

THE DESIRE OF THE RIGHTEOUS GRANTED

by John Bunyan

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“The fear of the wicked; it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.” Proverbs 10:24

The desire of the righteous is only good, Proverbs 11:23.

This book of the Proverbs is so called because it containeth hard, dark, and pithy sentences of wisdom, by which is taught unto young men knowledge and discretion.

Wherefore this book is not such as discloseth truths by words antecedent or subsequent to the text, so as other scriptures generally do, but has its text or sentences more independently; for usually each verse standeth upon its own bottom, and presenteth by itself some singular thing to the consideration of the reader; so that I shall not need to bid my reader look back to what went before, nor yet to that which follows, for the better opening of the text, and shall therefore come immediately to the words, and search into them for what hidden treasures are contained therein.

The words, then, in the first place, present us with the general condition of the whole world; for all men are ranked under one of these conditions, the wicked or the righteous: for he that is not wicked is righteous, and he that is not righteous is wicked. So again, “Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous, spoil not his dwelling-place.” I might give you out of this book many such instances, for it abounds with such, but the truth hereof is plain enough.

The world is also divided by other general terms: such as believers and unbelievers; saints and sinners; good and bad; children of God and children of the wicked one etc. These, I say, are general terms, and comprehend not this or that sect or order of each, but the whole. The believer, saint, good, and child of God, is one, to wit, the righteous; the unbeliever, the sinner, the bad, and the child of the devil, is one, to wit, the wicked; as also the text expresses it: so that, I say, the text, or these two terms in it, comprehend all men; the one that shall be saved, the other all that shall be damned for ever in hell fire.

The wicked, who is he? but the man that loves not God, nor to do his will. The righteous, who is he? but the man that loveth God and his holy will, to do it.

Of the wicked there are several sorts, some more ignorant, some more knowing; the more ignorant of them are such as go to be executed, as the ox goes to the slaughter or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; that is, as creatures whose ignorance makes them as unconcerned while they are going down the stairs to hell. But, alas, their ignorance will be no plea for them before the bar of God! for it is written, "It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favor."

Though I must confess, the more knowing the wicked is, or the more light and goodness such a one sins against, the greater will his judgment be; these shall have greater damnation: it shall be more tolerable at the judgment for Sodom than for them.

There is a wicked man that goes blinded and a wicked man that goes with his eyes open to hell; there is a wicked man that cannot see and a wicked man that will not see the danger he is in; but hell fire will open both their eyes.

There are that are wicked and cover all with a cloak of religion, and there are that proclaim their profaneness; but they will meet both in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

There are also several sorts (if I may so express myself) of those that are truly righteous; as children, young men, fathers, or saints that fear God, both small and great. Some have more grace, and some do better improve the grace they have, than others of their brethren do; some also are more valiant for the truth upon the earth than others of their brethren are; yea, some are so swallowed up with God, and love to his word and ways, that they are fit to be a pattern or example in holiness to all that are about them; and some again have their light shining so dim that they render themselves suspicious to their brethren, whether they are of the number of those that have grace or no. But, being gracious, they shall not be lost, although such will at the day of reward suffer loss; for this is the will of

the Father that sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, that of all that he had given him he should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

In the next place, we are here presented with some of the qualities of the wicked and the righteous; the wicked has his fears, the righteous has his desires.

The wicked has his fears: "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted."

Indeed, it seems to the godly that the wicked feareth not, nor doth he after a godly sort; for he that feareth God aright must not be reputed a wicked man. The wicked, through the price of his countenance, declareth that he feareth not God aright, because he doth not graciously call upon him; but yet for all that the wicked at times are haunted, sorely haunted, and that with the worst of fears: "Terrors," says Bildad, "shall make them afraid on every side." And again, "His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors."

A wicked man, though he may hector it at times with his proud heart, as though he feared neither God nor hell, yet again, at times, his soul is even drowned with terrors: the morning is to them even as the shadow of death; if one knew them, they are in terrors of the shadow of death.

At times, I say, it is thus with them, especially when they are under warm convictions that the day of judgment is at hand, or when they feel in themselves as if death was coming as a tempest to steal them away from their enjoyments, and lusts, and delights; then the bed shakes on which they lie, then the proud tongue doth falter in their mouth, and their knees knock one against another; then their conscience stares, and roars, and tears, and arraigns them before God's judgment seat, or threatens to follow them down to hell, and there to wreck it fury on them for all the abuses and affronts this wicked wretch offered to it in the day in which it controlled his unlawful deeds.

Oh! none can imagine what fearful plights a wicked man is in sometimes, though God in his just judgment towards them suffers them again and again to stifle and choke such awakenings, from a purpose to reserve them unto the day of judgment to be punished!

In the third place, as the wicked has his fears, so the righteous has his desires: “The desire of the righteous shall be granted.” But this must not be taken exclusively, as if the wicked had nothing but fears and the righteous nothing but desires; for, both by scripture and experience also, we find that the wicked has his desires and the righteous man his fears.

1. For the wicked, they are not without their desires: “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,” was the desire of wicked Balaam: and another place saith, “The wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire,” that he is for heaven as well as the best of you all; but yet even then he blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.

Wicked men have their desires and their hopes too, but the hope and desire of unjust men perisheth; yea, and though they look and long too all the day long, with desires of life and glory, yet their fears, and them only, shall come upon them; for the desires of the righteous only shall be granted.

The desires of the wicked want a good bottom; they flow not from a sanctified mind, nor of love to the God or the heaven now desired; but only from such a sense as devils have of torments, and so, with them, they cry out, “I beseech thee, torment me not.”

