appeals to justice, the other to mercy. it is contrary to the gospel, however disguised it seems; it seems to be humility, yet indeed it is but pride. When men will not look after the comforts of the gospel because they are not worthy, this is contrary to the tenor of the gospel; for wherefore is Christ a Saviour, but for sinners, 1 Tim. 1.15. It is but a humble pride when men would have some worth in themselves before they would come to God.

(4.) When men murmur if God doth not hear their prayers, and come in at their times and seasons: Isa. 58.3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, and thou regardest not?' When men will come and challenge God as if he were in debt to them, it is a sign their hearts secretly run upon their own righteousness. Murmuring is a fruit of merit. If God be not a debtor, why should we complain where nothing is due? Therefore the complainers speak perversely against the providence of God. It is a sign they think they have deserved better. Those that prescribe God ascribe too much to themselves. Proud hypocrites think God is beholden to them, that he is

bound to hear them, therefore when they murmur if they have not what they expect. They entertain crosses with anger, and blessings with disdain. Mal.1.2, when God loved them, they count slight of his mercy and say, 'Wherein hast thou loved us? The children of God wonder why the Lord should show them any mercy at all; they wonder anything should be theirs but vengeance and punishment, since nothing is theirs but sin. 'What am I!' saith David, 2 Sam. 7.18. Whence is it that God should be so merciful and gracious to me? Nothing can be little to them, because they know their sins are so great and their deserts so small. And if God lay affliction upon them, they are humble and quiet, knowing it is but the fruit of their doings.

(5.) When men go on in a track of duty and outward observances, and never look after the interest of their persons, this is a sign they would be accepted for their works' sake, it is God's method to accept of the person before the work. And all that are God's are driven to take hold of the covenant, driven out of themselves to run to the hope that God hath set before them, as it is said of the heirs of promise, Heb. 6.18. There was never a man that belonged to God but one time or other he was driven to run to the covenant of grace; therefore when men never breathe out those desires to be found in Christ, it is a sign their hearts do secretly build upon their own righteousness.

(6.) If the person of Christ be not exceeding precious to your souls, and always kept in the eye of your faith and in the arms of your love, you have not a due sense of your own state and actions: Cant. 1.13, 'A bundle of myrrh is my beloved.' The children of God always keep up an esteem for Christ in their hearts, and strive to keep in the fire of love to their dearest Lord. Paul groans fearfully under the relics of sin, Rom. 7.22 but saith he, 'Blessed be God for Jesus Christ:' Your hearts will be breaking out in thanksgiving if you have a due sense of the nothingness of your own works.

[4.] For the helps and remedies to take you off from depending upon your own righteousness.

(1.) Meditate much upon the nature of God; it is such that his children are ashamed to appear in his presence. Job saith, chap. 42.5,6, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor

myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Oh I consider, you have to do with a holy God, that can endure no imperfection because of the holiness of his nature, and that will not release his law because of the severity of his justice: Ps. 140.3, 'In thy sight shall no flesh living be justified.' Alas! we can scarce keep up a fair show before men; a discerning man may soon look through the veil of our profession, How shall we do to appear before the holy God? We need to have a better robe than our own if we would be comely in God's sight, for our 'righteousness is but as filthy rags.'

(2.) Extenuate no sin, for that will lessen your esteem of Jesus Christ. Have true and proper thoughts of the least sin. See how God hath been displeased with the lesser sins of his people: one passionate fit of anger kept Moses out of Canaan; Adam was thrown out of Paradise for eating an apple; and the angles of heaven for a thought of aspiring to God's greatness and majesty. Therefore extenuate no sin, and this will make Christ exceeding precious.

(3.) Consider the greatness of God's love, and the infiniteness of the reward that he hath provided for us. If we did oftener think of this we should be ashamed of our weak requital, and should run to the merit of Christ.

(4.) Remember that we have all from God. Whenever we have done anything with which the heart is apt to be tickled, remember how many considerations there are to humble you. In every holy service, if there be anything that is good in it, it is from God - 'Of thine own, O Lord, have we given thee.' Shall we be proud because we have received more from God than others? A servant that trades with his master's money doth but his duty, and deserves nothing. All we do in holy things, it is upon the expense and cost of divine grace.

(5.) Consider how much evil and weakness is in every service. Certainly that cannot merit glory that needs pardon itself. Though whatever we do in holy things be by divine grace, yet all that passes through our hands receives some soil and filth from our hearts like pure water that runs through a dirty channel.

(6.) Whatever we can do for God, it is due to him, so that the payment of new debts will not quit old scores.

Secondly, I come to work you off from dependence upon your own wisdom, a matter necessarily to be regarded in this argument. Christ had foretold his

sufferings, and Peter, out of carnal wisdom, dissuadeth him from the cross, and suffering himself to be so used; and upon this occasion Christ saith, 'If any man will come after me, he must deny himself,' that is, he must not, with Peter, follow his own carnal reason and understanding, as if such kind of counsel and advice were best. Thereupon, in the 25th verse, as a help to self-denial, our Lord lays down a conclusion that is quite contradictory to the judgment of carnal sense - 'He that will save his life must lose it;' implying that we must have other thoughts, we are not to be guided by the judgment of our own sense and reason, but by maxims and principles of faith. Therefore we have that dissuasive, Prov. 3.5, 'Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thine own understanding;' where Solomon shows that dependence upon our own understanding and wisdom is wholly inconsistent with a trust in God.

In the managing of this argument -
1. I shall state the matter, how far we are to deny our own wisdom.
2. Show how hard and difficult a matter it is to bring men off from leaning upon their own understanding.
3. The signs whereby leaning to our own wisdom is discovered.
4. Dissuasives or reasons to take us off from such a dependence.
5. The directions that are proper in this case.

[I.] How far we are to deny our own wisdom. It concerns us both in doctrinals and practicals.
1. In doctrinals.
To wave such discourse as is controversial, I shall lay down **two propositions.**

1st. Reason must not be heard against scripture.
2d. Scripture cannot be understood or applied without the Spirit.

[1st] Reason must not be heard against scripture, or be set up as the highest judge in matters of religion; otherwise we shall soon shift off many of the chiefest principles and articles of faith, as the incarnation of Christ, the resurrection of the body, the mystery of the trinity, etc. Who, by his own wisdom, can see God veiled under the curtain of flesh, the root of the vine growing upon one of his own grapes? Who can see that life must be fetched out of death? or that one man

must be healed by another's stripes? that the morsels of worms are parcels of the resurrection?

Therefore the first work of grace is to captivate the pride of our thoughts and our prejudices against religion: 2 Cor. 10.5. 'Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every high thought to the obedience of Christ;' captivating every high thought, the inward reasonings of the mind, to the obedience of Jesus Christ. There is an obedience of faith. Reason must be captivated to faith, though not to fancy; and if it be revealed, we must believe it, how absurd soever and unlikely it seems to nature. At first conversion our prejudices must strike sail to religion. When our Saviour speaks of the first conversion, he saith, Mat. 18.3, that 'whosoever receives the kingdom of God, he must receive it as a little child.' A little child believes as he is taught; so must we, as we are taught, - I mean by God, and not by men. You are never fit for heaven nor the understanding of heavenly things, till you have denied your own wisdom; that which is above reason cannot be comprehended by reason. All lights must keep their place. There are three lights - sense, reason, and faith. Sense, that is the light of beasts; reason, that is the, light of men; faith, that is the light of the church: all these must keep their place. To consult with nature in supernatural things is all one as if you should seek the judgment of reason among the beasts, and determine of human affairs by brutish instinct. If carnal men should but have liberty to let nature work, and set down a divinity of their own, what a goodly religion should we have in the world! A very comely chimera! For practicals, I am sure it would be large enough; natural conscience hates fetters and restraints. And in doctrinals it would be absurd enough; man can never take a right draught and image of God. We cannot empty the ocean with a cockleshell; so neither can we exhaust the divine perfections by the shallow discourse of our reason. The heathens that were most profound in the researches and inquiry of reason, they sate abrood, and thought of hatching of an excellent religion; but what was the issue? Rom. 1.22, Professing themselves wise, they became fools.' All that they produced was fables, and high strains of folly mixed with popular rites and customs. There are many things that are necessary to religion, which the very angels themselves could not know if it had not been revealed to them: Eph. 3.10, 'That to the principalities and powers in

heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.' The way of salvation by Christ is such a mystery as that it could not have entered into the heart of any creature, no, not of an angel. If an angel had been to set down which way man should be saved; nay, if all the cherubim and seraphim, thrones, dominions, and powers, if they all had met together in a synod and council, it would have posed all the world and the united consultation of angels, to have found out such a way. Therefore in those things that are revealed we must believe God upon his word; we must believe above and without reason.

[2.] The scripture cannot be understood nor applied without the Spirit. A blind man cannot see the sun, though it shine ever so clearly; and so, till the inward light meet with the outward, we cannot apprehend God's mind—We shall be 'ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth.' As the eunuch said to Philip, Acts 8.32, Philip saith to him, 'Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me.' Whenever you go to the word of God, you must not be your own interpreter; it must be interpreted by the same Spirit by which it was indited. It is very notable, when Christ himself was the preacher (and certainly none can interpret as Christ could), he expounded the scriptures. But it is said, Luke 24.45, 'Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scripture.' Christ, as an external minister, first opened the scriptures, and then, as the author of grace, he opened their understandings, without which they would have been veiled up in clouds and darkness. Mere flesh and blood are apt to stumble in God's plainest ways, and when we rest in the strength of our own reason we shall soon make a contrary and indiscreet use of truth: Hosea 14.9, 'Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? The ways of the Lord are right, the just shall walk in them; but the transgressor shall err therein.' The ways of the Lord become an occasion of ruin to the wicked; they shall undo themselves by their own apprehensions. Carnal reason turneth all to a carnal purpose; as the sea turneth the dews of heaven and the tribute of the rivers into salt water. But they are plain to them that are enlightened by a heavenly light. As the sun draws out a stench from carrion, and a sweet savour from flowers; or as the pillar of the cloud was 'light to the Israelites,' and 'darkness to the Egyptians;' so are the ways of God

'the savour of life unto life' to them that believe; but unto the other the 'savour of death unto death,' 2 Cor.2.16. So Solomon saith, Prov. 16.29, 'As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of a fool.' The Jews were wont to sew their garments with thorns; now when he would sew, he wounds and goreth himself, because his spirits are disturbed. Natural men may have literal knowledge, but they turn it to quite another purpose; it were easy to instance in many principles: 1 Cor. 7.29, 'The time is short,' saith the apostle, what is the use he makes? To be more strict—'Let them that have wives be as though they had none,' etc. There is his inference. Now compare it with 1 Cor. 15.37; the epicure draws another inference - ' The time is short.' What then? Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die.' The apostle presseth strictness, and he presseth jollity. The commonest truth in practical divinity is a mystery, and it must be divinely understood.

(2.) As it holds in doctrinals. so also in practicals; there we are to cease from our own understanding.

1st. We must not take counsel of human and fleshly wisdom. Folly is bound up in the heart of a man, and it is the more dangerous because it goes under the disguise of wisdom; so that we think none are wise but those that are fleshly wise. Now the apostle saith, Rom. 8.7, 'The wisdom of the flesh is enmity to God.' An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. A vicious man may become virtuous, but vice cannot become virtue. Do but observe what a contradiction there is between the wisdom of the flesh and the wisdom of the Spirit. This saith, The way 'to be exalted, is to abase ourselves;' the way to become first is to be last; the way to be strong is to be weak; the way to live is to die; the way to be wise is to be a fool: 1 Cor. 3.18, 'He that would be wise must be a fool, that he may be wise;' that is, renounce his own wisdom that he may be taught of God. It is a high point of wisdom to be one of the world's fools, to take such a course as that the world counts us fools. To save life, we must lose it; so consequently of estate, and other appendages of life. That which the flesh would call saving, the Spirit calls losing ; that which the flesh would call wisdom, the Spirit calls folly. So on the contrary, the flesh is quit with the Spirit. That which the Spirit calls strictness, the flesh calls folly and preciseness; that it is cowardice and disgrace to

love enemies and to put up with wrongs; and to pardon injuries a servility of spirit; and that charity is prodigality. As astronomers call the glorious stars by the names of lions and bears, the dragon's tail, etc; so carnal reason miscalls the graces of God's Spirit. To renounce present delights and advantages there is not a course more foolish in the eye of natural reason: 1 Cor. 2.14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' These things are folly to him; and our heart will be apt to say, when any begin to be strict, We shall have you turn fool now. Fervent zeal seemeth peevishness and frowardness, and strictness mere scrupulosity and niceness. **To be severe and strict in religion, to do or suffer, or to quit visible conveniences for invisible rewards, to renounce interests, to mortify carnal affections, all this is folly in the judgment of sense**: Isa.5.20, 21, 'Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put light for darkness, and darkness for light; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.' It is a strange perverseness to confound the names and nature of things. We would count him a madman that would call night day, and day night; yet so distorted and depraved is our reason. A man that is blind cannot distinguish between night and day; he may suppose it is night when it is day, yet he cannot take darkness itself for light. Now, what is the reason of all? It is rendered in the 21st verse, 'Woe to them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.' When men lean upon their own wisdom, they can expect to make no better judgment. Reason is not only blind, but mad; and therefore see who you make your counsellors. We shall never be good subjects to God as long as we give fleshly wisdom the hearing. Abraham, when he offered Isaac, did not acquaint Sarah, lest she should dissuade him; so in all cases of religion consult not with flesh and blood. Every sin hath a thousand shifts and fig-leaves. There is no sinner but he is like Solomon's sluggard, that is 'wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason,' Prov. 26.16. I confess in a doubtful case a man is to deliberate; but in the wisdom of the flesh interest hath the casting voice, rather than conscience and religion. Therefore take heed of making your bosom your oracle, and neglecting constant application to God for wisdom and direction in all cases, especially as to religion.

2d. We must not rest in our own private and sanctified light; how good soever it be, it must not puff us up and take off our dependence from God, though we have knowledge, wisdom, parts, and learning. It is a high contempt of God, when you make your bosom your oracle; you take his work out of his hands. Christ is the great counsellor, Isa.9.6. And we are to go to him for advice. It is God's prerogative, which he will not part with: Prov. 3.6, 'Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and then he shall guide thy path.' This keeps in the fire of religion, and maintains a commerce betwixt us and heaven, All nations that have been touched with the sense of a deity have granted a necessity of consulting with a divine power. The very pagans had their sibyls and oracles that they consulted with. And certainly the people of God dare not resolve upon any design till they have first asked counsel of God. Next to depending upon our own righteousness, this is the greatest evil. God is very jealous of the creature's trust; for trust is the acknowledgment of his sovereignty, and sets the crown upon his head: Judges 9.15, 'The bramble said unto the trees, If in truth you anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow;' where trust is made an acknowledgment of sovereignty. Therefore if we would acknowledge God, we must make him our oracle and counsellor, and **that in three cases**.

[1st.] In the general choice of thy life, both for opinion and practice. David had made God his portion: Ps.16.6,7, 'The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night season;' as if he had said, Lord, if I had been left to the counsel of my own heart, I should have been as wicked a wretch as others are; I have as vile a heart, that doth as much delight in flesh and the pleasures of sin as any do. Oh, whither should I have gone? What would have been my course and way if the Lord had not given me counsel? How should I have been hardened in ways of sin and carnal pleasures! There are many who have more wisdom than I have, yet they have taken a wrong course, and are prejudiced against the ways of the Lord. Oh, blessed be God that I have received counsel in my reins: Ps.25.10, 'What man is he that feareth the Lord; him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.' They that think to be religious upon their own choice and wit prove stark fools, and are justly hardened by their own prejudices. It was the corrupt doctrine

of the heathens. *Quod vivamus, deorum munus est; quod bene vivamus, nostrum*, Seneca saith, - That we live, we owe to the gods; that we live well, we owe it to ourselves. So Tully, *Judicium hoc est omniumi mortalium*, etc. - This is the judgment of all men, that prosperity is to be sought of God, but wisdom is to be taken from ourselves. This is to rob God, to enrich man; and that is the highest sacrilege, to rob God of his glory. God must not only give thee heaven, but he must give thee counsel. Thou mayst resolve and purpose, and yet still thou shalt be set back till God give thee direction. As a picture must be seen in its proper light, so the ways of God are never lovely till they are discerned by his own beam and light.

[2nd.] In the management of the whole spiritual life, still we need counsel and direction. Our own wisdom is an empty lamp; we shall soon stumble if we have not new counsel and direction from God. Mark the apostle's speech in 2 Thes. 2.5, 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ.' We know not how to exercise love, nor how to fix our patience, nor how to dispense the exercise of every grace in an orderly manner, without counsel from God. When a ship is rigged, yet it needs a pilot; so when the soul is furnished with grace, still we need direction how to exercise grace, otherwise religion will degenerate into a fondness and superstition, and patience will be turned into blockishness; zeal into an indiscreet heat, and constancy into humorous stiffness. There are many nice and critical cases in religion which we shall not understand without the continual direction of the Spirit. Let me instance in those rules: Eccles. 7.16-18, ' Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself overwise. Why shouldst thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish. Why shouldst thou die before thy time? It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thy hand; for he that feareth God shall come forth from them all.' How shall we know how to take the middle way, that we may neither hazard conscience nor endanger ourselves by a sullen and rigid obstinacy? God will direct us how to temper zeal with prudence - ' He that feareth God shall come out of them all.' Through false appearances and the weakness of grace we are apt to miscarry - ' Fear God,' that is, acknowledge him, and he will decide the case.

[3rd.] In all your particular actions and affairs self-wit is very confident and presumptuous, and we speak as if all were in our own hands: I will carry on this business, and thus and thus order my affairs. But alas! where we seem most wise we are most infatuated. Pharaoh was never such a fool in his life as when he said, 'Let us go wisely to work,' Exod. 1.10. God loves to confute men in their vain confidences; and when they lean to their own understanding, they seldom prove successful; for then we entrench upon God's prerogative, and God will have the creature know that all their actions are in his power, and the success depends upon his blessing. This is the bridle God hath on the world, the disposal of their affairs: Prov. 20.24, 'Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?' We cannot see the event of things in the course of our lives, what is expedient, and what not, therefore we must ask counsel of God. Man would fain work out his own happiness, and like a spider, climb up by a thread of his own weaving; but it is gone with a breath - ' The hope of the hypocrite is like a spider's web.' Men that will be their own carvers, they seldom carve out a good portion to themselves. God will have us daily to acknowledge the dominion of his providence, and live in a continual dependence, that so there may be a constant respect between us and him - ' Lord, teach me,' saith David, 'on thee do I wait all the day long:' Ps, 25.4, 'Show me thy way, O Lord; teach me thy paths.' David would not give over his dependence, no, not for a moment. Thus I have shown how far we should not lean upon our own understanding.

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

It is natural to us all, but especially it is incident to young christians, who are hugely given to dogmatise, because their notions, being hasty and fervorous, are accompanied with more confidence, though with less reason. They are peevish and obstinate in their sense, and none so humorously conceited of what they hold as they. It is incident also to men of great parts. Simple men that are not able to raise doubts and objections are more credulous - 'The simple believeth every word;' but these, that have such an high claim and title to the exercise of reason, are wont to scoff at matters of faith, to lose the reverence and respects of religion, at least are not so soon won to close with the simplicity of the gospel.

But I say it is naturally incident to us all, and truly, hardly cured, for several reasons.

Partly, because the evil is so close and spiritual. Christians do not easily fall to open idolatry, to worship a stock and a stone, but they easily idolise their own understanding, and so their respects to God are intercepted, or but coldly rendered. We are not so sensible of the defects and weakness in the understanding as we are of distempers in the will. Distempers of the will are always accompanied with some combat and strife, by which they are exposed to the view and notice of conscience; but the distempers of the understanding are more silent, and when we are convinced of them, they seem more pardonable, because they do not work such disturbance as other sins do; it is a secret and sly evil. And partly, because a natural wit befriends carnal desires. There is a league and a conspiracy between the soul and the spirit, between the understanding and the carnal desires: Heb. 4.12, 'The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit;' it can dissolve the cursed league and conspiracy between a carnal understanding and a carnal heart. It is an easy matter to deceive him that will be deceived. **We love our understanding, for there bad counsel hath more credit than the best and most sacred suggestions of the Holy Ghost. Our wit is forestalled by affection, so that we are willingly directed by the dictates of our own hearts, and it is troublesome to us so much as to suspect them.** And partly through pride. Natural wit is very confident. It is no easy thing for a man to pluck the eyes out of his own head, and to give his hand to another to lead him which way he pleaseth. Man is loath to have the leading part of his soul to be debased. By our understandings we are distinguished from the beasts, and therefore we cannot endure to cease from resting in our own understanding and parts. That man is extremely proud of his understanding, appears by two sensible experiences or observations.

(1.) We rather would be accounted wicked than weak; sooner own a wickedness in morals than a weakness in intellectuals. In wickedness there seems to be somewhat of bravery and choice; we all affect the repute of wisdom: Job 11.12, 'Vain man would be accounted wise, though he be born as the wild ass's colt.'

Though man be foolish and gross of conceit, yet he would fain be accounted wise: Gen. 3.5, 'Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' Ever since the fall we catch at knowledge. The pharisees were mighty angry with our Saviour when he charged them with blindness: John 9.40, 'Are we blind also?' Will you say we are ignorant that are the great rabbis, and doctors of the people?

(2.) Another observation is, that errors are more touchy than vices. Men do with greater patience bear with declamations against sin than convictions of error, which may arise partly from this, because erroneous persons usually take up their errors out of interest, and men cannot. endure the voice of a hated truth. But chiefly, and the most universal reason, is our natural pride; men are conceited of the sufficiency of their understanding, and so become impatient when they are convinced of their mistake.

The signs whereby leaning to our own understanding is discovered.

(1.) When men are puffed up with a conceit of their knowledge, it is a sign they lean upon it. Why? For esteem and admiration is an inseparable evidence of trust. Therefore the scriptures that do dissuade us from leaning upon our own understanding, dissuade us also from being wise in our own eyes, or conceit: Rom. 12.6, 'Be not wise in thy own conceit;' and Prov. 3.7, 'Be not wise in thy own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil.' These two always go together, self-conceit and self-dependence: 1 Cor. 8.2, 'Knowledge puffeth up;' and, 'If any man thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing as he ought to know.' Our ignorance is never cured till we come to heaven; and it is a good progress in grace to be sensible of it. When men think they are above ordinances, they know as much as men can teach them for substance, they know nothing. It is a sign they have never waded into the depth of the scripture. Menedemus was wont to say of them that went to Athens to study the first year, he thought they were wise men; the second year, philosophers; the third year, orators that could talk of wisdom; the next year that they were plebeians, that they understood nothing but their own ignorance. Usually thus it is in growth in scriptural knowledge. Young christians are very opinionated, but when they look into the breadth of the commandment, then they see their own ignorance - that 'they know nothing.' This is the reason

why the children of God have such a low opinion of their understandings. A man would wonder at their expressions: Prov. 30.2.3, 'Surely I am more brutish than any man, I have not the understanding of a man; I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.' The more he saw, the more he was acquainted with his ignorance; so that he durst not attribute any wisdom to himself. None are so sensible of their ignorance as those that abound in knowledge. Look, as when the sun appears, the light of the candle seemeth nothing; so when God comes and enlightens their mind, oh; what a brutish creature was I ! But now, self-admiring argues great confidence.

(2.) When men dare undertake anything without asking counsel from God: Prov. 3.6. 'In all thy ways acknowledge him.' We are not to lessen our dependence, no, not for a moment. Whenever you go forth in the strength of human counsel and reason, you do, as it were say, In this business I can do well enough without God. It is a great contempt to put upon God when in the things of the family, church, or commonwealth we do not seek him earnestly. Not only in doubtful and difficult cases, which are wholly above our strength and wit to decide, but in all your ways God must be sought and acknowledged. The prophet Jeremiah speaks as one that was sensible of his dependence: Jer. 10.23, 'Lord, 1 know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' There should be such an actual sense and feeling upon the soul. So David said, Ps. 25.4, 'Show me thy ways, O Lord; on thee do I wait all the day.' A christian dares not to go into the study, shop, nor into the assembly or council, without God. Mr Greenham, when one came to ask his advice in a business, he answered, Friend, you and I have not prayed yet.

(3.) If thou wert never moved to bless God for making Christ to be wisdom. You know what the apostle saith, 1 Cor. 1.30, 'He is made to us of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' I observe, many bless God because Christ was made redemption and sanctification, for natural conscience is sensible of the sad consequences of sin; but usually we lean upon our own understanding, we do not bless him for being made wisdom to us: John 14.6, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' Many may bless him for life, for the hopes of glory; but hast thou blessed him, because he hath been a prophet to teach thee?

This is always the first work of grace, to convince us of our brutishness and folly - as Paul, when he was converted, was made blind - that we may prize Christ the more, that we may say to Christ, as Moses to Hobab, his father-in-law, Num. 10.31, 'Leave us not, I pray thee, that thou mayst be to us instead of eyes;' that thou mayst run to Christ for eye-salve: Rev. 3.17,18, 'Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve,' etc. When men are never convinced of their natural blindness, they do not prize Christ in all his offices; it is no small matter that he is a prophet to guide thee; the truth, as well as the way and the life.

