

WILLIAM JAY

1769-1853

Anne Davies was surprised with unexpected visits by a country preacher. There were many occasions for getting to know one another during his eight week internship in London as a mentor of her father. William Jay was invited to the family home often those two months, but he dropped by without an invitation frequently because of his attraction to Anne. Anne's father was an Anglican pastor at Surrey Chapel, London, part of the established or state church. He had been asked to give this young evangelist an opportunity to preach and to evaluate him, giving helpful hints, taking him under his wing so to speak. Jay's preaching stirred London while Anne stirred William! Jay shortly proposed marriage to Anne, but was turned down by Edward Davies until he could provide for a family. Providentially, the Davies' moved within a few miles of Jay's new pastorate in Bath, and in 1791, they were married.¹ Thus, began a career of imminent usefulness to God's people as he developed his own style of warm, practical experiential preaching leading to authentic Christian experiences in himself and those who heard him. I was first introduced to him through his *Morning Exercises* which added substance to the *Morning and Evening* by Charles Spurgeon I had used for years. Jay wrote for a more churched audience so he could go deeper. I loved what I saw in both of them: doctrinal explanations, useful applications, and an up-lifting of God's mercy and love to sinners like me. My heart that was in a period of coldness was strangely warmed again.

AN ELEVATED VIEW OF WOMEN'S ROLE

In his *Autobiography* published after his death, Jay praised

Anne as a helpmate and friend. Jay's kind and warm regard for women and their usefulness was well-known by then. "It was she who contributed so much to give me that exalted idea of the female character which I have always entertained and expressed," he said.² And by "exalted" he meant that he did not put down women, deny them usefulness in spiritual matters even though he held tenaciously to Paul's admonition for women not to preach or lead a church. But, Jay did not go beyond "submit to your husband and do not lead the church" to restrict women further. He mentions them as having the gifts of prophecy (distinguished from preaching), of being deacons, of leading family and servants in devotions, of myriad acts of mercy and kindness, of using their resources for God's kingdom, of writing and publishing, of hospitality, not to mention, the rearing of children and the duties of submission and creating a home.³ He refused to restrict them beyond the biblical restrictions of submitting to their own husbands or to stretch the boundary of not preaching to being unable to practice their gifts in any way outside the home. Thus, his view of women was exalted. I mention this to show how his theology rested on biblical principles impacting our relationships and activities. Preachers in the Reformed, Puritan tradition who valued the practical always did this. Because of the way William Jay approached the scriptures by seeking to apply its great flowing themes, those applications affected his own life as well. He became a warm and gentle Calvinist. His applications of Calvinism warmed his own heart resulting in increasing love for God and others. This warm Calvinism drew me to him. I wanted to know him so I read whatever I could find. Others attested to the same thing; he was known as a warm and gentle person. I think his writings will warm your heart too as they correct your behavior.

John Newton had taught him the way life experiences opened up scriptural meaning and deepened spiritual experiences. These

experiences did not define truth for them, but made it more applicable and human. That is very different from modern day experiential preachers who like to tell stories about experiences (either their own or from history) and then guide you into lessons you can learn about leadership or parenting.

It was Anne's life with him that confirmed his position on women as being true. She bore him six children; none of them died in infancy. But, three of them died before she did. Then she outlived William who died at 84. Their oldest daughter married an American, had thirteen children, and lived in Baltimore and New York, with few return visits to England and no international phone calls, so she was not around to help during Anne's health problems. William appreciated Anne's homemaking skills rendering his abode peaceful, neat, ordered, cheerful, and attractive.⁴ It was Anne who sustained him when they lost their nineteen year old daughter to typhus, and "Though I was not wanting in love to my wife before, yet now I felt her the more singularly endeared."⁵ They were friends. He valued her decisiveness and ability to handle life's cares to leave him free to do his work--to study, write, and preach.⁶ She was his friend.

Life's afflictions, looked at in the right light, can enhance spiritual realities. Home life can cause us to turn from our sins, see our own need of Christ's righteousness, and flee to the Savior for comfort from the sins of others--all real spiritual experiences common to Christian life. The Jay household was no exception. When Anne was in her fifties, she apparently had two strokes. She lost her speech, unable to recall the right words; he increasingly lost her verbal companionship. With the help of the one daughter remaining in town, Jay cared for her. He "learned by experience that the happiness of love results principally from its

disinterestedness."⁷ By this he meant, the turning away from self-interest to the good of another results in true happiness. He had a long time to learn these lessons of repentance and love. He applied those scriptural themes to his own everyday life, experienced his own authentic Christian experiences and grew more merciful and kind himself. Anne's legacy to us is her influence on her husband, and the way their life turned out to mold both of their spiritual experiences in knowing God as their friend. Anne also models for all young ladies the value of managing her household to free her husband to accomplish his role of providing for his family. The next generation of English women heard about it; Charles and Susie Spurgeon surely knew it too and ordered their home life in a similar manner. Could you follow her example, not only of managing your household but of seeing afflictions and illness and limitations and home life as a means to experiencing spiritual realities? Knowing something of her life has certainly helped me see some of my pain as a means to authentic Christian attitudes.

SIXTY-FOUR YEARS OF USEFULNESS

If your family had lived in Bath, England, from 1789 to 1853, three generations could have sat under the preaching of William Jay at Argyle Chapel, a non-conformist congregation. Imagine the continuity and transforming power of the preached word for a family when joined with a godly life and caring ministry of one man over sixty-four years. How many families must have been changed and protected! To be non-conformist then meant you were not a part of the state-supported Anglican church and even rejected some of their Thirty-Nine Articles. Thus, a non-conformist did not "conform" to the government's wishes. But, by the 1800's, the consequences for that were much less than the generation before, even though many doors were still closed to them. Jay could preach publicly from the beginning and he had a

church building in a popular town. No barns for him like Matthew Henry started learning his lessons in experiential preaching in. He read Matthew Henry and was mentored by John Newton. His long life allowed him to see both John Wesley and Charles Spurgeon; he had "seen and known nearly all the distinguished men in both church and state, for more than sixty years."⁸ Add to that the attractiveness of his sermons in their practical appeal and easy to remember style and you have sixty years of great usefulness:

It was not only preaching but teaching, and that, too, in the most beautiful and winning manner. The simple and clear way in which Mr. Jay divided and explained all his sermons, added to the attractive style of delivery, made all he said easily remembered; and indeed, so attractive was his mode of preaching, that numerous individuals whom I have met with during my lifetime who have heard him only once, have been at the end of years able to give the substance, if not the division, of the only sermon they ever heard from his lips.⁹

And how many lessons in spiritual realities leading to authentic Christian experiences he gave through his experiential teaching.

FROM LOWLY ROOTS

Jay describes his unforgettable joy at receiving *History of the Old and New Testaments* and *Pilgrim's Progress* from his Presbyterian pastor. He lived in a small village, Tisbury, England, where books and education were limited; the son of a stonemason. They were relatively poor--landowners but with no real advantages except for having beautiful rural scenery. He was a late learner, finding reading difficult but with lots of imagination and opportunity to "muse." His parents were "practically religious," meaning they lived moral lives out of true piety and fear and love for God, but their church lacked true evangelical teaching, heard little doctrine or heart stirring warmth. Jay, even as a child, longed for more.¹⁰

Thus, it is to God's mercy that Jay attributes his childhood being free of gross immoralities and it was through God's providence alone that Jay was given life-changing opportunities.

Jay, at fourteen, was an apprentice to his father as a stonemason when he started attending the non-established chapel services in Tisbury, Wiltshire. The services proclaimed Jesus as the Savior of sinners, exhibited warmth and heartfelt devotion to Christ, and stirred William Jay to thankfulness for Christ. Soon he was leading in public prayer and his own family's devotions. After a year or so, Cornelius Winter, a follower of George Whitefield, invited Jay to attend his small academy in Marlborough to prepare for the ministry. There was no real way to pay the expenses; Mr Winter just felt impressed to make the offer. Jay never forgot this lesson in balancing prudence with strong urging from the Spirit. Notice the route to ministry in this non-conformist group. Jay's education was rudimentary; his letter of acceptance in 1785 shows a heart for God but lacks even basic writing skills.¹¹ The seminary was Mr. Winter's attempt to evangelize surrounding villages and prepare men for pulpit ministry, not an authorized seminary program. It was not the way to get into Oxford where an approved ministry would be assured. As I noted earlier, non-conformists had much more freedom by this time than in the days of Matthew Henry, but it was not an easy route even then.¹²

Jay had to work hard to keep up. He wanted to learn, and writing in his 70's, he still remembered the joy of reading:

Mr. Winter's library was not large, but it was large to me; and every moment I could spare from my studies I was searching it for hidden treasure.

It may seem strange, but the authors I was most struck with then, have continued to be my favourites ever since, and my views and tastes with regard to sermons and preachers have not otherwise changed than as they have been enlarged and improved.¹³

The students preached in rented facilities or on the corner of a common or by a cottage door urging their hearers to flee to Christ. They would preach three times on Sunday and sometimes during the week. He started at sixteen and would preach for the next sixty- seven years! He was taught to speak the truth in love, with kindness and affection, in spite of the opposition of some clergyman or landowners. He concluded that love did not prevent enforcing the laws on the books for their protection and for the public welfare--in this case the right of the villagers to hear the gospel. These laws had not been there for Matthew Henry's generation. Again, we have another example of experience playing a big role in the way these men applied the Bible. To Jay, speaking the truth in love did not mean failing to prosecute a trespasser or someone threatening harm to a minister of the gospel. And he allowed that "God has not only a right to choose for us, but as he appoints us our stations and offices, and foresees all they will require, he arranges our trainings, and renders all our previous circumstances and experience preparatory to our fitness." ¹⁴ Jay stayed at Mr. Winter's Academy, and in close personal association with him, until 1788. Like Matthew Henry, Jay never forgot the practical lessons learned through these early experiences. His foundations were laid. He remained evangelistic, practical, and warm in his approach to people, and doctrinal and hard working in his approach to scriptures.