But their fears have a substantial foundation, for they are grounded upon the view of an ill-spent life, the due reward of which is hell fire! “The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” their place is without; “for without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolators, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

Their fears, therefore, have a strong foundation; they have also matter to work upon, which is guilt and justice, the which they shall never be able to escape without a miracle of grace and mercy.

Therefore it saith, and that with emphasis, “The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him;” wherefore his desire must die with him, for the promise of a grant of that which is desired is only entailed to righteousness: “The desire of the righteous shall be granted:” but “Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked,” said David.

2. Nor are the righteous without their fears, and that even all their life long; for some of them, “through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

But, as the desires of the wicked shall be frustrated, so shall also the fears of the godly: hence you have them admonished, yea, commanded not to be afraid, neither of devils, death, nor hell; for the fear of the righteous shall not come upon them to eternal damnation.

No, they are not to fear what sin can do unto them, nor what all their sins can do unto them. I do not say they should not be afraid of sinning, nor of those temporal judgments that sin shall bring upon them, for of such things they ought to be afraid, as saith the Psalmist, “My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgment.”

But of eternal ruin, of that they ought not to be afraid with slavish fear: “Wherefore should I fear (said the prophet) in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?” And, again, “Ye have done all this wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord; for the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake.”

The reason is, because the righteous are secured by their faith in Christ Jesus; also their fears stand upon a mistake of the nature of the covenant in which they are wrapped up, which is ordered for them in all things, and sure. Besides, God is purposed to magnify the riches of his grace in their salvation; therefore goodness and mercy shall to that end follow them all the days of their life, that they may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. They have also their intercessor and advocate ready with God, to take up matters for them in such a way as may maintain true peace betwixt their God and them, and as may encourage them to be sober and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Wherefore, though the godly have their fears, yea, sometimes dreadful fears, and that of perishing for ever and ever, yet the day is coming when their fears and tears shall be done away, and when their desires only shall be granted: “The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.”

The words then are a prediction or prophecy, and that both concerning the wicked and the righteous, with reference to time and things to come, and shall certainly be fulfilled in their season.

Hence it is said, concerning the wicked, that their triumphing is short, and that the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment. Oh, their end will be bitter as wormwood, and will cut like a two-edged sword! Of this Solomon admonishes youth, when he saith, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”

This therefore sheweth the desperate spirit that possesses the children of men, who, though they hear and read all this, yet cannot be reclaimed from such courses that are wicked, and that lead to such a condition: I say, they will not be reclaimed from such courses as lead to ways that go down to hell, where their soul must mourn, even then when their flesh and body are consumed. Oh, how dearly bought are their pleasures, and how will their laughter be turned into tears and anguish unutterable! and that presently, for it is coming: their “judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” But what good will their covenant of death then do them? And will their agreement of hell yield them comfort? Is not God as well mighty to punish as to save? Or can these sinners believe God out of the world? or cause that he should not pay them home for their sins, and recompense them for all the evil they have loved and continued in the commission of? Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the day that God shall deal with thee?

Thou art bold now, I mean bold in a wicked way; thou sayest now, thou wilt keep thy sweet morsels of sin under thy tongue, thou wilt keep them still within thy mouth. Poor wretch! read Job 20:11. Thy sins shall lie down in the dust with thee. Thou hast sucked the poison of asps, and the viper’s tongue shall slay thee, ver. 16. Thou shalt not see the rivers, the streaming floods, the brooks of butter and honey, ver. 17. All darkness shall be hid in thy secret places: a fire not blown shall consume thee, etc.

“This is the portion of a wicked man from God,
and the heritage appointed to him by God,” ver. 26-29.

And, as they predict or prophesy what shall become of the wicked, so also they plentifully foretell what shall happen to the righteous, when he said, Their desire shall be granted; of which more anon.

Only here I will drop this short hint, that the righteous have great cause to rejoice; for what more pleasing, what more comfortable to a man, than to be assured, and that from the Spirit of truth, that what he desireth shall be granted? And this the righteous are assured of here; for he saith it in words at length, “The desire of the righteous shall be granted.”

This then should comfort them against their fears, and the sense of their unworthiness; it should also make them hold up their heads under all their temptations, and the affronts that is usual for them to meet with in the world. The righteous! Who so vilified as the righteous? He, by the wise men of the world, is counted a very Abraham, a fool; like to him who is the father of us all.

But, as he left all for the desire that he had of a better country, and at last obtained his desire, for after he had patiently endured he obtained the promise, so those that walk in the steps of that faith which our father Abraham had, even those also in the end shall find place in Abraham’s bosom: wherefore it is meet that we should cheer up and be glad, because what we desire shall be granted to us.

But I shall here leave off this short way of paraphrasing upon the text, and shall come distinctly to inquire into the nature of the words; but my subject matter shall be granted:” From which words there are these things to be inquired into:

- (1.) What, or who is the righteous man?
- (2.) What are the desires of a righteous man?
- (3.) What is meant or to be understood by granting the desire of the righteous? “The desire of the righteous shall be granted.”

1. For the first of these, namely, What, or who is the righteous man?

My way of prosecuting this head shall be to shew you, first, that I intend a righteous man, not in every sense, but in that which is the best, otherwise I shall miscarry as to the intention of the Holy Ghost; for it may not be supposed that these words reach to them that are righteous in a

general, but in a special sense; such I mean that are so in the judgment of God: for, as I hinted, there are several sorts of righteous men, that yet have nothing to do with this blessed promise, or that shall never as such have their desires granted.