(4.) When men cite God before the tribunal of their own reason, this is a sign that the word and counsel of God was never exalted in their judgments. In matters of faith, worship, and obedience, we are to fetch our light from the scripture. And we would set up an higher tribunal, and fetch all from our reason, and give laws to heaven. Usually men will dispute against the righteousness of God's decrees, the simplicity of his ordinances, the mysteries of faith : Rom. 9.20, 'Who art thou, O man, that disputest against God?' When men are apt to pick quarrels with religion, to cavil and snarl at God's ways, to dispute away duties rather than practise them, it is an ill sign. All the ways of God seem unjust and incredible to the carnal reason of men; they cannot believe how Christ should be God and man in one person; how it should be just that by one man's transgression all should be made sinners, and why God should elect some, and leave others in their corruption. Ah, foolish man! who art thou, that disputest against God? They cannot believe the same body shall rise again: suppose it be thrown into the sea, and eaten up by fishes, and those fishes devoured by men, and those men torn with wild beasts, they cannot see how it is possible God should restore to every body his own substance: Mat 22.17, 'Ye err, not knowing the scriptures, and the power of God:' the power of God showeth that it may be so; the scripture that it is so. There is the rule and ground of truth. So men will dispute against the simplicity of the ordinances: 2 Kings 5.11,12, 'Are not Abana

and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?' They cannot see but reading at home may be as effectual as the public ministry. So they cannot see why men should pray, since God's decrees are past, and his decrees are unalterable; if he will, he may give mercy and salvation without their prayers; and if he will not, he cannot be won to it by their importunity. Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?

(5.) When men despise the advice and help of other christians. The Lord will have us to profit by one another. He withdraws himself many times to this end and purpose, that we may be endeared one to another, as well as engaged to himself. Certainly the head cannot say, I have no need of the foot. As God would establish a dependence between himself and us, so he would establish a dependence between christians among themselves; therefore grace doth not only come from God, but we receive it in part through the means of the body: Col. 2.19, 'And not holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.' The admonitions of the weakest christian, they may be of great use to enkindle zeal, if not to better our knowledge; as a wisp of straw may enkindle a great block. Now when a man thinks his own wit sufficient, and that he need not be taught of any, it is an evil sign: Prov. 26.12, 'Seest thou a man wise in his own eyes, there is more hope of a fool than of him.' A fool will rather be counselled than one given to self-conceit. You cannot put wine, or any other liquor, into a blown bladder till the wind be voided, and the bladder rid of it, so here such puffed bladders are in a sad condition, can receive nothing, they can make no progress in grace.

In the next place I must join dissuasives and directions together. If you would cease from your own understanding -

(1.) Be sensible of the utter impotency of nature: 1 Cor. 2.14, 'The natural man understands not the things that are of God.' He is not only actually ignorant, but unable to conceive; not only through negligence, but weakness; not only will not, but cannot; there is a prejudice and positive enmity in the heart. The mind of man is not white paper, but it is prepossessed with carnal principles, atheism, unbelief,

profaneness, libertinism. As the stomach that is ill-affected with choler casts up all the food it receiveth as soon as it is swallowed, so we reject all holy doctrine. Though we may like generalities, yet when we are pressed to practice, carnal reason will discover itself. We are apt to think ourselves angels, but we are but beasts: Eccles. 3.18, 'I said in my heart, concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.' Nay, after regeneration we have great cause still to suspect ourselves. There are two voices, flesh and spirit. And our wisdom that we have, is often enthralled, and made a prisoner to sinful passions and affections. Therefore when we go about any business, especially when we come to the word, we should never do it without lifting up our souls to God for the spirit of wisdom and revelation: Eph. 1.17,18, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.'

(2.) Consider the mischief of self-conceit, or dependence upon our own wisdom. Most men in the world are ruined by it; of Babylon is said, 'Thy understanding hath undone thee.' Who would choose him for a pilot that drowns every vessel that he governeth? it is as inconsistent with salvation, as trusting in wealth. It is true, the object is more excellent, but therefore the temptation is the more dangerous. Now, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,' Mat. 19.24. Consider, what a great folly it is; *Bis desipit, qui sibi sapit* - He that is wise in his own eyes is twice a fool; a fool by having but a little knowledge, and by his great conceit of it.
And then it is the ground of all the creature's miscarriages. Apostasy from religion, whence comes it? From idolising self-wit, John 6.65. Christ had spoken something which they understood not, of eating his flesh - ' From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him,' because they could not fathom it by the line and plummet of their reason. It is the usual rise of heresy; then a man is ripe to breed monstrous opinions in the church. When men will have the mysteries of faith demonstrated by the law of reason, like a sick man

who will not swallow his pills, but chew them; when he tastes the bitterness, he presently bringeth them up, and so loseth a wholesome remedy.
Then it is the ground of all corruption in life, the lust of covetousness, it is rooted upon self-conceit, Prov. 23.4. When Solomon dissuadeth from covetousness, 'Labour not to be rich,' then presently, 'Cease from thy own wisdom.' See how these two precepts are coupled, as if the Spirit of God should say, if you hearken to carnal wisdom, that will tell you of honour, great pleasure, and of flourishing in your family; that you shall want nothing; but be not wise in your own eyes, that will be a means to keep you from labouring to be rich, from prostituting your precious time, care, and strength, only to advance secular interests.

Thirdly, I come now to speak of dependence upon our spiritual strength, and grace received: Gal. 2.20, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' where there is an abnegation of all his own strength with respect to the spiritual life. The work of the inferior agent is denied, that the supreme may have all the glory: not I, but Jesus Christ.

1. I shall show you the consequence and weight of this part of self-denial.
2. How far forth our spiritual strength is to be denied.
3. What are the signs whereby dependence upon our own strength may be discovered and found out.

[1.] For the consequence and weight of this: I shall show you in several considerations, that certainly this is a necessary part of self-denial.

(1.) Because dependence maintains the commerce between God and man; it is the ground of the creature's respect to God. A proud creature is loath to be beholden, to come out of itself, and to fetch all from another. We had rather keep the stock ourselves. When the prodigal had his portion in his own hands, away he goes from his father. We would be strangers to the throne of grace were it not that there were a continual dependence upon God for the supply of grace. Those two great duties of prayer and praise are built upon dependence. So that in effect the whole spiritual life is but a profession of our dependence upon God.

1st. To instance in prayer. If we did not depend upon God for daily receiving, the Lord would seldom hear from us. Most of the prayers in the apostle's writings are for a supply of grace: 2 Thes. 1.11, 'Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power;' and Eph. 3.14-17, 'I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with all might, by his Spirit in the inner man,' etc. This was the reason, why Paul prayed for others, and why the saints pray for themselves, that they may have new strength from God in the inward man. So Heb. 13.20, 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight.' This is the great cause of Christ's intercession, to maintain the life which we have received. God would oblige us to continual visits and intercourse with himself by keeping grace in his own hands.
2nd. For the duty of praise. Self loves to divide the glory with free grace; and truly, if we be not sensible of our dependence upon God, we shall never think of setting the crown upon grace's head. The saints that are kept humble, are also kept thankful; they see they can do nothing themselves, and therefore they come and give God the glory: Luke 19.16,' Thy pound' saith the faithful servant, 'hath gained ten pounds;' as if he had said, It was not my industry, but thy pound. This makes the children of God to come with ingenious acknowledgments - ' Not I,' said Paul, 'but Christ that liveth in me.' Alas! I do little in the spiritual life, it is Christ that doth all. I live, there is some concurrence; but mine is nothing to what Christ doth. So 1 Cor. 15.10, 'I laboured more than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' They take off the crown from the head of self, and lay it at the feet of Christ. As Joab sent for David when he had conquered Rabbah, to take the honour of the victory; so when they have done anything through grace, they send for God to take the honour, They know whence their supplies come, and that makes them thankful.

(2.) It is a very great sin to rest in ourselves; it crosseth the very end of the covenant, and robs Christ of his free grace. In all God's dispensations to the

creature, his aim is to magnify his own grace; and the great end of our being christians is to be to the 'praise of his glorious grace,' Eph. 1.12. When we come to heaven, it is a great question which we shall most admire, grace or glory. Certainly when our affections are wrought up to the pitch of the glorified estate, we shall value glory for grace's sake; for this is God's great end, that grace may have the glory. Therefore it is a necessary part of a christian's work, to keep his heart still sensible of his dependence upon grace; therefore self-sufficiency after grace received is a great sin. The more we rest in self, the more we rob grace. Carnal men, they are hardly sensible of foul and gross sins; but a christian is sensible of spiritual evils, and of these chiefly. When we humble ourselves for want of life and quickening, there may he something of hypocrisy in that; because quickening serves the pride of parts, and we would all discover gifts with applause. Now it is a sign of grace to be humbled for depending upon our own strength and endeavours, because we would not rob Christ of his chiefest honour and glory.

(3.) It is a sin not only foul in its nature, but severely punished by God. The saints have never so foully miscarried as by their self-confidence. Who would have thought that Lot who was pure and chaste in Sodom, should have committed incest in the mountain, when there was none but he and his own daughters? Though he avoided the filthiness of Sodom, where there was a multitude to draw him to evil, yet he fell foully when there was none but his own family. In the dreadful falls of God's children we may see that nature is but a sorry undertaker. No man knows how far his heart will carry him till it comes to the trial. Who would have thought that Peter's high resolution would end in curses and blasphemy, and denying of Christ? The man of God, that spake against the altar of Bethel, could deny the king's request, but could not deny the old prophet to turn back and eat; 1 Kings 13.8. compared with the 19th verse.; when grace had left him, then he falls. The prophet saith of Ephraim, that 'he was a cake not turned,' baked but of one side; for a great while we may stand fast; but when once we grow secure, we may sadly miscarry. Hezekiah knew how to be sick, but not how to be well. The Spirit of God will not flatter us in our vain confidences; when we proudly trust in ourselves, the Lord, to punish pride, will deny his assisting grace, and so we soon feel the disappointment of a trust misplaced. When God framed

us and renewed us by grace, he doth still reserve a dominion over particular acts of grace. Grace is but a creature; if we rest in it, we may make grace an idol; it is not an independent thing, but dependeth in, *esse, conservari et operari*. There is a constant concurrence necessary to strengthen the habit as well as to produce the act, without which habits are dead and useless.

How far spiritual strength is to be denied. The question is needful, lest while we seek to establish devotion we lay a ground for laziness; therefore **I shall show it in four propositions -**

(1.) That there is somewhat in a christian which we may call spiritual strength;
(2.) That this strength is to be maintained and supported; and
(3.) To be drawn out in constant exercise; yet
(4.) Not to be rested in, for several reasons.

1st. There is somewhat in a christian which we may call spiritual strength. The familists say, That grace is Christ himself working in us, and that there are no habits of grace; that it is not we that repent and believe, but Christ. But certainly this is false and foolish; there is something poured out upon a christian: Zech. 12.10, 'I will pour out upon them a spirit of grace and supplication;' and there is something that remains in them, called the 'seed of God,' 1 John 3.9, which cannot be Christ or the Spirit, because it is called the new creature and the inward man, that is created after God. And a good treasure, that a christian hath of his own, a good stock God hath bestowed upon him: Mat. 12.53, 'A good man out of his good treasure,' etc. There is a stock of grace conveyed into the soul which may be increased; therefore we are said, 2 Peter 3.18, 'To grow in grace.' All which things are not compatible to the Spirit; nay plainly, the fruits of the Spirit, which are the created habits of grace, are distinguished from the Spirit himself: Gal. 5.22, 'Now the fruits of the Spirit are these, love, faith, gentleness,' etc; so 2 Tim. 1.5, 'The unfeigned faith that is in thee.' In regeneration there is introduced into the soul a stock of knowledge, a whole frame of grace, faith, and patience, and love, and hope, and these abide upon the heart. They are not transient operations of the Holy Ghost, nor the Holy Ghost himself, but such habits as abide still in the heart. Besides, if in acts of grace there were nothing but an operation of the Holy

Ghost, and a man were a mere patient, then all our defects, and the faintness of our operation, were to be charged on the Spirit; as a ship is an innocent piece of timber, therefore the splitting thereof is not charged upon the ship, but the pilot.

2nd. This strength is with diligence to be maintained and supported; we are to be very careful that we do not waste our stock, and prove bankrupts with grace received. When we embezzle our habitual treasure, God is exceeding angry, and then he withdraws his actual influence. By gross sins we maim and distemper the new nature, and it is a long time ere it can be set right again. It cost David much labour and travail of soul to get a right spirit within him: Ps. 51, 'Lord create in me a clean heart;' it was a creating work. It must be constantly maintained, for we may easily embezzle and weaken it in a great measure.

3rd. It must be stirred up and improved to holy actions - ' A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things.' God hath given us a treasure to trade withal. Grace teacheth no man to be lazy. The doctrine of dependence on Christ doth not take us off from endeavours, but from resting in them. But you will say, What can we do with habitual grace, if there be not some predetermining influence? I answer -

[1st.] Some small power there is to an act, otherwise what difference were there between a regenerate and an unregenerate man, if a renewed man were totally disabled? The days of our unregeneracy are thus described, Rom. 5., 'Then were we without strength;' but certainly, when we are taken to grace, there is some kind of power; God's image is repaired in such persons; they have renewed faculties, Eph. 4.23. God hath given us gifts and abilities to work which are not altogether in vain; motion and operation followeth: Col. 2.6, 'As you have received Christ, so walk in him.' Something you may do by virtue of the new nature. Thou mayst call upon thy soul, and awaken it; it is thy work to quicken habitual grace, and to do what thou canst to bring it forth: 2 Tim. 1.6, 'Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.' It is an allusion to the priest that kept in the fire of the altar; so we are to stir up ourselves as much as we can. Isa. 64.7, The Lord complains, 'There is none that stirs up himself.' As we are men, we have understanding and memory, and can revive truth upon the conscience in an

outward and literal way; but as we are renewed men, so we have a sanctified understanding and memory, and that is more, and a greater advantage; so we may call upon the soul and stir it up, and grieve for deadness.

[2nd.] I answer, all the moral actions of the regenerate are commanded by God: though the principle of motion be but natural, yet we are under a command to be doing; want of predetermining grace will be no excuse. God may do what he will as to matter of assistance, but I must do what I am commanded in matter of duty. God is at liberty to act, but we are not; we are bound, but the Spirit is free. Therefore, putting forth the exercise of grace, being a moral thing, and that which falls under a command, we are obliged to it.

[3rd.] It is God's way to meet with his creatures in the midst of their endeavours: Rom. 8.26, 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.' Helpeth together - the word importeth such help as when another steppeth it, to sustain the burden that lieth too heavy upon us, When we wrestle and strive in a way of duty, God will come in with his assistance. - We know not the counsel of God; he may join with us, but we refuse his help and put it away if we act not. Up and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee. Within there must be a habit of grace; without, there is an assisting grace. We must be doing, and leave alone God with his own gracious work.

[4th.] This strength, though it must be improved and stirred up to action, yet it must not be rested in. When God frames the new creature, he doth not leave us as a clock to go of ourselves. God hath reserved the dominion over particular acts of grace to himself, that so he may keep the creature in a constant dependence. Not only the seed, but the tree; and not only the tree, but the fruit, dependeth upon grace. We are not only the planting of the Lord, grow in his courts, but our fruit is found in him: Hosea 14.8, 'In me is thy fruit found.' Grace is not only seen in renewing the faculty and strengthening the habit, but also in quickening it to bring forth fruit.

Because this is the matter in hand, **I shall lay down several reasons and considerations to enforce it.**

[1st.] Because though we are renewed, yet it is but in part. The maim of nature is not fully recovered till we come to heaven; we still halt of the old fall; our nature is not altered of a sudden, but still tasteth of the old leaven; there is a constant weakness while we are in the world. Many would flatter nature, and say of it as Christ said of the damsel, she is 'not dead, but sleepeth,' as if original corruption were not a deadly maim, but only a swoon and languishment. After grace is put into the heart, we still find that our graces are weak and feeble. The children of God complain, Gal. 5.17, 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' We cannot act with such freedom and courage as we would in the holy life. So Paul, personating a regenerate man, saith, Rom. 7.18, 'To will is present, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.' The new nature may purpose and will, but we cannot perform a good work without a new concurrence.

[2nd.] Because the habit of grace is but a creature, it is not an independent thing, like the Spirit of God himself. If we rest in it, we may make grace an idol. There is need of the concurrence of grace, to strengthen the habit and produce the act, without which the habits will be but dead and useless. This is that the apostle intimates when he saith in 2 Thes. 1.11, 'We pray always that God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.' Grace is a creature, therefore depending, as all other creatures, upon God, and cannot stir or move without God. The apostle saith, Acts 17.18, 'That in him we live, and move, and have our being;' we are moved and acted by him, if God should but suspend his influence, the creature cannot move, nor stir a joint or arm. If God should but 'let loose his hand,' as it is expressed, Job 6.9, all creatures would fall into nothing. There is a providential assistance that is necessary to all created agents; as the fire could not burn the three children, though the property was not destroyed, but because God's influence was suspended; all things would fall into nothing if he should let loose his hand. I produce these things for demonstration; for in the exercise of every grace God doth not only work by a general concurrence, as a universal cause, but by special aid and assistance. Every act is from God, as the author of nature, and

graciousness of the act is also from God, as the author of grace. There is a great deal of difference between the natural elevation of the faculty and the gracious exercise of it. As the apostle saith, 2 Cor. 3.5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.' As the apostle saith, 2 Cor. 3.5, 'Of ourselves we are not able to think a good thought.' We are so far from a good work that we cannot so much as think without an influence of providence. Nor can we think graciously without the influence of grace. Therefore to the resistance of any sin, or to the performance of any holy duty, there must be some concurrence from God. We cannot rest in any creature or created thing, but still look up to him as the independent cause that sends forth his influence. Nay, this holds in the very angels; grace is always necessary every moment to the angels, to prevent possible sins, and to stir up actual rejoicing in God; they had need of a continual influence from their creator, so have we.

[3rd.] Because of the several indispositions of the saints. We are always weak, but sometimes we lie more wind-bound and suspended than at other times, and are not able to move and stir. The children of God find a great many corruptions, a loathness and shyness of God's presence, especially after long guilt, and there needs a 'day of power to make them willing,' Ps. 110.3. So also they find deadness; when they have given content to the flesh, their hearts are apt to grow flat and dead, and they lose the savouriness of their spirits; therefore David begs for quickening: Ps. 119.37, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.' And sometimes they are in straits, they are bound up and suspended. The mind is like very tender part, soon offended and out of temper. Men, you know, are very seldom indisposed for bodily labour; but now the affairs of the christian life, being wholly spiritual, there will be much unfitness and distemper as to them; the soul will soon be indisposed.

[4th.] A fourth reason is the sovereignty of God, who keepeth grace in his own hand, and gives it out at pleasure, that he may make the creature beholden to him. God delights to have men and angels to be his debtors, and therefore he exerciseth all his dispensations to them with a liberty and freedom - 'He giveth the will and the deed, according to his good pleasure,' Phil. 2.3. He gives the

power and the faculty, and the act; he suspends and enlargeth the acts of the understandings and affections of men according to his own pleasure. We cannot be masters of any one good act without grace. He will be master of his mercies, that he may keep the power in his own hands, that we might wait upon him by a humble and actual trust.

[5th.] The necessity of a continued influence from Christ. Grace is in his keeping: 2 Tim. 2.1. 'Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.' That grace which makes us to work strongly in duty, and with good effects it is in Christ not in ourselves: John 15.5, 'Without me you can do nothing;' separated from Christ, we can act nothing. Members divided from their head, they cannot live; so out of our mystical head we cannot live and act. There is not one individual act of grace but Christ is interested in it, as the soul is in the motion of every member. There must not only be a constant union, but a continual animation and influence: Phil. 4.13, 'I can do all things, through Christ that strengtheneth me,' not only hath strengthened, but strengtheneth by a constant influence. You saw Adam was an ill keeper of his best jewels; and because Christ is a good steward, he knows the value of spiritual privileges; therefore all is put in his keeping; it is put into safe hands, that we may be sure to find it when we have need. But you will say, If we can do nothing without Christ, what difference is there then between the state of nature and the state of grace? I answer, By grace we have new faculties, which have some small power, though we can be confident of little success. Before conversion we were wholly passive, there was no co-operation; but now we have renewed faculties, there is a sub-operation; we act as instruments, in the virtue of the principal agent; we have a will to close with the things of God, and an understanding to judge aright of them an moved by God; how we may carry out the work of God, and act as instruments in his hand, by virtue of the principal and supreme cause.

[6th.] Another consideration to press you to a continual dependence upon God in the exercise of your spiritual strength, is the sad experience of God's children whenever they have been left to themselves. I need not instance in the angels, which did 'excel in strength;' yet when left, they fell. I need not speak of Adam in innocency, how he fell when God left him, when he left him, I say, to the freedom

of his own will. But let us speak of holy men of God that are under the same dispensation we are, the most holy and sanctified men of God: 2 Chron.32.31, it is said of Hezekiah that 'the Lord left him, that so he might know what was in his heart.' God will show us what we are in ourselves; if he should but suspend grace and spiritual influences but for a moment, what poor chaff are we before the blast of every temptation! As when a glass is shaken then the dregs appear, so it is with us. I now come to give you the signs.

[3.] The signs of depending on our spiritual strength.

(1.) If you would know whether you do so, observe the frame of the heart both before and after duty. (1.) Before duty, and every address to God whenever we come to worship, we should have actual thoughts of our own weakness. When we come to pray, Lord, we know not how to pray, how to act faith, and how to draw forth grace; we should still be 'poor in spirit,' that is a grace of constant use. But now, when men are full of parts and gifts, and think 'to go forth and shake themselves as at other times,' as it is said of Samson when his strength was gone; when we think to find the same savouriness and smartness of expression, God will make us see how much we are mistaken. Therefore when we have not actual thoughts of our own weakness when we come to perform any holy exercise, it is a sign we are too full of our own gifts and abilities. (2.) After the duty, art thou moved to bless God for the supplies of his grace, especially if gifts have been discovered with applause? Art thou able to say with David, 'Lord, of thine own have I given thee?' canst thou cast the crown at the feet of Christ? canst thou take all thy excellency, and lay it down at Christ's feet? If it be not thus with us, it is a sign we depend too much on our own strength.

(2) Another note is a confident presumption of the success of future actions and undertakings, without taking God along with us in our resolution. Thus Peter, he was a sad instance of leaning upon himself: Mat.26.74, 'Though all men should deny thee, yet I will not deny thee.' The confidence of the children of God is built upon the expectation of grace; and if God will undertake for them, then they can be confident of the success of their endeavours: Ps. 119.32, 'I will run the way of

thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' Look to the ground, whether it be built upon thy own resolution, or the expectation of his grace.

(3.) When man dare venture upon occasions of sinning and temptations, certainly this is a great confidence, and it cannot proceed from divine grace, for God when he keeps us, he will keep us in his ways, not when we tempt his providence. Therefore when men can delight in carnal company, and put themselves upon such a snare, it is a sign they depend not upon God. For what is the fruit of depending upon God? avoiding all occasions of evil. Therefore when men dally with temptation, it is a sign they place confidence in their own strength,

(4.) Despising of ordinances. These are the pipes by which God conveys his influences to us, and by which the habits of grace are strengthened, by the power that goes out in them. There must be dependence upon God in the use of means if we would maintain grace: Luke18.8, 'Take heed what you hear, for to him that hath shall be given.' Attend upon ordinances. Why? for otherwise you will lose the flush of gifts which puff you up. Many despise hearing when they have got a little knowledge.

(5.) It is a sign of dependence upon ourselves when we contemptuously insult over others that are weaker than ourselves; for if we did acknowledge all to be from grace, how could we be proud? Who would dare to be proud of that which is but borrowed? Who could be proud because he is most in debt? If we have wore gifts than they, we are more obliged to God, and this keeps the hearth of God's people humbled: 1 Cor. 4.7, 'For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?' Thy merit is no more than theirs, and in thyself thou art as incapable of spiritual blessings as they are, and in holy duties thou canst do no more than they can; for what dost thou add to duty? Nothing but what will lessen the value of it; they can add corruptions and weakness of their own, so canst thou. The pharisee, you know, that condemned the publican, he speaks of grace in pretence - 'God be thanked, I am not as other men,' etc.; but because 'he despised others,' Christ spake that parable. When men are proud and

confident of their own abilities, and despise others, there is a depending upon themselves; they have much cause of thankfulness, but none of pride.

Fourthly, I come to speak of the fourth head - viz., Dependence upon the supplies of the outward life. And -

1. To show that there is such a sin.
2. How evil and heinous it is, that it is capable of the highest aggravations.
3. What are the notes and evidences by which this secret vein of guilt may be traced and found out in the soul.
4. The proper cure and remedy.

1. That there is such a sin appears by the testimony of scripture, and by experience.

(1.) By the testimony of scripture, which is the best judge of the heart: Mark 10.23,24, 'And Jesus looked round about him, and said to his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' Now because this seemed harsh unto the disciples, who were leavened with the conceit of a pompous Messiah, therefore, ver. 24, it is said, 'The disciples were astonished at his words. And Jesus answered and said, How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!' Christ allays the wonder, it is not simply impossible for a rich person, a man that possesseth wealth, to be saved, poor Lazarus sleeps in the bosom of rich Abraham; there may be godly rich as well as godly poor; but it is impossible for them that 'trust in riches.' Our Lord shows how irreconcilable it is with the hope of salvation, as impossible as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. That place showeth that there is such a sin, a sin that we may easily commit when we have anything in the world. And because men think light of spiritual sins, that do not end in a gross and foul act, he showeth how irreconcilable it is with all hopes of salvation when it reigneth. So Job, when he doth protest his own innocency: Job 31.24, 'If I have made my gold my hope, or said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence. If I have rejoiced because my wealth is great, and because my hand hath gotten much.' Job, to vindicate himself from hypocrisy, reckoneth up the usual sins of hypocrites, and among the rest this is one, To make gold our hope, and fine gold our confidence. He had before

named extortion and oppression, and now carnal confidence. It is not enough that our wealth be not gotten by fraud, cozenage, and extortion; but we must not trust in it, nor make it our confidence, Luke12.15-21. The rich man is not charged, that he had gotten his goods wickedly, but that he had trusted in them - 'Soul, eat, drink, and be merry, thou hast goods laid up for many years.' Men think them to be the staff of their lives, and the stay of their posterity ; therefore it is said, 'The rich man's wealth is his tower,' as elsewhere it is said, ' The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.' A godly man thinks himself never safe till he be gotten within the verge of the covenant, till he be within the munition of the rocks that God hath provided for the safety of his soul. But the rich man, till he be walled and entrenched within his wealth, he never thinks he is safe and secured against all the changes and chances of this present life; and so God is laid aside, not 'the name of the Lord,' but his wealth is his 'strong tower.' Therefore is covetousness called idolatry, and a covetous person an idolater, Eph. 5.5. It is not so much because of his love to money, as because of his trust in money. The glutton loveth his gullet, and the gratifications of his appetite; he makes his 'belly his god,' but he doth not trust in his belly-cheer, thinks not to be protected by it, as the covetous person doth by his estate, and so becometh an idolater, making the 'creature his god.' The covetous man is an idolater, because he robs God of the chiefest respect the creature can show to him, which is confidence and trust; he thinks he is the better and safer, because of the abundance of his goods.

