

UNIT 4
MATTHEW 6:19–7:11

I/ Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

Whenever the gospel is taught, and people seek to live according to it, there are two terrible plagues that always arise: false preachers who corrupt the teaching, and then Sir Greed, who obstructs right living. –Martin Luther

II/ Do Not Be Anxious

You see, he is making the birds our schoolmasters and teachers. It is a great and abiding disgrace to us that in the Gospel a helpless sparrow should become a theologian and a preacher to the wisest of men... Whenever you listen to the nightingale, therefore, you are listening to an excellent preacher... It is as if he were saying "I prefer to be in the Lord's kitchen. He has made heaven and earth, and he himself is the cook and the host. Every day he feeds and nourishes innumerable little birds out of his hand." –Martin Luther

III/ Judging Others

If we occupy the bench, we must not be surprised to find ourselves in the dock... The command to “judge not” is not a requirement to be blind, but rather a plea to be generous. –John Stott

IV/ Ask, and It Will Be Given

He knows that we are timid and shy, that we feel unworthy and unfit to present our needs to God... We think that God is so great and we are so tiny that we do not dare to pray... That is why Christ wants to lure us away from such timid thoughts, to remove our doubts, and to have us go ahead confidently and boldly. –John Calvin

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This Is My Father's World

Sovereign Lord ... you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. Acts 4:24

1. This is my Fa - ther's world, and to my lis - t'ning ears,
 2. This is my Fa - ther's world, the birds their car - ols raise,
 3. This is my Fa - ther's world, O let me ne'er for - get

all na - ture sings, and round me rings the mu - sic of the spheres.
 the morn - ing light, the lil - y white, de - clare their Mak - er's praise.
 that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Rul - er yet.

This is my Fa - ther's world: I rest me in the thought of
 This is my Fa - ther's world: he shines in all that's fair; in the
 This is my Fa - ther's world: the bat - tle is not done; Je -

rocks and trees, of skies and seas; his hand the won - ders wrought.
 rus - tling grass I hear him pass, he speaks to me ev - ery - where.
 sus who died shall be sat - is - fied, and earth and heav'n be one.

(3.) The mercies of God have been melting mercies unto others, melting their souls in love to the God of their mercies. When Hannah received the mercy of a son, she said, "My soul rejoiceth in the Lord;" not in the mercy, but in the God of the mercy. So also Mary: "My soul doth magnify the Lord; my spirit rejoiceth in God my Savior." The word signifies to make more room for God; their hearts were not contracted, but the more enlarged to God.

(4.) The mercies of God have been great restraints to keep others from sin. "Seeing thou, our God, hast given us such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments?" Ingenuous souls have felt the force of the obligations of love and mercy upon them.

(5.) The mercies of God to others have been as oil to the wheels of their obedience, and made them more fit for service. Now if mercies work contrarily upon our heart, what cause have I to be afraid that they come not to me in love! It is enough to damp the spirits of any saint, to see what sweet effects mercies have had upon others, and what bitter effects upon him.

Adversity
 II. The *second season* in the life of a Christian, requiring more than common diligence to keep his heart, is the time of *adversity*. When Providence frowns upon you, and blasts your outward comforts, then look to your heart; keep it with all diligence from repining against God or fainting under his hand; for troubles, though sanctified, are troubles still. Jonah was a good man, and yet how fretful was his heart under affliction! Job was the mirror of patience, yet how was his heart discomposed by trouble! You will find it hard to get a composed spirit under great afflictions. O the hurries and tumults which they occasion even in the best hearts!—Let me show you, then, how a Christian under great afflictions may keep his heart from repining or desponding, under the hand of God.

I will here offer several helps to keep the heart in this condition.

1. By these cross providences God is faithfully pursuing the great design of electing love upon the souls of his people, and orders all these afflictions as means sanctified to that end. Afflictions come not by casualty, but by counsel. By this counsel of God they are ordained as means of much spiritual good to saints. "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged," &c. "But he for our profit," &c. "All things work together for good," &c. They are God's workmen upon our hearts, to pull down the pride and carnal security of them; and being so, their nature is changed; they are turned into blessings and benefits. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," says David. Surely then thou hast no reason to quarrel with God, but rather to wonder that he should concern himself so much in thy good as to use any means for accomplishing it. Paul could bless God if by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead. "My brethren," says James, "count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations." 'My Father is about a design of love upon my soul, and do I well to be angry with him? All that he does is in pursuance of, and in reference to some eternal, glorious ends upon my soul. It is my ignorance of God's design that makes me quarrel with him.' He says to thee in this case, as he did to Peter, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

2. Though God has reserved to himself a liberty of afflicting his people, yet he has tied up his own hands by promise never to take away his loving kindness from them.