JOHN NEWTON'S INFLUENCE

The people we associate with always influence us. After leaving Mr. Winter and the other young preachers, Jay came in contact with Rev. Rowland Hill who arranged for Jay to preach at Surrey Chapel in London July, 1788. Large crowds attended the "boy preacher" and besides Rowland Hill, he also met John Newton,

John Ryland, and, of course, Anne.¹⁵ He attended John Newton's "open breakfast" often through the years, meeting other young pastors from a variety of denominations and theological persuasions. Newton used these informal gatherings to mentor young men. He would read a passage, give the meaning and application, pray, then encourage a time of questions and answers. Jay profited greatly from watching Newton's gentleness, good humor, and practical, devotional teaching style. He watched John's approach to foundational truths in preaching and counseling and writing. "I always admired, not only Mr. Newton's theology, which moulded doctrine, and experience, and practice so finely into each other, but also his composition."¹⁶

Jay, in his autobiography, says of John Newton's *Letters*:

What thousands have derived repeated profit and pleasure from the perusal of these utterances of the heart! Nor ever will they cease to be found means of grace, while God has a church on earth. With regard to myself, I commonly had one of these letters read to me on every Sabbath evening, after the labours of the day; and what refreshment and profit have I derived from them!¹⁷

As we have seen, Newton and Jay, and later Ernest Reisinger, believed that our experiences open up the scripture for us, making passages real to us in a way never understood before. Our personal experiences could actually be used to confirm the biblical truth. They never meant experience or feelings were to determine truth, but to make it clear and personal. My pastor, Ernest Reisinger once quipped, "Our Lord is a strange teacher. He first gives the test, then the lesson." His point was our experiences open up the scriptures to us in a more meaningful way, not that we place our experiences in place of the "scripture interpreting scripture" principle. The idea in experimental Calvinism is to mix doctrine and practical application so that spiritual experiences are promoted.

Experiences such as turning from sin, love for others, growing in humility, hearts softened with thankfulness for what Christ has done for them are worth promoting. So Jay tried to do the same thing: balancing sound Calvinistic doctrine with practical application and a warming of the heart toward God in the process. He certainly did that for me as I read his devotions in *Morning Exercises*.

APPLYING PRINCIPLES

In the following quote from Jay's *Morning Exercises*, published in 1828, (the same year Matthew Henry's biography and diary were printed) and now available on the internet at www.ChristiansClassicsOnLine.com, we have an example of his practical application of a complex principle. The principle was a general, foundational Bible truth gleaned clearly from the scriptures. He first explains the principle within the context of the passage and brings in other scripture as a way to show its meaning. Then he shows how to use this particular principle in dealing with our experiences and sins and problems. Notice his tender affirmation of our discomfort, weakness, and even sorrow and moaning when undergoing these stresses. He closes with an encouragement of their sure end and of God's sure love. So our hearts are strangely warmed! We are left to love God more deeply and rejoice for this truth revealed. See if these applied principles help you to understand the passage and stir your heart as well.

DECEMBER 8

["If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." 2 Cor.11:30.](#)

WE may consider these infirmities under two classes. First, as outward and natural. Thus they include bodily weaknesses and indispositions. Some, by reason of a healthful and firm constitution,

know little of these infirmities, and can scarcely sympathize with those who are the subjects of them. But Paul was no stranger to them. "I was with you," says he to the Corinthians, "in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling." They also include other external afflictions, whatever lowers a man's condition and weakens him in the opinion of the world, who always judge after outward appearances. If it were necessary to prove this, we might refer to the apostle's sufferings, as recorded in the preceding verses, and to which he obviously alludes; and also to what he immediately subjoins as an illustration, in his escape from Damascus by the wall in a basket, and the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him; ending with his noble avowal, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake ; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

There is something, wonderful in this. For all these are viewed as disadvantages, and give rise to emotions of grief and shame, rather than of joy and glory. People glory in their beauty, not in their deformity; in their strength, not in their weakness; in their dignity, not in their meanness; in their praise, not in their disgrace; in their successes, not in their disappointments. But Paul says, "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." Let us make a distinction here. Absolutely considered, these things are evils in themselves, and it does not become a Christian to pray for them, or go out of his way to meet with them. But when he is called to suffer them according to the will of God, he should remember that there are purposes to be answered by them which render them *relatively* valuable and excellent. If medicine be regarded only as to its taste, we say it is offensive, and we should decline it; but when the necessity and usefulness of it are perceived, and we think of the health to be restored, and the life to be prolonged by it, we not only consent to take it, but even thankfully pay for the otherwise disagreeable remedy. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." So it is here: Paul glories in things which *concern* his infirmities. What are these ? We may consider them as preservatives or preventions. Thus, when Israel was going astray after her lovers, says God, "I will hedge up her way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not be able to find her paths." And as restorers: thus David says, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." I was sick; he bled me and I recovered. And as probations, to evince and display the reality and degree of our religion, the tenderness of God's care, the support of his grace, and the truth of his word. Of this quality were Job's sufferings. And as preparatives for usefulness here, and heaven hereafter. How these views of faith are sufficient to alter our estimate of the dispensation, and to change our feelings under it.

But, secondly, we may consider these infirmities as inward and spiritual. Thus they comprise all those weaknesses and deficiencies of grace under which the best now labor, and which lead them to pray, "strengthen O God, that which thou hast wrought for us." Something is wanting in their faith, hope, courage, patience, and spiritual understanding. Even Paul could say, I have not attained; I am not already perfect. But are not these infirmities matter of humiliation, rather than of glorying? Yes, and the believer blushes and groans over them. Nor will an apprehension of his security reconcile him to his remaining imperfections. Yea a persuasion of God's constant love towards him will induce him the more to bewail them. Yet there are things which *concern* these infirmities for which he feels thankful, and in which he rejoices. Four of these may be mentioned.

First, the means of grace are things which concern our infirmities. They are rendered necessary by them, and are designed to relieve them. In heaven they are laid aside; there they are needless. But the Christian now cries, Send us help from the sanctuary, and strengthen us out of Zion. And by waiting upon the Lord he renews his strength.

Secondly, the promises are things which concern our infirmities. To him that hath shall be given." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." When we read all this, let the weak say, I am strong. But for these assurances we must despond; but now we read, and go on; read, and fight on; read, and suffer on. We rejoice at his word as one that has infinite great spoil.

Thirdly, the influences of the Spirit are things which concern our infirmities. How is a Christian to live or walk? He lives in the Spirit, and walks in the Spirit. How does he pray? In the Holy Ghost, The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God." Observe the ground of the apostle's hope with regard to himself, in the issue, of all his sufferings: "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." And with him there is rich abundance, and in him all fullness dwells, and to him we have always a free and invited access.

Fourthly, the last thing that concerns our infirmities is the removal of them by death. A certain removal; a removal nigh at hand; an entire removal. Everyone of them will be done away with, and for

ever.¹⁸

I have highlighted the topics of each principle. Can you state the general Bible truth of each? For instance, under promises, the principle is that the promises in the Bible help us when we're weak, making us strong to persevere, keep on, and even rejoice. He describes the spiritual experience and the emotions that accompany it. The believer groans over his weaknesses, sees God's love for him in spite of his sins, is thankful, and yearns to live a life of obedience. Then you see the inferred application: Remember the promises; take heart, and rejoice that God bears us up!

That alone would warm the heart. But Jay goes on to end with one more general truth that our weaknesses will all be entirely removed forever. Anticipation of that stirs us to rejoice and to love God for that hope.

See how he gently blends Bible principles, life applications, and heart-warming thoughts which stir up love? He had learned this lesson well from John Newton and Matthew Henry. Jay had been preaching forty years when he wrote these, and as he said, his observations of how to preach and teach were strengthened, not changed, from his earliest training. Jay spent more than sixty years mastering his trade--preaching and writing for the glory of God and His people.

Not only did Jay have access to Matthew Henry's *Commentary* and John Newton's letters and history of the church, but he probably also had a copy of the biography of Matthew Henry taken largely from Henry's *Diary* published in 1828. Applying principles to promote real spiritual experiences is the essence of these works. Here is another example from *Morning Exercises* of how Jay blended principles with

practical instruction and warm devotional thought. Can you find the principles? Do you see the applications? Does it warm your heart toward God?

DECEMBER 9

"I am a burden to myself." JOB 7: 20.

AND perhaps this is not all--perhaps you are a burden to others also.

But we will leave this, and inquire whether you are a burden to yourself. We may put the complaint into the mouth of four classes.

It is sometimes the language *of the afflicted*. Thus it was the exclamation of Job. We talk of trouble. He could say, "Behold, and see if ever there was sorrow like unto my sorrow ." Read the affecting relation, dwell on all the dismal items, and wonder not that *he* should say, "I am a burden to myself." If we cannot approve of the strength of his complaint, we hardly know how to condemn it. God himself overlooks it, and only holds him forth as an example of patience. All sufferers cannot indeed say truly as he did, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning." Yet the heart's bitterness is known only to itself. We cannot determine the pressure of another's mind under suffering; for the feeling of affliction may be actually much greater than we should have supposed from the degree of it. But afflictions may be great in themselves from their number and frequency, and suddenness and subject. Is this thy case? Yield not to impatience and despondency. Such afflictions have often introduced a train of mercies, and the valley of Achor has been a door of hope. How many in heaven, how many on earth are now thanking God for their trials. He knows how to deliver. Say, "Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."

It is sometimes the language *of the disengaged and idle*. None so little enjoy life, and are such burdens to themselves, as those who have nothing to do; for

"A want of occupation is not rest ;
A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed."

Such a man is out of God's order, and opposing his obvious design in the faculties he has given him, and the condition in which he has placed him. Nothing, therefore, is promised in the Scripture to the indolent. Take the indolent with regard to exertion. What indecision;

what delay; what reluctance; what apprehension I "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without; I shall be slain in the streets." " The way of a slothful man is as a hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain." Take him with regard to health. What sluggishness of circulation; what depression of spirits; what dullness of appetite; what enervation of frame! Take him with regard to temper and enjoyment. Who is peevish and fretful ? Who feels wanton and childish cravings ? Who is too soft to bear any of the hardships of life ? Who broods over every little vexation and inconvenience ? Who not only increases real, but conjures up imaginary evils, and gets no sympathy from anyone in either ? Who feels time wearisome and irksome ? Who is devoured by ennui and spleen ? Who oppresses others with their company, and their questions, and censorious talk ? The active only have the true relish of life. He who knows not what it is to labor, knows not what it is to enjoy. Recreation is only valuable as it unbends us; the idle know nothing of it. It is exertion that renders rest delightful, and sleep sweet and undisturbed. That the happiness of life depends on the regular prosecution of some laudable purpose or lawful calling which engages, helps, and enlivens all our powers, let those bear witness who, after spending years in active usefulness, retire to *enjoy themselves*. Prayers should always be offered up for their servants and wives, and for themselves too. They are a burden to themselves.