(2.) By experience, I shall prove first it is incident to all men, and that they are ensnared who are least sensible of it.

1st, it is incident to all men. Every man is naturally an idolater, and he makes the creature his god; few or none are free from this idolatry; we all stick to the creature too much. The rich, the poor, all sorts of men, may be comprised under this censure. The poor cannot be exempted, for those that have not wealth idolise it too much in fancy and conceit, they imagine what a happy thing it is to be in such a case - oh, had they wealth, this were enough to make them happy! and because they have not, therefore they trust in those that have it, which is idolatry upon idolatry; therefore it is said, Ps. 62.9, 'Surely men of low degree are vanity,

and men of high degree are a lie;' therefore a lie, because they disappoint those that trust in them, to the wrong of God. To appearance, men of low degree can do little or nothing, but men of high degree are a lie. It supposeth a promise, and a breach of promise. Men of high degree tempt us to trust in them, and then they will surely prove a lie. The miscarriages of the poor are by a servile dependence on such as have not power to hurt or help them, if God will not; they are apt to say, I shall lose such a friend, hazard his frowns and displeasure, all their hopes are built upon his favour, so they come to displease God. But chiefly this sin is incident to the rich: Ps. 62.10, 'If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.' Usually, as our estate grows, so doth our confidence, the distemper is bred up in us by degrees. Great men, their minds are secretly and unawares enchanted with their estates, and delight in the fruition of them, and from thenceforward we begin to date our happiness, and so grow secure, and neglectful of God and holy things. Many that are in want despise wealth, and live in actual dependence upon the providence of God; but as soon as they begin to have somewhat of the creature, their hearts begin to value their estates, as if they could live alone, and without God, and then they are altogether intent about increasing their store, or keeping and retaining that which they have gotten. As Antigonus's soldier, who had a grievous disease upon him, yet fought valorously, but when cured, became as timorous as others, because then he began to prize his body; so when we are poor our hearts may be taken from the creature, but when riches increase, we begin to think that our 'mountain stands strong;' and that now we are secure against all the strokes and changes of providence.

2d. It is a secret sin that is found in those that are least sensible of it. We are blinded with foolish and gross conceits, and are apt to think that a man doth not make money his idol if he doth not pray and offer sacrifice to it, and adore his gold with outward ceremonies, as the heathens did their idols of gold and silver; whereas the sin is to be determined, *non exhibitione ceremoniarum, sed oblatione concupiscentiarum*, saith Gregory - not by formal rites of worship, but by the working of the heart towards it. Many carnal christians are idolaters in affection; though not by external rites of worship, yet in the inward workings of their heart. We smile at the vanity of the heathens that worshipped stocks and stones, and

onions and garlic, and yet we do worse, though more spiritually; we worship the creature, and set it up instead of God. Though we do not actually say to gold, 'Thou art my confidence,' or use such gross language to riches as, You shall deliver me, or, I will put my trust in you; yet our hearts do secretly say so when we make it our main care to get or gain wealth, Therefore it is not enough that you break not out into such actual thoughts. Remember, there are implicit as well as explicit thoughts; this is the interpretation of our actions when we do not make God our portion, but trust in the abundance of our wealth; our hearts say so, Thou art our confidence, and we do not perceive it. Many declaim against the vanity of outward things, and yet their hearts secretly trust in them. There is a difference between speaking as an orator and acting as a Christian. Many may make it their common theme and common place; they grant the creature is vain, and wealth but an unstable possession, because they are in judgment convinced of the vanity of them. Men will say, We know well enough money is but refined earth, and we esteem as basely of it as others do; but their hearts work towards it, and they are loath to part with it. Their 'inward thought is that their houses shall endure for ever,' Ps. 49.12. This is not the fruit of habituated meditation, or mature deliberation, stilt money hath thy heart and trust, and thou thinkest thou canst not be happy without it. He that gives God good words is not said to trust in him; so he that gives the world bad words, that can speak contemptuously of the creature, yet he may trust in the creature all the while.

[2.] I will endeavour to show you the evil of the sin, and how great it is.

(1.) Job saith, chap. 31.24, it is a denying of God, to make gold his confidence. You take away God's honour, and wholly lay him aside. Do not flatter yourselves, a man cannot trust in God and riches too: Jonah 2.8, 'And they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.' You renounce God by trusting in wealth. The same altar will never serve God and Dagon; the Philistines could not bring it to pass, do what they could; nor will the same heart serve for God and the world, Now consider what dishonour this is to leave God for the creature; it is as if a woman should leave her husband, and dote upon her slave, or as if a fool should throw away his treasure, and fill his chest with coals; or take away his precious garments, and fill his wardrobe with dung.

(2.) And then it is idolatry, the setting up of another God. We first commit adultery, by diverting our love and esteem from the true God, and then we commit idolatry, by fixing our hope and expectation in the creature. Trust is only due to God. Now by trusting in worldly pelf you dethrone God, and put money in his place; therefore it is said, Col. 3.5, 'coveteousness which is idolatry;' and there is a parallel expression: Eph. 5.5,' Nor covetous man, who is an idolater.' Mammon is the idol, and the worldling the priest. The inward worship is esteem and trust, and the outward care and endeavour is to wallow in wealth. All their care is about their present accommodations, whereas a man's main care should be for heaven and grace, and for other things he should refer himself to God's allowance.

(3.) This must needs be a very great sin, for it is the ground of all miscarriage in practice. When men think they cannot be happy without money, they dare not obey God, for fear of offending mammon; they shall lose their wealth, which is their happiness: 1 John 5.3-5, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the son of God? It is notable, when the Spirit of God speaks of 'keeping the commandments,' he presently speaks of 'victory over the world.' What is the connexion and contexture between these two sentences? The world, that is the great hindrance of keeping the commandment; it hinders the soul from looking after heavenly things. It is impossible a man should fix his heart on things above, unless he be weaned from trust in the world. All our esteem of riches comes from the trust in them. If men were truly persuaded that all things were vain, they would make out after other satisfactions; but men think there is no want in their condition, therefore they neglect heaven.

(4.) It is the ground of all disquiet and discontent of mind. If a man would live a happy life, let him but seek a fit object for his trust, and he would be safe; we lose the equal poise of our spirits, because we bind up our life and happiness with the life and presence of the creature. David saith, Ps. 30.6,7, 'I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved, my mountain standeth strong. Thou didst hide thy face,

and I was troubled.' When once we begin to think of a strong mountain, and set up our hopes and heart here, it doth but make way for a great deal of trouble. A man shall never want trouble that misplaceth his trust; he will always be up and down as the creature is. Whereas a christian whose heart is fixed in God is like the nave and centre of a wheel, it is still in its own place and posture, though the wheel move up and down; such christians keep their spirits in an equal balance in all providences. A child of of God whose heart is fixed on God, though there be a great change made in his condition, he is where he was still; but a wicked man, his hope and comfort ebbs and flows with his estate; when his estate is gone, his confidence is gone. It is a sad thing to have our hopes fixed upon that which is subject to so many casualties, the waves, the wind, the fire, the wrath of man, the undermining of thieves, the unfaithfulness of a debtor. Certainly we shall never have peace till our confidence be rightly placed. Ps. 112.7, it is said of a godly man, 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.' Why? Because 'his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' Though there come messenger upon messenger, as to Job, one bringing him news of a bad debt, another of a loss at sea, another of an accident by fire, a tempest, an earthquake, or it may be of the violence of thieves, or robbers, he is not 'afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed,' trusting in God. As Job, he was equally poised and equally balanced in spirit, his joy doth not ebb and flow with the news that is brought to him. But now see the contrary in wicked men: Jer. 49.23, they have heard evil tidings, therefore their heart fainteth. The enemy was broken into the country, all their estate that lay upon the borders was lost, for of that the prophet speaks; this causeth faintness and trembling at the heart. It is a sad thing to put your joy and your contentment under the creature's power. Now till your trust be rightly placed, so it will be.

(3.] The third thing is, to give you the signs by which this confidence may be discovered. I will give you but three plain evidences:
by your care to get wealth;
by your thoughtfulness in the possession of it;
and by your grief for the losing of it.

(1.) By your carking care in getting an estate; when men cumber themselves with much business, and have confidence in the means, with neglect of God, it is a sign

we think we cannot live without an estate. A man that is always getting crutches showeth that he cannot go alone. There is a lawful labour. Wealth may be sought for the necessaries of life, and for the exercise of good works; but when men make it their main aim to get an estate, it is a sign they place their happiness in it; they make it their chiefest good, and utmost end. Now because it is hard to distinguish honest labour from worldly care, you must examine it by the disproportion of your endeavours in spiritual and heavenly things. Our Saviour concludeth his parable against trusting in riches: Luke 12.21, 'So is he that heapeth up treasures to himself, and is not rich towards God.' Men make most provision for the world, and a little slender care serves for heaven. They have no care to provide suitably for their souls; all their endeavours are to leave their posterity an estate, but they are not so careful to see grace in their hearts. That which they desire is to see them well matched, well provided for, but are not troubled about their carnal or unregenerate estate. They can be contented with slight assurance in the matter of heaven, but all things seem too little to settle their estate upon earth. A little degree of sanctification serves the turn, but in the world they would still have more and more, join house to house, and field to field, not faith to faith, and virtue to virtue. They have a lean soul. and a fat estate: they suffer the lean kine to devour the fat - when they suffer worldly cares to eat up all their vigour and strength, which they should reserve for communion with God. Bernard saith, *Felix domus ubi Martha queritur de Maria* - Oh that is a blessed family where Martha can complain of Mary! Luke 10.40. She complains Mary was too much in spiritual things. But alas! it is usually quite contrary: Mary may complain of Martha - all our care and endeavours are spent in the world, and we content ourselves with some drowsy devotion towards God. When there is such a disproportion, this is a sign men had rather enjoy wealth than God. Heavenly things should have the first place, and our principal strength: Mat. 6.37, 'Seek first the kingdom of God;' but you are all for the fatness of an outward portion, neglect heavenly things, and are for that which would perpetuate your names on earth.

(2.) When in possessing wealth you look upon it as the surety and pledge of your happiness and felicity, you then place the chief stay and trust of your souls

in the things of this life. When a man hath gotten an estate, then he grows proud, and drunk with temporal happiness, as if he were above fate, and all the changes to which the creatures are obnoxious; this is a sign men dote upon their wealth, amid make a god of it. Vain admiration always ends in vain expectation. We think we are above the control of providence, we have enough for us and ours: Luke 12.19, 'Soul, take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years.' When God gives us an estate, we think we have enough to make ourselves and children happy. Oh, it is good to keep the heart sensible of the changes of providence every moment; and when we glitter most in the splendour of an outward estate, let us remember man at his best estate is but vanity. Many times we cannot roast that which we have got in hunting; God may blast all in an instant. But especially if this security put you upon injurious practices, when a man dares venture upon a sin in a confidence that his greatness and wealth shall bear him out. When men wax insolent to God; and proud and injurious to men, and all upon confidence of their present greatness, as if they were sufficiently secured and fenced against all changes whatsoever - when they grow fat and wanton against God and men, as Deut. 32.15, this is that the Spirit of God speaks against, Ps. 62.10, 'Trust not in oppression, be not vain in robbery;' when men care not what wrong they do to their inferiors because they are sure and safe, as if God could not bring them down, surely and certainly, and suddenly and wonderfully, by strange and unexpected means.

(3.) When we are loath to let them go upon just and convenient reasons. As suppose, if they be taken away by providence, men's hearts are so depressed as if all their happiness were gone. Job was otherwise; he had messenger upon messenger of evil tidings, yet blessed God. It was Gregory's observation, *Sine dolore amisit, quia sine amore possidet*; Job lost his estate without grief, because he possessed it without love and trust. His heart was not fixed upon his estate, therefore he parts with it most easily. Carnal men are troubled when their riches take wing, because they are their god. Their hearts are depressed beneath the heart of man, because their happiness is gone; as Micah said, 'Ye ask me what aileth me, when ye have taken away my gods.' Or else they are loath to let them go voluntarily, upon any good occasion. A carnal man, he holds his life by them,

he cannot be happy without them; therefore he dares not dispose of them for holy uses, or for his own relief.

[4.] To give you the remedies and cures of this distemper.

(1.) God only can do it thoroughly, and to purpose. We read, Mark 10.23, that 'Jesus looked round about, and said unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' and ver. 24, 'The disciples were astonished at his words.' But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, 'Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' Then it is said, ver. 26, 'And they were astonished out of measure, and said, Who then can be saved? And Jesus said, With God all things are possible.' It is impossible to enter and trust; it is as impossible almost to have it and not to trust in it. This blessing then is to be sought of God with greater care and diligence; you should put up more frequent prayers for this grace than you do for wealth and life. To have a competent measure, and not to trust in it, it is a greater blessing than the greatest abundance in the world. Therefore let this be one of your constant prayers, 'Lord, let not my heart be set upon these things.'

(2.) Man must use endeavours, for we confute our prayers by idleness; for when a man doth not use the means, he shows his designs are not hearty. Now the means to attain this are these following -

1st. Frequent practices of charity: we should be as careful to employ wealth to charitable uses, as worldlings are to gather wealth: Luke 12.33, 'Sell that you have, and give alms. Provide for yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, and moth corrupteth not.' There is no remedy nor cure, but only in laying them out, and then they will be ours for ever. This is a real profession, you look upon all these things as vanity, and only useful as you have a further opportunity of service of doing good. There is no means to prevent the danger of trust and confidence, but a constant exercise of good works; these are the true riches. The way of destroying idols was by crumbling them to pieces. It is better to be a steward than a treasurer; to have

them in our hands, that we may give them to others, than to have them in our hearts, that we may adore them ourselves; therefore while thou possessest them, it is not thou that art rich, but thy chest; but when thou distributest them, and art rich in good works, these are the riches that can never be lost.

2nd. Make but suppositions, and see how thou canst bear the loss of all things when but represented in conceit and imagination - If God should blast my estate, if such a friend should prove unfaithful, such a debtor defraud me. The church, Hab. 3.17,18, doth make a supposition - ' Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, and the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Suppose that God should send a dear year, and there should be scarcity in all things, what then? Can I comfort myself in these things? The fool in the Gospel durst not suppose what might fall out that night; it would discompose all his mirth to have thought of a sudden stroke that night, Luke 12.19,20. He dreams of many years. This would keep your souls in an equal poise, either to keep or forego an estate. Men do not acquaint their souls with suppositions of loss and danger, and so grow secure.

3rd. Meditate upon the vanity of the creature. Talk hardeneth and deludeth men, but meditation leaveth deep effects. There is a moral efficacy in constant and serious thoughts; the world puts fair titles on them, and calls them goods, treasure, and substance; but God calls it shadows, lies, running after shadows. How different are the notions of the word from those of the world; the word looks upon it as a vain shadow: Ps. 39.6, 'Surely every man walketh in a vain show, surely they are disquieted in vain;' the word shows they are not only vanity, but lies: Ps. 62.9, 'Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie.' The creatures lie by our own thought, they abuse us by our trust, and they will surely prove a lie. A man should not rest in any creature, unless he hath a mind to be deceived; now no man would be deceived. Nay, the scripture speaks of them as if they were nothing: Prov. 23.5, 'Wilt thou cast thine eyes upon that which is not?' In comparison of better things, they are rather said not to be than to be. And consider, riches take to themselves wings; the thief, the sea, the

displeasure of the magistrate, the violence of the soldier, and our own unadvised words many times are wings to riches, that make them fly away from us; but the more enduring substance is in heaven, Heb. 10.34.

4th. Improve experiences to this end and purpose; it is a lesson God hath taught us now in these times. Men were never more greedy of the world, and God never more showed us the vanity thereof; the greatest men have proved a lie to their dependents; how many have experience of these things! They, and their fathers and grandfathers, have laid out all their wit, labour, and toil to get a great estate, and are deprived of it all in a moment, and now it is bestowed upon others. Thou hast known many great ones who are now no more thought of; either they are dead and gone, and others enjoy their places; or if alive, their flower is gone, they live like a neglected stalk. How often hath God stained all worldly glory, and the world will do so still; it will forget thee, as it hath forgotten many others. How many in these times have had heirs that they never thought of, those that have been strangers to their blood and family! Job 27.17, 'Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver.' They may provide and heap up a great estate, and think now they and their families are ennobled for ever; but riches take wing, and God bestows them upon others that we never dreamed of.

5th. Lay up several gracious maxims and principles in the soul.

1. None ever trusted in the world, but they had cause to complain. Mammon's drudges have hard work, and worse hire and wages; as Jacob after he served seven years, and when be expected beautiful Rachel, he receives Leah. Riches will surely disappoint the trust you put in them; they promise contentment, but that promise is but a lie; they do but distract the head and heart with cares. They promise peace, plenty, and security, which they can never bring to you. They are called 'deceitful riches.' A man should not trust in any creature, unless he had a mind to be deceived. At death especially we shall see how the world hath beguiled us: Job 27.8, 'What is the hope of the hypocrite, when God shall take away his soul?' a sorry gain and purchase. When our service is ended, we see what kind of wages mammon giveth us in the day of wrath: Zeph. 1.18, 'Neither

their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath.' Justice will not be bribed with money, we cannot buy a pardon. Consider, if a man had taken a long voyage to the Indies, and had brought many commodities with him, and not one fit for the traffic of that place; just so it is here, we are bound for a city where gold and silver will make no traffic, thou canst not buy one hour for repentence. Consider how justly the saints and blessed angels may laugh at thee when thy foolish trust is disappointed - Lo, this is the man that trusted in his riches, and would not make the Lord his portion.

2. The more wealth, the more danger. In a net, when great fishes are taken, the lesser escape; so it is in public calamities, they that are the poorest, many times have the best portion. A tree that hath largeness and thickness, being loaden with boughs, provoketh others to lop it, or else it falleth by its own weight. Nebuchadnezzar, when he had forced Jerusalem, he carries away the princes and noble captains, but the poor were left in the land. Therefore never believe the world, it promiseth life, continuance, advancement of families, but no man can assure himself to hold his wealth one night; remember, you have to do with a cheater.

3. Thy estate, it is not thy life. Thy life and happiness is not bound up with thy estate; Luke 12.15, it lies not in abundance, but in the providence of God.

4. Remember, God is the author of all the wealth we enjoy. This will draw off the heart from the creature, that it may with more entire trust fix and fasten upon God himself. In want and distresses we see the creature is vain, but few will own this in abundance: Prov. 10.22, 'It is the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich.' By what means soever thou hast thy estate; if it comes to thee by inheritance, yet it is God that gave it to thee; it is of God's grace, that a man was born of such rich friends, not of beggars. If thy estate comes by gift, remember, the hearts of men are in God's hands, and it is he that can make them able and willing. If thy estate comes by industry and skill, and diligence in thy calling, bless God that gives thee thy skill and success; many have not the skill, and many have not the success that have as great skill as thyself,

God the Highest Lord - Denying Self-will

I now come to speak to that branch of denying, self-will.
As God is the supreme lord and law-giver, so we are to deny our self-will. Now our submission to God is double, to his laws, and to his providence; we submit to his laws by holiness or obedience; we submit to his providence by patience.

First, We submit to his laws by obedience. Our will is to give place to the will of God: Col. 4.12, 'That you may be perfect and complete in all the will of God.' This was the prayer of Epaphras, and this should be the aim of every christian, to bring his will to a perfect conformity to the will of God.

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

First, For the difficulty of this part of self-denial; that will appear if we do but consider -

1. That man's will is the proudest enemy that Christ hath on this side hell, it resisteth Christ in all his offices. In his kingly office and reign: Luke 19.14, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' God hath set up Christ as king, and the world votes it in the negative - ' We will not have this man.' The great contest between us and God is, whose will shall stand, God's or ours. The soul cannot endure to hear of another king and another sovereign, because it affects a supremacy, and it cannot endure that any should lord it over us: Ps. 12. 4, 'Our tongues are our own; who is lord over us?' Man would have the command of his own actions. A proud creature cannot endure to hear of fetters and restraints. The rebellion of the world against Christ was 'to cast away his bands and cords,' Ps. 2; so Jer.2.31, 'We are lords, we will not come at thee.' They would be absolute, and without God. This is so rooted in our nature that Satan, when he sets heretics at work, he puts them upon holding out this bait of worldly liberty and freedom from the reign and sovereignty of God: 2 Peter 2. 18, 'They promise liberty, but are themselves servants of corruption.' The great rage and tumult of the world is to break the bands and cords, and to loosen us from our obedience to God. The proud will of man cannot endure to hear of an higher lord; this hindereth his reign in the heart, and slighteth the offers of his grace: John 5.40, 'You will not come to me, that you

might have life.' Christ comes with riches of grace, and desires entertainment, and we neglect him, and are taken with the basest creatures. If a king should come to a subject's house and desire entertainment, and he should neglect him, and talk with base fellows, this were a mighty affront put upon him. Yet this is our disposition towards Christ; he comes to dispense comforts and graces, and we will not entertain him, but are taken up with the creature. All that Christ hath done is, to us, lost for want of our consent. All things are ready prepared, decreed in heaven, only the guests are not ready, they will not come, will not consent, and ratify the decrees of heaven, in short, this is the cause of all sin, and of all the disorder of the creature: James 1.14, 'Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed.' Man taketh himself to be lord over his own actions, and enacts contrary laws to God, in the court of his own heart, and is so wedded to his own affections, that he accounts his lusts himself, and can as well endure to have his sin reproved as a member of his body to be cut off.

2. The difficulty of it will appear again if we consider, the will is far more corrupted than any other faculty of the soul. The understanding is much blinded, but the will is more depraved and averse from God. The mind of a carnal man hath a little light, which is apt to suggest some good motion. As Job's messenger said, 'I alone am escaped to tell thee;' so may conscience say, I alone am escaped out of the ruins of the fall to suggest some good motion to thee. But now the will doth more abhor and refuse good than the understanding is ignorant of it; there is some light in the understanding, but there is nothing but sin in the will. Many a man is often convinced, his understanding is gained before he is converted; they see better things, see what is good, before they choose them. **The last fort Christ gains in the heart is the will of man.**

3. Consider, the will is not subdued by all the methods and external arts of grace which God useth to gain the soul. The Lord makes a challenge in Isa. 5. 3, 4, 'Judge between me and my people, what could be done more for my vineyard than I have done?' What could God do more than to provide a Christ, a gospel, a gracious covenant? and yet all this doth not gain with man. There we have the highest motives to allure us, the strongest arguments to persuade us, the greatest terrors to affright us, yet the soul will not yield. Oh, what sweet motives have we

to come in to God: the offer of Christ; the promise of heaven and glory! God outbids all the world. What will you have more? You have my Son to die for you, my grace to help you, heaven to reward you. God hath contrived a sweet plot of grace, but the will of man slights all. The devil, he cannot bid so fair for your heart, yet men give up their souls to him. He cannot promise you everlasting glory. Can Satan give you such recompenses as God? The world cannot assure you of everlasting happiness. You may die, or these things may fly away from you. The devil was never buffeted for you; he endured no agonies, shed no blood for you; he seeks to undo you all he can, therefore 'Come to me,' says Christ. But the sum of all is in Mat.23.37, 'I would, but you would not.' When God comes with external offers, with fit accommodation of means, with all necessary circumstances and methods of grace, yet the sinner turns back. Christ renews messengers, yet the proud will of man saith, 'I will not: Ps. 58.5, 'They will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.' All the charms of grace will not prevail, they stop their ears; Christ's blood may stand as cheap as common blood for all this, if God did not come in with an act of power. Nay, further, if he should threaten and inflict judgment, yet all will not work to soften the heart and subdue the will of man, without an almighty efficacy and influence. The greatest terrors are of no force. Judgment may break the back, but not the heart. Pharaoh was crossed again and again, God multiplies plague upon plague, yet his will stood out - 'I will not let the people go.' When God knocks upon us by the hammer of judgment, yet it will not break the flint and the rock and adamant that is in our will. The bad thief had one foot in hell, yet he blasphemes still. Not only the standers-by, but one of the thieves derideth Christ on the cross.

4. When the will is in part renewed and cured, yet still it is apt to recoil and return back again to its old bondage. How often do the children of God complain of weariness, deadness, and straits, continual reluctation of the flesh: Gal. 5.17, 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, so that you cannot do what you would.' A child of God cannot do what he would ; when his will begins to be set towards heaven, it is very much broken and distracted: Rom. 7.18, 'To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.' When we are gone out of Sodom, we are apt to look back again. And this will be our condition till we come

to heaven: the flesh will rise up in arms against every holy motion, and our fetters hang upon us, till we come into Christ's arms. We are not only at first conversion like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; but afterward still we find there is an unruly will, not fixed with obedience to the will of God.

Secondly, To give you motives and arguments to enforce this kind of self-denial.

1. The soul is never renewed till the will be tamed and subdued to God. The soul can never be said to be regenerated till the will be renewed. The new creature begins in the mind, but is never perfected till it come to the heart, till we 'put off the old man with his lusts,' Eph. 4.22,23. Till our natural inclinations be altered - till grace be placed in the centre of the heart, corruptions will recoil. When the bird's wings are broken, then it can fly no longer; so when once the will is broken, then the sinner is subdued, and taken captive by grace. The mind is only the counsellor, the will is the monarch ; till this be done, you cannot look upon yourselves as new creatures.