Can I contemplate this scripture with a repining, discontented spirit: "I will be his Father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of man, and with the stripes of the children of men: nevertheless my mercy shall not depart away from him." O my heart, my haughty heart! Dost thou well to be discontent, when God has given thee the whole tree, with all the clusters of comfort growing on it, because he suffers the wind to blow down a few leaves? Christians have two kinds of goods, the goods of the throne and the goods of the footstool; immovables and moveables. If God has secured those, never let my heart be troubled at the loss of these: indeed, if he had cut off his love, or discovered my soul I had reason to be cast down; but this he has not done, nor can he do it.

3. It is of great efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under afflictions, to call to mind that thine own Father has the ordering of them. Not a creature moves hand or tongue against thee but by his permission. Suppose the cup be bitter, yet it is the cup which thy Father hath given thee; and canst thou suspect poison to be in it? Foolish man, put home the case to thine own heart; canst thou give thy child that which would ruin him? No! Thou wouldst as soon hurt thyself as him. "If thou then, being evil, knowest how to give good gifts to thy children," how much more does God! The very consideration of his nature as a God of love, pity, and tender mercies; or of his relation to thee as a father, husband, friend, may be security enough, if he had not spoken a word to quiet thee in this case; and yet you have his word too, by the prophet Jeremiah: "I will do you no hurt." You lie too near his heart for him to hurt you; nothing grieves him more than your groundless and unworthy suspicions of his designs. Would it not grieve a faithful, tender-hearted physician, when he had studied the case of his patient, and prepared the most excellent medicines to save his life, to hear him cry out, 'O he has undone me! he has poisoned me!' because it pains him in the operation? O when will you be ingenuous?

★ 4. God respects you as much in a low as in a high condition; and therefore it need not so much trouble you to be made low; nay, he manifests more of his love, grace and tenderness in the time of affliction than in the time of prosperity. As God did not at first choose you because you were high, he will not now forsake you because you are low. Men may look shy upon you, and alter their respects as your condition is altered; when Providence has blasted your estate, your summer-friends may grow strange, fearing you may be troublesome to them; but will God do so? No, no: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" says he. If adversity and poverty could bar you from access to God, it were indeed a deplorable condition: but, so far from this, you may go to him as freely as ever. "My God will hear me," says the church. Poor David, when stripped of all earthly comforts, could encourage himself in the Lord his God; and why cannot you? Suppose your husband or son had lost all at sea, and should come to you in rags; could you deny the relation, or refuse to entertain him? If you would not, much less will God. Why then are you so troubled? Though your condition be changed, your Father's love is not changed.

5. What if by the loss of outward comforts God preserves your soul from the ruining power of temptation? Surely then you have little cause to sink your heart by such sad thoughts. Do not earthly enjoyments make men shrilly and warp in times of trial? For the love of these many have forsaken Christ in such an hour. The young ruler "went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." If this is God's design, how ungrateful to murmur against him for it! We see mariners in a storm can throw over-board the

most valuable goods to preserve their lives. We know it is usual for soldiers in a besieged city to destroy the finest buildings without the walls in which the enemy may take shelter; and no one doubts that it is wisely done. Those who have mortified limbs willingly stretch them out to be cut off, and not only thank, but pay the surgeon. (Must God be murmured against for casting over that which would sink you in a storm; for pulling down that which would assist your enemy in the siege of temptation; for cutting off what would endanger your everlasting life? O, inconsiderate, ungrateful man, are not these things for which thou grievest, the very things that have ruined thousands of souls?)