It is the language *of the wicked*. Not always, indeed; but much oftener than they are willing to own. It may not come from them in the circle of their companions, but it is sighed out in private, when the charm of amusement has ceased, and conscience tries to be heard. They may pretend--for hypocrisy is not confined to religion--to be peaceful, but they know that one thought of God is sufficient to destroy all the calm. They may profess to admire the world, but they know it affords them no satisfaction. They know they return jaded from all their excursions of avarice, ambition, and sensuality; still asking, Who will show us any good ? They know that in this uncertain state they are always trembling for the idols of their heart; that they look for no support in trouble, and dread the approach of death, to the fear of which they are all their lifetime subject to bondage. Sin and sorrow are inseparable. God himself has told us that the way of transgressors is hard, and that there is no peace to the wicked. Many sins bring their own punishments along with them. Envy is the rottenness of the bones. "Pride is restless as the wind." What a torment is the spirit of revenge. What must be the apprehension of the thief, and the terror of the murderer ? What the remorse of a villain who has seduced a fellow- creature from the path of virtue, and made her ignominious and wretched for life ? What the feelings of a drunkard, who has ruined his business, and covered his wife and children with rags ? How often does the sinner become the contempt of the neighborhood. How often does he contract infirmities and

diseases which lie down with him in the dust? Yes, *he* may well say, I am a burden to myself; and to get rid of the intolerable load, he not rarely lays violent hands upon himself, saying, with Cain, " My punishment is greater than I can bear."

It may be the language *of the godly*. We mean, not only or principally as they are afflicted--then they would coincide with the first class of complaints. Many indeed are the afflictions of the righteous, and they are not required to be insensible under them. But there are things which they feel more painfully than outward trouble: the temptations of Satan; a world lying in wickedness; the imperfections of their graces; the remains of corruption within them; wanderings in duty; an evil heart of unbelief; distrust of their best Friend; the grievings of his Holy Spirit. Another cannot enter into all this; it requires the feelings of a renewed mind: but this induces the believer to say, " I loathe it, I would not live always." O wretched man that I am! said Paul; who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?

Is there any relief? The very experience is a token for good. Your case is not peculiar. All your brethren, while in this tabernacle, groan too, being burdened. You will not be a burden to yourself always. You now say, Behold, I am vile: wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes. But you will soon be reconciled to yourselves without pride. Your knowledge will be without obscurity, your services without imperfection, your pleasure without pain. And He who is now keeping you from falling, will present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.¹⁹

Were you able to see his molding of doctrinal principles and practical application? Did feelings of love toward God well up inside you? Grasping a biblical detail without seeing its connection to the foundational principle may seem very smart, but knowledge like that tends to make us feel proud whereas applying a foundational principle to our lives and hearts can lead to humility, awe, and praise. Why not try it yourself for a week? It's easier with William Jay's help; just make www.ChristianClassicsOnLine.com one of your favorite websites.

EXPERIENCES USED TO CONFIRM TRUTH

Now in this reading of January Fourth from *Morning Exercises*,

note the way William Jay appealed to Everyman's inner experiences to confirm the truth that God would strength him. In this case, he relates his own experiences as an example for the reader to follow in thinking about his personal experience. His purpose was to confirm the Calvinistic doctrine of perseverance of the saints. This technique he had learned from John Newton and perfected in his own long years of ministry. I have highlighted some key words for your convenience.

JANUARY 4

Seasonable Strength

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."-Deut. 33:25.

DR. DODDRIDGE was one day walking, much depressed, his very heart desolate within him. "But," says he " passing a cottage door open, I happened at that moment to hear a child reading, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' The effect on my mind was indescribable. It was like life from the dead." Much is often done by a word; and many can say, with Watts,

"And when my spirit takes her fill
Not warriors, who divide the spoil,
At some good word of thine,
Have joys compared with mine."

And what does *this* word say to *us*? " As thy days, so shall thy strength be." There is strength bodily. The continuance of this is a mercy. How soon, how easily may it be crushed or reduced,so that we may be made to possess months of vanity; and endure wearisome nights; and feel every exertion a difficulty, and every duty a burden. But there is strength spiritual. This is very distinguishable from the former, and often found separate from it. The Lord does not always give his people a giant's arm, or an iron sinew; but *His* strength is made perfect in weakness. This is the strength here spoken of, and for two purposes his people will find it necessary *service* and *suffering*.

"Every Christian has a course of duty common to him as a man; which is to provide for his outward wants, and the support of his

family. And this is done by labor, in which he is required not to be slothful: but there is a series of duties pertaining more immediately to him in his religious character; to believe, to pray, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present evil world. The discharge of this high calling is sometimes expressed by a race, which he is to run with patience. Sometimes, also, by the life of a soldier. A soldier must not be effeminate, but endure hardness and fatigue. Even his preparations and exercise are often trying--how much more his actual services! And the Christian's enemies possess every thing that can render them formidable; and so fights he, not as one that beateth the air.

Suffering is commonly connected with service in the divine life. It was so invariably in the beginning of the gospel. Then it was deemed impossible for anyone to live godly in Christ Jesus, and not suffer persecution. Therefore, no sooner was Paul converted, than he was told how great things he had to suffer. As real religion is always the same, some degree of the same opposition may be always looked for and the hatred of the world *will* be shown, as far as they have liberty to express it, and are not restrained by law, or the usages of civilized life. But when the Christian has rest from such trials as these, God can subserve their purpose, by personal and relative afflictions, which are often severer, all things considered, than the endurings of a martyr. They are called chastenings and rebukes, which he is neither to despise, or faint under. They have seen the experience of all his children from age to age. They are not wantonly inflicted; but there is a needs be for them of which their heavenly Father is the unerring judge; and who, as far as their education and welfare will allow, will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Now, the prospect of all this, when he looks forward into life, is enough to awaken the Christian's anxiety; and nothing can effectually encourage him, but the discovery of strength equal to his experience. And this he finds not in himself. The natural man has no sensibility of his weakness, because he is not earnestly engaged in those applications which require divine strength. But the Christian is. He knows that he is as destitute of strength, as he is of righteousness. He feels himself entirely insufficient for all the duties and trials of the divine life. And the consciousness, instead of diminishing grows with the experience of every day.

And he need not be afraid of this -- rather let him cherish it; for when he is weak, then he is strong. What he wants is provided and ensured by the promise of a God who cannot lie. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God. His veracity has been attested by all his people, not one failing. And what says our own experience? Year after year I have

been travelling in an enemy's country, and carrying with me an evil heart, prone to depart from the living God. I have often said, I shall one day perish. But where am I this morning! Following hard after God, his right hand upholding me. My prayers have not been always lively and delightful; but I have looked again toward his holy temple; and through many a benighted hour I have waited for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning. I have had no might of my own, and have been often faint; but he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. This is my testimony to the praise of the glory of his grace - and, at the beginning of another year I thank God, and take courage. "Here raise mine Ebenezer, And I hope, by thy good pleasure Hither, by thy help, I'm come, Safely to arrive at horne."²⁰

Does this help you apply this passage to how you live and how you praise God? Praising God is a real spiritual experience that J. I Packer would applaud in *Knowing God* and William Plumer would be happy about in *Vital Godliness*.

REACHING THE MULTITUDES

Jay believed all preaching should be useful to the common people and framed in a way they could hear it gladly. So he believed in using illustrations to achieve this. He blamed the preacher if he did not follow Jesus's example of making the complex simple.

The fault is always much more with the preacher than with them. He does not adapt himself to those he professes to teach; he does not make *them* his aim; he does not study *them*; he does not throw himself into their modes and habits of thinking and feeling; he has nothing simple and natural in his official being.²¹

And thus, the writing or preaching or hymn does not reach the multitudes.

He reaches for these multitudes in *The Christian Contemplated*. This was a series given at his church, Argyle Chapel, in Bath, England, and first published in 1826 with subsequent editions published in the 1830's. These lectures portrayed the Christian, "in a way of

application. He did not intend to hold up the Christian to barren contemplation."²² So these lectures were filled with illustrations and appeals to personal experience yet without denial of good scholarship or a clear doctrinal base. Publishing this so that others could see the value of practical "how to" instruction, Jay defended his view that laying precept upon precept, taking time to instruct, was the way to correct behavior.²³ The Bible was not a list of definitions or a system but a series of stories of real experiences, first of the patriarchs, then of Jesus and his disciples. So preachers should use illustrations and experiences and poetry with diffusiveness, repetition, and the language of the Bible itself to impart practical wisdom to his listeners.²⁴ Many of his critics were hyper-Calvinists--those who saw no need to evangelize anyone-- and/or Antinomians--those who rejected any use of the moral commandments as a measure of obedience. His response was to pour out the gist of the passage in all directions and maintain the unity of the Old and New Testaments and believers through all the ages and relish in his freedom to do both.

Without hesitation, Jay expressed his own opinions and observations and experiences in these practical discourses. For instance, in "The Christian in the Church," *The Christian Contemplated*, (Sprinkle Publications, reprint, 2003), p. 104-144), he welcomed and encouraged children to join his church and feared many would draw back to the seat of the scornful when they were not far from the kingdom of God as young children. Speaking with the confidence stemming from thirty-eight years of successful ministry, Jay, nevertheless, always sought unity and peace with those who differed with him. He had friends in all denominations but he could be forcefully defensive with both Antinomians and hyper-Calvinists as seen in the preface to this volume. And he does not neglect his appeal to the heart in the following lecture: ..."I now delight in conversing with them, as believing I shall commune with them for

ever," speaking of the eternal nature of Christian relationships.²⁵

If you have any position or regular teaching responsibilities, whether you are an elder, deacon, Sunday School or Vacation Bible School teacher, you would profit greatly by reading three chapters. One is the preface Jay wrote in 1826 to *The Christian Contemplated* and the others are "Concluding Observations on the Rev. William Jay, as a Preacher and as an Author" written in 1854 by the two editors of *The Autobiography of William Jay*. Both have been republished by Sprinkle Publications. These books would make wonderful gifts to any pastor or teacher interested in experiential Calvinism.