1. There is one that is righteous in his own eyes, and is yet far enough off from the blessing of the text: there is a generation that are pure or righteous in their own sight, yet are not purged from their filthiness.

These are they that you also read of in the evangelist Luke, that are said to trust in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.

These are set so low, by this their foolish confidence, in the eyes of Jesus Christ, that he even preferred a praying publican before them. Wherefore these cannot be the men, I mean those righteous men, to whom this promise is made.

2. There are those that by others are counted righteous; I mean they are so accounted by their neighbors. Thus Korah and his company are called the people of the Lord, and all the congregation by them are also called holy, every one of them, Numbers 16:3, 41. But as he who commends himself is not approved, so it is no great matter if all the world shall count us righteous if God esteemeth us not for such; for not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

3. There are those that indeed are righteous when compared with others: "I came not to call the righteous." "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die;" and the like, are texts thus to be understood: for such as these are, as to mortal life, better than the others. But these, if they are none otherwise righteous than by acts and works of righteousness of their own, are not the persons contained in the text, that are to have their desires granted.

4. The righteous man, therefore, in the text is, and ought to be, thus described:

- (1.) He is one whom God makes righteous, by reckoning him so.
- (2.) He is one that God makes righteous, by possessing of him with a principle of righteousness.
- (3.) He is one that is practically righteous.

First. He is one that God makes righteous. Now, if God makes him righteous, his righteousness is not his own, I mean this sort of righteousness: “Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”

God then makes a man righteous by putting righteousness upon him; by putting the righteousness of God upon him. Hence we are said to be made “the righteousness of God in Christ. For God hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Thus God, therefore, reckoneth us righteous, even by imputing that unto us which is able to make us so; “He is made of God unto us righteousness.” Wherefore he saith again, “In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”

The righteousness then by which a man is made righteous, with righteousness to justification of life before God, (for that is what we are speaking of now) is the righteousness of another than he who is justified thereby. Hence it is said again, by the soul thus justified and made righteous, “The Lord hath clothed me with the robe of righteousness.” As he also saith in another place, “I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness.”

This we call a being made righteous by reckoning, by the reckoning of God; for none is of power to reckon us righteous but God, because none can make us so but him.

He that can make me rich, though I am in myself the poorest of men, may reckon me rich, if together with his so reckoning he indeed doth make me rich. This is the case; God makes a man righteous by bestowing of righteousness upon him, by counting the righteousness of his Son for his: he gives him righteousness, a righteousness already performed and completed by the obedience of his Son.

Not that this righteousness, by being bestowed upon us, is severed from Jesus Christ; for it is still his and in him. How then, may some say, doth it become ours? I answer, by our being put into him; “For of God we are in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us of him righteousness.” And again, “We are made the righteousness of God in him.” So then the righteousness of Christ covereth his, as a man’s garments cover the members of his body

(for we are the body of Christ and members in particular.) The righteousness therefore is Christ's, resideth still in him, and covereth us, as the child is lapped up in its father's skirts, or as the chicken is covered with the feathers of the hen.

I make use of all these similitudes, thereby to inform you of my meaning; for by all these things are set forth the way of our being made righteous to justification of law.

Now thus a man is made righteous without any regard to what he has or to what is of him, for as to him it is utterly another's. Just as if I should with the skirts of my garment take up and clothe some poor and naked infant that I find cast out into the open field. Now, if I cover the person, I cover scabs, and sores, and ulcers, and all blemishes. Hence God, by putting this righteousness upon us, is said to hide and cover our sins: "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

For, since this righteousness is Christ's, and counted or reckoned ours by the grace of God, it is therefore bestowed upon us, not because we are, but to make us, righteous before the face of God. Hence, as I said, it is said to make us righteous, even as gay clothes do make a naked body fine: "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

This is of absolute necessity to be known, and to be believed; for without this no man can be counted righteous before God: and if we stand not righteous before God it will benefit us nothing as to life eternal, though we should be counted righteous by all the men on earth. Besides, if God counts me righteous I am safe, though in and of myself I am nothing but a sinner and ungodly. The reason is, because God has a right to bestow righteousness upon me, for he has righteousness to spare; he has also a right to forgive, because sin is the transgression of the law: yea, he has therefore sent his Son into the world to accomplish righteousness for sinners, and God of his mercy bestows it upon those that shall receive it by faith. Now, if God shall count me righteous, who will be so hardy as to conclude I yet shall perish? "It is God that justifies, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Thus therefore is a man made righteous, even of God by Christ, or through his righteousness. Now, if, as we said, a man is thus made righteous, then in this sense he is good before God, before he has done any thing of that which the law calls good before men; for God maketh not men righteous with this righteousness, because they have been or have done good, but before they are capable of doing good at all. Hence we are said to be justified while ungodly, even as an infant is clothed with the skirt of another's while naked as touching itself.

Works therefore do not precede, but follow after this righteousness; and even thus it is in nature, the tree must be good before it bear good fruit, and so also must a man. It is impossible to make a man bring forth good fruit to God before he is of God made good, as it is for a thorn or bramble-bush to bring forth figs or grapes.

But again, a man must be righteous before he can be good; righteous by imputation, before his person, his intellectuals can be qualified with good, as to the principle of good: for faith, the Spirit, nor any grace is given unto the sinner before God has made him righteous with the righteousness of Christ. Wherefore it is said, that after he has spread his skirt over us he washed us with water, that is, with the washing of sanctification.