Answering our prayers for godliness, but not in the way we thought / wanted

6. It would much support thy heart under adversity, to consider that God by such humbling providences may be accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited. And should you be troubled at that? Say, Christian, hast thou not many prayers depending before God upon such accounts as these; that he would keep thee from sin; discover to thee the emptiness of the creature; that he would mortify and kill thy lusts; that thy heart may never find rest in any enjoyment but Christ? By such humbling and impoverishing strokes God may be fulfilling thy desire. Wouldst thou be kept from sin? *Lo, he hath hedged up thy way with thorns.* Wouldst thou see the creature's vanity? Thy affliction is a fair glass to discover it; for the vanity of the creature is never so effectually and sensibly discovered, as in our own experience. Wouldst thou have thy corruptions mortified? This is the way: to have the food and fuel removed that maintained them; for as prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a means to kill them. Wouldst thou have thy heart rest nowhere but in the bosom of God? What better method could Providence take to accomplish thy desire than pulling from under thy head that soft pillow of creature lights on which you rested before? And yet you fret at this: peevish child, how dost thou try thy Father's patience! If he delay to answer thy prayers, thou art ready to say, he regards thee not; if he does that which really answers the end of them, though not in the way which you expect, you murmur against him for that; as if, instead of answering, he were crossing all thy hopes and aims. Is this ingenuous? Is it not enough that God is so gracious as to do what thou desirest: must thou be so impudent as to expect him to do it in the way which thou prescribest?

If you could see the end * like @

7. It may support thy heart, to consider that in these troubles God is performing that work in which thy soul would rejoice, if thou didst see the design of it. We are clouded with much ignorance, and are not able to discern how particular providences tend to the fulfilment of God's designs; and therefore, like Israel in the wilderness, are often murmuring, because Providence leads us about in a howling desert, where we are exposed to difficulties; though then he led them, and is now leading us, by the right way to a city of habitations. If you could but see how God in his secret counsel has exactly laid the whole plan of your salvation, even to the smallest means and circumstances; could you but discern the admirable harmony of divine dispensations, their mutual relations, together with the general respect they all have to the last end; had you liberty to make your own choice, you would, of all conditions in the world, choose that in which you now are. Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made of a thousand shreds, which, single, appear useless, but put together, they represent a beautiful history to the eye. As God does all things according to the counsel of his own will, of course this is ordained at the best method to effect your salvation. *Such a one has a proud heart, so many humbling providences appoint for him; such a one*

has an earthly heart, so m'any impoverishing providences for him. Did you but see this, I need say no more to support the most dejected heart.

8. It would much conduce to the settlement of your heart, to consider that by fretting and discontent you do yourself more injury than all your afflictions could do. Your own discontent is that which arms your troubles with a sting; you make your burden heavy by struggling under it. Did you but lie quietly under the hand of God, your condition would be much more easy than it is. "Impatience in the sick occasions severity in the physician." This makes God afflict the more, as a father a stubborn child that receives not correction. Beside, it unfits the soul to pray over its troubles, or receive the sense of that good which God intends by them. Affliction is a pill, which, being wrapped up in patience and quiet submission, may be easily swallowed; but discontent chews the pill, and so embitters the soul. God throws away some comfort which he saw would hurt you, and you will throw away your peace after it; he shoots an arrow which sticks in your clothes, and was never intended to hurt, but only to drive you from sin, and you will thrust it deeper, to the piercing of your very heart, by despondency and discontent.

9. If thy heart (like that of Rachel) still refuses to be comforted, then do one thing more: compare the condition thou art now in, and with which thou art so much dissatisfied, with the condition in which others are, and in which thou deservest to be. 'Others are roaring in flames, howling under the scourge of vengeance; and among them I deserve to be. O my soul, is this hell? Is my condition as bad as that of the damned? What would thousands now in hell give to exchange conditions with me!' I have read (says an author) that when the Duke of Conde had voluntarily subjected himself to the inconveniences of poverty, he was one day observed and pitied by a lord of Italy, who from tenderness wished him to be more careful of his person. The good duke answered, "Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I suffer from want; for I send a harbinger before me, who makes ready my lodgings and takes care that I be royally entertained." The lord asked him who was his harbinger? He answered, "The knowledge of myself, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins, which is eternal torment; when with this knowledge I arrive at my lodging, however unprovided I find it, methinks it is much better than I deserve. *Why doth the living man complain?*" Thus the heart may be kept from desponding or repining under adversity.