2. Because no creature can be *sui juris* at his own dispose, and to live according to its own pleasure. If any might plead exemption, then certainly Christ, as man, might, because of the glorious fellowship that was between the human and divine nature. But see, when Christ took human nature, he was bound to submit his human will to the Godhead; when he took our nature, he took our obligation upon himself, and therefore he saith, Heb. 10.9, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.' When Christ came into the world, this was his work, to do his Father's will. He brought himself into the condition of a creature, and then, having taken our nature, he was to take our obligation upon himself, which Christ performed. Christ and his Father had but one will between them both : John 5.30, ' I seek not my own will, but the will of my Father that sent me;' there was a perfect resignation. Christ did so obey as if he had no private human will of his own, but only the will of his Father. Christ did not look to his own ends, to the safety and conveniency of his human nature, but to what was his Father's will. And wilt thou stand upon terms with God? And dost thou think thou art too great to submit and stoop to God? Nay, consider the holy angels, that have many privileges above man, yet they have no exemption front duty and homage; they have many

privileges, freedom from troubles, sicknesses, diseases, and from all the infirmities and clogs of the flesh, but they are not freed from obedience - 'They obey his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word,' Ps. 103.23. - The Psalmist speaks of the angels there, they still owe homage to their creator. Those courtiers of heaven are servants of God, and followers with us in the same obedience. Now Christ in his prayer, Mat. 6., hath referred us to the example of his angels - 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.' You upon earth are not held to a harder law than they are in heaven; they obey his will, and so must you. Certainly, no men are too good nor too great to obey God. If the example of the angels be too high, then look to all the creatures, they obey God, and sometimes contrary to their natural tendency and motion, as the sun stood still; and it is said in the Gospel, Mat. 8. that 'the winds and seas obeyed him.' Man only is eccentric and exorbitant in his motions; they glorify God in their way. The sun shall rise up in judgment against many a carnal wretch. God hath set to them a decree, beyond which they shall not pass; and they obey the laws of their creation, but we are disobedient, and break through all restraints.

3. Consider the right God hath to us, as we are his creatures, and as we are new creatures; as we are bare creatures, we hold our being and all that we have continually from God. Now you know, the more a man holds of a lord, the more homage he is bound to perform. Thou holdest thy life and all thy comforts by his allowance; the more thou hast, the more is due, though usually it be quite contrary: the more we have from God, the more we slight him. *Qui majores terras possident, minores census solvunt* - Many times, they that hold the greatest lands pay the least rent; so the more we hold from God, the less careful we are to give in returns of obedience to him: Jer. 5.5, 'I went to the great men, but they have altogether broken the yoke.' Those that have more means of instruction, that have higher breeding, have greater obligations upon them; but these usually are the worst. A horse that is kept low is easily ruled by his rider; but when he grows lusty and fat, he lifts up the heel against him, and will not suffer the bit; so when men grow great and prosperous, when God hath fenced them with prosperity, then they wax wanton and disobedient. And as we are new creatures: 1 Peter 4.2, ' That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men,

but to the will of God.' The great aim of grace is to cure the disorders of the will, and to bring us into a stricter bond of service to the Lord; therefore usually at conversion this is made explicit by our own solemn vow. A good heart is contracted to Christ, as an evil heart is to the world: Cant. 2.16, 'My beloved is mine.' All that is thine is God's; you have no will of your own, you have given up yourselves to another; take heed of retracting the vows of your solemn covenant and fealty that you have sworn to God.

4. There is a great deal of reason our wills should be given up to the will of God, because we are not able to manage them ourselves. By the laws and customs of all nations fools and madmen are to be ruled by their kindred, not to be left to their own wills, but to the will of another; now naturally we are mad fools, as Titus 3.3, ' Foolish and disobedient,' and have not the guidance of our own will ; therefore it is not fit that it should be left in our power, but given up to God. If we be our own pilots, we shall soon shipwreck ourselves. When God requires the resignation of our will, it is but the taking a sword out of a madman's hands. A man's own will, it is the cause of all the mischief that comes to him, and, at last, of his ruin. *Tolle voluntatem, tolle infernum*, saith Bernard - There would be no hell were it not for the perverseness of a man's will. It is Chrysostom's position, - Man could never be hurt were it not for himself and his own will; others may trouble us, but cannot hurt us; the devil may tempt us, but not hurt us till we consent; the world may frown upon us, but it cannot harm us; so the apostle intimates, 1 Peter 3.13, 'Who can harm you if you be followers of that which is good?' It is presently added in the next verse, 'But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.' Men may trouble you and molest you, but cannot harm you without your own consent. Now since none can harm us but our own will, and since we are unfit guides, it is fit we should have a guardian, and who is wiser than God? The merchant, though he hath stored the ship with goods, yet because he hath no skill in the art of navigation, therefore suffers the pilot to steer it; so though the will be ours, let us give it to God, to manage it according to his good pleasure.

5. It is a very great condescension and blessing that God will take the charge of our will. The strictest rules of religion are to be reckoned among our privileges. It

is the greatest judgment that God can lay upon any creature to give him up to his own will, and to the sway of his own heart; the Lord threatens it when other means are ineffectual: Ps. 81.12, he saith, 'So I gave them up to their own counsel, and to their own heart's lust;' that is a dreadful punishment. So Rom. 1.24, it is said,'The Lord gave them up to uncleanness;' and ver. 26, 'Their own vile affections.' It is worse to be given up to a man's own heart than to be given up to Satan; for a man that is so given up may be recovered again: 1 Cor. 5.5, 'Deliver such a one to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord' this may be for his exercise and trial; but when once a man is given up to himself, to the sway of his own heart, there cannot be a greater judgment. When the sentence of obduration is passed upon us, it is as much as to say, Give him up to hell and utter judgment, as an irrecoverable sinner.

6. It will be great pleasure to us in the issue when once we can get the victory over our own will. There is none have more joy and greater happiness than the angels and spirits of just men made perfect, and yet none have less of their own wills. The angels and blessed spirits perfectly accomplish the will of God, therefore are completely happy. Why should we account that a sad work which is a part of our happiness in heaven? The saints and angels complain not of any burden; yet they have no *velle* and *nolle* of their own, they will and nill as God doth. We think it is a happy thing to have our carnal desires accomplished, and wonder how any can be contented without them; they fancy such great felicity in their way; therefore the world wondereth at the children of God: 1 Peter 1.4, 'They think it strange that you do not run with them into the same excess of riot.' It is pleasant to a woman with child to have what she longs for, but it is much more pleasant to be without the trouble of such longings; so the world thinks it pleasant to have their carnal desires satisfied, but it is a great deal more pleasant to have those desires mortified. Drink is very pleasant to a man in a fever; but who would put himself into a fever to taste the pleasure of drink? Certainly, if a man would be completely happy, he must renounce his own carnal desires. If you would but trust Christ upon his word, you would find it is not so burdensome and grievous as you imagine; you would find 'his yoke to be an easy yoke,' Mat. 11.28, not only as you have help from God, but the very delight and contentment we

enjoy would make it easy. Certainly it will be far better to give up our wills to God, than to the devil. How hard is his yoke, and how small are his wages? A little pleasure here, and eternal pains hereafter.

Thirdly, In the next place, I shall give you some rules which will serve both for direction and trial; it is very needful, for men are apt to flatter themselves with a pretence of obedience; they cry, Lord, Lord! but do not do his commandments. Many will give good words, and because they do not break out into such an actual contest with God, as those rebellious and obstinate wretches, Jer.18.12, ' And they said, There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart;' or as those, Jer. 44.16,17, 'As for the word thou hast spoken unto its in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee, but will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth,' etc., - if they do not break out into such an obstinate and gross contest with God, they think they are safe; but you know, Matt. 21.28, Christ spoke a parable for the discovering of such a hypocritical profession of the two sons; the one said, 'I go sir, and went not;' the other, 'I will not; but afterward he repented and went.' Our Saviour puts the question, 'Whether of the twain did the will of his father?' He that said, I will, but did not, was the worst, because the understanding is somewhat better than the will; therefore men will give God good words. This rebellion is disguised with a promise and pretence of obedience; therefore I shall give some rules which you must observe in denying your own will, and by which you may try your estate.

1. If you will obey God there must be some solemn time when you make this resignation to him. Naturally we are averse, and therefore whosoever is bought in to God, he comes humbly, and like a pardoned rebel, and lays down the weapons of defiance. God, as creator, hath a right to your wills, to your obedience; but he will have his right confirmed by your grant and consent: Rom. 12.1, 'I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.' There can be no more acceptable sacrifice to God than the entire resignation of our wills to him. So Acts 9.6, Paul comes and lays down the buckler, and gives God the key of his own heart - 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Grace had so melted him

that he that had done nothing before but breathe out threatening, now comes humbly, crying out, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' This is that our Saviour intends in that expression, Mat. 11.28, 'Take my yoke upon you.' Jesus Christ will force it upon none, he requires the consent of your own will. In matrimonial contract consent is not to be forced; so Christ doth not force his spouse against her own consent, but she is to make an actual resignation of her own self to God. You must desire God to come and take possession of your hearts.

2. When you give up yourselves to God, it must be without bounds and reservations: Col. 4.12, ' I pray that you may be perfect and complete in the whole will of God;' you must not pick and choose, but take all the will of God as your rule to walk by. So Acts 13.22, 'My servant David, he shall fulfil all my will.' Whatever God will signify to be his pleasure, that will David fulfil. We should so perfectly obey as if we had no will of our own, not reserving a propriety in the least motion or faculty of ours. The least sin, when it is allowed, is a pledge of the devil's interest and right to us. If a man hath bid a thousand pounds for an excellent jewel, will he stand for a penny more? And as we thus entirely resign ourselves at first, so afterwards we must make good our vows; we must remember every action of ours, it is given up to God; every motion, every glance, it is under a rule; and in every lesser action we should say, will God have this to be done or no, and in this manner? and if not, let us not do it for a thousand worlds. Especially in praying - Do I pray as the Lord would have me? Is it with such reverence, with such submission, such affection? I gave up myself to do his whole will, to do the duty, and in that manner which God requires. So in eating and drinking, in all actions you should do all in obedience, in that manner, and to that end that God requires. Every glance of the eye is under a rule: Mat. 5.28, 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' We must use our sight in obedience to God, and so also our hearing.

3. There are some special things which God hath willed, and our master hath given us a special charge about; those things must be done, how distasteful soever to flesh and blood, or prejudicial to our interests. There are three things that have his stamp and seal upon them - 'This is Gods will.' So it is said of

holiness and sanctification: 1 Thes. 4.3, 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification;' so of duties of relation, obedience to magistrates, parents and masters: 1 Peter 2.15, 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, . . . for so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' So of the duty of thanksgiving - 'In everything give thanks to God, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you;' concerning these things we have the express pleasure of God. Now it is great rebellion and disobedience not to obey God's solemn charges. Holiness, it is irksome to nature, and we are apt to forget thankfulness, and we are sensibly tried in duties of relations. God hath expressed his will concerning all these.

4. In all these things we must not only do what God wills, but we must do it, because he wills it; this is pure obedience. The bare signification of God's will and pleasure, it should be reason and motive strong enough. You read, Lev. 19, where God enacteth sundry laws; this is the reason for obedience - ' I am the Lord.' The Lord wills, that is enough to engage the obedience of the creature. So in these places before mentioned, wherein holiness and thanksgiving, and duties of relation are enjoined, this is the reason alleged - ' for this is the will of God.' The angels have no other motive: Ps. 103.22, 'They do his will, hearkening to the voice of his word.' This is that which is motive enough to the angels, God hath signified his will; and we should captivate all our thoughts, and not allow of disputes - 'Have not I commanded thee?' saith God to Joshua. So we should plead with ourselves: when we are slack and sluggish to any duty, say, Hath not the Lord commanded thee? What needeth any farther argument?

5. We must not only do what we know, but we must search that we may know more. This is a great sign of an obedient heart, when we are willing to inquire what duty further God requires: Rom. 12.2, 'That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' A man that hath given up himself to God must make it his constant practice; **we shall be accountable for ignorance as well as neglect.** Many times there may be somewhat of will in ignorance. When men have no mind to practise, certainly they have no heart to know and search: Eph.5.17, 'Be not unwise, but understanding what is the will of God.' Men are loath to sift out truth to the bottom, lest it should prove to their disadvantage;

when they do not understand, or have a confused notion that what God commands is contrary to their lusts, they will not know it distinctly; these do not err in their minds so much as in their hearts. Some err in their mind, out of simple ignorance; others in their heart, they have no mind to know; in such their negligence there is deceit. Therefore search and find out what is the acceptable will of God, that you may have a clearer light and ground for practice. The angels are always hearkening for a new command, Ps. 103.22, so should we be hearkening still. As the beasts, in the Revelation, that stood before the throne: Rev. 4.6, 'They had eyes on either side,' that they might see what God would have them to do; so we should be always searching that we may be perfectly instructed in the will of God.

6. Our obedience is chiefly to be tried by keeping ourselves from our sin, *i.e.*, that sin, which our corrupt will had wedded and espoused. So David: Ps. 18.23, '1 was upright before thee, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.' Herein is our subjection to the will of God chiefly tried, in keeping ourselves from our own sin, which is most vehement and passionate; thy worldliness, thy sensuality, thy pride, according as the corruption runs out, for we are apt to deceive ourselves in generals. God hath left some particular lust for trial; we are to 'deny all ungodliness,' but chiefly this bosom sin. If men were acquainted with their own hearts they would find there is some sin for which conscience smiteth most; a sin, to which temptations are most frequent, of most usual residence and recourse, that is proper to their constitution and course of life. Certainly he is not acquainted with his own heart that doth not know this sin; and he is not acquainted with the work of grace that doth not resist and mortify it. Therefore, though it be never so dear and pleasant, yet herein God will try thy obedience, Mat. 5.29,30. Our Saviour expresseth it 'by cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye.' Though it be as dear and precious to us as a member of the body, as useful as a right hand, or as pleasant as a right eye, yet it must be plucked out; as men to preserve life will cut off a gangrened joint, though it be a right hand; so must our bosom lust be mortified.

7. Because there cannot be an exact conformity to the will of God, our obedience will be discovered by the general bent and course of our lives. A

godly man hath set his face towards heaven; it is true, sometimes he may be turned out of the way, but the course of his life, the bent and care of his soul, is to bring up his heart to a conformity to the will of God. A ship that sails to the east or to the west, may be driven back by a storm, but it makes way again towards the haven; so a man may be overborne by the violence of a temptation, but makes way again, seeks to recover the harbour to which he aims. A godly man is troubled for the breach of God's will above all things; sin is most contrary to the divine will; therefore our obedience will be best known by our care to avoid all sin, and by our grief for committing it.

***Secondly*, I come now to speak to the second branch, submitting to the providence of God.**

As God is the supreme lord and law-giver, so we are to deny our self-will by a subjection to his laws, which is holiness, and by a submission to his providence, which is patience. In renouncing the dominion of the will, it is not enough to do what God commandeth, but to suffer what he inflicteth. his will is declared in his providence as well as in his law. Now, murmuring is an anti-providence, a renouncing of God's sovereignty, as well as open sins and rebellion against his laws; therefore when God's will is declared, though against our dearest comforts and nearest relations, this should be enough. **In stating this submission I shall show -**

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

***First*, How far we are to submit to the will of God in providence. That will be discovered in several propositions.**

1. The lowest degree is, we must be quiet and silent. When a vessel is much shaken, it is apt to plash over; and so usually we give vent to strong passions and to the grievances of the mind, by murmuring and complaint. There is a quick intercourse between the tongue and the heart; and therefore when the heart is burdened and overcharged, it seeks ease and vent by the tongue. The first degree

then of the patience of the children of God is to keep silence Ps. 39.10, saith David, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;' it is God, and therefore the least repining thought must not be allowed; when he saw God in the providence, he durst not speak one word that might savour of discontent. So Lev.10.3, when Aaron had two children taken away by a judgment, and a strange stroke of God's providence, it is said Aaron held his peace. Now this quietness and silence must be, not only in suppressing words of pet and passion, but in calming the affections. When an oven is stopt up, it is more hot within. When David kept his tongue as with a bridle, yet musing made the fire burn and his heart boil against God, Ps. 39.3. And therefore there must be a quiet contentation of the mind and submission of the heart, how grievous soever the affliction be. A stormy mind is as bad, though not as scandalous, as a virulent tongue. You must be contented in your very souls, you should not dare to quarrel with God, nor enter a plea against providence. Thoughts are as words with God; therefore take heed of private disputings. We must obey God with silence and quietness. Believing will give us ease, when disputing cannot..

2. We must not only quietly submit to God, but willingly, and approve and accept the providence. Patience perforce is no grace. God is not glorified, till there be a subscription of the judgment and a consent of the will. A subscription of the judgment, that the providence is good, because God wills it; as Hezekiah said, Isa. 39.8, 'Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken.' Look into the context, and you will find it was a heavy sentence that intimated the transportation of his issue and posterity into Babylon; yet his sanctified judgment calls it good - good, because God would have it so. That is best which God wills. We murmur, we set up an anti-providence, and censure the acts and dispensations of God, as if we could correct them, and do better and fitter for the government of the world. A heathen could say, If this be pleasing to God, let it be, that is best which pleaseth him. And so there must be a consent of the will: Lev. 26.41, 'If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity.' Mark that place: it is not said, if they shall bear the punishment, but 'accept the punishment of their iniquity;' kiss the rod, and welcome the providence. There must be a perfect correspondence between our

wills and the dispensations of God. Look, as the patient doth willingly take bitter pills that make for his health; so should we swallow with willingness and contentment the hardest accidents. We should not take the providence of God as a drench, but as a potion; not as a thing that is enforced upon us, but that to which our sanctified judgment consents. Heathens, if their lives were as good as their works, may shame many christians; they would always be of the same mind with God. Seneca saith, I yield to providence, not out of necessity, but choice. It is best, saith he, because God wills it; if he bless, it is good; if he afflict, it is good; his will is the highest wisdom and reason; therefore faith welcometh all providences, as well as submitteth to them. Rabbi Gamzeth said, This dispensation is good, and this too, because it comes from God. God hath a supreme right to dispose of us according to his own pleasure: Job 9.22, 'Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? and who can say, What dost thou?' Will you resist him in the disposal of what is his own? Which is more equal, that your will should stoop to God's, or God's will be brought down to yours? How little good will it do us to murmur! it is better to submit.

3. We are not only to submit to God, but to love him when he seems to deal most hardly with us. You know in the gospel we are bidden to love our enemies, though they be really so, though they be our fellow-creatures, and we do not depend upon them as we do upon God; therefore much more are we to love God when he only appeareth as an enemy. The Lord Jesus in the height of his sufferings loved his Father, yea, he loved the cross for his Father's sake: John 18.11,' The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink of it?' Christ loved the elect when he suffered most for them, and loved his Father when he suffered most from him - It is a bitter cup, but it is of my Father's sending. Our love should glow most to God in our affliction, so the church professeth, Isa 26.8, 'In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our souls is to thy name;' then did their desires burn and glow towards God. Many pretend to love God when he blesseth them, when they abound in ease and all kind of comfort, but storm as soon as they are touched in the skin. Look, as the heliotrope turns after the sun, not only in a shining but in a cloudy day; so in most gloomy days the bent of our hearts and desires should be after God. So also

among the creatures; the dog loves his master that beats him, and many times when he is half dead he will run after his master. Look, as God sends Israel to the ox, because they did not love him for his kindness - ' The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider,' Isa. 1.3; so we may send you to the dogs for not loving of God when he beats you; we should the rather love him then, because God loves us when he doth correct us - ' He loves whom he chastens.' A man may give entertainment to strangers, but he gives chastisement only to those of his own family. We are of God's household, a part of the charge of God, and therefore are under the discipline of his house. And that is some argument of God's love, that he doth not let us alone. You are put to your trial before men and angels, whether you can love him, when he exerciseth you with sharp afflictions.

4. We must not only love God for the dispensation, but entertain it with cheerfulness and thanksgiving. This should be enough to the creature, that God's will may be fulfilled, though with their loss and smart: Job 1.22,' The Lord hath given, The Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' A child of God is of a different temper from other men: he can fear God for his mercies, and praise him for his justice. We are bound to bless him for taking as well as giving. All God's corrections to his children are administrations belonging to the covenant of grace, evidences of God's faithfulness and means of good to the saints, and therefore deserve to be reckoned in the roll of mercies. Oh, what a good God do we serve, when we can even bless him for afflictions! A christian can sing in winter as well as in the spring. In outward things we can thank a physician for a bitter potion. We can pay a surgeon for emitting off an arm or a leg in a gangrene, and therefore much more have we cause to bless God for his faithfulness to us, for taking as well as giving; but if there were no advantage, it is enough that God's will is accomplished, this is matter of praise. See the instance of David, 2 Sam. 12.20, when he understood that the child was dead, ' He arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of God, and worshipped. Then he came into his own house; and they set bread before him, and he did eat.' Before, he would not rise from the earth nor eat bread, but sat mourning; but when God's pleasure was declared, he goes with

praise into God's house, and with cheerfulness to his own, because he would not seem to oppose or cross God's will, but would bear it with cheerfulness and patience. It is more than enough to thee that it pleaseth God, whose pleasure thou art bound to fulfil, how dear soever it should cost thee.

5. This submission must be manifested, whatever the cross be. As in obedience there must be no reservation, they were not to leave a hoof in Egypt; so in the cross we must make no exceptions, but give God a blank paper, and let him write what he will. I know there is a gradation in our miseries, some are greater and some are less, though every one thinks his own to be most burdensome, because he is under sense and feeling - 'No sorrow like my sorrow.' There is a great deal of difference between afflictions. Those miseries that light upon the outward estate, they do not sit so close as those that light upon the body; and those that light upon the body are nothing so terrible as those that light upon the soul - 'The spirit of a man can bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?' Common generousness will bear up under an outward cross; yet all must be borne with patience and submission. The apostle enumerates sundry sorts of afflictions 2 Cor. 12.10, 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses, for Christ's sake;' if it be racking pains of the body, or if it be reproaches that enter into the very soul; if it be want, calamity, infamy, loss of goods, loss of children or husband, of all dear relations, we must not be our own carvers, but we must take up our cross, as Christ saith. God himself will choose the rod; we are not bound to seek, or choose, or make the cross, but to bear, and take it up, when it is laid upon us. We are not to fill the cup ourselves, but drink that which God tempers in the cup with his own hand. It is not a cup of our own brewing; it is a deceit to say I could bear such and such an affliction with cheerfulness, and patiently, if it were not the loss of dearest and nearest relations. But God knows how to strike in the right vein. The world would soon become an emptiness and solitude if every ignorant creature might be his own physician, and prescribe his own potion. Those that would have a cross of their own carving do not submit to God, but to their own wills. Pride of will shows itself in providence as well as worship, when men cannot bear the cross that God hath laid upon them. Impatience is as great a sin as superstition. Look, as it is

superstitious to carve to ourselves such worship as pleaseth us, so it is a breach of God's law, an entrenchment upon the sovereignty and wisdom of providence, when we would carve out our own cross. How grievous soever the affliction be, we must submit. Suppose it be a submission to death itself, it is not by chance, but by God's disposing hand; God doth but call us back to our old dust, and by the same sovereignty bring us to the grave by which he brought us out of the womb: Ps 90.3, 'Thou turnest men to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men.'

6. This submission must be manifested by preparing ourselves to suffer yet more than we feel for the present in vow and purpose. A christian resigns up himself to the will of God, he hath no will of his own, Lord, turn me into what condition thou pleasest, as David, 2 Sam. 15.26, 'Here I am, do to me as seems good in thine own eyes.' A believer sets his name to a blank, that God may write what he pleaseth; this is to reserve no will of our own. Patience is a very high grace; it doth not only consent to known articles, but refers itself for the future to God. It is a question which is most worthy, obedience or patience; obedience hath a stated rule, all the articles of the covenant are absolutely set down, what God hath required; but patience referreth itself for the future to God, let God write what he will; I am thy creature, it submits to whatever future trial God will appoint. So Acts 21.13, the apostle Paul speaks of greater sufferings - ' I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the Lord Jesus.' If it were a heavier burden, even death itself, I am ready to bear it, I have given up my will to God. So Heb. 12.4, 'You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin;' intimating they should prepare themselves for greater sufferings. The persecution already borne was as nothing; this makes the lesser suffering to be more tolerable. Resolution for the worst that can come, it is a great degree of submission, and will be a very great help, when you are resolved to bear whatever God will inflict; alas! otherwise we shall soon faint and murmur.

7. It is a very high degree of submission to submit to God's dispensation in spiritual wants and troubles. We should not be troubled at whatever we may want without sin, and therefore you should bear spiritual evil with a sweet submission to and acquiescency in the will of God. I shall instance but in three

things to be borne, the want of sensible consolation, spiritual desertion, and many times God's not hearing of our prayers.

[1.] Want of suavities in religion, or of sensible consolation. These are a mere preferment in grace, and we must tarry till the Master of the feast hath bid us sit higher. All the sin is if the comforts of the Holy Ghost be despised, not if they be not enjoyed, when we have low and cheap thoughts of them; it is not the want, but the contempt. Such things as are mere dispensations, and proposed as rewards are different from duties. To want grace, though it be God's gift, that is a sin, because the creature is under a moral obligation; but not to want sensible comfort, because that is merely given, but not required; and therefore when we want these things, we are to be patient. Remember, Christ himself parted with these for a while: when he was in the midst of his agonies, he said, 'Not my will, but thine be done;' it hath relation to the sensible consolations of the Godhead, which Christ felt by virtue of the glorious fellowship - 'Not my will, but thine be done;' this may be God's will to keep us from pride. Therefore when christians would have those redundancies and overflowings of Christ's love at the beck of their own desires, it is a sign they have not learned to submit to God; it argues impatiency, or conceit of merit. Remember, in these sensible consolations there may be more of self-love, and of indulgence to our own appetite, than of obedience. We praise God best when we are contented with what he gives, and contented with what he doth, though it be with our loss. But when men cannot love God nor serve God, unless they be feasted with love and fed with these sensible consolations, it is like peevish children, that will not be quiet till pleased with some bait and sweetness; it is not the Father's will that quiets them, but the apple, or some such external satisfaction. It is an act of obedience to submit to God's mere will.