And to conclude otherwise is as much as to say that an unjustified man has faith, the Spirit and the graces thereof, which to say is to overthrow the gospel. For what need of Christ's righteousness if a man may have faith and the Spirit of Christ without it, since the Spirit is said to be the earnest of our inheritance, and that by which we are sealed unto the day of redemption?

But the truth is, the Spirit which makes our person good, I mean that which sanctifies our natures, is the fruit of the righteousness which is by Jesus Christ; for, as Christ died and rose again before he sent the Holy Ghost from heaven to his, so the benefit of his death and resurrection is by God bestowed upon us, in order to the Spirit's possessing of our souls.

Secondly. And this leads me to the second thing, namely, that God makes a man righteous by possessing of him with a principle of righteousness, even with the spirit of righteousness. For though, as to justification before God from the curse of the law, we are made righteous while we are

ungodly and yet sinners, yet, being thus made free from sin, we forthwith become, through a change which the Holy Ghost works in our minds, the servants of God. Hence it is said, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” For, though, as the apostle also insinuates here, being in Christ Jesus is antecedent to our walking after the Spirit, yet a man can make no demonstration of his being in Christ Jesus but by his walking in the Spirit, because the Spirit is an inseparable companion of imputed righteousness, and immediately follows it, to dwell with whosoever it is bestowed upon.

Now it dwelling in us, principles us in all the powers of our souls with that which is righteousness in the habit and nature of it. hence the fruits of the Spirit are called ‘the fruits of goodness and righteousness,’ as the fruits of a tree are called the fruit of that tree.

And again, he that doth righteousness is righteous, not only in our first sense but even in this also; for who can do righteousness without he be principled so to do? Who can act reason that hath not reason? So none can bring forth righteousness that hath not in him the root of righteousness, which is the Spirit of God, which comes to us by virtue of our being made sons of God. Hence the fruits of the Spirit are called “the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.”

This then is the thing we say, to wit, that he that is made righteous unto justification of life before God is also habituated with a principle of righteousness, as that which follows the righteousness by which he stands just before: I say, as that which follows it, for it comes by Jesus Christ, and by our being justified before God and made righteous through him.

This second, then, also comes to us before we do any act spiritually good: for how can a man act righteousness but from a principle of righteousness? And, seeing this principle is not of or by nature, but of and by grace through Christ, it follows that, as no man is just before God that is not covered with the righteousness of Christ, so no man can do righteousness but by the power of the Spirit of God, which must dwell in him. Hence we are said by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body, which works are preparatory to fruitful actions. “The husbandman,” says Paul, “that

laboureth must first be partaker of the fruit;" so he that worketh righteousness must first be blessed with a principle of righteousness.

Men must have eyes before they see, tongues before they speak, and legs before they go; even so must a man be made habitually good and righteous before he can work righteousness. This then is the second thing. God makes a man righteous by possessing him with a principle of righteousness; which principle is not of nature, but of grace; not of man, but of God.

Thirdly. The man in the text is practically righteous, or one that declared himself by works that are good; a virtuous, a righteous man, even as the tree declares, by the apple or plum it beareth, what manner of tree it is: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Fruits shew outwardly what the heart is principled with; 'Shew me then thy faith, which abideth in the heart, by thy works in a well-spent life.'

Mark how the apostle words it, "We, being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Mark his order: first we are made free from sin; now that is by being justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood. Now this is God's act, without any regard at all to any good that the sinner has done, or can accomplish: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy thus he saveth us."

Now, being made free from sin, what follows? We become the servants of God; that is, by the turn which the Holy Ghost makes upon our heart, when it reconciles it to the word of God's grace; for that, as was said before, is the effect of the indwelling and operation of the Holy Ghost. Now, having our hearts thus changed by God and his word, the fruits of righteousness put forth themselves by us: for, as (when we were in the flesh) the motions of sin, which is in our members, did bring forth fruit unto death, so now, if we are in the Spirit (and we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, so be the Spirit of Christ dwells in us) by the motions and

workings of that we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

But now by these fruits we are neither made righteous nor good; for the apple maketh not the tree good, it only declares it so to be. Here, therefore, all those are mistaken that think to be righteous by doing of righteous actions, or good by doing good. A man must first be righteous or he cannot do righteousness, to wit, that which is evangelically such. Now, if a man is and must be righteous before he acts righteousness, then all his works are born too late to make him just before God; for his works, if they be right, flow from the heart of a righteous man, of a man that had, before he had any good work, a two-fold righteousness bestowed on him; one to make him righteous in the sight of God, the other to principle him to be righteous before the world, that he might be called a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

The want of understanding in this is that which keeps so many in a mist of darkness about the way of salvation; for they, poor hearts, when they hear of the need they have of a righteousness to commend them to God, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, that is, of that which God imputeth to a man, and that by which he counteth him righteous, have it not in their thoughts to accept of that unto justification of life, but presently betake themselves to the law of works, and fall to work where for the performing of a righteousness, that they may be accepted of God for the same, and so submit not themselves to the righteousness of God, by which, and by which only, the soul stands just before God.

Wherefore, I say, it is necessary that this be distinctly laid down, that a man must be righteous first, even before he doth righteousness: the argument is plain from the order of nature: for “a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit:” wherefore make the tree good, and so his fruit good; or the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt.

Reason also says the same; for how can blacks beget white children when both father and mother are black? How can a man without grace and the spirit of grace do good; nature is defiled even to the mind and conscience; how then can good fruit come from such a stock?