FOCUS ON EXPLAINING THE PASSAGE

In 1831, *Evening Exercises for Every Day in the Year* was published. Again Jay took the same approach. He did not lay down the Five Points one by one to defend them. Instead he wove his theology into his applications in the language of the Bible and with poetry from hymns. He does not take a defensive position of defending the Calvinist system. Instead, his focus is on explaining the passage so as to change lives and impact hearts. Roger Ellsworth does this as well. He might use the terms of Calvinism such as "adoption" and "regeneration" and "grace," but his aim is to explain the Bible not to justify a system of interpretation. Yet, he was not against doctrine, "What is practice without principle, but a tree without a root, or a stream without a spring?"²⁶ And he did get results. By the end of his life, Antinomianism was firmly defeated (at least for the moment) and hyper-Calvinists could only criticize and maintain a party spirit.²⁷ Jay had served his generation well.

Notice the language of the Bible he freely uses in his devotionals. His culture was one in which most people attended church services

and were familiar with these terms and ways of expressing something. Less and less people attended church regularly in England in the next generation. Charles Spurgeon was aware of this and changed how he communicated these same truths. Another characteristic of Jay is his keeping his focus on eliciting spiritual experiences and corrected living in spite of whatever the latest controversy was. He focused on Christ instead of the controversy over predestination. Without compromising the text quoted, he warms the heart instead of wearing down his readers with continued debate. I found this teaching technique especially useful and endearing. Yet, he never departed from his firm Calvinistic convictions. He once wrote he had always preferred to study religion "in its practical principles; not in its distant generalities" and to follow it out into actual and ordinary life.²⁸

"STRIKE AND ABIDE"

For those who criticized his practical preaching and writing, he had strong words: they were "ensorius, self-willed, presumptuous." He spoke against those who were practical Antinomians no matter their doctrinal positions: "They go to the House of God, not for wholesome food, but for something to elevate and intoxicate."²⁹ He condemned those who preach "high things" (like election) but refuse to alter their own life or do family devotions or reach out to help and heal sinners. He justified his approach by noting that the Old Testament is a story of real experiences while the New Testament is the story of Christ and his apostles--not a list of definitions! "We live, we travel, we worship with the patriarchs: we stand round their dying beds."³⁰ Use real life illustrations, appeal to their own feelings and experiences because "Instances and facts strike the mind much more than abstract reasonings."³¹ Strike the heart and will by bringing visual pictures to mind. He used, "Sweep before your own door!" as a call to clean up your own act!³² Strike and abide were his

recommendations for effective teaching. By abide, he meant stick with it awhile, giving examples and pictures, giving the people time to grasp and think. By strike, he meant to aim the principle's application at sin in the life and heart.

Why not look for preaching like this? It is for your benefit in knowing God and experiencing true spirituality to sit under such preaching. Or at least, use Jay's *Morning Exercises* for your devotional reading. They helped me to stand firm on doctrine, but to avoid a harsh rejection of the needs of every life. Why not apply these lessons to your family evangelism? Teens love Proverbs and sayings like "Sweep before your own door." It is the practical they yearn for. So work at stating biblical principles simply and in a practical way they can easily grasp. I kept a little volume of the Proverbs on my refrigerator as a help in doing this. Then I could grab it when that teaching moment came. Most of the time it was unplanned and unexpected. You have to seize those moments with teens. And my experience was they came either in the kitchen or in the car! And don't forget to "abide" as long as you can to make your point. To strike without abiding does not aid retention or application.

Jay was also interested in family evangelism. In 1805, he issued two volumes of *Short Discourses To Be Read in Families*. He wanted to provide a twenty minute reading for Sunday nights at home--instructive as well as devotional. In "The Profane Exchange" from Volume I (attached at the end of this chapter), notice the strike. He hones in on Esau's sin of rejecting his birthright as illustrative of the reader's sign of rejecting the worship opportunities so available in England at the time. He then stays with it for awhile showing the consequences of neglecting the opportunity of grace. Note too, how he gets into no debate or argument over Election versus Responsibility or Freewill versus Sovereign Grace. But, rather appeals to their own feelings and convictions and thoughts to show them their sin. These were written for family worship; he felt it better to leave the arguments and theological debate for another venue.

Strengthening family devotions was his immediate goal, and in so doing, to defeat hyper-Calvinists who were failing to evangelize their children and Antinomians who were looking at grace as an excuse to keep on sinning. He knew his times and who were the real opponents of true Christianity.

You could practice this "strike and abide" technique in your own family or Sunday School or other teaching responsibility. You find the principle's application and take aim at sinful attitudes and behavior. Then bring in your examples from life stories in the Bible first, then real life. Do not allow the word strike to excuse harshness or using the principle as a club to enforce your own opinion. Jay was noted for his gentleness, warmth, good manners, and congeniality and believed in dealing with people like a mother nursing her infant. But, with faithfulness to point out sin and urge people to obedience. That is very different from avoiding mentioning sin so everyone will be in a good mood!

At the end of March, 1853, William Jay preached his last sermon in Argyle Chapel. It was from Job 40:4 on the value of knowing yourself as a sinner in need of a Savior. Although in much pain and suffering, he saw to the publication of his last book, *Lectures on Female Scripture Characters*, which was sent to the press on December 23. He was eighty-four. (Ernest Reisinger, who was instrumental in the republication of Jay's works in the 1990's, also died at 84.) He died December 27, 1853, and was buried at Snow Hill after sixty-three years of faithful preaching of the Savior's invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Won't you look to Jesus, grasping hold of His death as being what you really deserve and His righteousness as your only hope, and grabbing God's grace and mercy offered to you as a free gift?

QUOTES FROM MR. JAY

- "Happy will it be for us if we have *principles* and dispositions that will enable us to accommodate ourselves to all the varying dispensations of Divine Providence, and to say with the Apostle, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.'¹ (He said this long before there was any such thing as Dispensationalism and did not use the word in that way. He meant all the ups and downs of life; the way God decided to work through our individual circumstances.)
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- "...we should be cautious, lest we cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of; or by turning facts into fiction, and fiction into facts, spiritualize the Scripture, till it seems to have no determinate and certain meaning." Jay is referring to Elisha's restoring to life the only child of his benefactor, the Shunamite woman where some take that fact and make it a type of salvation.²
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- "Few will deny the utility of illustrating principles and dispositions by examples; and the importance of presenting vices and virtues, not abstracted in their definitions, but embodied in action, and enlivened in character. Hence, so large a proportion of the Word of God is occupied with the account of particular persons."³
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- In recommending John Newton's letters: "I (Newton) rather reckoned upon doing more good by some of my other works than by my 'Letters,' which I wrote without study, or any public design; but the Lord said, 'You shall be most useful by them;' and I learned to say, 'They will be done! use me as Thou pleasest, only make me useful.'--What thousands have derived repeated profit and pleasure from the perusal of these utterances of the heart! Nor ever will they

cease to be found means of grace, whilst God has a church on earth. With regard to myself, I commonly had one of these letters read to me on every Sabbath evening, after the labours of the day; and what refreshment and profit have I derived from them!"⁴

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- In contrasting life in his youth to the times of his latter years: "Love also has abounded more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment. How much less stress is laid on minor and circumstantial things in religion than once! And how much more disposed are the various parties to unite and hold intercourse with each other!...Now, without abolishing our distinctions, we have learned to hail, and bless, and help each other. We have agreement without compromise. Our regiments retain their own colours and officers, but fight against a common foe, and for the same King of Glory." ⁵

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- "In my considerable acquaintance with the religious world, some of the most exemplary individuals I have met with have been Calvinists. Of this persuasion were the two most extraordinary Christian characters I ever knew--John Newton, and Cornelius Winter. They held its leading sentiments with firmness; but their Calvinism, like that of Bunyan, was rendered by their temper, milder than that of some of their brethren; and they were candid towards those who differed from them; and esteemed and loved them as fellow-heirs together of the grace of life."⁶

- "You may here remember what you have so often seen, and which I early prefixed to my Study Bible.

'In reading this Book, let me guard against four things--

1. The contractedness of the Systematic
2. The mysticism of the Allegorizer
3. The dogmatism of the Bigot;
4. The presumption of the Rationalist

Let me tremble at God's word, and let me, in reading it, keep three

purposes in view:

1. To collect facts rather than form opinions;
2. To regulate practice rather than encourage speculation:
3. To aid devotion rather than dispute."⁷

- "It does not follow that, because one point is to be made more prominent in a discourse, all others are to be disregarded. We are no more to abridge than to mangle the Gospel...The apostles are our models; in their Epistles we find doctrine and practice, duty and privilege, always blended together."⁸

- Jay's sixth child, Statira, died of typhus fever at nineteen. "She was incapable of knowing the father around whose neck she had so often clung. I turned away, and was led by her mother into the solitude of my study. We kneeled down hand in hand to pray; but not a word was uttered. At such a season, how poor is speech; and how surprising is it that persons should employ it, and not yield to the devotion of silence and tears!...As being not only her husband, but her pastor, I ought to have solaced and supported my wife under the loss, but she solaced and supported me. One thing I peculiarly remember as arising from our affliction. Though I was not wanting in love to my wife before, yet now I felt her the more singularly endeared."⁹

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- In a sermon to husbands and wives, "he represents woman, pleading on the ground of her weakness and dependence for sympathy, kindness, and protection:" "Honour us; deal kindly with us. From many of the opportunities and means by which you procure favourable notice, we are excluded. Doomed to the shades, few of the high places of the earth are open to us. Alternately we are adored and oppressed. From our slaves you become our tyrants. You feel our beauty, and avail yourselves of our weakness. You complain of

our inferiority, but none of your behaviour bids us rise. Sensibility has given us a thousand feelings, which nature has kindly denied you..."¹⁰

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- He tells of a young lady he met on a coach to London: "I felt a wish to say something during our journey that might be useful, though she was an entire stranger; ...I had an opening for this without the impropriety of forcing religious reflection upon my fellow-traveller, as is often done, abruptly and offensively."(She later attended his church and was converted.) After a life, blameless, exemplary, and useful, in no common degree, this follower of the Lamb finished her course in peace, and fell asleep in Jesus; and is had in applauding remembrance of all that were about her. A minister should feel peculiarly honoured and grateful when God gives him a convert that not only obtains good, but also perpetuates, multiplies, and diffuses it."¹¹

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- On his son, Cyrus', education: "As I always admired the Friends, and they seemed exemplary in training their youth to habitudes of order, and self-control, and disregard of ridicule and reproach, I was induced to place him for a considerable time at one of their schools. But I was not entirely satisfied with the result. The want of more *express* evangelical instruction, and the comparative deficiency of *instrumental* religion, were a disadvantage which I found it was not so easy to remedy."¹²

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EXAMPLES OF HIS WRITINGS

LECTURE IV

The Christian, in the Church

(*The Christian Contemplated*, reprinted from the 1835 edition by Sprinkle Publications, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 2003, p. 104-144.)