III. The *third season* calling for more than ordinary diligence to keep the heart is the time of *Zion's troubles*. When the Church, like the ship in which Christ and his disciples were, is oppressed and ready to perish in the waves of persecution, then good souls are ready to be shipwrecked too, upon the billows of their own fears. It is true, most men need the spur rather than the reins in this case; yet some men sit down discouraged under a sense of the Church's troubles. The loss of the ark cost Eli his life; the sad posture in which Jerusalem lay made good Nehemiah's countenance change in the midst of all the pleasures and accommodations of the court. But though God allows, yea, commands the most awakened apprehensions of these calamities, and in "such a day calls to mourning, weeping, and girding with sackcloth," and severely threatens the insensible; yet it will not please him to see you sit like pensive Elijah under the juniper tree. "Ah, Lord God! It is enough, take away my life also." No: a mourner in Zion you may and ought to be, but a self-tormentor you must not

world (who judge more by what they see in your practices than by what they understand of your principles) to conclude from your timidity, that how much soever you commend faith and talk of assurance, yet you dare trust to those things no more than they, when it comes to the trial. O let not your fears lay such a stumbling-block before the blind world.

12. He that would secure his heart from fear, must first secure the eternal interest of his soul in the hands of Jesus Christ. When this is done, you may say, 'Now, world, do thy worst!' You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you are once assured it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. "Fear not them (says Christ) that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." The assured Christian may smile with contempt upon all his enemies, and say, 'Is this the worst that you can do?' What say you, Christian? Are you assured that your soul is safe; that within a few moments of your dissolution it shall be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation? If you be sure of that, never trouble yourself about the instrument and means of your death.

13. Learn to quench all slavish creature-fears in the reverential fear of God. This is a cure by diversion. It is an exercise of Christian wisdom to turn those passions of the soul which most predominate, into spiritual channels; to turn natural anger into spiritual zeal, natural mirth into holy cheerfulness, and natural fear into a holy dread and awe of God. This method of cure Christ prescribes in the 10th of Matthew; similar to which is Isaiah, 8:12,13, "Fear not their fear." 'But how shall we help it?' "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Natural fear may be allayed for the present by natural reason, or the removal of the occasion; but then it is like a candle blown out by a puff of breath, which is easily blown in again: but if the fear of God extinguish it, then it is like a candle quenched in water, which cannot easily be rekindled.

14. Pour out to God in prayer those fears which the devil and your own unbelief pour in upon you in times of danger. Prayer is the best outlet to fear: where is the Christian that cannot set his seal to this direction? I will give you the greatest example to encourage you to compliance, even the example of Jesus Christ. When the hour of his danger and death drew nigh, he went into the garden, separated from his disciples, and there wrestled mightily with God in prayer, even unto agony; in reference to which the apostle says, "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save from death, and was heard in that he feared." He was heard as to strength and support to carry him through it; though not as to deliverance, or exemption from it. O that these things may abide with you, and be reduced to practice in these evil days, and that many trembling may be established by them.

V. The *fifth season*, requiring diligence in keeping the heart, is the time of outward wants. Although at such times we should complain to God, not *of* God, (the throne of grace being erected for a "time of need,") yet when the waters of relief run low, and want begins to press, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the fountain! When the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse are almost spent, our faith and patience too are almost spent. It is now difficult to keep the proud and unbelieving heart in a holy quietude and sweet submission at the foot of God. It is an easy thing to talk of trusting God for daily bread, while we have a full barn or purse; but to say as the

prophet, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord:" surely this is not easy.

Would you know then how a Christian may keep his heart from distrusting God, or repining against him, when outward wants are either felt or feared?—The case deserves to be seriously considered, especially now, since it seems to be the design of Providence to empty the people of God of their creature fullness, and acquaint them with those difficulties to which hitherto they have been altogether strangers. To secure the heart from the dangers attending this condition, these considerations may, through the blessing of the Spirit, prove effectual:

1. If God reduces you to necessities, he therein deals no otherwise with you than he has done with some of the holiest men that ever lived. Your condition is not singular; though you have hitherto been a stranger to want, other saints have been familiarly acquainted with it. Hear what Paul says, not of himself only, but in the name of other saints reduced to like exigencies: "Even to the present hour, we both hunger and thirsts and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." To see such a man as Paul going up and down the world naked, and hungry, and homeless; one that was so far above thee in grace and holiness; one that did more service for God in a day than perhaps thou hast done in all thy days may well put an end to your repining. Have you forgotten how much even a David has suffered? How great were his difficulties? "Give, I pray thee", says he to Nabal, "whatsoever cometh to thy hand, to thy servants, and to thy son David." But why speak I of these? Behold a greater than any of them, even the Son of God, *who is the heir of all things, and by whom the worlds were made*, sometimes would have been glad of any thing, having nothing to eat. "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree afar off, leaving leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon."