Besides, God accepteth not any work of a person who is not first accepted of him: “The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering;” to Abel first, that is, before that Abel offered. But how could God have respect to Abel if Abel was not pleasing in his sight? and how could Abel be yet pleasing in his sight for the sake of his own righteousness, when it is plain that Abel had not yet done good works? He was therefore first made acceptable in the sight of God, by and for the sake of that righteousness which God of his grace had put upon him to justification of life, through and by which also the Holy Ghost in the graces of it dwelt in Abel’s soul. Now Abel, being justified, and in possession of this holy principle, offers this sacrifice to God. Hence it is said that he offered by faith, by the faith which he had previously to his offering; for, if through faith he offered, he had that faith before he offered, that is plain. Now his faith looked not for acceptance for the sake of what he offered, but for the sake of that righteousness which it apprehended God had already put upon him, and by which he was made righteous; wherefore his offering was the offering of a righteous man, of a man made righteous first; and so the text saith, “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous,” that is antecedent to his offering; for he had faith in Christ to come, by which he was made righteous; he also had the spirit of faith, by which he was possessed with a righteous principle; and, so, being in this manner made righteous, righteous before God, and also principled to work, he comes and offers his more acceptable sacrifice to God. For this all will grant, namely, that the works of a righteous man are more excellent than are even the best works of the wicked. Hence Cain’s works came behind, for God had not made him righteous, had no respect unto his person, nor had given him the Spirit and faith, whereby alone men are made capable to offer acceptably: “But to Cain and his offering the Lord had not respect.”

From all which it is manifest that the person must be accepted before the duty performed can be pleasing unto God: and, if the person must first be accepted, it is evident that the person must first be righteous; but, if the person be righteous before he doth good, then it follows that he is made righteous by a righteousness that is none of his own, in which he had no hand, further than to receive it as the gracious gift of God. Deny this, and

it follows that God accepteth men without respect to righteousness; and then what is the consequence, but that Christ is dead in vain?

We must not therefore be deceived: “He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as the Lord is righteous.” It doth not say, he that doth righteousness shall be righteous, as if his doing works would make him so before God; but he that doth righteousness is righteous, antecedent to his doing righteousness. And it must be thus understood, or else what follows signifies nothing; for he saith, “He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as the Lord his God is righteous.” But how is the Lord righteous? even antecedent to his works. The Lord was righteous before he wrought righteousness in the world; and even so are we, to wit, every child of God. As he is, so are we in this world.

But we must in this admit of this difference; the Lord was eternally and essentially righteous before he did any work; but we are imputatively righteous, and also made so by a second work of creation, before we do good works. It holds therefore only as to order; God was righteous before he made the world, and we are righteous before we do good works.

Thus, therefore, we have described the righteous man.

- (1.) He is one whom God makes righteous by reckoning, or imputation.
- (2.) He is one that God makes righteous by possessing of him with a principle of righteousness.
- (3.) He is one that is practically righteous.

Nor dare I give a narrower description of a righteous man than this; nor otherwise than thus.

1. I dare not give a narrower description of a righteous man than this, because whoever pretends to justification, if he be not sanctified, pretends to what he is not; and whoever pretends to sanctification, if he shews not the fruits thereof by a holy life, he deceiveth his own heart, and professeth but in vain.

2. Nor dare I give this description otherwise than thus, because there is a real distinction to be put between the righteousness by which we should be just before God, and that which is in us a principle of sanctification; the

first being the obedience of the Son of God without us, the second being the work of the Spirit in our hearts.

There is also a difference to be put betwixt the principle by which we work righteousness and the works themselves; as a difference is to be put betwixt the cause and the effect, the tree and the apple.

II. I come now to the second thing into which we are to inquire, and that is,

What are the desires of a righteous man?

My way of handling this question shall be;

- (1.) To speak the nature of desire in the general.
- (2.) And then to shew you more particularly what are the desires of the righteous.

1. For the first: Desires in generally may be thus described: they are the workings of the heart or mind, after that of which the soul is persuaded that it is good to be enjoyed; this, I say, is so without respect to regulation: for we speak not now of good desires, but of a human creature; I say, desires are, or may be called, the working of the heart after this or that; the strong motions of the mind unto it.

- (1.) Hence the love of women to their husbands is called their desires; and the wife is also called the desire of the husband's eye. Also love to a woman, to make her one's wife, is called by the name of desire. Now who is there that is ignorant how strong the motions or passions of love are?
- (2.) Hunger is also a most vehement thing; and that which is called hunger in one place is called desire in another; "and he desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table."
- (3.) Exceeding lustings are called desires, to shew the vehemency of desires.
- (4.) Longings, pantings, thirstings, prayers, etc. if there by any life in them, are all fruits of a desirous soul.
- (5.) Desires therefore flow from the consideration of the goodness, or profitableness, or gratification of a thing: yea, all desires flow from thence; for a man desires not that about which he has had no

consideration, nor that neither on which he has thought, if he doth not judge it will yield him something worth desiring.

When Eve saw the forbidden fruit was a beautiful tree (though her sight deceived her) then she desired it, and took thereof herself and gave to her husband, and he did eat; yea, saith the text, “When she saw that it was a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took.”

- (6.)** Hence that which is called coveting in one place is called desiring in another; for desires are craving, and by desires a man seeks to enjoy what is not his.

From all these things, therefore, we see what desire is; it is the working of the heart after that which the soul is persuaded is good to be enjoyed; and of them there are these two effects.

1. One is (on a supposition that the soul is not satisfied with what it has) to cause the soul to range and hunt through the world for something that may fill up that vacancy that yet the soul finds in itself, and would have supplied. Hence desires are said to be wandering, and the soul is said to walk by them: “Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire” or than the walking of the soul. Desires are hunting things; and how many things do some empty souls seek after, both as to the world, and also as to religion, who have desirous minds!