[2.] In matter of desertion it is good to be sensible of God's withdrawments. But we should be rather troubled about the fault than the punishment, that which causeth God to withdraw the comfort of his presence, for herein God will have his sovereignty and pleasure acknowledged: Phil. 2.13, it is said, 'He giveth both to will and to do, according to his own pleasure.' I confess this is a bitter cup; but remember, Jesus Christ himself hath been our taster. He complains of desertion:

Mat. 27.46, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and we do not deserve to be handled more softly than the Son of God. He complaineth of desertion, to manifest his sense of the evil; but still he saith, 'Not my will, but thine be done.' God may make use of this to humble us for our self-conceits, and for our pride and thoughts of merit, or having an obligation upon God. It is good sometimes to be left to ourselves, and stand upon our own legs, that so we may know ourselves; as God left Hezekiah, that he might show him the pride of his heart. That we might be kept low and empty, and that grace may be exalted, these dispensations are very necessary.

[3.] When God doth not always sensibly bear our prayers. Thought this is a very sad case, to go away from God without a token for good, without any sensible effect of his love, yet God will show us that prayer deserves nothing; therefore when we have wrestled mightily at the throne of grace, yet we may miss. Why? that we may know, though Christ be full and God willing, yet we must have 'grace for grace,' John 1.16; that is, grace for grace's sake, freely. God will make us see we are but unprofitable servants, and he will not give blessings to us but in and through Christ, when we rely upon him. Or else we may ask too coldly, or without esteem of those spiritual blessings, or else thou hast been too earnest for temporal blessings, and God will not give thee poisoned weapons to offend thyself. God knows what is best, and his will must be submitted to.

***Secondly*, For the grounds upon which we are to renounce our own will.**

1. The absolute sovereignty of God, and his supreme right and dominion over the creatures, to dispose of them according to his own pleasure. He can destroy and annihilate, and no man can call him to account: Job 9.12, 'Behold he taketh away and who can hinder him? and who can say, What dost thou?' Before what tribunal will you cite God? And where shall he give an account of his dispensations? When he takes away, who can say, Lord, what dost thou do? Every man may do with his own what he pleaseth, why not God? thou art as 'clay in the hand of the potter:' Rom. 9.20, 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' Why should we deny God the common privilege of all

proprietors? If God use us according to his own pleasure, he doth but use that which is his own. A man may cut out his own cloth as he pleaseth. Why should we confine the right of God to narrow limits? If he make us sick, pained, infamous, if he humble us with want, if he should take away our relations, where will you cite God to give an account of this matter? It is injurious to resist a man in the disposal of his own goods; why should we resist God, that hath such a supreme and absolute right over the creature? 1 Sam. 3.18, saith Eli, 'It is the Lord,' - it is he that is the supreme and absolute lord, - 'Let him do whatsoever he pleaseth.' It is good to be satisfied with the will of God, and sit down and say no more; it is the Lord, and he may do with his own as he pleaseth.

2. God can take away nothing from us but what he gave us at the first; we do but return him his own, and we should do it with thanks. When he taketh anything from us, he doth but demand his own goods. Job, chap. 1.22, saith, 'the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be his name.' He that hath taken, gave first. And Seneca hath just such another passage, *abstulit, sed et dedit* - God hath taken; ay! but he gave first, it was his own. So Job 2.12,' Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and not evil?' If God hath left blessings and comforts with us, shall we be grudging when he comes and demands them again, when he did but lend them to us for awhile? Remember, God takes but a part that gave all, and it is his mercy that he hath left thee anything.

3. The excellency of God's will. God is infinitely good, wise, and powerful; he knows what is better for us than we do for ourselves. Unless we will blaspheme God, and count him evil, or ignorant, or impotent and weak, why should we murmur? Alas! we are poor, short-sighted, narrow-witted creatures; it is best to leave our condition to the wisdom of providence. Say, when thou goest to murmur and repine against God, when God takes away thy comforts, estates, relations, Who am I, that I should prefer my will and my judgment before God's? We pray daily 'Thy will be done,' and shall we confute our own prayers? consider, which is more equal, that thy will should be conformed to God's or God's stoop down to thine? It is the child's happiness that the father's will is his rule, not his own. God's will is more safe. We usually make our reason the highest court, and enact laws, and then would have God bound by them. Should the sheep choose

their pasture, or the shepherd? God shapeth your condition, and cutteth out your allowance.

4. Ground : the honour the Lord doth us, that he should take us in hand, though it be to correct us; Job speaks of it with admiration, Job 7.17,18, 'Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?' It is meant of corrective dispensations, that God should spend his thoughts upon such an unworthy creature, that God should try him in a way of affliction; how grievous soever the chastisement be, yet that God should look after him is wonderful. If a king should undertake to form the manners of a mean subject, it is a great abasement; so that God should look down upon us from the height of his imperial glory: Job 14.2,3, 'Man cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not; and dost thou open thy eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?' 'What is man?' saith he. Man is but a vapour, and 'dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one?' Wilt thou look upon such a shadow of clay? upon such an unclean sinful creature? We are unworthy of the very anger of God, as a beggar is unworthy the anger of a prince, or a worm of the indignation of an angel.

5. Whatever God doth to his children, it is with aims of good; he is goodness itself, more apt to do us good than the fire to burn or the sun to shine. Consider, God's nature is most alien from other courses, he doth not 'willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.' It is for our sakes that he puts on this rigour; the scripture speaks of it as a forced dispensation. If a friend should undertake a business that is contrary to his nature and disposition to pleasure us, we are the more obliged to him: so it is God's great condescension that he should take the rod in his hand, and that he should use it to our profit, we are bound to acknowledge it. If God doth punish, it is not that he delighteth in punishment; but he doth punish us here that he may not punish us for ever. Who would not rejoice, that, if when he owed a debt of a thousand pound, the creditor should require but twenty shillings? It is God's mercy that we shall suffer in this world, that we may not suffer in the world to come: 1 Cor. 11.32, 'When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.' There is often a great deal of mercy in affliction. After the sin of Adam, there

could not be a more gracious nor more wise invention than affliction to wean our affections from the delight of the senses, and to meeken the spirit. And if God should not deal thus with us, we had cause to complain, as if he were too gentle; as we have cause to complain of that physician that lets his patient die, because he will not put him to the trouble of physic; or as Eli's children had cause to complain of their father, because he was so indulgent; and Amnon of David. It is a great judgment to be let alone. When God was angry with Ephraim, what is his sentence? Hosea 4.17, 'Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.' It is an honour that God is mindful of us, that he will give us suitable corrections. If a man see a serpent creeping upon another while he is asleep, though he give him a great blow, yet it is a courtesy to him to kill that serpent that would destroy him; so God doth but kill that serpent that would kill us. We are chastised, but it is only to destroy and kill sin. But suppose we could see no good in the affliction, yet we are bound to believe there is good in it, and not to have hard thoughts of God. Alexander, when his physician was accused that he would poison him in such a potion, takes the letter in one hand, and shows it his physician, and drinks off the potion in confidence of his trust and fidelity. Distrust will make lies of God, as if he meant to hurt and wrong us; but we should say as Christ did, 'The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' We should trust God's potion. We are dearer to God than we can be to ourselves; he is more solicitous for our good, than we are for our own. God loves the lowest saint infinitely more than the highest angels love God.

6. Impatience doth not lessen the evil, but double and increase it: takes not away the bitterness of the affliction, but makes it bitterer, and is the wormwood and gall of it. All the evils in the world consist in the disorder of the will, in the disagreement that is between the object and the appetite. Man's will is the cause of all his misery; we are troubled because it falls out otherwise than we would have it. He that wills what God wills may have somewhat to exercise him, but hath nothing to trouble him. All the evils that we meet with in the world come merely from our own will.

***Thirdly*, for the helps by which we might bring our hearts to yield to the will of God.**

1. See God in all things. This is the first principle of submission: Ps. 39.10, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;' that made David quiet and altogether silent. So Hezekiah speaks of his patient submission to his disease and the sentence of death: Isa. 38.15, 'What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it.' That passage, though it be in the song of thanksgiving, relates not to the deliverance, but to the affliction. As soon as we see God in the providence, it is the duty of a christian to cease and say no more; as he answered the king, I have learned not to dispute with him that can command legions. Why should we contend with the Lord of hosts, unless we can make good our quarrel? Every wheel works according to the motion of the first mover. Creatures are but subordinate instruments of providence. We break our teeth in biting at the nearest link of the chain. Oh! look to the supreme mover, it is God that hath fastened all the links. David was so far from opposing God that he bears the very contumacy of the instrument: 2 Sam. 16.11, 'Let him alone, and let him curse: for the Lord hath bidden him.' This was spoken when Shimei cursed him, and one of the captains would have taken off his head; that was a time rather for humiliation than revenge. As a magistrate, he might have punished him; but 'Let him alone' saith he, I see God in it. Consider, it is God that chooseth men to be instruments of his justice, that by them he may admonish us of our duty. To resist a lower officer of state is to contemn that authority with which he us armed. Consider, instruments are set a-work by God; they could not wag their tongue without God. It is good to see God at the end of causes. Do not think God sits idle in the heavens; providence has no vacancy. Christ saith, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' God is always working, in and by the operation of the creature. We look no higher than the creature, and so are apt to murmur.

2. Wait for changes. Evils foreseen are the better digested and borne; it is like the fitting of the burden before we put it upon our backs. Hereby the cross is made more portable - 'The evil I feared,' saith Job, 'is come upon me.' It is good to look for changes; it is good to look for the affliction before it finds us out, and to keep our mind and heart loose from all comforts. We have great reason to think of changes: we cannot clude the course which God hath set; the cause of suffering is born and hired up with us. We were born in sin, and sin grows as we grow, and

therefore the cross, which is the consequent of sin, shall not be taken away till we are taken out of the place of sinning. God might have translated us to heaven presently, without trouble, butt there is a method in all his works. He might have caused the earth to bring forth bread as well as an ear of corn but he would have it first to grow, them to lie threshed, then ground, then baked, and so fitted for man's use; so there are many preparative changes to fit us for heaven, as the stones were squared before they were set in the temple. He were a madman that should expect his bread to grow out of the ground before the corn were cleansed by the flail, or bruised by the mill-stone, or baked in an oven; or should expect the stones of a building to come together by chance; so it is a great madness to think to go to heaven without changes and afflictions. We must expect to 'enter into the kingdom of God by much tribulation.'

3. Moderate and lessen your carnal desires. Our afflictions are very much heightened by our affections. We set up a court of providence in our own hearts, enact laws there, and speak of what we would do and do not reserve the exceptions of God's providence. Oh! it is very hard to repeal the decrees and sentence of our own will when once it is set and determined; when we have decreed that thus we will do, this we will have, then we are vexed if God will not let it stand; this causeth storms and murmurs against the will of God: Jer. 45.5, 'And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.' When men's desires are for great things, especially in uncertain times, they do but it dress up a trouble and sorrow for themselves. Self-love and self-seeking always make way for self-trouble; and therefore keep your desires low. It is far easier to add than to subtract; and it is far better to rise with providence, when the master of the feast 'bids us sit higher,' than to be compelled to descend and lie in the dust. Therefore till God's will be declared it is good to keep the heart in an equal poise for all providences, and not let our will outstart God's: as David said, 2 Sam. 15.26, 'If the Lord hath any pleasure in me, he will bring me back again; if not, here I am, let him do with me what pleaseth him.' He did not dare to pass his vote first, but gives providence the precedency; so should we.

4. Consider, what little cause you have to indulge your own murmuring; guilt is enough to silence any creature. Thou art a creature, and a guilty creature, and

God is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth; let this stop thy mouth. There is always cause from God, and we may still say, as in Ezra 9.13, 'Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities have deserved.' We are now in Babylon, and we might have been in hell. Consider, God is too just to do us wrong. Certainly there is a cause; if he will exchange hell for Babylon; there is much of mercy, but nothing of injustice. But suppose there were no cause visible, God may resolve the reason of his actions into his own will. God is under no law, and thou hast no tie and engagement on him; why should he give an account of his matters? If affliction is not deserved from men, it is to be borne more cheerfully. Whose cross would we bear, the cross of Christ or the thieves? When we suffer as malefactors, we bear the thieves' cross. There is no cause why we should allow our murmuring. Consider the evil of murmuring, search it to the head, and you will find it always comes from pride. The devil is the proudest creature, and the most discontented with his condition. Murmuring is always a fruit of supposed merit, we think we have deserved better. Alas! we are worthy of nothing, and if we have ever so little, we have cause enough to be content. Though you cannot fare as others - though you have not such good trading - though you have not houses so well furnished, yet what have you deserved?

5. Do but interpret your murmuring, what is it? It is but a taxing of God, and it is an high presumption for creatures to tax their creator, as if they were wiser than he; it is, in effect, to say, this is not well done; there is an error in providence, which we would fain correct. If it be good, and best, why should we repine?

6. Consider, what little good will murmuring do us? We should never argue against providence, because we cannot counterwork it. It is best to do that voluntarily which we must otherwise do by force. Submit to God; God will have the better in all contests with the creature: Job 9.22, 'Who can hinder him?' Your comforts, and children, and estates, are in his hands; if he will take them away, who can hinder him? Therefore why should we murmur against him.

God the Chiefest Good - Denying Self-love

The next branch of self-denial is denying self-love. God is the chiefest good and highest object of the creature's respect, and therefore we are to deny self, that is,

self-love. A necessary doctrine. It is said, 'In the latter times, that men should be lovers of themselves,' 2 Tim. 3.1. Men have been always lovers of themselves, in every age of the church; but in the lees and dregs of time this evil shall most reign and prevail. The latter times are inflamed with wars, and so all love to our neighbour is devoured; and with heresies, and so God is neglected, and then there remains nothing but self to be respected and adored. In the abbreviation of divinity, or in a moral consideration, there are made to be but three general persons or beings, God, thy neighbour, and thyself. Now when men have lost their reverence to God, and their charity to their neighbour, self is only left to devour all the respect of the creature.

In treating of self-love we must -
1. See how far it is criminal.
2. Then speak of the branches and kinds of criminal self-love.

First, How far self-love is criminal. To love ourselves is a dictate of nature, and not disallowed by grace. We read not that man is expressly commanded to love himself, because every man is naturally inclined to it - 'No man hath ever hated his own flesh, but loveth it, and cherisheth it,' Eph. 5.29. By natural instinct all creatures move and act to their own good and preservation. But though there be not an express command, yet there is an allowance, it is implied in that precept 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' The thing enforced is love to our neighbour, but the thing implied is love to ourselves. There is an innocent affection planted in nature moving every man to procure his own welfare. In procuring this welfare we have a liberal allowance; nature aimeth only at things necessary, but in grace God hath been indulgent, enlarging the bounds of allowance, and besides necessaries, hath afforded us the conveniences and moderate pleasures and delights of the present life. Therefore the motions of self-love are regular and tolerable as long as they do not entrench upon the privilege of God, but are subject to his will and the laws of sanctified reason. But when are they vicious and sinful? I answer, when they go beyond the limits prescribed, when self-love encroacheth upon the love of God, or the love of our neighbour, when a man loves no other but himself, and makes religion and all to stoop to his private commodities or pleasure. Aristotle in his 'Ethics,' defining self-

love, saith, 'he is a lover of himself that doth all he doth for his own sake, and with respect to himself, to his own pleasure and profit.' But let us rather take the description from the apostle, in two places: Phil. 2.21, 'Those that seek their own things and not the things of Jesus Christ;' and 1 Cor. 10.24, 'That seek their own, and not another's welfare.' Who mind the conveniency of their own life, and their own private profit, without any respect to the glory of God and the salvation of others. This is self-love that is prejudicial both to God and our neighbour, when a man makes himself the centre of all his actions, without any respect to God or the good of others. But because particulars are most sensible, therefore let me tell you -

Secondly, This self-love is twofold - to our persons and to our interests. I told you before that self is a capacious word, and doth not only involve us, but that which is ours. (1.) To our persons: we manifest that by doting upon ourselves, and by the admiration of ourselves, and so it is contrary to true humility and lowliness of mind. And then (2.) To our interests and enjoyments: we manifest self-love, by an inordinate zeal and care of our interests, preferring them before the conscience of our duty to God and our neighbour, being loath to part with anything that is ours for God's sake. This I principally intend to treat of, as being contrary to God's privilege of being the chiefest good; for this is a preferring something before him, when we can neglect his glory, or our obedience to his commands out of a zeal to our own interests.

First, The first kind of self-love is shown by doting upon or admiring our own persons. Self-conceit must be renounced, as well as self-interest. When a man thinks of himself beyond what is meet, and admires his own gifts and excellences, this is to be in love with his own shadow, to become our own parasites and flatterers.

Here I shall show you -

1. To what kind of persons this evil is incident.

2. How it discovers itself.

3. How odious it is.

4. Some remedies.

[1.] To whom it is incident? To all men by nature. By long conversation and acquaintance, a man becomes enamoured of himself; and hath high thoughts and opinions of his own excellency; as Goliath admired his own stature, and Nebuchadnezzar his own Babel, 'That he had built for the honour of his majesty.' There is a natural disposition this way, and there are none of the Sons of Adam to be excluded. But usually and mostly it is incident -

(1.) To those that are most ignorant of the state of their own hearts: Rev. 3.17,18, 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.' The church of Laodicea doted upon itself; she thought herself rich, and wanted nothing, when they wanted all things, though blind and unclean, yet miserably conceited. In a transparent glass the least motes are seen; but in a thick bottle we cannot discern the grossest dregs and sediment. Certainly those that have most light, they have lowest thoughts of themselves. He that knows himself best loves himself least of all. Love is always blind, especially self-love; it is but a fond fancy of that which is not: Rom. 7.9, 'For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' When Paul had but little knowledge, he had great conceit of himself. A short exposition of the law would beget a large opinion of our own righteousness. Usually what is wanting in the light of reason is made up in the pride of reason.

(2.) It is incident to men that by their own industry have raised themselves to any excellency, either in estate, or learning, or other endowments; there are none so apt to be puffed up and conceited of themselves as they are, for they look upon themselves as makers of their own fortune; they are not only drunk with their felicity and attainments, but admire their own prudence and diligence, by which they have compassed worldly greatness and excellency. It is a question who are most apt to dote on their own excellency, those that have been perpetually happy, or those lifted up out of misery and a low estate. In a perpetual hereditary happiness there is little of our own acquest and purchase to be seen; but those that have raised themselves out of a low condition are apt to be puffed up upon a double ground, their happiness and their diligence; they are

happy, and they have made themselves so, as they think, and so dote upon their own prudence and diligence, as well as their felicity and acquests.

(3.) It is incident to men of great gifts, especially after some public performance and exercise of them. It is hard to discover gifts with applause, and not to be proud. Our minds are secretly enchanted with self-love, and the music of our own praise. Therefore the apostle forbiddeth novices, those that were newly begotten to Christ, young men, to be put into the ministry, but very mortified persons: 1 Tim. 3.6, 'Lest being lifted up with pride, they fall into the condemnation of the devil.' Men of great gifts and unmortified spirits are very apt to full into pride, and so into condemnation; in a strong wind it is hard to sail steady. It is a question not easily decided, which duties are most difficult, public or private. In private duties there seems to be some difficulty, because there we have no other witness but God, and so we are tempted to slightness, for every one cannot see God; and in public duties there we are tempted to pride and self-conceit in the exercise of our parts.

(4.) It is incident to good christians; they are in danger to be enamoured of their own goodness. Pride once got into heaven itself among the angels, it crept into paradise, and the best heart can hardly keep it out. When men have withstood the 'lusts of the flesh,' and 'the lusts of the eye,' yet they may be overcome with 'pride of life.' Look, as a castle, when it cannot be taken by assault, many times it is blown up; so when the devil cannot surprise and take us by other stratagems, by open assault, he seeks to puff and blow up the heart. Paul was like to 'be puffed up with the abundance of his revelations,' 2 Cor. 12.7, though he were a sanctified vessel, and though his enjoyments were not of an earthly nature. It is a sin very incident to the children of God to be lifted up with a vain conceit of their own worth, others are not liable to it so much as they are. It is no wonder for a beggar to call himself poor, or a drunkard to have such low thoughts of himself, they are not in such danger as you are. And it is a sin got out with a great deal of difficulty; God is forced to punish it with other sins. For common sins, God useth the discipline of affliction; but for this he punisheth sin with sin, and gives us up to some scandalous fall, that so we might know what is in our own hearts.

How it bewrays itself; I shall mention but two marks.

(1.) By admiring thoughts and reflections upon our own excellency. A man is apt to entertain his spirit with privy whispers of vanity, and to court himself, as it were, with suppositions of applause and honour in the world: Luke 1.51, 'He scattereth the proud in the imagination of their heart.' Proud men are full of imaginations and musings upon their own worth, greatness, and excellency. This is the courtship that self-love makes to itself, when men muse upon the excellency of their gifts, and how far they excel others. As the strutting king, Dan. 4.30, as he walked on the palace of Babylon, he is musing upon the vastness of his dominion and empire: 'Is not this great Babel that I have built for the honour of my majesty and the glory of my magnificence?' When men make an idol of self, they are wont to come and solemnly worship it, to dote and gaze upon their own excellences and achievements; but a sincere christian's heart is taken up with admiration of Christ and the riches of the covenant, as Abraham walked through the land of promise, Gen 13. and said, 'All this is mine.' So carnal men are wont to take a survey of their gifts and excellences, how far they excel others in parts, prudence, and estate, and so play the parasites with their own hearts.

(2.) It discovers itself by partiality to their own failings. Man is a very favourable judge to himself; men favour their own sins, but with bitter censure comment upon the actions of others: Prov. 16.2, 'All the ways of a man seem right in his own eyes, but God weighs the spirits;' mark, it is in his own eyes. Man is apt to be partial in his own cause, blinded with self-love; when he comes to weigh his own actions, self-love takes hold of the scale, and so there is no right done. There is a great deal of difference between our balance and the balance of the sanctuary. Men are loath to see an evil in themselves; they can see motes in the eyes of others, severely censure their failings, but cannot see beams in their own, Mat. 7.3. A sincere heart is most severe against his own sins, and flings the first stone at himself; but self-love is blind and partial. The apostle saith, that 'love covers a multitude of sins.' It should do so in our neighbour, but it doth cover that which is in ourselves. The cases of Judah and David were very famous. Judah, when he was to sit judge upon Tamar, would have burned her because she had committed adultery, Gen. 38.34; but when he saw the bracelets, ring, and staff, when he

understood his own guilt, he becomes more favourable and mild. So David, 2 Sam. 12.5, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba, and represents the case to him, it is said, 'David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. And he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this shall die, die without mercy.' But when David was found to be the person, and the prophet tells him, 'Thou art the man,' then he was not so severe, his mind was more calm. In a disease we think our pain the sharpest; so when truly cured of self-love, we think no sins like our own. The apostle Paul counted himself 'the chiefest of sinners,' and certainly a person so sanctified would not lie.

[3.] Let me come to the odiousness of this sin. This is prejudicial to God, to your neighbours, to yourselves.

(1.) To God it is flat sacrilege; we detract from God, and rob him of the praise of his gifts, that we may set the crown upon our own head: Hab. 1.16, 'They sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their own drag.' Instead of acknowledging God, in their greatness they cry up their prudence, valour, and understanding. When we intercept God's praise, this is to deify ourselves, and put ourselves in the place of God. Trust and praise are God's own privileges; it is the rent which God as the great landlord of the world, expects from us. He hath leased out mercies and comforts of the world upon this condition, that we should give him the acknowledgment of praise. To intercept the praise due to him is to rob him of his rent and revenue. All creatures are bound to exalt and magnify God.

(2.) It is prejudicial to others. Self-love makes men envious and slanderous. When men would shine alone, and would have all the world else to serve for their foils, to set them off, therefore they blast their gifts with censure, aggravate their failings, and load them with prejudice, that upon the ruins of their good name, they might erect a fabric of praise to themselves. Self-lovers are always bitter censurers; they are so indulgent to their own faults, that they must spend their zeal abroad. And therefore, observe it, the apostles, when they would dissuade from the pride of censuring, they always bid us to consider ourselves: Gal. 6.1, 'If any brother be fallen, restore such a one with the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves.' Do not set up a high conceit of yourselves, and so blemish others, and

make an advantage of their failings. So James 3.1, 'Be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.' If man would look inward, they might judge freely, with more profit and less sin.

(3.) It is prejudicial to ourselves. Inordinate self-love was the ruin of angels, and it will prove the confusion of men; he is the best friend to himself who loveth himself least. Carnal self-love is indeed but self-murder; properly, it is the hatred of thy soul which is truly thyself. As the ape which hugs her young ones with too much earnestness, crusheth them, and thrusts out their bowels; so this self-hugging will be your ruin, it hinders us from the love of God; and those that love not God shall never be happy; and it is the cause of all sin, 2 Tim. 3.2, 'Men shall be lovers of themselves.' It is set in the first place, as the mother of all the rest - 'They shall be lovers of themselves, then covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers;' lovers of themselves, therefore 'covetous' seeking to increase their own store, though the means be never so unjust and irregular. They 'shall be lovers of themselves,' therefore proud, as it is common for such men to gaze upon their own excellency, and the idol they set up in their own hearts. They 'shall be lovers of themselves,' therefore 'boasters.' Men use to draw others to the worship of their own idols, insulting over others, because they deify themselves, loving pleasure more than God, gratifying their private appetites, though with the displeasure of God. 'Fierce, incontinent.' It were easy to derive their pedigree. But to instance in a sensible inconvenience, self-love is a ground of self-trouble and discontent. When men set an high price upon themselves, and others will not come up to it, then they are troubled and vexed. He that is low in his own eyes is secured against the contempt of others; they cannot think worse of him than he doth of himself. It is true, a self-loving man may set himself low in his own expression, speak as if he were a vile creature; but that is but an artifice of pride, to beat self down that it may rebound the higher. If others should think of him as he speaks of himself, lie would be much troubled.