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Hereby then God has set no mark of hatred upon you, neither can you infer want of love from want of bread. When thy repining heart puts the question, 'Was there ever sorrow like unto mine?' ask these worthies, and they will tell thee that though they did not complain as thou dost, yet their condition was as necessitous as thine is.

2. If God leave you not in this condition without a promise, you have no reason to repine or despond under it. That is a sad condition indeed to which no promise belongs. Calvin in his comment on Isaiah, 9: 1, explains in what sense the darkness of the captivity was not so great as that of the lesser incursions made by Tiglath Pileser. In the captivity, the city was destroyed and the temple burnt with fire: there was no comparison in the *affliction*, yet the *darkness* was not so great, because, says he, "there was a certain *promise* made in this case, but none in the other." It is better to be as low as hell with a promise, than to be in paradise without one. Even the darkness of hell itself would be no darkness comparatively at all, were there but a promise to enlighten it. Now, God has left many sweet promises for the faith of his poor people to live upon in this condition; such as these: "O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him; the lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing." "The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous to keep them alive in famine." "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" "When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the

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Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Here you see their extreme wants, water being put for their necessaries of life; and their certain relief, "I the Lord will hear them:" in which it is supposed that they cry unto him in their distress, and he hears their cry. Having therefore these promises, why should not your distrustful heart conclude like David's, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?"

'But these promises imply conditions: if they were absolute, they would afford more satisfaction.' What are those tacit conditions of which you speak but these, that he will either supply or sanctify your wants; that you shall have so much as God sees fit for you? And does this trouble you? Would you have the mercy, whether sanctified or not? whether God sees it fit for you or not? The appetites of saints after earthly things should not be so ravenous as to seize greedily upon any enjoyment without regarding circumstances.

' But when wants press, and I see not whence supplies should come, my faith in the promise shakes, and I, like murmuring Israel, cry, "He gave bread, can he give water also?" O unbelieving heart! when did his promises fail? whoever trusted them and was ashamed? May not God upbraid thee with thine unreasonable infidelity, as in Jer. 2: 31, "Have I been a wilderness unto you?" or as Christ said to his disciples, "Since I was with you, lacked ye any thing?" Yea, may you not upbraid yourself; may you not say with good old Polycarp, "These many years I have served Christ, and found him a good Master?"

Indeed he may deny what your wantonness, but not what your want calls for. He will not regard the cry of your lusts, nor yet despise the cry of your faith: though he will not indulge your wanton appetites, yet he will not violate his own faithful promises. These promises are your best security for eternal life; and it is strange they should not satisfy you for daily bread. Remember the words of the Lord, and solace your heart with them amidst all your wants. It is said of Epicurus, that in dreadful paroxysms of the colic he often refreshed himself by calling to mind his inventions in philosophy; and of Possodonius the philosopher, that in an acute disorder he solaced himself with discourses on moral virtue; and when distressed, he would say, "O pain, thou dost nothing; though thou art a little troublesome, I will never confess thee to be evil." If upon such grounds as these they could support themselves under such racking pains, and even deluded their diseases by them; now much rather should the promises of God, and the sweet experiences which have gone along step by step with them, make you forget all your wants, and comfort you in every difficulty?

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spective 3. If it be bad now, it might have been worse. Has God denied thee the comforts of this life? He might have denied thee Christ, peace, and pardon also; and then thy case had been woeful indeed.