2. The second effect is, if desires be strong they carry all away with them; they are like Samson, they will pull down the gates of a city, but they will go out abroad: nothing can stop the current of desires, but the enjoyment of the thing desired, or a change of opinion as to the worth or want of worth of the thing that is desired.

3. But we will now come to the thing more particularly intended, which is, To shew what are the desires of the righteous. This is that which the text calls us to the consideration of, because it saith, “The desire of the righteous shall be granted.”

We have hitherto spoken of desires as to the nature of them, without respect to them as good or bad; but now we shall speak to them as they are the effects of a sanctified mind; as they are the breathings, pantings, lustings, hungerings, and thirstings of a righteous man.

The text says, “The desire of the righteous shall be granted.” What then are the desires of the righteous? Now I will,

- (1.) Speak to their desires in the general, or with reference to them as to their bulk.
- (2.) I will speak to them more particularly as they work this way; and that,

First, For their desires in the general. The same Solomon that saith, “The desire of the righteous shall be granted,” saith also, “The desire of the righteous is only good.”

This text giveth us in the general a description of the desires of a righteous man, and a sharp and smart description it is: for where, may some say, is then the righteous man, or the man that hath none but good desires? and if it be answered, they are good in the main, or good in the general, yet that will seem to come short of an answer; for in that he saith “The desires of the righteous are only good,” it is as much as to say that a righteous man has none but good desires, or desireth nothing but things that are good.

Wherefore, before we go any further, I must labor to reconcile the experience of good men with this text, which thus gives us a description of the desires of the righteous.

First. Then a righteous man is to be considered more generally or more strictly.

First, more generally, as he consisteth of the whole man, of flesh and spirit, of body and soul, of grace and nature: now consider him thus, and you can by no means reconcile the text with his experience, nor his experience with the text. For as he is body, flesh, and nature, (for all these are with him, though he is a righteous man) so he has desires vastly different from those described by this text, vastly differing from what is good; yea, what is it not, that is naught, that the flesh and nature, even of a righteous man, will not desire? Do you think that the scripture speaketh in vain, “The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” And again, “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing:” and again, “The flesh lusteth against the spirit:” and again, “The lusts thereof do war against the soul.”

From all these texts we find that a righteous man has other workings, lusts, and desires, than such only as are good: here then, if we consider of a righteous man thus generally, is no place of agreement betwixt him and this text.

We must then consider of him, in the next place, more strictly, as he may and is to be distinguished from his flesh, his carnal lusts, and sinful nature.

Secondly, Then a righteous man is taken sometimes as to or for his best part, or as he is a second creation; and so, or as so considered, his desires are only good.

1. He is taken sometimes as to or for his best part, or as he is a second creation, as these scriptures declare: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, all things are become new;” created in Christ Jesus, born of God, become heavenly things, renewed after the image of him that created them; and the like.

By all which places the sinful flesh, the old man, the law of sin, the outward man, all which are corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, are excluded, and so pared off from the man, as he is righteous; for his delight in the law of God is after the inward man.

And Paul himself was forced thus to distinguish of himself, before he could come to make a right judgment in the matter: saith he, “That which I do I allow not; what I would I do not; but what I hate that do I.” See you not here how he cleaves himself in twain, severing himself as he is spiritual, from himself as he is carnal; and ascribeth his motions to what is good to himself only as he is spiritual, or the new man: If then I do that which I would not, I consent to the law that it is good.”

But I trow, Sir, your consenting to what is good is not by that part which doth what you would not? No, no, saith he, that which doth what I would not I disown, and count it no part of sanctified Paul. “Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me; for in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not; for the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do: now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Thus you see Paul is forced to make two men of himself, saying, I and I, I do not, I do, I would not do;

what I hate, that I do. Now it cannot be the same I, unto whom these contraries are applied; but his sinful flesh is one I, and his godly mind the other: and indeed so he concludes it in this chapter, saying, “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Thus, therefore the Christian man must distinguish concerning himself; and, doing so, he shall find, though he has flesh, and as he is such, he hath lusts contrary to God; yet, as he is a new creature, he allows not, but hates the motions and desires of the flesh, consents to, and wills and delights in, the law of God.

Yea, as a new creature, he can do nothing else: for the new man, inward man, or hidden man of the heart, being the immediate work of the Holy Ghost, and consisting only of that which is divine and heavenly, cannot breathe, or act, or desire to act, in ways and courses that are carnal. Wherefore, in this sense, or as the righteous man is thus considered, “his desires are only good.”

2. As the righteous man must here be taken for the best part, for the I that would do good, for the I that hates the evil; so, again, we must consider of the desires of this righteous man as they flow from that fountain of grace, which is the Holy Ghost within him; and as they are immediately mixed with those foul channels, in and through which they must pass before they can be put forth into acts.

For, though the desire, as to its birth and first being, is only good, yet before it comes into much motion, it gathers, from the defilements of the passages through which it comes, that which makes it bear a tang of flesh and weakness in the skirts of it; and the evil that dwells in us is so universal, and also always so ready, that, as sure as there is any motions to what is good, so sure evil is present with it; “for when (or whenever) I would do good,” says Paul, “evil is present with me.”

Hence it follows that all our graces, and so our desires, receive disadvantage by our flesh, which, mixing itself with what is good, abates the excellency of the good.