[4.] To give you some remedies against this self-love, if you would not dote upon yourselves, consider -

(1.) The vileness of your original; it is good to remember 'the hole of the pit, out of which we were digged.' Agathocles, a potter's son, afterward king of Sicily, would be served in earthen dishes, that he might be put in mind of his first condition. We should all consider the baseness of our original. Why should we be proud of our own worth? We have been infamous from our birth, tainted in our blood, prisoners to Satan, defiled in nature, guilty of high treason against God. What a pitiful creature is man by nature! Certainly the angels, if they could be touched with such kind of passions and afflictions, they cannot choose but laugh at us, to see us dote upon ourselves; it is as if a leper should be conceited of the comeliness of his own face, and think every scar a pearl or ruby. We still halt of the fall and maim of nature all our lives; and the longer we live in the world, we are the more sensible of it. A man that hath been sick, and begins to walk, he feels the aches in his bones; so after we are recovered, we feel the disorder of nature - 'We cannot do the things that we would,' Gal. 5.17; and Rom. 7.18, 'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.'

(2.) Consider the purity of God. Much acquaintance with God in our thoughts would make us loathe ourselves. How did Job cure his self-love'? Job 42.6, 'Mine eyes see thee, and therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' The only way to loathe and abhor ourselves is to think often of God's holiness. To this God must we be like in holiness; and when this holy God cometh with his impartial balance to weigh the spirits of men, and I come to give an account to him, what a loathsome creature shall I appear! Whenever your thoughts begin to be tickled, and your hearts enchanted with self-admiration; when you begin to muse how much you excel others in parts and prudence, turn your thoughts upon the excellency of God, and then thou wilt cry out, O vile, unclean, and unworthy creature? As the prophet Isaiah, when he saw God in vision: Isa. 6.5, 'Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' When you think of the immaculate purity of the holy God, all your proud thoughts will vanish. Daniel saith, Dan. 8.10, 'I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.' Men are self-conceited,

because God and their thoughts are mere strangers. The stars shine most, the further off they are from the sun; the less light there is, the more they will shine, as at night; one seemeth to exceed another - 'One star differeth from another in glory,' 1 Cor. 15. 1. But when the day comes, all the differences of the stars vanish, none shineth; the heaven seems to be as if there were no star at all. So when God ariseth in all his glory, those that are apt to think themselves to be better than others, they see that all is nothing but darkness and mere imperfection in comparison of him.

(3.) Consider the greatness of thy obligation. A man hath no cause to love himself the more because he hath more gifts than others, but to love God the more; great gifts do not argue a good man, but a good God. The apostle saith, 1 Cor. 4.7, 'Who hath made thee to differ?' If thou excellest others, consider, who must have the praise and glory of this. Must thou dote upon thyself, or love God that made thee to differ? The more thou hast received from him, the more thou art in debt to him. A man should be humble, not only for his sins, but for his gifts and excellences. The greater our gifts, the greater must our account be. Gifts and excellences lay a greater obligation upon us. It is not the greatness of gifts, but well using of them is the glory of the receiver; and that is from God too. If thou shouldst be gracious and better than others, yet who made thee better? it is an evidence thou hast gifts with a curse if they puff thee up.

(4.) After every duty there is enough to keep thee humble. When thou hast done the duty, either conscience works and smites for some failing, or it doth not work. If conscience should not work, there is enough to keep thee humble: 1 Cor. 4.4, 'I know nothing by myself, yet I am not thereby justified.' If conscience should not smite thee for one straggling thought in prayer, one carnal glance and reflection, yet still you must say, 'I am not hereby justified.' God knows the secret working of my heart, to which I am not privy. I am apt to be partial in my own cause; this will not quit me before the tribunal of God. So, Luke 16.15, 'Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.' He doth not only say that which is 'esteemed' among men, but that which is 'highly esteemed;' and then he doth not say, God may not have such high thoughts of it, but it is

'abomination' in the sight of God. That which men call a rose may be found a nettle when it comes to God's judgment; that you call spice may be dung when God comes to make a judgment; and thy sacrifices may be carrion. But if conscience should work, and smite thee for failings, then there is enough to humble thee, and keep down these high thoughts that self-love is apt to put forth: 1 John 3.20, 'If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.' My heart now smites me, that I have had some vain thoughts and carnal reflections while I have been doing something for God; but will not God much more? God seeth with a more clear light. What is the light of my conscience to the pure eyes of his glory? God hath an ocean-hatred against sin, I have but a drop; I may hate sin because it is against my interest, but God hates it, because it is against his nature; his holiness sets him against it. God knows the privy turnings of heart. The duty seems to be a strange duty wherein you will not find some matter of humiliation.

(5.) Get this advantage of thy failing, that thou mayest be the more out of love with thyself. Oh, what odious creatures should we appear, if we did but keep a catalogue and roll of every day's miscarriage - if all time errors of our life were but drawn up together. Now whenever you put yourselves in the balance, graces in the one scale, sins in the other, your evils will much overweigh - ' Few and evil are the days of my pilgrimage,' saith Jacob. We have but a few days in the world, a short life, yet it is long enough for thousands of sins and evils. Our sins are more than our graces, because in every act of grace there is some fleshly adherence. We think well of ourselves. Why? because we only take notice of our worth and excellency, and not of our defects, as if the reflexive light were nothing else but to see the good that is in us. Consider, conscience was made to censure the evil as well as to approve the good: Rom. 2.1, 'Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another.' It should be translated thus, accusing and excusing by turns; accusing must take its turn. You are bound not only to know your knowledge, but your ignorance; not only to reflect upon your graces, but your sin. It is an easy matter to know our graces, but it requires a great deal of grace to get a humble sense of our continual failings.

Secondly, I come now to the second kind of self-love, and that is self-love to our interests and enjoyments.

There is a lawful respect to the safety and convenience of our lives. As we are bound to love ourselves, so we are bound to love our interests and our relations. The service of Christ requires no violation of the laws of God and nature, but still the great interest must be preserved. We are bound to love ourselves, but we must love God more than ourselves. He is a true disciple that doth not seek himself, but the honour of his master. Now the place of scripture for this, is Luke 14.26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, wife and children, or brethren and sisters, yea. and his own life, he cannot be my disciple.' To all these relations the scripture enforceth a dear and tender love; and yet in such cases where such love is incompatible with the love of Christ, we should rather hate than love. Hatred there is the same with denial in this scripture; hate, that is, to deny his own life; all must be renounced for Christ's sake, because there is a higher obligation. We are more obliged to our Creator than to our parents, and we owe more service to our Redeemer than to our greatest friends and benefactors in the world. Let him not 'love father and mother above me,' for so it is Mat. 10.37. And pray, mark again, all these relations are mentioned because one time or other they may prove a snare. The frowns of a father or mother, it is an ordinary temptation. When a child takes to religion, he exposeth himself to the displeasure and browbeating of a carnal father and mother. And so the insinuation of a wife, of one that lies in the bosom, it is a great snare; so provision for our children and family; so brothers and sisters; loss of familiarity between them, when we are to lose our commerce, it is a great temptation. Then love to our own lives. Life, it is the great possession of the creature, by which we hold other things; these are known temptations. Well then, it is a faulty self-love when we love anything that is ours, and prefer it before the conscience of our duty to God; when we are loath to part with our lives, with our relations, anything that is ours, for Christ's sake, or the just reasons of religion.

Concerning this self-love, I shall observe -

1. That we mistake our own identity, and think self to lie more in the conveniences of the body than of the soul. A man hath a body and a soul too,

and he is to seek the welfare of both. Now we love the body, and seek the conveniences of the body; that is the reason why so often in scripture self is expressed by the body: Eph. 5. 'So ought husbands to love their wives, even as their own body,' because naturally our love runs out that way. Man loves this life rather than the next, and his body rather than his soul, and pleasure more than the body; they waste and harass the body in hunting after riches, pleasure, and honour, and profit, and such-like appurtenances of the outward life; now these are mere mistakes. The self we are to preserve and maintain is soul and body, in a convenient state and constitution, to perform duty to God, and to attain to true happiness. Now when we love the body, we do not love that which is properly ourselves. The body hath more affinity with the beasts, as our souls have with the angels; our souls are ourselves - 'What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?' In another evangelist it is, 'If he shall lose himself.' Our souls were chiefly regarded by Christ; in the work of redemption he poured out 'his soul to death' for our souls; therefore in denying thy self this must be distinguished. Whatever thou dost with the body, or the conveniences of the body, do nothing to prejudice the soul and eternal happiness. I ground this observation upon this very context. Christ had spoken something of his bodily sufferings; and saith Peter unto his master ; 'Favour thyself,' Mat. 16.23; and then Christ giveth this lesson in the text, 'Deny thyself,' and take up thy cross - 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it;' and then explains it, ver. 26, 'For what is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' We lose by saving the body. He that makes his body himself, and the appurtenances and conveniences of the temporal life himself, he will deny Christ, but will never deny himself. You must reckon upon and discern this first, what is yourself.

2. We misplace self as well as mistake it. He that loves himself more than God lays God aside, and sets self on the throne in his heart, now this is a great crime in the eye of nature. There is a natural reverence to what we conceive to be of divine power. Every one will say, I love God best; God forbid, I should love

anything above God. **We cry out against the Jews for preferring Barabbas before Christ, yet we do the like every day, when we prefer a carnal satisfaction before communion with God.** We think the Gadarenes were vile men, that could be content to part with Christ, and preferred their swine before him; yet we, that profess to believe the dignity of his person, do many times little less. We look upon it as a great scorn in the Philistines that they should set up Dagon above the ark; yet this is done by carnal persons, and they are not sensible of it, because it is done (as idolatry is, under this light we enjoy) spiritually. Look, as a man may give the devil bad words, yet hold the crown upon his head, that doth not exempt us from his power and dominion - many that defy the devil in their words, yet defy him not with their heart - so empty professions do not satisfy. This self-love is not to be measured by naked professions, but real experiences. If your heart be carried out more to the creature than to God, and the strength of our spirit run out to pleasure, and we spend whole hours and days that way, and can find no time for God, we love the creature more than God, though we do not say so much in gross language.

But here a question will arise, What are those usual experiences, by which this disposition is to be measured? I shall answer it in several propositions.

1. The comparison of affection with affection is the best way to discover the temper and strength of our love; that is, when we compare our affection to Christ with our affection to other matters; for we cannot judge of any affection by its single exercises, what it doth alone as to one object, as well as by observing the difference and disproportion of our respect to several objects, if you observe the vein of marks and signs in scripture, they always put us upon this compounded trial, the disproportion of our respect to God and to the world; as to instance both in the pleasure and profit of the world. In the pleasure of the world, 2 Tim. 4.3, there is a description of very carnal men - ' Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.' Simply and apart, a man cannot be so well tried, either by his love to God or by his love to pleasure; not by his love to God, because there is in all men a pretence of devotion and service to God; nor by his love to pleasure, because there is a lawful allowance of taking pleasure in the creatures, provided they do not take and overcome our hearts. But now, when you compare affection

with affection, when the strength of a man's heart is carried out to the use of worldly comforts and pleasures, and God is neglected, and we cannot find any delight in the exercises of religion and the way of communion, God hath established between himself and us; this is an ill note, and shows that we are 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.' So for the profit of the world, Luke 12.21, Christ spake a parable, to find out who is the covetous man, and concludes it thus - 'And so is he that lays up treasures to himself, and is not rich towards God.' Simply, man cannot be tried by laying up of treasures, by hoarding up worldly provision, and by getting increase in the world. Why? because we are allowed to be active and cheerful in the way of our calling, and God may bless our industry. And besides, on the other hand, a man may think he hath made some provision for heaven, because he waits upon God in some duties of religion, and because of some cold and faint operations, some devout and cold actings and workings of his soul. But now compare care with care - 'He that lays up treasures to himself, and is not rich towards God;' that is, when a man is all for getting wealth for himself, and is not so earnest to get grace and get a covenant interest for himself, to be enriched with spiritual and heavenly exercises; when men follow after spiritual things in a formal and careless manner, and after earthly things with the greatest earnestness and strength that may be; when respects to the world are accompanied with the neglect of heaven; when men can be content with a lean soul, so they may have a fat estate; when all their care is to join land to land, and not lay up evidences for heaven; this is a sign the heart is naught, and grossly covetous.

2. Though comparison be the best way to discover love, yet this love is not to be measured by the lively stirring acts of love so much as by the solid esteem and constitution of the spirit. Why? because the act may be more lively where the love is less firm and rooted in the heart. The passions of suitors are greater than the love of the husband, yet not so deeply rooted. The commotion may be greater in less love, but esteem and solid complacency is always a fruit of the greater love. Men laugh many times most when they are not always best pleased. A man may laugh at a toy, yet he cannot be said to rejoice more in that toy than in other things, because the act of his joy is more lively than it would be in a solid,

serious matter. We laugh more at a trifle, but are better pleased at a great courtesy. The commotion of the body, and spirits, and humours, depends much upon the strength of fancy; and fancy depends much upon the sense and the presence of the object, so that sensible things do much affect and urge us in the present state to which we are subjected; we are masses of flesh and blood, and it is our infirmity introduced by sin, that the senses and vital and animal spirits are affected with sensible things rather than spiritual. For instance, a man may have more affectionate expressions upon the loss of a child or an estate, than at God's dishonour. A man may weep more for a temporal loss than for sin. Why? because in spiritual things grief doth not always keep the road, and vent itself by the eyes. So a man may seem to have more lively joy in sensible blessings than in spiritual, and yet he cannot be concluded to be carnal. Why? because of the solid estimation of his heart; he could rather part with all these things than offend God; had rather want this and that comfort than want the favour of God. David longed and fainted for the waters of Bethlehem, as strongly as the spouse that was sick of love, longed for Christ. But he would not have refused the consolations of the Spirit, as he refused, pouring out the waters of Bethlehem. The affections may be violently carried out to a present good, which though it be not without some weakness and sin, yet it doth not argue a state of sin. Therefore the judgment you are to make upon your heart, whether you love your relations and contentments more than God, is not to be determined by the rapid motion, but by the constant stream and bent of the heart. Your affections may be more vehemently stirred up to outward objects, because two streams meeting in one channel run more vehemently and strongly than one stream. It is a duty required of us by nature and grace moderately to prize these things, children and friends, outward delights and comforts; nature craves a part, and grace judgeth it to be convenient; there may be more sensible stirring in the one though the solid complacency and esteem of the soul be set right.

3. As our affection to outward things is not to be judged by the vigorous motion and titillation of the spirits, so neither altogether by the time and care that we lay out upon them. A man. may spend more time in the world than in prayer with God, yet he cannot be said to love the world more than God. Why? Because

bodily necessities are more pressing than spiritual. In the proportions of time, we see that God allowed six days for man to labour, and appropriated only the seventh to himself, which is an intimation at least that the supply of bodily necessities will require more time than spiritual. I do not speak this, as if in the week a man were free whether he would serve God or no. For as we may do works of necessity on the sabbath day, to preserve ourselves, so we must in the week redeem seasons for duty. But I speak this to show that the great proportions of time spent in the world do not argue disproportion of affection to God and the world. The body must be maintained. Nature and grace hath laid a law upon us so to do, and it cannot be maintained without active diligence in our calling; and therefore, though I should give God but two hours in the day for immediate service, and spend the other in my calling, and necessary refreshment, yet I cannot be said to have God less and the world more, provided it be with these two cautions -

[1.] That I go about the duties of my calling in obedience, and upon a principle, and for ends of religion. If a christian were wise, he might give God all his time, not only that which he spends in the closet, but that which he spendeth in the shop; when you go about your worldly business with a heavenly mind, and do it as God's work, to the end of his glory. Those that live by handy labour, they must labour, not merely to sustain themselves, but to glorify God, and do good to their neighbours: Eph. 4.28, 'Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may give to him that needs.' Mark, if a man were in such necessity, if he hath but from hand to mouth, if a man live by handy labour, yet he is to have a gracious end, to bring glory to God, to be useful to his neighbour, to give to him that needs. So that in effect God hath the most work, thought grace be exercised rather about temporal than spiritual employments; for the difference is not so much in the proportion of time as in the materials of grace. In our callings grace is to work there; grace works to keep the heart right in worldly employments; and in duties of worship, grace works to keep the heart right in spiritual employments. That in worldly business we may have a heavenly mind, and that in spiritual business we may not have

carnal minds; that now and then you may send a glance to heaven; and in duties, that you may not straggle into the world.

[2.] My next proviso is that you will sometimes make the world give way to grace, and rather encroach upon your temporal than spiritual necessities. Too, too often we find the 'lean kine devour the fat.' Now it is good sometimes to take revenge, and let grace encroach upon the world, for special and solemn duties. Look, as it is a sin to feed without fear, so it is a sin to trade without fear, lest we should be too much in the world. Remember, 'we are debtors, not to the flesh,' Rom. 8.12. Did we promise we would be all for the flesh? No, but rather we are 'debtors to the Spirit,' we have entered into covenant to gain all opportunities for heaven. It is better to make business give way to duty, than duty to business. Bernard hath a pretty expression, *Felix illa domus ubi Martha queritur de Maria* - That is a happy family where Martha is complaining of Mary; when the world complains of duty, rather than duty complains of the world, for the greatest part of our time and care should be spent in the work of God.

4. The great trial of our esteem and love to God is when duty and interest are utterly severed. When we are put upon an exigency or strait either to deny ourselves or Christ; as in the similitude of the dog following his master, when two walk together in company, we do not know whose he is; but when they part, the matter is tried. God and mammon may sometimes walk together, but when they part company, you are put to your choice, whether you will leave God or the company of mammon. I leave all upon this decision, because such straits and cases are called trials - 'Knowing the trial of your faith worketh patience;' and 'count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials,' James 1. Our affections are brought into the lists, and God and angels sit as spectators to behold the combat. Here are deliberate debates; and when in a deliberate debate the world gets the victory of conscience, it is an ill sign; here you show whether your esteem and a solid complacency be in God or no. The things of religion, in the absence of a temptation, seem best, but when you are brought to an actual choice, either of duty or sin - when duty is left without sensible encouragement, or loaded with sensible discouragement, what will you do then? which will you prefer? Rev. 12.11, 'They loved not their lives unto the death;' when it came to the pinch. A

temptation, represented in fancy and speculation, is nothing so terrible as it is in its own appearance. We may be of great confidence in fancy, as Peter was; but when we are called out to death itself, then not to love our friends or lives, to hazard the frowns of a father, the familiarity of kindred, provisions for your children, it is a sign your love to God is real. It is true, in such a case as this is, a child of God may be overborne by the violence of such a temptation, but speedily he retracts his error. Here is the great trial, when we are called out (as first or last we are) to break a law or hazard an interest, to please men or to please God; then are we put to it, to see if we will deny ourselves or Christ. The high priest under the law had the names of the tribes upon his breast, but the name of God on his front or forehead - Exod. 28.29, compared with 37 - to show that he was to love the people, but to honour God; an emblem of every christian, if his relations be on his breast, yet the honour of God must be on his forehead. That interest must be chief and predominant; when we can venture upon the displeasure of God to gratify our interest, this is to love ourselves more than God.

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

I shall (1.) Show what are the acts of self-love; (2.) What showeth the reign and state of it; (3.) Give some remedies.

1. The acts of this kind of self-love are many. All sins are a conversion from God to the creature; and so far as we sin, we prefer the creature before God. But there are some special acts of sin that are to be taxed and censured upon this occasion. When a man can break a law to salve an interest, and makes duty to give way to relations, this is to venture on God's displeasure to gratify a friend. No affection to the creature should draw us to offend God. So it is said to Eli: 1 Sam. 2.29, 'Thou honourest thy sons above me.' Eli did not think so, in his heart; but this was the interpretation of his act. By virtue of his office he should have put them by the

priesthood; but he chose rather to please his sons than God, and was more careful of the credit of his sons than of the credit of God's worship. which was extremely scandalised. When parents prefer their children to spiritual employments, or continue them there for their maintenance, though otherwise unfit and unworthy, this is to honour their sons above God. God is to have the highest honour and respect.

[2.] When we can part with spiritual prerogatives for a more free enjoyment of carnal pleasures. When we make pleasures to be the business of our lives, and are carried out with great affection thereunto, but are cold and careless in the service of God, this is to love them more than God, 2 Tim. 3.4. It is a sin not to be stroked with a gentle censure. There is much of profaneness shown, when duty and pleasure come in competition; and we cannot find any contentment in communion with God, but can part with that to gratify the senses. The temptation is so low, that the sin riseth the higher. When the consolations of God are exchanged for the pleasures of sin, it is a sorry exchange; like Esau's selling his birthright for a mess of pottage, Heb. 12.16. When the temptation is small, and yet prevalent, it is a sign the natural inclinations are very great; they are carried downwards, as heavy bodies, by their own weight; they are not forced, but inclined. A little sinful delight and satisfaction draweth them out of the way, and maketh them hazard the love of God, the consolations of the Spirit, and whatsoever is dear and precious to Christ. Now this is aggravated, when upon serious debates and strugglings of conscience men do not what is best, but what is sweetest, it is a very shrewd symptom of this evil, for resolution or debate argueth something of choice and full consent; not only a doing of evil, but a preferring of it.

[3.] When men have an actual conviction upon them, and out of carnal reasons think of delays; Mat. 22.5, 'They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise;' and so, Luke 14.18, they are loath to part from these things. **Christ calleth, not only from sin, but from the world;** they do not send a denial, but an excuse; some neglect, others oppose. They do not kill the preachers, yet they prefer these paltry matters before the king's grace tendered to them. When their hearts are affixed on worldly affairs, they will not leave them

for heavenly offers. An overgreat care for the business of the world worketh a neglect of God: Heb. 2.3, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Though we do not contemn or oppose, yet if we neglect, we think the world better, and will not be called off to higher things.

[4.] When men have a greater savour in worldly gain than in the ordinances of God, when they think all time is lost that is spent in duty: Amos 8.5, those wretches that said, 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn; and the Sabbath be over, that we may set forth wheat?' it was a hindrancc and a loss to them to lose a day; it was irksome to fast from gain. It is a profane spirit that grudgeth God his time, and to think that all is lost that is spent in duty and service to him; this is to love the world more than God. This savour is bewrayed by self-denial, when we can deny ourselves more for pleasure than for God; it is an ill sign when we count nothing too much for our lusts, and everything too much for God. When we spend whole days in the world, Ps. 127.2, or in pleasure, counting it a pleasure to riot in the day-time, 2 Pet 2.13; in effect and necessary interpretation, this is to 'love pleasure more than God.' When we cut God short of his necessary allowance, and do not keep the soul healthy, and are loath to redeem time for ordinances, and can spend it freely and without remorse in pleasures, and this is our joy and rejoicing; when men can rack their brains and waste their strength in worldly business, yet will not take pains in a godly life, it shows that the world, not God, is uppermost in the heart.

[5.] When for the favour and countenance of men, and our ambition to attain them, we do many things that are contrary to the conscience of our duty to God. It is an ill sign when men cannot satisfy themselves in the approbation of Christ; he should be instead of all. It were a great folly in a race to make the people judges, it is no matter what standers-by say, so long the judge of the race do approve. Yet thus too many do; they are convinced of the excellency of the ways of God, yet dare not profess them, lest they should 'lose the praise of men,' John 12.42,43. Their consciences were sufficiently convinced, but their heart was not subdued and weaned from self-respect. In all controverted cases, thus it falls out; men are hardened, not so much for want of light, as want of love to God; they will not veil to truth. Such a spirit, in the reign of it, is wholly inconsistent

with grace, for so Christ chargeth it: John 5.44, 'How can ye believe, when ye seek honour one of another?' Men are loath to lose credit with their own party; so Paul, Gal. 1.10, 'For do I persuade men, or God? or, do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not have been the servant of Jesus Christ.' Paul, when a pharisee, was carried with a wild zeal, and animated with a false fire.

[6.] When we find more complacency in outward enjoyments, and are more satisfied with them than in God's love and favour; when men cannot find any sweetness in communion with God, but are wonderfully drawn out in fleshly delights. This is contrary to the dispositions of God's people: Ps. 84.10, 'One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.' Oh, that is a day of a thousand that is spent in free access to God in his ordinances! Wherever there is a new heart, it must have new desires and new delights. But carnal men, like swine, find more pleasure in swill than in better food. It is irksome to converse with God in duties, they find no more pleasure than in the white of an egg. As those, Mal. 1.13, that brought the sick lamb, and the lame, yet they did count it a great burthen, and they say, 'What a weariness is it!' They puffed and blowed, and said, How weary am I with bringing this sacrifice! This is an ill note, and doth in effect proclaim that the life of pleasures is more excellent and satisfying than that which is spent in the exercises of religion.

[7.] It argueth a spice of this carnal self-love when men envy them that have outward increase, as if they had the better portion. This is an evil with which the children of God may be surprised when Satan is at their elbows. 'They may have admiring thoughts of the world, and think it a brave thing to milk out the breasts of worldly consolations: Ps. 144.15, 'Happy is the people that is in such a case.' But this is but like a nod in case of drowsiness, they awake with more vigour and life; yea, rather, 'Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.' The ground of this trial is because God in the ordinances is much more sweet than God in the creature, even as much as grace excelleth nature. Now, the best that wicked and carnal men have is but God in the creature. You prize a carnal self when you look lean upon their mercies; you have a true self, that is more advanced and ennobled; but you prize a carnal self, as if this would make you more happy than those privileges you have, and the comforts you enjoy with a good conscience.