You know God has done so to millions. How many such wretched objects may your eyes behold every day, that have no comfort in hand, nor yet in hope; that are miserable here, and will be so to eternity; that have a bitter cup, and nothing to sweeten it—no, not so much as any hope that it will be better. But it is not so with you: though you be poor in this world, yet you are "rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has promised." Learn to set spiritual riches over against temporal poverty. Balance all your present troubles with your spiritual privileges. Indeed if God has denied your soul the robe of righteousness to *clothe* it, the hidden manna to *feed*

it, the heavenly mansion to receive it, you might well be pensive; but the consideration that he has not may administer comfort under any outward distress. When Luther began to be pressed by want, he said, "Let us be contented with our hard fare; for do not we feast upon Christ, the bread of life?" "Blessed be God (said Paul) who hath abounded to us in all spiritual blessings."

4. Though this affliction be great, God has far greater, with which he chastises the dearly beloved of his soul in this world. Should he remove this and inflict those, you would account your present state a very comfortable one, and bless God to be as you now are. Should God remove your present troubles, supply all your outward wants, give you the desire of your heart in creature-comforts, but hide his face from you, shoot his arrows into your soul, and cause the venom of them to drink up your spirit: should he leave you but a few days to the buffetings of Satan: should he hold your eyes but a few nights waking with horrors of conscience, tossing to and fro till the dawning of the day:—should he lead you through the chambers of death, show you the visions of darkness, and make his terrors set themselves in array against you: then tell me if you would not think it a great mercy to be back again in your former necessitous condition, with peace of conscience; and account bread and water, with God's favor, a happy state? O then take heed of repining. Say not that God deals hardly with you, lest you provoke him to convince you by your own sense that he has worse rods than these for unsubmissive and froward children.

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5. If it be had now, it will be better shortly. Keep thy heart by this consideration, 'the meal in the barrel is almost spent; well, be it so, why should that trouble me, if I am almost beyond the need and use of these things?' The traveller has spent almost all his money; 'well,' says he, 'though my money be almost spent, my journey is almost finished too: I am near home, and shall soon be fully supplied.' If there be no candles in the house, it is a comfort to think that it is almost day, and then there will be no need of them. I am afraid, Christian, you misreckon when you think your provision is almost spent, and you have a great way to travel, many years to live and nothing to live upon; it may be not half so many as you suppose. In this be confident, if your provision be spent, either fresh supplies are coining, though you see not whence, or you are nearer your journey's end than you reckon yourself to be. Desponding soul, does it become a man travelling upon the road to that heavenly city, and almost arrived there, within a few days' journey of his Father's house, where all his wants shall be supplied, to be so anxious about a little meat, or drink, or clothes, which he fears he shall want by the way? It was nobly said by the forty martyrs when turned out naked in a frosty night to be starved to death, "The winter indeed is sharp and cold, but heaven is warm and comfortable; here we shiver for cold, but Abraham's bosom will make amends for all."

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'But,' says the desponding soul, 'I may die for want.' Who ever did so? When were the righteous forsaken? If indeed it be so, your journey is ended, and you fully supplied.

'But I am not sure of that; were I sure of heaven, it would be another matter.' Are you not sure of that? Then you have other matters to trouble yourself about than these; methinks these should be the least of all your cares. I do not field that souls perplexed about the want of Christ, pardon of sin, &c., are usually very solicitous about these things. He that seriously puts such questions as these, 'What shall I do

to be saved? how shall I know my sin is pardoned?' does not trouble himself with, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?"

6. Does it become the children of such a Father to distrust his all-sufficiency, or repine at any of his dispensations? Do you well to question his care and love upon every new exigency? Say, have you not formerly been ashamed of this? Has not your Father's seasonable provision for you in former difficulties put you to the blush, and made you resolve never more to question his love and care? And yet will you again renew your unworthy suspicions of him? Disingenuous child! Reason thus with yourself: "If I perish for want of what is good and needful for me, it must be either because my Father knows not my wants, or has not wherewith to supply them, or regards not what becomes of me. Which of these shall I charge upon him? Not the first: for my *Father knows what I have need of*. Not the second: for the *earth is the Lords and the fatness thereof, his name is God All-sufficient*. Not the last: for *as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; the Lord is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy; he hears the young ravens when they cry*:— and will he not hear me? Consider, says Christ, *the fowls of the air*; not the fowls at the door, that are fed every day by band, but the fowls of the air that have none to provide for them. Does he feed and clothe his enemies, and will he forget his children? he heard even the cry of Ishmael in distress. O my unbelieving heart, dost thou yet doubt?"