"That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God." -1 Tim . 3:15

THE connexions of life are many and various; and they have all their appropriate claims and advantages. Some of these relations are natural; some, civil; some, commercial; some, intellectual and literary. But the most important of all alliances are those of a religious quality. The bonds of these are not flesh and blood; but faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. These regard the spirit in man; and fall under the power of the world to come. All other connexions have their sphere only in this life; but these aspire after "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." All other unions, however firm, or however tender, having answered the destinations of Providence, will be dissolved by death; but though Christians die, *they* are still related. The separation between them is only *temporary*; a period of re-union will assuredly and speedily arrive. Yea, it is only *partial*: even now--

The saints below, and all the dead,
But one communion make;
All join in Christ, their living head,
And of his grace partake."

You are to view the Christian, this morning,
In the Church.

In this state Timothy was when Paul addressed him in the words which we have chosen for our motto--"*That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God.*"--*Him*, it is true, he addressed as a minister; and his official station demanded a line of conduct becoming it. But every Christian has a place to fill, and a part to act, in the Church of God; and he needs to be informed and admonished concerning it.--Let us,

- I. Explain the CONDITION OUR SUBJECT SUPPOSES.
- II. The OBLIGATIONS WE ARE UNDER TO ENTER IT.
- III. The DUTIES WHICH ARISE OUT OF IT.

I. The CONDITION OUR SUBJECT SUPPOSES

NOW when we speak of the Christian's being in the *Church*, it is necessary to observe two acceptations of the word in the Scripture, as well as in common discourse.

It is sometimes used to comprise *all the redeemed and sanctified people of God*. These, in every age; in every country; under every dispensation, whether Patriarchal, Jewish, or Evangelical; all these, whether residing in earth, or in heaven; all these constitute one church. And of this we read, when it is said, "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." "We are come to the church of the first-born." "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." However distinguished from each other, all *real* Christians, "who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, "belong to *this* church; and to be found in it, is an unspeakable privilege, and constitutes what we mean by "the communion of saints: in the Apostles' Creed--a mutual participation in all their work, honour, and blessedness. But it is not of *this* we *now* speak. *This* is the Church universal; and in this we are necessarily found, as soon as ever we are chosen and called out of the world.

But the word much more frequently means *a particular community, or company of believers associated together for religious purposes*. This coincides with the language of the Nineteenth Article--"A Church is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all things that of necessity are requisite to the same." In conformity to this, we read of "the messengers" not of the Church--but "of the churches:" not of the Church--but "the churches which were in Christ." And thus we read of "the seven churches which are in Asia:" of "the churches which were in Galatia;" and of "the churches throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria:" and what they were may be inferred from their "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and being multiplied." Thus, too, we read of "the church at Philippi," and "the church at Colosse," and so of the rest.

In advancing further, nothing would be more easy than to furnish matter for dispute. My object, however, is not controversial, but practical. It does not require me to undertake the task of attempting to determine the particular form of a Christian church, or the precise mode of administering divine ordinances in it; but only to show, that it is the duty of a Christian to be found in a Church-State; giving up himself not only to the Lord, but to his people by the will of God; and

walking with those who profess to continue steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer.

Yet there are some who have here, we will not call them their arguments, but their excuses. To such union, they prefer rambling, or at least detachment. They fix nowhere, or at least commune nowhere. No church is wide enough, or strict enough, or pure enough, or sound enough--for them: no one is completely modified to their taste. Constantine said to such a self-conceited Christian, "Take a ladder, and climb to heaven by thyself." If all were like-minded with some, there would be no such thing as a Church on earth.

I am aware of what I shall incur from certain quarters; but I shall deliver myself with the firmness of conviction. It is not necessary that we should approve of every opinion or usage among those with whom we connect ourselves. It is far better in lesser matters, if we have faith, to have it to ourselves before God; and to exercise forbearance and self-denial, than, for the sake of some trifling difference, to endeavour to originate a new party, or remain destitute of the benefits, and violating the obligations of social Christianity. We should guard against an *undue* attachment to any particular scheme of Church policy, when, though the abettors profess to be governed by the Scripture only, and consider every iota of their system as perfectly clear and binding; others, more numerous than themselves, and equally wise and good, and entitled to the leading of the Spirit of truth, draw a very different conclusion from the same premises. Mr. Newton, speaking of the several systems under which, as so many banners, the different denominations of Christians are ranged, observes, that "there is usually something left out, which ought to have been taken in, and something admitted, of supposed advantage, unauthorised by the Scripture standard. A Bible-Christian, therefore, will see much to approve in a *variety* of forms and parties: the providence of God may lead and fix him in a more immediate connexion with some *one* of them; but his spirit and affection will not be confined within these *narrow* enclosures. He insensibly borrows and unites that which is excellent in *each*, perhaps without knowing how far he agrees with them, because he finds all in the written word." With regard to myself, though I have a preference, and attach *comparative* importance to the things wherein pious men differ, yet there is no body of Christians, holding the Head, with whom I could not hold communion, and to whom I would not join myself, if circumstances withheld me from my own denomination, rather than remain a religious *solitaire*.

It will be, I presume, committing an unpardonable sin with bigots,

when I express my persuasion, after all I have read of the claims, whether Episcopalian, or Presbyterian, or Independent, to the *only* scriptural standard, that there is no *very* definite plan of Church Government laid down in the New Testament; so that while one mode is canonized, every other is absolutely wrong. Deviation from prescribed orders is sinful; but where there is no law, there is no transgression. "As oft," says the Apostle, "as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come?" Now had he told us *how* often we are to do this, we must observe such times only, or oppose the will of God. Is it so, now the thing is left undecided? May there not be a difference in the frequency of its observance, without sin? It is otherwise with the recurrence of the Sabbath: this is determined both by command and example. It would have been criminal in Moses not to have made the snuffers of pure gold; or the holy oil of a mixture of certain ingredients; or the priest's robe of such a quality, such a colour, and such a length: for he had express instructions to do so, and the pattern of every thing was shewn him in the Mount. But in what mount has our model of circumstantial regulation been exhibited? What Moses received it? Where do we find a particularity of detail in the Gospels of the Evangelists; or in the Acts, and Epistles of the Apostles? Where do we find many of the materials of angry debate and exclusiveness which have occupied so much time, and spoiled so much temper, in the system of Christianity?--A system designed for every nation, and people, and kindred, and tongue--a system too sublime in its aim to lose itself in minuteness--too anxious to unite its followers in great matters, to magnify little ones--too truly noble, not to be condescending--too tender, not to be tolerant--too impartial, not to say to its subjects, receive one another as Christ also has received you; you that are strong, bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please yourselves.

Now we do not pretend to say, that all who do not thus enter a Christian Church are not in a state of grace. Some, after they are converted, may not have the opportunity. Some are repulsed by the rigidity of admission: They cannot pronounce every Shibboleth of a confession; or express their belief of the divinity of every part of prescribed discipline.--These are to be pitied: The *blame* lies with the exactors of such righteousness. Some, otherwise disposed to come forward, are held back by a sense of unworthiness, or a dread of hypocrisy, or a fear of causing "the way of truth to be evil spoken of," by their acting unbecoming the Gospel. These are to be instructed and encouraged.

But after these concessions, we make no scruple to say, that if a Christian does not belong to a Christian Church, he is not walking according to God's appointment, and the order of the Gospel; but is

living in the loss of privilege, and the omission of duty. It was not thus with the Christians of whom we have accounts in the New Testament. They are represented not as wandering sheep, but a flock having a shepherd and a fold. Not as stones loose and scattered on the ground, but built up a spiritual house. Not as separate and solitary plants and trees, but as a vineyard, a garden watched and watered. Not as rovers and vagrants, in the highways and hedges--but as "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."--This brings us to consider,

II. THE OBLIGATIONS WE ARE UNDER TO ENTER THIS STATE.

Let us notice four articles--*Suitability--Consolation--Safety--and Usefulness.*

The first claim is derived from *Suitability*. This state accords with the very constitution of man. He is not only a rational, but a social creature: and so natural are his social feelings, that they can only be rooted up with his very being. Religion therefore does not aim to destroy or injure those propensions; but it sanctifies them. It opens a new sphere for their development. It presents to them, new objects of interest and attachment.

Like attracts like; and when we become godly, our longing is for godly association. Then we pray, "Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto them that love thy name:" then, we confess, "I am a companion of them that fear thee:" then, "we take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you:" then, we "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." These fall in with our new views, and hopes, and fears, and joys, and sorrows. These are now our fellow-learners, fellow-travellers, fellow-labourers, fellow-warriors--yea, whosoever now, doeth the will of our Father who is in heaven, the same is our brother and sister and mother.

Saul, therefore upon his conversion, assayed to join himself to the disciples: and every one, when he falls under the same influence, will be like-minded with him. It would be strange indeed, if when we turn away from the vain and the wicked, we should find ourselves in a state of social destitution and abandonment. But God has expressly provided against this repulsion of loneliness. We do not become outcasts. He takes us up. "Wherefore," says he, "come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Ye shall not be homeless and friendless. I will place you in my family. You shall

have better relations than those you have resigned; and more valuable connexions than those who have renounced you. When you part with the world, you enter the Church, and this is more glorious than all the mountains of prey. You rise in rank; and so far from being losers, "Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." We therefore

Derive the second claim from *Consolation*. This is the law of Christ: as we "have opportunity, let us do good unto all men; but especially unto them that are of the household of faith." Their members, therefore, have the first claim upon a Christian Church for sympathy and succour. And the privilege arising from hence will appear to be the greater, when it is considered, that the discharge of this duty does not depend upon obligation only. Christians feel themselves disposed, as well as bound to this good work. Their principles lead them to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," and to "weep with them that weep." And is it nothing to belong to a community, who, instead of envying and hating you for your successes, and endowments, and comforts--it is so always with the world--will glorify God on your behalf? Is it nothing to be connected with those who feel it to be their duty and their privilege to guard your reputation, to explore your wants, to soften your cares, to soothe your sorrows; and where, not only the minister and the office-bearers, but all the members, will visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and comfort them that are cast down.