There is a spring that yieldeth water good and clear, but the channels through which this water comes to us are muddy, foul, or dirty: now, of the channels the waters receive a disadvantage, and so come to us as

savouring of what came not with them from the fountain, but from the channels.

This is the cause of the coolness, and of the weakness, of the flatness, and of the many extravagancies, that attend some of our desires: they come warm from the Spirit and grace of God in us; but, as hot water running through cold pipes, or as clear water running through dirty conveyances, so our desires gather soil.

You read, in Solomon's Ecclesiastes, of a time when desires fail, for that man goeth to his long home: and, as to good desires, there is not one of them, when we are in our prime, but they fail also as to the perfecting of that which a man desires to do: "To will is present with me, (says Paul) but how to perform that which is good I find not."

To will or to desire, that is present with me; but, when I have willed or desired to do, to perform is what I cannot attain unto. But why not attain to a performance? Why, sayeth he, I find "a law in my members warring against the law of my mind;" and this law takes me prisoner; "and brings me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members."

Now, where things willed and desired meet with such obstructions, no marvel if our willing and desiring, though they set out lustily at the beginning, come yet lame home in conclusion.

Thus a man, when he first prostrates himself before God, doth it with desires as warm as fire-coals; but erewhile he finds, nevertheless, that the mettle of those desires, were it not revived with fresh supplies, would be quickly spent, and grow cold.

But yet the desire is good, and only good, as it comes from the breathing of the Spirit of God within us.

We must therefore, as I said, distinguish betwixt what is good and that which doth annoy it, as gold is to be distinguished from the earth and dross that doth attend it.

The man that believed desired to believe better, and so cries out, "Lord, help my unbelief." The man that feared God desired to fear him better, saying, I desire to fear thy name.

But these desires failed, as to the performance of what was begun, so that they were forced to come off but lamely, as to the faith and fear they had; yet the desires were true, good, and such as were accepted of God by Christ: not according to what they had not, but as to those good motions which they had. Distinguish then the desires of the righteous, in the nature of them, from that corruption and weakness of ours that cleave to them, and then again they are only good.

3. There is another thing to be considered, and that is, the different frames that our inward man is in while we live as pilgrims in the world. A man, as he is not always well without, so neither is he always well within. Our inward man is subject to transient, though not to utter decays.

And, as it is when the outward man is sick, strength, and stomach, and lust of desire, fails, so it is when our inward man has caught a cold likewise.

The inward man I call the new creature, of which the spirit of God is the support, as my soul supports my body: but, I say, this new man is not always well: he knows nothing that knows not this. Now, being sick, things fail. As, when a man is not in health of body his pulses beats so as to declare that he is sick; so, when a man is not well within, his inward pulse, which are his desires, (for I count the desires for the pulse of the inward man) they also declare that the man is not well within. They beat too little after God, weak and faintly after grace; they also have their halts; they beat not evenly, as when the soul is well, but so as to manifest all is not well there.

We read that the church of Sardis was under sore sickness, insomuch that some of her things were quite dead, and they that were not so were yet ready to die; yet life is life, we say, and as long as there is a pulse or breath, though breath scarce able to shake a feather, we cast not away all hope of life. Desires then, though they be weak, are notwithstanding true desires, if they be the desires of the righteous thus described, and therefore are truly good, according to our text.

David says he opened his mouth and panted, for he longed for God's commandments. This was a sickness, but not such an one as we have been speaking of. The spouse also cried out that she was sick of love. Such sickness would do us good, for in it the pulse beats strongly well.

Objection: But it may be objected, I am yet in doubt of the goodness of my desires; both because my desires run both ways, and because those that run toward sin and the world seem more and stronger than those that run after God, and Christ, and grace.

Answer: There is not a Christian under heaven but has desires run both ways, as is manifest from what hath been said already. Flesh will be flesh, grace shall not make it otherwise. By flesh I mean that body of sin and death that dwelleth in the godly. As grace will act according to its nature, so sin will act according to the nature of sin. Now the flesh has desires, and the desires of the flesh and of the mind are both one in the ungodly; thank God it is not so in thee.

The flesh, I say, hath its desires in the godly; hence it is said to lust enviously; it lusts against the Spirit: “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit.” And, if it be so audacious as to fly in the face of the Holy Ghost, wonder that thou art not wholly carried away with it.

But those desires that run to the world and sin seem most and strongest in me.

Answer: The works of the flesh are manifest; that is, more plainly discovered, even in the godly, than are the works of the Holy Ghost.

And this their manifestation arises from these following particulars:

1. We know the least appearance of a sin better by its native hue than we know a grace of the Spirit.
2. Sin is sooner felt in its bitterness to and upon a sanctified soul than is the grace of God. A little aloes will be sooner tasted than will much sweet, though mixed therewith.
3. Sin is dreadful and murderous in the sight of a sanctified soul: wherefore the apprehending of that makes us often forget, and often question, whether we have any grace or no.
4. Grace lies deep in the hidden part, but sin lies high, and floats above in the flesh; wherefore it is often more easily seen than the grace of God. The little fishes swim on top of the water, but the biggest and best keep down below, and so are more seldom seen.

5. Grace, as to quantity, seems less than sin. What is leaven, or a grain of mustard seed, to the bulky lump of a body of death?

6. Sin is seen by its own darkness, and also in the light of the Spirit: but the Spirit itself neither discovers itself, nor yet its graces, by every glance of its own light.

7. A man may have the Spirit busy at work in him; he may also have many of his graces in their vigorous acts, and yet may be greatly ignorant of either: wherefore we are not competent judges in this case. There may a thousand acts of grace pass through thy soul, and thou be sensible of few, if any of them.