7. Your poverty is not your sin, but your affliction. If you have not by sinful means brought it upon yourself, and if it be but an affliction, it may the more easily be borne. It is hard indeed to bear an affliction coming upon us as the fruit and punishment of sin. When men are under trouble upon that account; they say, 'O if it were but a single affliction, coming from the hand of God by way of trial, I could bear it; but I have brought it upon myself by sin, it comes as the punishment of sin; the marks of God's displeasure are upon it: it is the guilt within that troubles and galls more than the want without.' But it is not so here; therefore you have no reason to be cast down under it.

'But though there be no sting of guilt, yet this condition wants not other stings; as, for instance, the discredit of religion. I cannot comply with my engagements in the world, and thereby religion is likely to suffer.' [It is well you have a heart to discharge every duty; yet if God disable you by providence, it is no discredit to your profession that you do not that which you cannot do, so long as it is your desire and endeavor to do what you can and ought to do; and in this case God's will is, that lenity and forbearance be exercised toward you.]

'But it grieves me to behold the necessities of others, whom I was wont to relieve and refresh, but now cannot.' If you cannot, it ceases to be your duty, and God accepts the drawing out of your soul to the hungry in compassion and desire to help them, though you cannot draw forth a full purse to relieve and supply them.

'But I find such a condition full of temptations, a great hindrance in the way to heaven.' Every condition in the world has its hindrances and attending temptations; and were you in a prosperous condition, you might there meet with more temptations and fewer advantages than you now have; for though I confess poverty as well as prosperity has its temptations, yet I am confident prosperity has not those advantages that poverty has. Here you have an opportunity to discover the sincerity

of your love to God, when you can live upon him, find enough in him, and constantly follow him, even when all external inducements and motives fail.

Thus I have shown you how to keep your heart from the temptations and dangers attending a low condition in the world. When want oppresses and the heart begins to sink, then improve, and bless God for these helps to keep it.

VI. The *sixth season* requiring this diligence in keeping the heart, is the *season of duty*. Our hearts must be closely watched and kept when we draw nigh to God in public, private, or secret duties; for the vanity of the heart seldom discovers itself more than at such times. How often does the poor soul cry out, 'O Lord, how gladly would I serve thee, but vain thoughts will not let me: I come to open my heart to thee, to delight my soul in communion with thee, but my corruptions oppose me: Lord, call off these vain thoughts, and suffer them not to estrange the soul that is espoused to thee.'

The question then is this: How may the heart be kept from distractions by vain thoughts in time of duty? There is a twofold distraction, or wandering of the heart in duty: First, voluntary and habitual, "They set not their hearts aright, and their spirit was not steadfast with God." This is the case of formalists, and it proceeds from the want of a holy inclination of the heart to God; their hearts are under the power of their lusts, and therefore it is no wonder that they go after their lusts, even when they are about holy things. Secondly, involuntary and lamented distractions: "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me; O wretched man that I am," &c. This proceeds not from the want of a holy inclination or aim, but from the weakness of grace and the want of vigilance in opposing in-dwelling sin. But it is not my business to show you how these distractions come into the heart, but rather how to get them out, and prevent their future admission:

1. Sequester yourself from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn time to meet God in duty. You cannot come directly from the world into God's presence without finding a savor of the world in your duties. It is with the heart (a few minutes since plunged in the world, now in the presence of God) as it is with the sea after a storm, which still continues working, muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and the storm be over. Your heart must have some time to settle. Few musicians can take an instrument and play upon it without some time and labor to tune it; few Christians can say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, it is fixed." When you go to God in any duty, take your heart aside and say, 'O my soul, I am now engaged in the greatest work that a creature was ever employed about; I am going into the awful presence of God upon business of everlasting moment. O my soul, leave trifling now; be composed, be watchful, be serious; this is no common work, it is soul-work; it is work for eternity; it is work which will bring forth fruit to life or death in the world to come.' Pause awhile and consider your sins, your wants, your troubles; keep your thoughts awhile on these before you address yourself to duty. David first mused, and then spoke with his tongue.

2. Having composed your heart by previous meditation, immediately set a guard upon your senses. How often are Christians in danger of losing the eyes of their mind by those of their body! Against this David prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way." This may serve to expound the Arabian proverb: "Shut the windows that the house may be light." It were well if you could