The poor and the needy are too generally overlooked, not to say despised by the world; and from the treatment they receive from others, there is danger of their feeling a kind of self-degradation that makes them regardless of their conduct. But here they have a name and a place. Here they feel an importance, that while it raises them morally, does not injure them in their civil dependence. Here their elevation does not draw them off from their stations; but improves them for every relative duty, by producing self-respect, and augmenting a sense of responsibility. Here their fellow-members, above them in condition, can without envy or uneasiness see their equality with themselves, or even their pre-eminence, in experience. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away."

The Church is the only society in which it is either possible or proper to merge the ranks of life. Temporal things divide men, and keep

them separate; and they have always a tendency to carry to excess those distinctions which are allowable, and even necessary. However disposed towards each other, the small and the great cannot unite in secular friendship. The master and the servant cannot consort together either in the upper or the lower room. The peasant and the nobleman cannot inhabit the same cottage, or the same mansion. The noble and the vulgar cannot feed together, either at the dinner of herbs or at the stalled ox. But here they all surround the same table. Here all eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink. Here the rich and the poor meet together. Here all are partakers of the same common salvation. Here all are one in Christ Jesus. Here every disadvantage is compensated. "Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

Safety furnishes a third claim. For it is not to be overlooked that this state fortifies individuals against the influence of example, and number, and ridicule, and reproach. It will be allowed that a man ought to do what is right, if no one stands by him. Yet singularity is sometimes a great trial; and to brave all the consequences, in many cases, requires more moral heroism than is always possessed even by one that is upright and sincere. But when he stands in connexion with others; when he sees himself countenanced and supported by those he deems wiser and better than himself; this gives him confidence and courage; and he resembles a soldier who advances boldly with his comrades, when he would hesitate and falter alone. "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Indecision is as perilous as it is uncomfortable. And therefore the Apostle says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." For while the enemy sees you unfixed and hesitating, he yet hopes to succeed, and this protracts his endeavours: whereas when he finds you determined, he desponds, and departs. How many temptations are cut off, as soon as we cease to halt between two opinions, and proclaim ourselves to be on the Lord's side. And how much circumspection is also hereby induced. He who makes no pretences to a thing, is not judged by it; but a profession of religion is of great value, as it tends to check what is evil, and to bind us to what is

righteous, by subjecting us to self-reproach and the censure of others, when we act inconsistently. "Does this temper or conduct become a member of the Church of Christ? Do I wear his livery, and disown him? Have I opened my mouth to the Lord, and can I go back? Are not the eyes of many upon me? And have they not a right to ask, What do ye more than others?"

And let me put it to your conscience, whether this be not one of the reasons which operate to keep you out of the Church. Ye feel yourselves now in a larger place. You have more liberty. You can do your own ways, and find your own pleasures, and speak your own words, on God's holy day. Your tongues are your own: who is Lord over you? And--"I do not profess to be a saint," seems an excuse to prevent or silence all the qualms of the sinner. "I know not," says Doddridge, "a more dreadful mark of destruction upon a man, than a fear to be under an obligation to avoid what is evil, and to cleave to that which is good." A man properly concerned for his spiritual and everlasting welfare, would feel every assistance, every excitement, every motive in such an important course, a privilege: and such a privilege constitutes a powerful argument on behalf of a Church relation.

There it has a fourth claim. It is *Usefulness*. How much more is a man's zeal drawn forth as soon as he has declared himself in any cause; and he partakes of the spirit of the party. When his vote is solicited for a candidate at the time of an election, though he feels scarcely a preference before, yet as soon as he has avowed himself for either of the applicants, his indifference is destroyed, his fervour is excited, and he is carried along with the proceedings, until he is intensely interested; and his happiness or misery seems suspended on the success. Indeed, whatever we keep concealed within, is likely to lose some of its hold upon us: it is by speaking of it, by pushing it forward, by acting constantly upon it, that we feel more of its impression and influence.

But there is another view to be taken of the subject. We all know how much is to be done by union, even when the parts are inconsiderable in themselves. Thus sands make the mountains. The cable that holds the ship in the storm is composed of small strings. A single soldier that has missed his way, may chance-wise do some little good; but he is efficient only as acting with a corps; and the war requires an army. If the liberal soul *deviseth* liberal things, how are good schemes to be carried *into effect*, and how are useful institutions to be *supported*, but by union and co-operation? How much often does *one* Christian society accomplish by its collective wisdom, and benevolence, and exertion! Why are the Churches called candlesticks, but because they are instruments, holding forth

and diffusing the light of life?"

The public worship of God ought always to be considered as an unspeakable benefit to mankind. Amidst the cares and toils and distresses of life, "God is known in his palaces for a refuge." He is "the Father of the fatherless, and the Husband of the widow, in his holy habitation." There the tempted are succoured; and the weak strengthened; and the wandering directed. The sanctuary opens a door for the weary traveller to enter and refresh himself. It awakens, by its administrations, the curiosity of the thoughtful and the attention of the careless; and how often have those who came from no pious motive, been known of all, judged of all, and compelled to exclaim, God is in the midst of them of a truth. While we are anxious for more success to attend the means of grace, we are not aware of the extent and the degree in which they *are* useful. What an injury would be sustained in a neighbourhood, if they were given up!

But it is by *Churches* that the ministry of the word and the ordinances of religion are supported and dispensed; and by their means the system of conversion and edification is continued and perpetuated. Individuals die; but thus, as some are removed, others are added. Thus member succeeds member, and pastor succeeds pastor; and, as in the case of a river, change leaves sameness, and permanency is produced by succession.--But we have,

III. TO CONSIDER THE DUTIES ARISING FROM THE STATE.

These are various as well as important. They relate,

First, To the Worship. This a Christian will value as the appointment of Him, who knowing what is in man, ordains what is necessary to him, and delights in the prosperity of his servants. When, therefore, God says, "Seek ye my face," his heart answers, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." And as he obeys from love, he will never exclaim, "What a weariness is it to serve the Lord! when will the Sabbath be gone?" He calls the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord, honourable. He loves the habitation of his House. He finds his word and eats it; and it is to him the joy and the rejoicing of his heart. If others can dispense with ordinances, he never rises above his need of them. He feels that something is still wanting to his knowledge, his graces, his comfort; and though he holds communion with God habitually, and wishes in all his ways to acknowledge Him, he sees what an adaptation there is in the means of grace to afford him relief and assistance. His own experience stimulates him,--for he has seen His power and glory in the sanctuary; while the promise justifies his most enlarged expectation--"In all places where I record my Name, I will

come unto thee, and I will bless thee." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

Cases of prevention will sometimes occur; but he will take heed that they are not excuses. And, as he would not love and serve the creature more than the Creator, he will see that the hinderances are such as would keep him from all other engagements. And if they can be removed by order and skill and diligence in his affairs; or by a little expense in conveyance, saved from vanity and excess; he will remove them. And when the sick relation, or his own bed of languishing, or the painful accident, detains him at home, he will feel himself the prisoner of the Lord, and say, with the royal exile, "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day." I never believe those, who turning their backs upon the temple, tell us that they pass their time in retired devotion. One duty pleads for another, and prepares for another, and helps another. It is the same with neglect: we may infer one omission from another. It is very questionable too, when they tell us, that the preacher can teach them no more than they know already. It is the remark of an old writer, that "he who will learn of none but himself, is sure to have a fool for *his* master." Besides, novelty of information is not the only or principal object in attending the house of God: but, as Judge Hale said, with regard to himself, "to be impressed and affected; and to have old and known truth reduced to experience and practice."

He therefore regards the means of grace *constantly*. He attends not one part of the Sabbath only, but both parts: and surely two public services cannot be too much for a day dedicated to devotion. Nor will he attend on the Sabbath only, but on the week-day also. He will be thankful for a service which refreshes and nerves his mind amidst the cares and toils of his calling; and he will remember that, as a professor of religion, he has stipulated for his regular attendance, by his joining the Church to which he belongs. Nothing can be more painful to the feelings of a minister, when he comes to water his flock, than to find many of them not at the well. Perhaps, too, he has chosen his subject, and studied it, and prayed over it, with a peculiar reference to the individual then absent. And how often has something been delivered in the absence of that individual, singularly appropriate to his condition or experience; something that might have directed and comforted him to the end of life, and have been remembered in death with pleasure. And thus neglect has been punished with regret.

But you are required to attend the means of divine appointment *spiritually*. Ye are not to think it enough to draw nigh to Him with the mouth, and honour him with the lip, while the heart is far from him. The Lord looketh to the heart. There is such a thing as an attendance on ordinances, when there is no attention in them; at least none that comes up to the demand, to "worship in spirit and in truth."

And as Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God alone can give the increase, we must attend, in *humbleness* of mind, and never without *prayer*, that the Spirit may help our infirmities, and render the means available to our profit. When the preacher enters upon his work in such an assembly as this, "it is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed:"--And,

Secondly, These duties regard the *Minister*, who is placed over you in the Lord. Add not to his difficulties. He has his trials as a man; and he has his trials as a Christian; and in addition to both these, he has trials peculiar to his office. Could he have foreseen all at the beginning, he would have been disheartened at the entrance; but his work is like John's little book, a bitter sweet, and the sweet comes first. You find it hard enough to manage one temper; what must be the task of governing a multitude, including every diversity! After the engagement of years, he would yield to many a temptation to withdraw, but that necessity is laid upon him. Never successful according to his wishes; and sometimes apparently useless: he is often ready to lay down his commission at his Master's feet; to say, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." Bound to engage at the times appointed, and knowing what is expected from him; in his perplexity arising from choice of subjects, in his barrenness of thought, in his unfitness of feeling, in the study which is a weariness to the flesh, and the exhaustion of spirits gendered by intense application; his heart knoweth his own bitterness; death worketh in him, but life in you. Encourage him. Welcome his instructions. Yield to his reproofs. Respect that authority which he has received, not for destruction but edification. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

A minister must be very mean-spirited if he regards his salary as alms, or benefactions from his people. What they give, they more than have out in services; and "the labourer is worthy of his hire." Has not God ordained, that they who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel? And is not this law founded in equity and justice? Would not the same talents the man devotes to the service of the

sanctuary, provide for himself and his family, if employed in secular concerns? This is a delicate point for a minister to handle; and he surely would never bring it forward if he could do justice to the part of the subject before us, without it. But he will resign it as soon as possible; and leave it in the words the Holy Ghost teacheth. Let congregations compare themselves with it; and especially those individuals in them who pay more annually to the most menial of their attendants, than to the shepherd of their souls.