For the aggravating of this evil, consider, the devil himself is not taken with material things, with carnal pleasure, and with the delight of the senses. Why? because he is a spiritual essence. Christians, they are made partakers of a divine nature; therefore when carnal men increase in wealth, or grow fat, and flourish in outward pleasure, they should not envy them. The people of God have always disclaimed this evil, as the Psalmist doth, in Ps. 6.7, 'Thou hast put more gladness into my heart than when corn, and oil, and wine increase.' If they grow fat upon common mercies, should I wax lean upon spiritual mercies? So Ps. 17.15, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' Those that bear down all before them with violence, they may be filled with treasures, they may provide for their babes, but I envy them not their portion; I have a better self, that is provided for - ' When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy image and likeness.'

[8.] When men are more troubled for worldly losses than they are for sins against God, this is also to love the creature more than God. All affection follows love, and so doth grief; and therefore it is notable, John 11.35, it is said, 'Jesus wept,' and then it followeth, 'They said, Behold, how he loved him.' The greatness of our grief will bewray the greatness of our love; therefore when we grieve more for worldly losses than for sins, this is an act of self-love. I confess, in crosses there may be a greater commotion, but there should not be a more solid grief. A christian's sorrow is consecrated, it is water for the uses of the sanctuary; we should not lavish out our tears, but reserve them. Men may spend their affections on carnal matters, and then, when they should mourn for sin, they have no tenderness left. Most of our grief should be for the affront we put upon God's grace. It is an argument men love the creature more than God, when they can grieve more for a temporal loss than for departure of God.

2. Then for the state of it. Most of the marks already given are convincing, yet you must know a man is not tried by what he doth in a temptation in all these things; but a man is to be measured by the constant course of his life. When a man maketh pleasures and earthly advantages to be the scope of his life rather than God's service, and letteth go all care of heaven, and constantly consults with flesh and blood, and is ruled and guided by the love of the creature and respect to

his own interest, rather than the love of God, this argues the state. Many a man, in fact, and by the interpretation of his action, may be said to love the creature more than God. But the state is to be measured by the esteem and solid constitution of the soul; when men's bent is to the carnal life, and they are prejudiced against the strict part of religion, and have neither hope, nor desire, nor estimation for Christ, as the pearl of greatest price. And therefore, whenever they are put to the trial, they fall off from Christ to the 'present world,' as 2 Tim. 4.10. They seek to provide for their safety and profit rather than peace of conscience, and never, or but in a slight manner, look after their true self, and I may add, are not grieved for the failings in act. This showeth it is an habituated disposition; self is in the throne, and not God.

3. I come now to offer some remedies. Herein I shall speak something by way of consideration, and something by way of means. I shall be brief, because prevented in the general part. To inform the judgment is not so necessary, every one will confess that it is not fit the creature should be preferred before God; but to impress an awe upon the heart, and to awaken faith and meditation.

[1.] Consider, how much thou differest from the temper of God's children, when thou preferrest self before God, and esteemest the outward appendages of life rather than that which is properly thyself. **The children of God count the worst part of godliness better than the best of worldly pleasures.** Take Christ at the worst; when obedience puts us upon inward trouble or outward suffering, yet they think it is fit he should have the preferment; **they count the groans of prayer better than the acclamations of the theatre.** The very tears of Gods children are blessed, and they look upon the most burdensome and difficult duties as sweet. They cannot only say, ' Thy loves are better than wine,' as Cant. 1.3; the manifestations of his grace are more choice than the best refreshments of the creature; but, 'One day in thy courts is better than a thousand,' Ps. 84. Galeacius Carracciolus said, Cursed be the man that thinks all the world worth one hour's communion with God. Now when thou preferrest thy pleasure and contentment, what a vast difference is there between thee and them! It is recorded of Moses, Heb. 11.26, that he esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.' He looks upon that as the most glorious passage of his life.

And Thuanus saith of Lewis Marsae, a French nobleman, when he was condemned to suffer for religion, and because of the nobility of his blood was not bound with ropes, as others were, *Cur non et me torque donas*, etc. - Give me my chain also, and make me a knight too of this excellent order. The reproaches of Christ are better than all the pleasures of the world.

[2.] Consider, how wilt thou be able to look Jesus Christ in the face on the day of recompenses, when you have such cheap and low thoughts of him for trifles, when you are content to part with God and Christ, and all the comfort and hope of the Spirit, for a trifle, for worldly concernments, base and dreggy pleasures. The day of judgment is one of the enforcements of self-denial. When Christ had laid down this doctrine of self-denial, ver. 27, saith he, 'For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works.' The devil will insult over you, because you would forsake Christ upon so small a temptation, and would sell all the excellent things of religion for a toy, a matter of nothing. And how will you look the blessed companions of Christ in the face, angels, and those self-denying saints that could give up every concernment, and counted not their lives dear? You become the scorn of saints and angels Ps. 52.7, 'Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.' This is the man that would not make God his portion, that preferred his body before his soul, and his wealth and pleasure before Christ; this is he that would not part with a little comfort in the world for Christ's sake.

[3.] Consider, if we would love ourselves, we should love our best self. The dignity of the soul requires the chiefest care to keep and save it. The body was made to be the soul's instrument to work by, therefore it is inferior to it; we should look principally to the safety of the soul. Besides, the bodily life may be lost, but the soul endures to eternity; the bodily life may be repaired, while the soul is sick. Therefore it is best to secure the soul in the hands of Christ, and then thou canst not miscarry. Alas! the body is but the case, but the vessel, as Anaxarchus said, *Tunde vasculum*, etc. When he was put into a great mortar, and pounded with brazen pestles, he cried out to his tormentor, Beat on, beat on the

bag of Anaxarchus, thou canst not hurt himself. Now who would preserve the case, and lose the treasure?

[4.] You may seek self with more allowance and leave from God and conscience, yea, and with more success, when the better part of self is once secured and made safe. Self-love is not abrogated and disannulled by grace, but overruled and put in its proper place. By the law of nature we are first to look after the necessities, and then the conveniences of life. We are bound to look after the necessities and conveniences of the body, but first we must look to the soul: Luke 10.42, 'One thing is necessary;' it is a necessary thing to secure the soul. It should be the main care of a christian to state what is necessary for the salvation of his soul; this will stead you in life and death. This one thing is simply necessary; one thing is necessary for itself, all other things necessary in order to it. Thou art to maintain thy body, that it may be an instrument for thy soul while thou actest and workest toward true happiness. 'Seek first the kingdom of God,' Mat 6.33; that is, first seek to get into a state of grace. The kingdom of God is put for all the whole state of evangelical grace. The first thing the Israelites did in the morning was to seek manna; this kept them alive. So the first thing, and thy chiefest care and work should be to secure thy soul, and then all other things will be added, so far as they are convenient.

[5.] The very motives and reasons that draw us to self-love do draw us to better things, for he that loveth anything would love the best of the kind; and therefore, if we love anything that is good, let us love that which is eternally good. What do we love? is it friends, life, glory, pleasure, substance? When we love friends, let us love the best of friends, an eternal friend, such as God is. We should please them most with whom we are to live longest. If we love long life, let us love eternity; if glory and praise, remember that there is no praise like that which is given us before God and angels, out of Christ's own mouth; vain glory, it is nothing to everlasting glory. If we love pleasure, let us love the best of the kind; those 'pleasures which are at God's right hand;' the nearer the fountain, the sweeter the water. If we love wealth, let us love 'enduring substance.' Heb. 10.34, the joy of heaven is called 'enduring substance.' All earthly things are but perishing movables.

[6.] Consider, what reason we have to love God above all things; not only in point of desert, we are more obliged to God than to all things in the world, and not only in point of law and duty, which we shall be responsible for, but in point of natural reason. All the creatures are but the image and shadow of that goodness which is in God. The good of the creature is but *splendor summi boni* - a ray or beam of the chiefest good. God hath parcelled out his goodness, these are but broken pieces. Why should we dote upon the image, and neglect the substance? Why should we love other things, and not God much more? and, with the dog, catch after the shadow, and let go the substance? It is true, in the creature there are some draughts and strictures of God's goodness which serve to put us in mind of God; not to intercept our affections, but to proclaim to us that God is more worthy of our respect and esteem. God hath parcelled out his goodness in all the creatures, to admonish us, and not to satisfy us. Consider, all these things stand in need of God to preserve them, they need other things. But now, God alone is enough, and he himself, without the creature, can satisfy thee; he that hath God hath all things; he that possesseth him, 'possesseth all things,' 1 Cor. 3.18, and they are more thine when thou hast them not, than when thou dost enjoy them without God, for then they are a less snare to thee. So then say with indignation to all other loves, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee,' etc. Ps. 73.25.

[7.] It is a very great honour when thou art called out to any actual trial, to show how much thou lovest God above the creature. There is no cause of grief in such a case, if our eyes were opened and our affections mortified. Certainly it is better to give up our concernments to God freely than to have them taken away from us by force; to offer them up to God, than to have them snatched from us. It is a great honour that God will have our will exercised, and our loyalty manifested; he might take away our pleasant things by the dominion of his providence, and so they may be taken away in punishment. It is an honour when we can sacrifice them by way of thanksgiving; death will take us from them, and God may take them from us. It is an honour that we may resign them before we die, and that by an act of choice and consent we may render them to God for the sake of a good

conscience. 'To you, it is given to suffer,' saith the apostle; your gain will be more than your loss. The means that may enable you to obtain this self-denial, follow.

(1.) See that you take heed of complicating and folding up thyself with the creature. We are apt to make ourselves too large; take heed, what thou countest thyself. There is an old and corrupt self, which we should not own. Consider thy comfort, thy safety, thy value and acceptation with God, doth not depend upon these things, Luke 12.15; thy safety doth not lie in them; these things are but pipes to convey the blessing of God to thee. Thou dost not live upon abundance, but upon providence; otherwise thy bread would be as a turf of earth to thee, not thy comfort. A man may have happiness enough in a single God, without the creature, Hab. 3.18. In heaven, it is our privilege that there God is 'all in all,' without the intervention of means and creatures. It is a dark way to enjoy God in the creature; the highest way is to enjoy him alone, separate from these outward things. Neither thy value and esteem with God, nor thy eternal life, doth lie in it. God loves thee, though naked, stripped of all temporal gifts and favours; he doth not love thine, but thee. Jesus Christ died not for thy goods and estate, but for thy person. And when God looks for thee in heaven, he doth not look that thou shouldst come with a train of outward comforts; for when we go to the grave we go naked, and leave these things behind us.

(2.) Act faith, partly upon the blessed recompenses. What is the reason men dote upon the creature? Because they are not acquainted with a higher glory. Carnal men are purblind, they cannot 'see afar off,' 2 Peter 1.9; they look upon the things of heaven as golden dreams, as pleasing delusions; therefore cannot be divorced, nor separate their affections from present comforts. It is notable, when Christ said to Zaccheus, 'Salvation is come to thy house,' presently he saith, 'Half of my goods I give to the poor.' As good almost bid men pluck themselves asunder, as press them to such a thing; it is as to rend the body from itself; yet the sight of heaven will do this.

(3.) Then faith must be employed to judge aright of present sufferings and encumbrances: faith must count losses to be savings. As we are not to believe reason, so not sense, against the articles of faith. Why do we believe the glorious

mystery of the trinity, three in one? Because Christ hath revealed it to us. The same Jesus hath revealed, 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution ; and he that loseth shall save.' Why should we count that grievous which Christ hath called blessedness? Why should we count that loss which indeed is the greatest gain? We are as much bound to believe persecutions will make us blessed, and losing will be saving, as we are bound to believe that God is three in one, and that there is a union of the two natures in the person of Christ. Faith is as much seen in practicals as it is in speculative principles; there it is oftener tried; the other is but in special temptations.

(4.) Let us love ourselves, and all things else, in God, and for God's sake. When God is made ours, we love ourselves in loving God. We should love nothing but for God's sake; do all to his glory, and with aims and ends of religion. Certainly God doth all things for himself. We should not love any other, no, not ourselves, but for God's sake, and the accomplishing of his holy will. If we love the godly, we should love them because they bear his image. Our enemies we should love, because of God's command, and our relations and comforts as they are God's gifts to us. God must have all the heart; and in those affections that are carried out to other things, the supreme reason must be taken from God. That is the law still in force: Deut. 6.5, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might. The Lord our God is but one.' And it is often repeated in the new testament. We are to reserve no part for idols, for creatures; all is too little for so great a God, though it be more than we can perform. When a great prince in his progress comes to an inn, he takes up all the rooms in the house, not holding it to stand with his state to have a stranger to be sharer with him. All our respect must either be carried out to God, or to other things for Gods sake. Certainly this will be a means to keep ourselves from such a degree of affection to them, as may alienate and divide our souls from God; yea, in whatever we love, it will make us tend to the service and glory of God. Look, as when one foot of the compass is fixed in the centre, it gives strength and direction to the other part that moves about the circumference; so when the heart is fixed in God, resolved to love God alone, we shall receive strength and direction from him, our love will be rightly set. The saints and angels above love

God with all their hearts and all their souls, therefore they cannot sin. Love is all the rule and guide they have, they can do nothing inordinately; so should we, in our measures, labour to come up to this, and it would be an exceeding great regulation of our love. Self-interest may come in as accessory, but the principal and original cause of all is God alone. We should love ourselves united with God by Jesus Christ; love God's servants as those that are dignified and beautified with his image; our relations, as they may be tokens to us of God's love.

God the Last End - Denying Self-seeking

Tun fourth branch is against self-seeking, by which I mean a denial of our own ends, for God must be the utmost end of all the creatures actings.

Here I shall show -
1. What this self-seeking is.
2. The evidences how it bewrays itself.
3. How necessary it is to handle it.
4. How difficult it is to deny this part of self:
5. Some remedies by way of consideration and practice.

First, What it is. Self-seeking is a sin, by which men refer all they do or can do, to their own glory and advancement. There is a double self-seeking, contrary to the double end of the creature's being and operation; one, by which we aim at our own profit; and another, by which we aim at our own glory. For the two great ends of the creature's being are, that we may enjoy God; and then that we may glorify God.

1. Our great aim should be to enjoy God; that is the happiness to which we are poised and inclined by the bent of nature. An immortal soul was made for an eternal good; nothing beneath God will satisfy it; and the heaven that we expect is nothing else but the filling up the soul with God. There is a great controversy in the world between God and self while we are here; but now in heaven the quarrel is taken up, and we and God are united in the nearest and closest way of union and communion, that we may enjoy him forever. Now when we rest in any low enjoyment, and are satisfied with it without God, that is self-seeking; in effect it is

self-destroying, self-losing. But the scripture speaks according to our aim and intention; we intend to seek ourselves, though in effect, we do but lose ourselves. Of this the scripture speaks - 'All seek their own, and not that which is Jesus Christ's.' In effect, neither their own, nor Christ's, but the carnal and corrupt heart of a man counts nothing our own things, but the concernments of the flesh. Of this kind of self-seeking they are guilty that do God's work, but not with God's end; not to enjoy him, but to enjoy the world; they make a mere merchandise of obedience; if they have worldly gain, they are satisfied; for other things they will give God a bill of discharge: Mat. 6.12, 'They have their reward.' They will acquit and release God of all the grant and promise that he hath made of heaven to them in the covenant of grace, if God will give them a patent to enjoy as much of the world as they can, which argues a sordid and base spirit: Rom. 16.18, 'They are such as serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.' The apostle speaks of false teachers, that did not make God their end, but were wholly bent upon their secular profit; that reprove not for, but soothe men up in, their sin. In their preaching there is no salt, and in their private visits there is a great deal of worldly compliance, and all because they have set up another God, such a base thing as the belly, instead of Christ.

2. The next aim of the creature should be to glorify God in all the motions and operations of the soul. This must be the settled frame and constitution of souls, to enjoy God, that is our happiness; to glorify God, that is our work; and therefore, when the aim of the heart is at our own glory and praise, this is self-seeking. Now, that you may discern it the better, and see when the soul is guilty of it, I shall show you how far we are to intend the glory of God in every action of ours; I shall do it in these propositions -

[1.] This must be the end that we must propose to ourselves in all our civil actions; though the action be civil, yet the end must be religious, that I may glorify God, and do good to others, 1 Cor. 10.31, though it be but in such a natural action, as eating and drinking; this must be the fixed aim, 'to do all to the glory of God,' otherwise you set up another God, Moloch instead of God. When merely you eat to gratify your own flesh, it may be a meat-offering and drink-

offering to appetite. So also for your traffic; if it be merely for wealth, it is but consecrating yourselves to mammon, and setting the world in the place of God. This is the great mercy of God, that, considering our necessity, he hath so wisely ordered it that he might lose no part of our time. Our very natural actions may be religious. Works of nature may become acts of grace, and our traffic may be a kind of worship when our ends are to glorify him; otherwise we set up self in his place. Your very eating is idolatry when it is merely to please and gratify self. Your table it is a table of devils - 'Whose God is the belly,' Phil. 3.18. And then, as for your traffic: when you trade in the world merely to grow rich, and have not an aim at the glory and service of God, you set up another god; mammon is your God, Mat. 6.24, 'No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and mammon,' But here ariseth a question worthy to be discussed, Whether in every action we are bound actually to intend God's glory? I answer, We should labour as much as we can to make our thoughts actual; this is the very vitality and vigour of the spiritual life, when all our natural actions are raised up to a supernatural intention. As a Christian is not to have evil aims, so he is not to be like a blind archer, to shoot at random and without a mark. Why should we forget God at any time, that doth always remember us? There is not a moment that passeth but God looks after thee, or else thou couldst not live; nay, he doth remember us, as if he had forgotten all others, and had none else to care for in this world. There is not a good thought of thine forgotten. The spiritual life seemeth to be as asleep when we do not think of God. In gratitude we seem to be obliged. And consider again, certainly an actual elevation of the soul is of no great labour and trouble, because thoughts are quick and sudden; and it will not hinder us, or be a burden to us, to look up with the eye of our soul, but it would be of great profit, it would make the actions of the mind more acceptable to God; and the soul will the better be kept upright; this will be as a golden crown upon the head of every action, and will be an excellent means to prevent carnal injections. However, because of our infirmities in the lesser actions of life, the habitual intention sufficeth; as an arrow may fly to the mark, though the archer hath ceased to think of it; or rather, as a man travelling homeward may not always think of home, yet he is journeying thither; so a Christian may not always actually think of heaven, yet his heart is set that way. We should at least renew this every morning. And in the noble actions

of life that require more labour and difficulty, there our thoughts should be explicit, and the reason is, because Satan is ready to blast every serious duty with the injection of carnal thoughts. The devil is not only with you in the shop, but in the closet, and at duty; and many times, though we 'begin in the spirit,' yet we are apt to end in the flesh.' Self recoils upon us: Gen. 15. Abraham, when he had quartered the sacrifices - 'The fowls came down, but he drove them away.' So when we think of offering duty to God, carnal thoughts are apt to rush into the mind; so that without this actual intention we may easily begin for God, and yet end for self-interest notwithstanding.

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

(1.) In internal actions, in desires of grace and salvation, our end must not be self. Our motions are then regular, when they are conformed to God, when we have the same end and aim as God hath. Now whatsoever God doth, both within and without, in creation and grace, it is for himself: Prov. 16.4, 'The Lord hath made all things for himself.' Well then, we should seek grace and glory with the same aim that God gives it: Eph. 1.6, 'He hath accepted us in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of his grace;' that is God's aim, that grace may be glorified in thy salvation, and in thy acceptance of Jesus Christ. I desire my salvation, but I should not rest there; but this should be my utmost aim, that God may be glorified in my salvation. Some make a question whether or no we may look to the reward; but those that make it, seem to mistake heaven, and they have a carnal notion of the reward of the gospel, and dream of the heaven of the alcaron, and not the heaven of the gospel. What is the heaven of the gospel, but to enjoy God for ever, in the way of a blessed and daily communion? Now can any man be so irrational to conceive I should not aim at the inheritance of the saints in light, as well as at the vision and fruition of God? This must needs be a high act of grace, to seek my own happiness in the highest way of communion with God. They mistake the nature of the covenant, or the way with which God would deal with men, for God hath invested his precept with a promise, and men would seem wiser than God. We may use the Spirit's motives without sin, as the saints have done. It was a foolish modesty in Ahaz, when God 'bade him ask,' and 'he would not ask a sign,'

Isa. 7.10-12; so it is a foolish modesty, when men will not act their faith upon the reward and the blessed recompenses. Christ used this way: Heb. 12.2, It is said, 'for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, and despised the shame,' etc. And truly all creatures, as they are now made, must needs take this course, look to the glory, that they may discharge the duty and endure the cross. No created agent can rest merely in the beauty and goodness of his own action. It is it folly to say that virtue is a reward to itself, if you speak of eternal reward; it is God's covenant way. We are not only to regard duty, but the encouragement of duty. But then the reward must not be the chief cause, but the encouragement; the ultimate reason must be the glory of God. When we make the reward the ultimate end of all we desire, this is to respect self above God; the glory of God must be the mainspring of all our desires and hopes. To look after happiness is an innocent aim of nature, but to glorify God is the aim of grace. Now only to aim at happiness is the mere motion of nature, and of our own will; but it is our duty to have a further aim at the glory of God. By the law of our creation we were bound to aim at the glory of God, though our happiness were not subordinate to it, for 'God made all things for himself.'

(2.) In external actions, and in duties of worship, we must have a good aim. It is dangerous in sacred things to look a-squint, and by the temple to serve the concernments of the shop; this is to put dung in God's own cup; this is to make God serve with our iniquities; and to use worship as a pretence and cover to interest. When we pervert things from their proper use, we do them an injury. If a cup were made for a king to drink in, and we should use it as a vessel to keep dung and excrements, it were a high affront; yet nature doth not design such things to such an use, but art, and the will of man. Duty is made for the special honour of God, by his appointment, therefore it should have no end beneath itself:

[3.] In all conditions of life, a Christian should be indifferent to every estate, so God may be glorified; to be like a die in the hand of God, let providence cast him high or low, as it pleaseth God: Phil. 1.21, 'So be it, that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death;' I am indifferent, my aim only is to magnify Christ. This is the temper of a Christian; things may fall out, not as we

think, but always as we would, if our general aim be to God's glory, for in providence we are required only to be passive. There is nothing left to our choice; we are to resign up our wills to his good pleasure; our duty is submission; events must be left to God himself, and in these things he will provide for his own glory. Well then, whether your condition be prosperous or adverse, pleasing or displeasing, if it be for God's glory, it should be all one to you. A traveller, when he asks the way, it is all one to him if you direct him to the right hand or left, so he may accomplish his journey; so it is to a Christian; whether his way to heaven lies by sickness or health, by quiet or trouble, by living at home or by exile and banishment, abased or abounding, by estate or poverty, a Christian is content, so God may be glorified. Thus should we, in all conditions of life, submit ourselves to the disposal of God, that he might be glorified upon us. Some dispute whether we are not to be at such a pass for the eternal state of our souls, whether he will damn us or save us, so he may be glorified. I answer, No; this seems to be extremely harsh, and God doth not put us upon that trial, the laying down our souls to the disposal of God; that is only required of Christ, that he should lay down his soul as to the consolations of the Godhead, for a while. It would put a creature into an indifferency in point of duty, or into despair in point of hope; whereas God in his covenant seeks to draw on the creatures to be earnest for the everlasting welfare of their souls, rather than to leave it at his disposal. By this you may see what is self-seeking; we do not make it our aim to enjoy God and glorify him in this manner.

Secondly, To give your three signs by which a self-seeker may be discovered. The best judge is his own conscience. Yet to revive guilt by a note or two.

1. A man is guilty of this self-seeking when he puts himself upon the profession of godliness, out of the promise of some worldly advantage. Gen. 34.22-24, observe the argument of the Shechemites, they would yield to circumcision upon this supposition - 'Shall not all their cattle, and all that they have be ours?' A brutish argument; and yet this is very usual, especially in times of public changes. It is usual for men to follow a dying church for a legacy, as vultures for a carcase; the change may be good, but their end is stark naught. There may be a great idol in their own hearts. Men may follow Christ 'for the loaves,' John 6.26; they did not

value his person, but they would live at ease, and be fed with miracle. *Vix diligitur Jesus propter Jesum* - Seldom is Jesus valued for his own sake. Men seek temporal conveniences in the practice and profession of the gospel, ease, peace, wealth, credit, and so they appropriate Jesus Christ to secular uses. It was an inestimable mercy that God should send his Son, yet they look no further than the loaves.

2. When a man cannot endure to be crossed for his religion. Carnal professors are 'enemies to Christ's cross,' Phil. 3.18; their lamp will not burn, unless it be fed with the oil of praise and profit. A godly man is contented to be neglected and abased for Christ, and yet still is satisfied with his work: 2 Sam. 2.22, 'I will be yet be more vile.' Blessed be God, I can suffer this for his sake, A horse that hath a nail in his foot may travel well upon soft ground; but in a hard and gravelly way there he halteth. So men as long as religion is accompanied with conveniency, then they may like it, but are 'enemies to the cross of Christ;' their hirelings will soon prove changelings: Job 2.9, 'Dost thou yet retain thine integrity?' When men are delicate and tender, and cannot endure the cross, it is a sign they had other aims of credit and profit in their profession.

3. By envying others in the same profession; we should rejoice in their gifts and graces, and be glad that God may be honoured by others as well as ourselves; but proud men would shine alone, they envy the gifts and graces of others; this is a sure note of self-seeking, it is not grace they look after, but carnal advantage. This is the practice of the elder brother, which Christ taxeth in the 15th of Luke; he that is truly gracious, desires that others may partake of the same grace, for he knows that God is thereby the more glorified. But when we are covetous of reputation, and design our own honour, then the fewer, the greater is our advantage. These men know that their stream will suffer some loss, when it is diffused into so many channels. It is notable, that of the apostle, Gal. 5, 26, 'Let us not be desirous of vainglory, envying one another, provoking one another.' Self-seeking puts men upon passions and envy; they are touchy, because they are jealous of their own interest; and they are envious, because they think the commonness of gifts and graces detracteth from their esteem.