"Let him," says the Apostle, "be with you without fear." And again: "Know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." He means, not only in reward of their work, but in *aid* of it: for unless you *magnify* his office, you are not likely to be *impressed* by it; and as your regard *for* the preacher declines, so will your profit *by* him. Your relation to him is such, that, if he is degraded, you are disgraced with him; and if he is honoured, you share in his respectability. Ministers are men; and "the best of men are but men at the best." You are not required to approve of their infirmities, or even to be ignorant of them: but surely you will not be suspicious; you will not invite or welcome reflection and insinuation; nor, like too many, speak of him, or suffer him to be spoken of, before children and servants and strangers, with a levity and freedom far from being adapted to increase or preserve esteem and respect. You will consider his character not only as forming his crown, but as essential to his acceptance and success. "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation."

Thirdly, These duties respect *your Fellow-Members*. They are all comprehended in love: and you are required to "love one another out of a pure heart fervently;" to "love as brethren." Has a fellow Christian erred? "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Has he been overtaken in a fault? "Ye that are spiritual are to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves lest you also be tempted." Is he declining in zeal, and negligent in duty? You are to "Consider him, to provoke him to love and to good works." Is he oppressed? You are to bear his "burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Is he in want? You are to give him such things as are needful. "Now," says the Apostle, "we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men."

Fourthly, Your duty concerns the welfare and prosperity of the *whole interest*. Not that you are to be exclusively attentive to your *own*

community. You are unfit to be a member of *any* Christian Church unless you can say, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." But our conditions and circumstances must regulate not the principle, but the exercises and the expressions of duty. The private affections are not incompatible with the public, but conduct to them; and the way, the best way, the only way, by which we can promote the good of the whole, is by advancing the good of a part. The man who, in opposing patriotism, pleads that the word is his country, and all mankind his fellow-citizens, has no country, no fellow-citizens. The object for which he pretends to be concerned is too indistinct to impress; too distant to approach; too extensive to grasp. To come nearer. If a man were to disregard his family, under pretence that he was acting on a broader, nobler principle, and for an object less selfish and contracted, even the nation at large; he would soon be told that the nation consists of families; that one of these is committed to his care; that this he *can* improve; that this he *ought* peculiarly to regard, even for the sake of the public. "He that provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." It is much the same here. It is the will of God that we feel a special sympathy with the religious society to which we belong. This demands our immediate attention, and efforts, and sacrifices; and all the members in their respective places, and by all the influences they can employ, should seek to excel to the edifying of the Church.

Now, the first thing that seems to strike us with regard to the prosperity of a cause is the *increase* of its members. There is, however, one kind of accession which a church should not value nor seek after. It is the drawing members from other churches, where they already hear "the truth as it is in Jesus," and enjoy the fellowship of the Gospel. We do nothing, in filling one place, by emptying another, where the same work is carrying on. The transferring of soldiers from one regiment into another, does not increase the king's army, or add to the defence of the country. The thing is to gain fresh recruits. Our aim should be to make converts, not proselytes. But it is delightful when the inquiry is often made, What shall we do to be saved?--when sinners are turned from darkness unto light, and the power of Satan unto God: when Zion, surprised at the quality and number of her sons and daughters, exclaims, "Who hath begotten me these? these, where have they been?"--and the Lord adds to the Church daily such as shall be saved.

Harmony is included in the welfare of a church. It can only edify itself in love. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit

of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

It takes in also *purity*. "Therefore," says the Prophet, "keep peace *and* truth:" and, says the Apostle, "speaking the *truth* in love." The church of Ephesus is commended for not bearing them that are evil. Our concern for the sanctity of our communion is to appear in maintaining godly discipline: in not admitting irreligious characters, whatever recommendations they may otherwise possess; and in excluding them when they discover themselves to be ungodly after they have been admitted. Improper individuals will occasionally enter the Church: there is no preventing it, unless we were omniscient. But we cannot search the heart; and our leaning ought always to be on the side of charity: it is better to be mistaken and deceived, than to be suspicious and censorious, or to destroy one for whom Christ died. But when the mask under which the man entered is shifted aside, and his conduct appears sinful, "put away from among you," says the Scripture, "that wicked person." He disgraces you; and he will contaminate--a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Some Christians not only individually but collectively do not sufficiently think upon and pursue "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report." A church may be austere and harsh and forbidding: but much of its usefulness depends upon its amiableness. And this will arise from its character for benevolence, and public spirit, and liberality; and from its joining, with firmness of adherence to essential truth, latitude in things circumstantial; from its tenderness in receiving the weak, but not to doubtful disputations; from its readiness to receive all as Christ has received us, to the glory of God.

Towards this prosperity every member should aim and labour to contribute, by his prayers, his conversation, his example, his temper, his influence. And a church thus flourishing; increasing with all the increase of God, in number, and peace, and sanctity, and every moral excellency; is the noblest sight on earth: and full of attraction, and impression, and "a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men:" it looks forth as the morning, clear as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.--Let us conclude.

First, We have been speaking of those that are within. But there are some who are yet *without*, whose condition we lament, and to whom we therefore would address the language of inquiry and invitation, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; why tarriest thou without?" And where do we find these? We find them among *you*, whose character and conduct are irreproachable, who constantly attend the preaching of the Cross, who are glad when they say unto you, Let us go into the House of the Lord; who have even the worship of God in your

families; and are not strangers to your closets--and yet keep aloof from the table of the Lord, where with his dying breath he is saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." We find them amongst those of you who so often remain as spectators at the holy solemnity, and looking down upon the privileged partakers, sigh and say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"--yet are restrained from approaching, not by carnality but timidity; and by forgetting that "all the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of Him." We find them among you, my young friends; you, who are shunning the paths of the destroyer; you, whose consciences are awake, whose hearts are tender, whose minds are impressed by divine things,--and who are detained by looking for a change too sudden and too sensible; and for a kind and degree of evidence and assurance by no means necessary.

People talk of the young, and seem to require more satisfactory evidence with regard to them, than with regard to older candidates. But wherefore? Do persons grow more simple and open and undesigning as they advance in life? Who are the members by whom churches have been troubled and disgraced? Not those who joined themselves to the Lord young, and very young too. I never knew a minister who had to repent of encouraging such communicants. And how many youths have I known, who, humanly speaking, would have been excellent and useful characters now, but they were not encouraged when, as our Saviour says, they were not far from the kingdom of God. Their foot was on the threshold of conversion; but no one took them by the hand, to draw them in--but there were enough ready to draw them back; the world laid hold of them; or their convictions, for want of cherishing, died away. Some of them are now sitting in the seat of the scornful; others, though not the victims of error and vice, are in a state of indifference with regard to the holy communion, which is likely to continue for life. Whereas, had they entered the Church when there was nothing to justify their refusal, they would have been decided; their return into the world would have been cut off; they would have felt identified with a peculiar people; their impressions would have been formed into principles and habits; and the whole man would have been changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord.

My young friends, hesitate, we beseech you, no longer. Fulfil ye our joy in verifying the promise, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

Then will your peace be as a river. You will gain all the succours your age and your condition require. You will become examples to others, in the same period of life: and the young love to follow the young. Your usefulness, early commenced, will advance with your character, and influence, and years: and planted so soon in the house of the Lord, you will flourish in the courts of our God, and bring forth fruit in old age.

Many of you are the children of religious parents. How are they now praying that my attempt to bring you to a decision may be effectual! See you not the tears now dropping from the cheek of thy father--thy mother--at they side; while each says, "If thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." Some of us can speak from experience. We only recommend what we have exemplified. We were enabled early to dedicate ourselves unto God; and we have found his yoke easy and his burden light. We have found his ways pleasantness and peace. We have found "godliness profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And, next to the salvation of our souls, we daily praise him for an early conversion. "I bless thee, O God, for many things," says Beza in his will and testament, "but especially that I gave up myself to Thee at the early age of sixteen."

Wait then no longer. Be encouraged by the assurance, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." If the flower be not blown, offer the bud--

"The flower, when offer'd in the bud,
Is no mean sacrifice,"

in his account. And through all the changes of life, and from the borders of the grave, He will honour this surrender, and say, "I remember thee the kindness of thy youth."

Secondly, We see that while Christianity expects us to enter the Church, it does not leave us to ourselves in it, but accompanies us with its social obligations, and requires us to be found in the performance of every part of relative duty. Unless you cultivate the principles and dispositions pertaining to the condition, you have no right to its benefits. Unless you bring forth fruit in the vineyard, you are cumberers of the ground. If in the master's house you are unprofitable, you are wicked servants. Here, as everywhere else in religion, privilege and duty go together. You had therefore better resign your connexion with the Church, if you are blanks in it. How much more if you are blots! Your relation to the body of Christ

stamps upon you a sacred character. It produces a responsibility peculiarly awful. As professors of his religion, you are witnesses for God; and you depose by your actions, as well as by your words--and will you bear a false, or a defective testimony? You are charged individually with a portion of the glory of the Redeemer; and will you not be concerned to carry it unsullied to the grave?

Beware, therefore, lest by any temper or carriage you should cause the adversaries of the Lord to blaspheme, and the way of truth to be evil spoken of. Do not sadden the heart, and slacken the hands of your minister. Do not prove a grief to the strong, and a stumbling-block to the weak among your brethren: but "make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." Thus you will be harmless and blameless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.

Even then, you may not escape censure and reproach. But you will not be buffeted for your faults; and therefore may take it patiently. Your enemies will find nothing whereof to accuse you, but in the law of your God. You will suffer for righteousness' sake, for well-doing, as Christians: and then you need not be ashamed, but rejoice that you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye also may rejoice with exceeding joy.

Thirdly, We may learn that while we are under obligation to make a profession of religion, and come to the table of communion, the Lord's Supper is not a passport to heaven; and a connexion with a visible Church does not prove our belonging to the invisible. The form of godliness is becoming, and useful, and necessary, as the dress of godliness: but it is nothing, it is worse than nothing, as a substitute for the reality. For, in this case, there is the *utmost* familiarity with divine things; and this prevents, this destroys their impressiveness. The very position of the man screens conscience from alarm, while the terrors of the Lord are addressed to those that are *without*: and as, by his assumption of the character, he passes for a Christian, and is so treated by the world and by his brethren, and is so addressed and encouraged and comforted by the minister, he is in danger of

taking it for granted that he is such--when the end of these things is death. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" He may be discovered and exposed in life; and if not, his name and his place in the Church will soon avail him nothing. The privileges he has enjoyed, instead of affording him any security, will aggravate the awfulness of his condemnation. He not only perishes "from the way," but from the holy hill of Zion--from the sanctuary of God. He falls, at the foot of the altar. He drops into hell, from the table of the Lord, and with the sacred symbols of his body and his blood in his hand and in his mouth. The house of God, in which he pretended to worship; the pew in which he trifled so many hours away, in hearing the word only; the pulpit, and the form of the man of God exerting himself in it; the chalice that never trembled in his unworthy hand--these will be the most dreadful images that will present themselves to the eye of his lost mind. The truths he professed to believe and recommend; the sacred exercises in which he engaged, with those who call on the name of the Lord; his favourite psalms and hymns in which he so often mocked Him with "a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue;" his sitting to hear, and to judge of the qualification of candidates; his joining with the Church in reproving, suspending, excommunicating other members with all the grimace of feigned sanctity and zeal--this will be the food of the worm that never dies, and the fire that never shall be quenched.

Yet, in some cases, it would appear that the extent and the continuance of religious delusion may be as wonderful, as the detection will be tremendous. "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know ye not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say:-o-Not know *us*? Why, "we have *eaten* and *drunk* in thy *presence*, and thou hast *taught* in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

"But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. You are poor in spirit. You mourn for sin. You hunger and thirst after righteousness. You love his salvation, and you love his services. You glory in his Cross, and you admire his character, and long to bear the image of the

heavenly. Yet you are often ready to shrink back: you often, you always pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Well, be assured of this, that you are more welcome to his house, than you ever feel yourselves to be unworthy. He himself rises up, and in all the freeness and tenderness of his love, invites you to his table; and cries, "Eat, O friends; drink you, drink abundantly, O beloved!"

And we, *fourthly*, conclude by hailing those who are not only members of a Christian church, but are joined to the Lord, and are of one spirit with him. Not resting in the outward and visible sign, you realize the inward and spiritual grace. You discern the Lord's body; and, by the exercise of faith on the Sacrifice of the Cross, your experience tells you that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. You have a joy in divine things which mere professors and formalists know nothing of. How often, in his word and ordinances, do you sit under his shadow with delight, and find his fruit sweet to your taste. How often, when lying down in green pastures, and feeding beside the still waters, do you exclaim, "Oh! how great is his beauty, and how great is his goodness." While the men of the world consider you as enslaved by superstition, you walk at liberty, because you keep his commandments. While they represent you as given up to dullness and melancholy, you can look them in the face, and say,

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
And heavenly fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets."

Yes, you are already blessed. But what a prospect is before you! Death has been called a going home--but it is going to church--going from the Church below to the Church above. Your communion on earth has its trials. It is a mixed state of things; and owing to the apostacies of some, and the backslidings of others, and the infirmities of all, you are often sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of it is a burden. Yet it is a pleasing emblem, and earnest of the fellowship of heaven; but its defects, as well as its excellences, should lead you to aspire after that world where the Canaanite will be no more in the house of the Lord for ever; and where the spirits of just men are made perfect. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth

on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Ah! Christian, though you will soon change your place, you will not change your associates. When death lets you go, you will return to your own company. Now, were you setting off for a country which you had never seen, would it not be very relieving to think that you would find yourself at home there--many of your connexions being there already--and the rest assuredly coming after? If, Christian, you are at present a stranger to the heavenly world, the heavenly world is not a stranger to you. There is your Father. There is your Saviour. There are the angels who have been your ministering spirits. There are all the saints, your brethren in Christ. There are your dear friends and fellow-worshippers, who have preceded you--while those you leave behind are loosening and preparing to follow.

And can you imagine that your religious acquaintance will not be renewed, and your holy intimacies be completed, there? "I am fully persuaded," says Baxter, "that I shall love my friends in heaven, and therefore know them. And this principally binds me to them on earth. And if I thought I should never know them more, nor therefore love them after death, I should love them comparatively little, as I do all other transitory objects. But I now delight in conversing with them, as believing I shall commune with them for ever." Paul was likeminded. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."

THE PROFANE EXCHANGE

Discourse XVIII, "The Profane Exchange" Volume I, Short Discourses, p. 202-219.²⁸

"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." -- Heb. 12: 16, 17

THE history of the wicked as well as of the righteous is useful. By

their crimes we are cautioned, and by their miseries we are warned. And as the Israelites fled from the tents of Korah, when **the ground clave asunder and swallowed them up**, saying, **lest the earth swallow us up also**--so should we abandon the course of the ungodly world, lest we share in their tremendous ruin.

Anxious for our welfare, the scripture addresses our fear as well as our hope, and holds forth instances of divine vengeance, as well as proofs of divine mercy. Hence the command of our Lord: **remember Lot's wife**. And hence the admonition of the apostle, **lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.**

And what is all this to us? Much every way. I compare your privileges with his privileges--your sin with his sin--and your doom with his doom.

I. Let us view Esau in his original state--and compare your privileges with his privileges. To stand supreme in the house of the patriarch Isaac, was no trifling prerogative. His house was **the house of God**, and **the gate of heaven**. In this family, Jehovah revealed himself; and there he was adored and served, while idolatry prevailed over all the other nations of the globe. And such was once the condition of this unhappy character; accordingly he possessed the birth-right, and stood in a fair way to obtain all the advantages flowing from it. And these were great and numerous.

To the birth-right belonged pre-eminence over the other branches of the family. To the birth-right appertained a double portion of the paternal inheritance. To the birth-right was attached the land of Canaan, with all its sacred distinctions. To the birth-right was given the promise of being the ancestor of the messiah, the **first-born among many brethren**, the Saviour **in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed**. And to the birth-right was added the honor of receiving first from the mouth of the father a peculiar benediction, which, proceeding from the spirit of prophecy was never pronounced in vain--Such were the prospects of Esau.

And what are yours? It is true you were not born in the house of Isaac, but you have been brought forth in a Christian country, in a **land the Lord careth for**, where **the darkness is past and the true light now shineth**. You have the bible; you have sabbaths; you have sanctuaries; you have ordinance; you have ministers; you have the throne of grace, you have the promise of the Holy Ghost; and **all things** appertaining to your everlasting happiness **are now**

ready. You possess much, but all your present advantages are not to be compared with those glorious hopes to which you are called by the gospel. You have the prospect of becoming a **kind of first fruits of his creatures**, of joining **the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven**--a primogeniture whose privileges far surpass those of the son of Isaac: a birth-right which comprehends a **better country** than Canaan, even heaven, where we shall reign **kings and priests unto God**, where **the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore.** But this pearl is not for the swine, who ignorant of its value tramples it under foot; but for those who conscious of its incomparable worth, prefer it to every thing else, and like the wise merchant are willing to sell all to buy it. These high advantages may be sacrificed.--

II. Let us therefore view Esau in the surrender of his privileges, and compare your sin with his sin.--**For one morsel of meat he sold his birth-right.** It is obvious that the loss was **voluntary and base.** First, it was voluntary. No one forced it from him--he **sold** it. He was indeed tempted to part with it by the sensation of hunger, and the sight of pottage when he was faint: an object was before him which promised the immediate gratification of his sensual appetite. But he could very soon have obtained food upon far easier terms. And surely the birth-right could not have a rival in a mess of pottage? Where was reason? Does the man yield to the brute?--No: he was not compelled to sacrifice his claims. And who compels you to abandon your hopes of heaven? who forces you into perdition?--You say that you live in a world full of enticing objects; that the dominion of sense is strong; that it is not very easy to resist the impulse of the moment. But is it impossible to resist? Have not many overcome, though placed in the same circumstances, and possessed of the same nature with you? What is goodness untried? Have you not reason as well as appetites? and is not grace attainable by you, and sufficient for you? And remember that you can never have so strong a motive to commit sin as to avoid it. The greatest difficulties therefore which you have to overcome, are those which are placed to keep you from hell. What is the applause of a fellow creature to the frown of the Almighty? What is a momentary pleasure to endless pain? and you know you act freely: you know that all the men in the world cannot force you to will: you know that the tempter can do nothing more than propose--the determination rests with you. You cannot justify yourselves even now to your own consciences, and hereafter unable to allege one excuse, you will be speechless. Yes: here is the true cause of your ruin--**ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. You have loved idols and after them you will go.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Introduce William Jay to others. His practical applicational preaching and his gentle approach to relationships come across in his writings. He does not put women down and would set a wonderful example to someone who might be confused on how to treat women, both as individuals and in their areas of usefulness to God's kingdom. Give his Autobiography to pastors and elders along with *Morning Exercises*, or a way to find him on the web.
- Read Jay yourself. Spend a year or two with him as your guide during your devotional time. Learn how to apply the Bible to your life and heart.
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- Use those applications with your children and teens. Tell them about Jay's life.
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- Read Jay for reformed doctrine that is gentle and attractive. Give him to people strong in doctrine yet weak in gentleness and compassion.
- Use Jay's teaching technique. Find the biblical principle in the passage. Apply it to the life by pointing out wise living or sinful behavior. Apply the principle to the heart to stimulate love and praise to God. Forcefully make your point and stay there awhile, giving the Holy Spirit time to work. Try this with your children. Show it to someone with whom you have a little influence.
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- Follow Jay's example in urging children to turn to Christ, instructing them, and welcoming them to His church.
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