Thirdly, To show you how necessary it is that you should practise, and that we should preach, this part of self-denial. How necessary it is appeareth enough already; but yet further, it may be added that you should regard it.
(1.) Partly, that you may not rob God of his essential honour. There is nothing that alienates a man from God so much as self-seeking. Devotion and service are preserved when we make God our paymaster; but when men look to the world and the approbation of men, they do not care for God - 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,' 1 John 2.16. Christ is troublesome to such, not welcome, because of the interest he hath in conscience. Brethren, it is no small matter I am speaking about; self-seeking abuseth God exceedingly. It is one of his prerogatives to be the utmost end of the creature's being and operation, and you usurp that which is proper to God; when self hath a pre-eminence above him, God is kept out of the throne. Pharaoh only reserved this, to be greater in the throne than Joseph; you may do much that is good, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give your body to be burnt, but, all this while, self is greater than God in the throne.
(2.) This is very necessary, that you may not rob him of his tribute from the creatures. God hath given us many things, only reserved this - 'My glory will I not give to another.' He hath given us the profit, that we may give him the glory. God hath given us a lease of the comforts of the world, only this he hath reserved as his rent and acknowledgment - that he will be glorified in all our actions and honoured in all our blessings. God hath made us, and hath a right and title to us. He that planted the tree, hath a right in the fruit. God that made us, certainly expects some fruit from us. God gave us talents to this purpose, or rather lends us; we are but servants, to employ the talents to our master's use. A Christian hath given himself up to God a 'living sacrifice,' Rom, 12.1. You are not your own, God hath a right and title to you, therefore do not rob him of his glory; a sacrifice under the law was no more his that offered it, but the Lord's.

And as it is necessary your should practise it, so it is necessary we should press it again and again upon you. Self-seeking is a close evil, as well as a dangerous and heinous one. Two things I observe -
(1.) That the greatest self-seeking usually is carried on under the colour of self-

denial. As the Gibeonites put on old shoes and old garments to make a league with Joshua; so many pretend mortification and self denial to endear themselves to others, for worldly profit and advantage, as those the apostle speaks of, in 2 Cor.11., that to gain credit, entrance, and applause, would take no maintenance. All the carnal designs of men have been carried on under a pretence and veil of religion. Herod, under a pretence of worship, would have Christ to be destroyed, Mat. 2.8; and Jezebel proclaims a fast to destroy Naboth, 1 Kings 21.9; so Simeon and Levi pressed the Shechemites to be circumcised out of revenge. A crocodile weepeth, and then maketh a prey. Carnal ends are often shrouded under religious pretences.

(2.) That we are more apt to accuse others out of envy than to reflect upon ourselves, Many think self-seeking is a sin only incident to them that are called to public employment, either in the church or common-wealth. We may warn others, but we cannot judge of them; for self-seeking lies in the aim of the spirit, and is liable to the censure and judgment of God alone. When the action was fair, Job 1.9, it was Satan's accusation, 'Doth Job serve God for nought?' You should not out of envy accuse others, but reflect on thy own heart. We may not have such opportunity as they to enrich ourselves, and that may put us upon envy; but art not thou a self-seeker so far as thou canst reach within thy grasp? Oh, the envy that is in our hearts, and the pride that is in our prayers and conferences which we do not take notice of! Wouldst thou be thought well of in thy place, as Simon Magus, would be 'some great one;' thou mayest be guilty of simony, as they may be guilty of hypocrisy, bribery, and purloining from the public.

Fourthly, It is a difficult and hard piece of self-denial. It is natural to us - 'All men seek their own things,' Phil. 2.21. All our mark, naturally, is at some aim of our own, at our own profit and credit. It is very hardly laid aside, for base and unworthy desires are very importunate, and do recoil upon us after mortification, and after resolutions to the contrary. We often find that we begin well; we aim at the glory of God, it is our habituated aim, but thoughts of pride grow upon us, in the very middle of the action, or else after it is ended. It is an impudent sin, that will assault us again and again.

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

1. By way of consideration.

[1.] Self is a base and unworthy mark to be aimed at. He that shoots at a shrub, will never aim so high as he that shoots at a star. That service must needs be base that doth not intend Christ, and centre in him. All actions savour of their end. How low-spirited are they that seek themselves! How soon they are apt to warp! It doth but expose you to temptation. They that have an ill end will not scruple at an ill way. He that hath a right mark in his eye will hardly miscarry so much as he that takes a wrong mark.

[2.] Consider the greatness of the sin in making other things our end besides God; you use the name of God that you may enjoy the world; you make him a minister of sin. You make religion a bait, and Christ a means to accomplish your carnal purposes. It is a question who sins more, he that makes use of wrong means, or he that proposeth a wrong end. He that makes use of wrong means makes the devil serve God; but he that hath a wrong end makes God serve the devil. You make the end serve the means; nay, though it be but in a glance and in a thought, it is a degree of whoredom. God would have Israel to have the 'law written upon the fringes of their garments,' Num. 15.39, that they might look upon it, and remember the commandments of the Lord, and 'do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you used to go awhoring.' You know the glance of the eye outwardly, and a thought in the heart, it is whoredom - 'He that looks on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' Evil suggestions that draw us away from God, are whoredom; you break the vows of loyal love affection to Christ. As a man may be an adulterer in thought, so he may be a spiritual adulterer too: James 4.4, 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?' The devil for one sin of thought, for aspiring after the dignity of God, was turned out of heaven. Now in your own thoughts you make your own praise your end.

[3.] It is an ill sign. To know the end doth distinguish a man from a beast, and to choose the end doth distinguish man from man. Survey all the world, wherever the name of Christian is heard, you will find, here is the great difference between man and man, in what they make their utmost end and chiefest good; therefore when you make self your end, it is an ill character and sign.

[4.] No man doth less enjoy himself than he that doth most seek himself. Self-seeking is always attended with self-losing, for we cannot expect wages from God and mammon too. And worldly rewards are very uncertain; God is wont to disappoint carnal aims, and the event is not suitable to the intention.

[5.] You shall have the greater judgment: Mat. 23.14, 'Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers, therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.' The pharisees, that they might be counted great devotionaries, would make long prayers, that they might have the disposing of orphans, and be trusted with widows' portions. All sin is out of measure sinful, yours especially; your very pretence, when you would seem to be good, and are stark nought, it aggravates the sin before God. If we would be accounted good when we have an evil aim within ourselves, when we take up religion for an ill purpose, and for a cloak only, the sin is the greater, and so will the judgment be also.

[6.] Consider the dishonour that comes to Christ by self-seeking. There are no greater enemies to the gospel than self-seeking Christians: Phil. 3.18,19, 'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly.' None greater enemies than they that make a god of their belly. What is the reason few or none are now converted, that ordinances are not so powerful as they were wont to be, but because many shroud themselves under the name of Christians, and yet mind nothing but their own profit and gain? Testify against them we must, though with grief, that we may keep up the honour and repute of religion, that is mightily stained by them. It is an honour to God when we serve him out of pure love, not for pay and gain. But when men merely make a market of religion, Satan and his instruments make an advantage of this;

they will say they profess religion, only to get great places. God may have servants enough upon such terms: Job 1.9, 'Doth Job serve God for nought?' It is true, Job is diligent and zealous, but doth Job lose by his profession? So carnal men will say, Is it for nought? They hunt after great places and preferments in the world. It was an old complaint of the gentiles, Lo, say the heathens, those that talk of their being freed from the tyranny of the devil, that they are dead to the world and alive to Christ, yet we see them to be as base and self-seeking as any. In vain do they talk of baptism and the Holy Ghost (by which they think they are ruled in all their actions), and of the gospel, when their whole life is nothing else but a contradiction to the rules of the gospel. It is a mighty prejudice to religion, and a dishonour to God, when men shroud themselves under the name of Christian and zealous persons, and secretly aim at their private commodity and profit.

2. But to remedy this evil by way of practice, be more frequent in prayer and praise. Frequent in prayer, to be purged from all self-seeking and sinister respects; carnal affection will be importunate. Then for praises, cast the honour upon God himself. As when they would have given the apostles divine honour, they cried out, 'We are men of like passions with yourselves. Why gaze ye upon us?' so when we meet with applause in the world, and are apt to be puffed up, we should cast it back, and remember that God is to have this praise. As Joab sent for David that he might have honour in taking the royal city, so should you give God all the glory and praise.

Having handled self-denial in reference to God, I shall now speak of it with respect to our neighbour.

As there is a carnal self in opposition to God, so there is also a carnal self in opposition to the good of others, to the duty we owe to our neighbour. In a moral consideration there are three general beings, God, thy neighbour, and thyself. Now self is ravenous, and devoureth the respects due to both. It seeks to intercept and usurp the rights of the Godhead, and to divert and engross the respects that are due to our neighbour. Well then, I shall now speak of self-denial with reference to our neighbour, and the rather because it is established by God's law, and that in the next place to our respects of God: John 4.21, 'And this commandment we have from him, that he which loveth God, should love his

brother also.' The scripture speaketh very little of love to ourselves, because of the strong bent of nature that way; there is somewhat of allowance, but nothing of precept. Self-love is not commanded in scripture, but regulated. The commandment takes notice of our love to God, and then of our love to our neighbour. This grant we have, that we should love ourselves; but this by commandment, to love our neighbour.

1. Because love to our neighbour is a means to preserve our respects to God; partly because he trieth us by this sensible way. God needeth nothing from us. He is elevated far above our bounty and kindness; and therefore it is easy to pretend love to God, if God had not devolved his own right upon our brethren, and made them the proxies to receive those respects, that we cannot so well bestow upon God himself. God needs not our love, but his servants do. Therefore it is made the test of our love to God that we love our brother: 1 John 4.20, 'If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother he is a liar:' so 1 John 3.17, 'If a man loveth not his brother, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' We cannot love God aright, without loving our brother, and cannot love our brother aright if we love not God; we must love our brother for God's sake. Therefore our pretensions are but mere lies when we pretend to be open to God, and our bowels are shut against our brethren, whom he hath made his proxies. And justly, because by sensible objects God would wean us from a devotion to ourselves, that so we may be made more fit for respects to objects spiritual and invisible. We are naturally moved to respect things or beings that are visible to our senses, and communicate with us in nature and blood, for so far they are nearer to self, and therefore God required the more respects to man, that we might be prepared for respects to his essence, which is more remote. 'Thus God argueth: 1 John 4.20, 'If he love not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?' By the senses, we see man partake with us in the same communion, and similitude, and nature; and if objects sensible do not work upon us, how shall we be moved to do anything for God, that is invisible, and more remote? If things that have a greater similitude with us, if visible things, of the truth of whose being we have certain proofs, do not work upon us, how will our respects be elevated to God, who differeth more from us, of whose being we are apt to doubt, because he is

invisible? If we have no natural love, how can we be supposed to have that which is supernatural? So that we see God would make advantage of this natural love, and by our respects to man fit us to love himself. It is necessary then to state this kind of self-denial. Now that you may see how far we are to deny ourselves in reference to the good of others, let me lay down some propositions, and then close all with application.

[1.] A man is bound with many engagements to love his neighbour.
[2.] To love his neighbour as himself.
[3.] In some cases, more than himself.

(1.) A man is by many engagements bound to love his neighbour; no man is born for himself. Nature teacheth it, and grace doth establish this dictate of nature. There is no one thing pressed in scripture so earnestly as the love of our neighbour: Gal. 5.14, 'For all the law is fulfilled in this one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' How can the apostle say, 'All the law?' There are respects due to God that are established by the law, as well as to man. The meaning is, all the civil part of the law, the whole second table; or else, all the law, as we obey God in loving man, for God's sake, so we turn the duties of the second table into duties of the first, and make commerce to be a kind of worship. Besides, this is Christ's solemn command: I John 15.17, 'These things I command, that you love one another. This is the sum of Christ's charge to his disciples. By way of special charge, it is ranked with faith: 1 John 3.28, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.' Here is the great commandment, faith in God, and love of the brethren, the great charge of Christ, which he left at his death. It is a legacy as well as a precept. Speeches of dying men are wont to be received with most veneration and reverence, but especially the charge of dying friends. It is notable, the brethren of Joseph, when they were afraid he would remember the injuries they had shown to his person, they sent messengers unto Joseph: Gen. 1.16, saying, 'Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, forgive the trespass,' etc. Oh, let us fulfil the will of dead. When Jesus Christ took his leave of his disciples, this was that he gave in charge, that we should have special respect to the good of one another.

Therefore, when thou art wont to quarrel with, or to neglect others, say, What love do I bear to Christ, since I do forget the solemn charge the dying Jesus left to his disciples, John 13.34. Christ calls this his new commandment - 'A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another.' How could he say so, since it was as old as the moral law, or the law of nature? New, because it is excellent, as a new song among the Hebrews is an excellent song; or rather, new, because solemnly and specially renewed by him, and commended to their care. New things and laws are much esteemed and prized; so let this my new commandment, let it be highly in esteem and regard. Nay, let me add farther, one reason why Christ came from heaven was to propound to us a pattern of charity; as to repair and preserve the notions of the Godhead, that the glory of God might suffer no loss by the greatness of his sufferings, so to show us a pattern of charity. To elevate duty between man and man; and therefore is his example so often urged in this case: John 13.34, 'That ye love one another, as I have loved you ;'and Eph. 5.2, We ought to walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour.' Christ would come from heaven to show us the highest pattern of self-denial, he would discover to us the love of his Father: John 15.19, 'As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.' The Father loved him with an infinite love, yet parted with him for the salvation of mankind; he parted with his dear Son out of his own bosom to be unworthily treated in the world for our sakes. And Jesus Christ parted with himself and all, to raise our love to God and men; therefore we ought to 'walk in love,' as Christ hath loved us.

(2.) The ordinary measure of our respect to our neighbour is that love that we bear to ourselves: James 2.8, 'if ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scriptures, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.' This is the royal law, the solemn standard of equity, and the measure of all respects between man and man, like the king's highway, and road of duty. Self and neighbour being equal in the balance, therefore they are to have the same respect. Now this rule, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' implies two things -

(1.) And principally, that I am to do them no more hurt than I would do to myself: Mat. 7.12, 'Whatsoever you would others should to you, do you the same to

them, for this is the law and the prophets,' that is, this is the sum of the whole word concerning moral duties. As I would not have them to injure me, so must not I injure them; wish them no more hurt than to my own soul. I must hide their defects and infirmities, as I would hide and conceal my own. And in all contracts and acts of converse I am to put my soul in their soul's stead; in short, to wish or do them no more evil, than by a regular act of self-love I would wish or do to myself. Then

(2.) It implies that I am as really to promote their good as my own: 1 Cor. 10.24, 'Let no man seek his own things, but every man another's wealth;' not seek his own, so as to exclude another. It is not to be understood simply, apart and by itself, but *in sensu conjuncto*, for I am to seek my own things; but let him not seek his own things, so as to neglect his care of another's welfare. We are to perform all offices of humanity suitably, and convenient to their necessities; we are to wish them all spiritual graces and eternal blessings, as we would to ourselves Acts26.29. 'Would to God all that hear me this day were altogether such as I am? And we are not only to wish but to procure their good by all means possible, only this caution is to be observed, that our endeavours may be more for our own good than the good of others; and yet I cannot be said to love myself more than others, because the expression notes only the reality of that affection that I should bear to them. I am to love them as myself. But in expressing the effects of this love, by industry, care, and bounty, there is a method, an order prescribed by God; and so I am first to love my own body; next, my near relations, the wife of my bosom and children; then neighbours, then strangers, then enemies: Eph. 5.28, 'So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.' It is made the rule of conjugal society, therefore there must be a subordination: first wife, then children, then kindred, then neighbours; therefore the apostle saith, 1 Tim. 5.8, 'But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' The Hebrews preferred the men of their own nation before the Grecians in their daily ministration. The effects of bounty and love are to be dispensed according to the urgency of necessities. They that dwell about us, and are more frequent with us, their necessities provoke us more to acts and expressions of love towards them.

(3.) In some cases a man is bound to love his neighbour more than himself. In the law it is, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' but in the gospel we have an higher pattern: John 13.34, 'As I have loved you, so ought you also to love one another.' Now the Lord Jesus hath loved us with an high love, he hath laid down his life for us. And it is no strain to apply this in some cases to love to our neighbours: 1 John 3.16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' He shed his precious blood, which was more valuable than all the world, therefore we should not stick at anything, not life, which is our most precious possession. Life and all must go for our neighbour's sake. But you will say, In what cases? First my single life, to save the whole community and society. It is a constant rule that all private things must give way to public; for God's glory is more promoted and concerned in a public good than in any private; therefore a public good is better and more considerable in itself, than any particular happiness of ours. In the whole business of self-denial, the great question is, which shall take place, God's glory, or the creature's profit. Thus Jonah, to save the company, saith, 'Cast me into the sea.' It was not only an act of patience and submission to the sentence of God when he was discovered and found out by lot; but it was an act of charity, to save those that sailed with him. Men should be contented to be sacrificed for a real public good. The creatures, they will leave their private bent to preserve the universe.

2. We ought to help on one another's spiritual good with the loss of our temporals, and to venture person and estate for the propagation of the gospel. Paul's glorious excess of charity is in some degree to be imitated, Rom. 9.3, who could wish himself 'to be cursed from Christ for his brethren and kinsmen in the flesh;' and Moses, Exod. 32., 'To blot his name out of the book of life,' if God would spare his people. In some degree they are to be imitated; with our loss we are to promote the spiritual good of others. We have an high instance in our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Cor. 8.9, 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich.' When he was rich, rich in the glory of the Godhead, yet he would come in the form of a servant. But alas! who becomes poor for Christ now?

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

3. It is a necessary act of our love to God, we may expose ourselves to uncertain dangers, to hinder another's certain danger. If a man were assaulted by thieves and ruffians, to prevent murder, I am bound to endanger my own life. If I may possibly contribute help, by the laws of God I am to help the wronged party, though it be to my own hazard. Thus Esther, 'If I perish, I perish,' when she went into the king. There was a double ground of that resolution; one was, she preferred the public good before her own private life; the other ground was because the cause was only hazardous, though likely. Now this case is the more binding, if it be the life of a public person, of a minister or magistrate. A subject is bound to preserve the life of a magistrate more than his own. The hand will put up itself to save the head; so ministers, as Rom. 16.4, 'For my sake they laid down their own necks.' He speaks of Aquila and Priscilla, they exposed themselves to danger of death to save Paul in some tumult; and therefore, saith he, I do not only give them thanks, but all the churches of Christ. Nay, if it be but the life of a private friend that is in danger, I am bound to expose myself to some hazard for his sake: John 15.13, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' Christ speaks of it as an act of love and friendship. For though simply my life and his be of a like value, and mine may be more dear to myself than his, yet my duty to him and his life, must oversway, especially if the case be but hazardous, as to rescue him from an assassin.

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

First, Self-lovers. There are several sorts of them.

1. When men seek their own contentment above the public benefit. They care not how it goes with the public, so their private interest flourish. The sin is more aggravated, if it be in times of public hazard, if men be neglectful. Among the Romans, men would leave their shops and trade, and venture all for the common good. But when in dangerous cases men are diverted from public service by a zeal

to private interest, this is a foolish course; like to those that would look to their own cabins, when the vessel itself is in danger. Judges 5.16, those that were wanting to public duty, were blasted with infamy and shame. 'Gad, Dan, and Ashur, that had their country near the sea; and felt not the yoke;' and Reuben, that lived on the other side Jordan, stayed at home unworthily, to tend their cattle and flocks, and were more affected with the bleating of the sheep, than with the groans and complaints of their brethren, under the oppression of Jabin. Those that 'did not come out for the help of God, they are cursed,' ver. 23. So they are counted of a base and degenerate spirit, who are mentioned 1 Chron. 4.22,23, 'They dwelt among plants and hedges; there they dwelt with the king for his work;' these were ancient things. Some that came of a noble extraction, yet because they remained in Babylon, and would not venture with the people of God, and go up and build the temple, they are marked out as men unworthy of their extraction.

2. When men in the course of their lives do only mind their own things, and are wholly taken up in fulfilling their own wills and desires. This is the temper of most men, they are of a narrow private heart, and do not seek the welfare of others. It is both against nature and grace. Against nature: no man is born for himself, his country hath a share in him; his friends, and the persons with whom he lives, have a share; for by nature man was made to be helpful to others. Man by nature is a sociable creature, made for commerce. If man could live of himself, he might live to himself. Now human society is built upon communion and commerce. The eye cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee; and we cannot say of the meanest person, We have no need of thee. It is the wisdom of providence to cast the frame of the world into mountains and valleys, to make some poor and some rich. The poor are as necessary for manual labour, for corporal and hard services, as are the rich; therefore it is against nature when men wholly live to themselves. So it is also against grace, which casts us into one mystical body. And the apostle, Rom. 12.5, hath a notable expression, 'So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.' There is a great self we are to regard, and that is the societies to which we do belong and we are members of; and the welfare of this great body must we seek

and promote. As in a clock, one wheel moveth another, each part gives and receives help, and one from the other; so should every one be serviceable, and put his heart, hand, and head to the common good, and be sensible of the common evil. As in the natural body there is no disaster happens to any one member, but all the rest are affected therewith. The tongue cries out when we tread upon the toe, You have hurt me; or if the foot be pricked with a thorn, the rest of the members will testify their compassion. The tongue complaineth, the eyes shed tears, the head studieth to recover it, and find out the grievance, and the hands will assist. There are three ways wherein we are to be specially serviceable one to another: by prayers, by counsel, and by outward actions of relief.

(1.) We are to mind in our prayers the good of one another, and labour for it with God, as we would seek his face for our own souls. This is a cheap act of charity, it costs us nothing but a little breath and expense of spirit, and it is an advantage to us, as well as benefit to them, that we have an occasion to go to God. David, you know, fasted for his enemies, Ps.25, and Abraham prayed for Sodom; but alas! few are nowadays touched with the miseries of others. If we be free from trouble, we care not what others suffer. Now the apostle saith, Heb. 13.3, 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversities, as being yourselves also in the body.' We that are at liberty, must not forget them that are in bonds, but esteem them as our own, till God set them free. Canst thou be a member, and not be affected? The children of God, when they have been in a flourishing condition themselves, have always laid to heart the miseries of others of God's children that have been in a suffering condition. Nehemiah was a favourite at court, the king's cupbearer, yet he is sensible of the affliction of his country, chap.1. And Daniel, a great prince in Babylon, yet how affectionately doth he plead with God for Sion: we are to implead their case with God, though we are never so well.

(2.) Another way is by counsel. Thou art not to suffer sin upon thy brother, no more than upon thy own soul, for every man is made his brother's guardian and keeper: Heb. 3.13, 'Exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' Take heed not only lest you yourselves, but lest any of your body and society be hardened through the

deceitfulness of sin. It is true, we have charge and trust enough of ourselves, but yet God hath laid this duty upon us too, therefore we should be much in spiritual counsel, though we spend ourselves, and be spent; it is a great part of self-denial, that is required of us. John 4, Jesus Christ was weary, yet he treats with the woman of Samaria about conversion.
(3.) This love is to be manifested by sensible nets of charity and relief. You had need be much in this, for Christ takes notice of it as done to himself. If Christ lay languishing upon his bed, we all pretend we would go and visit him. 'What you do to these little ones, you do to me,' saith Christ. He tries the young man by that, Mark 10.31, 'Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor.' It is the doctrine of self-denial to the young man, as if self-denial and giving to the poor were terms equivalent. I press it the rather because men love a cheap religion, pretend to pray for others, but yet stick at those costly acts of charity; can give good words and counsel, but will not relieve and clothe; but we cannot satisfy God with mere words, as you cannot pay debts with the noise of money; there must be some real bounty, by which you should approve your heart to God. It is the main thing Christ taketh notice of in the day of judgment

3. When in acts of charity to others men only regard their own relations and friends. This is but a natural love, because relations and friends, they are but self-multiplied, and dilated, and 'If you only love them that love you, what reward have you?' Mat. 5.46. Who will give you thanks for this; for the mere motion of nature. But it is according to the pattern, when you can 'love enemies,' and love those that wrong you. Christ loved us when we were his enemies, and children of wrath; and when we had offended God, he loved us, and gave his soul as a propitiation for our sins. Therefore you are not only to love your own relations and allies, but enemies may come in as your neighbour, Luke 10.29. It is a high prerogative to be a forgiver. Therefore let us not lose this crown of honour. Let us try which will be most weary, they in offending, or we in pardoning.

Secondly, It reproves self-seekers. And here -

1. They are guilty that seek their private benefit, though it be with the public loss: that make a prey and merchandise of the calamity of the times; that trouble

the water, that they may fish in it; that feather their own nests with public spoils; set an house on fire to roast their eggs: set on foot innovations to promote themselves. Men had need look to themselves in such cases. We read, Nehem. 5.14, though by the allowance of the king of Persia, Nehemiah had a standing course of diet allowed for him and his friends, yet, saith he, 'I took not the bread of the governor.' We should not carve out such large portions to ourselves, in times of distress and calamity. We see Joseph had a great trust in Egypt, yet he had made no provision for himself. Therefore it is the glory of a man in a public place rather to depart from his own right, than to make a merchandise of the times, and a prey of his brethren.

2. When men make merchandises of their private courtesies, and aim only at their own praise; when men eye self in all they do, and have an aim only to advance themselves in the esteem of others, in all the public good they do, these are self-seekers indeed. The heathen poet could say, that is no alms, which we use as a way of trade and exchange, that it will bring no profit to you at all. Still we must look to the pattern, Jesus Christ; when he loved us, 'He pleased not himself,' Rom. 15.3. Therefore there should be nothing of self and private reflection upon our own interest or our own charity.

3. Persons envious, those that would have a monopoly of gifts to set off themselves, and envy the gifts and graces of others. Whereas God would have us rejoice in each other's grace and labours. What is theirs by labour, is ours by love, by virtue of the mystical body; whatever members do, the glory and good rebounds to all. We being in the body, we should not envy them, as the foot doth not envy the eye, because it is seated in a higher place. Envious persons are not members of the body, but wens, that grow monstrous by sucking, they seek to draw all to themselves, therefore cannot rejoice in the good of others.