8. Do you think that he who repents, believes, loves, fears, or humbles himself before God, and acts in other graces too, doth always know what he doth? No, no. Grace many times, even in a man, is acted by him unawares unto him. Did Gideon, think you, believe that he was so strong in grace as he was? Nay, was he not ready to give the lie to the angel, when he told him God was with him? Or, what do you think of David, when he said he was cast off from God's eyes? or of Heman, when he said he was free among them whom God remembered no more? Did these then see their graces so clear, as they saw themselves by their sins to be unworthy ones?

9. I tell you it is a rare thing for some Christians to see their graces, but a thing very common for such to see their sins; yea, and to feel them too in their lusts and desires, to the shaking of their souls.

Question: But, since I have lusts and desires both ways, how shall I know to which my soul adheres?

Answer: this may be known thus:

1. Which wouldst thou have to prevail, the desires of the flesh or the lusts of the Spirit? whose side art thou of? Doth not thy soul now inwardly say, and that with a strong indignation against sin, O let God, let grace, let my desires that are good, prevail against the flesh, for Jesus Christ his sake?

2. What kind of secret wishes hast thou in thy soul when thou feelest the lusts of thy flesh to rage? Dost thou not inwardly, and with indignation again say, "O that I might never, never feel one such notion more! O that

my soul were so full of grace, that there might be no longer room for even the least lust to come into my thoughts!

3. What kind of thoughts hast thou of thyself, now thou seest these desires of thine that are good so briskly opposed by those that are bad? Dost thou not say, Oh! I am the basest of creatures, I could even spew at myself? There is no man in all the world, in my eyes, so loathsome as I am. I abhor myself; a toad is not so vile as I am. O Lord, let me be any thing but a sinner; any thing, so thou subduest mine iniquities for me.

4. How dost thou like the discovery of that which thou thinkest is grace in other men? Dost thou not cry out, Oh, I bless them in my heart! O, methinks grace is the greatest beauty in the world! Yea, I could be content to live and die with those people that have the grace of God in their souls. A hundred times, and a hundred, when I have been upon my knees before God, I have desired, were it the will of God, that I might be in their condition!

5. How art thou when thou thinkest that thou thyself has grace? O then, says the soul, I am as if I could leap out of myself; joy, joy, joy then is with my heart. It is, methinks, the greatest mercy under heaven to be made a gracious man.

And is it thus with thy soul indeed? Happy man! It is grace that has thy soul, though sin at present works in thy flesh: yea, all these breathings are the very actings of grace, even of the grace of desire, of love, of humility, and of the fear of God within thee. Be of good courage, thou art on the right side. Thy desires are only good; for that thou hast desired against thy sin, thy sinful self, which indeed is not thyself, but sin that dwelleth in thee.

I come next to speak of desires more distinctly, or more particularly, as they work this way or that.

First, then, the desires of the righteous are either such as they would have accomplished here, or else such as they know they cannot come at the enjoyment of till after death.

For the first of these, the desires of the righteous are for such good things as they would have accomplished here, that is, in this world, while they

are on this side glory; and they, in general, are comprised under these two general heads:

1. Communion with their God in spirit, or spiritual communion with him.
2. The liberty of the enjoyment of his holy ordinances. And indeed this second is, that they may both attain to, and have the first maintained with them. But for the first,

(1.) They desire now communion with God:

“With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early,” Isaiah 26:9.

The reason of this is rendered in the preceding verse, saying, “The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.”

Now thus to desire declares one already made righteous; for herein there appears a mind reconciled to God. Wherefore the wicked are set on the other side, even in opposition to these; for they say unto God, “Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” They neither love his presence, nor to be frequenters of his ordinances: “What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?” So again, speaking of the wicked, he saith, “Ye have said, It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?”

This then, to desire truly to have communion with God, is the property of a righteous man, of a righteous man only; for this desire ariseth from a suitableness which there is in the righteous unto God; “Whom (said the Psalmist) have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.” This could never be the desire of a man were he not a righteous man, a man with a truly sanctified mind. “The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

When Moses the man of God was with the children of Israel in the wilderness, he prays that God would give them his presence unto Canaan, or else to let them die in that place. It was death to him to think of being in the wilderness without God. And he said unto God, “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not hence.”

Here then are the desires of a righteous man, namely, after communion with God. He chooses rather to be a stranger with God in the world, than to be a citizen of the world and a stranger to God: “For I am (said David) a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.”

Indeed, he that walketh with God is but a stranger to this world: and the righteous man’s desires are to, for, and after communion with God, though he be so.

The reason of these desires are many.

1. In communion with God is life and favor; yea, the very presence of God with a man is a token of it.

For by his presence he helps, succours, relieves, and supports the hearts of his people, and therefore is communion with him desired: “I will (said David) behave myself wisely in a perfect way; O when wilt thou come unto me?”

2. The pleasures that such a soul finds in God that has communion with him, are surpassing all pleasures and delights, yea, infinitely surpassing them: “In thy presence is fullness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.” Upon the account he is called the desire of all nations, of all in all nations that know him.

3. Job desired God’s presence, that he might reason with God: “Surely (said he) I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God.” And again, “O that he would hear me! Behold, my desire is that the Almighty would answer me.”

But why doth Job thus desire to be in the presence of God? Oh! he knew that God was good, and that he would speak to him that which would do him good. “Would he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength into me. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.”

4. God’s presence is the safety of a man. If God be with one, who can hurt one? As he said, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” Now, if so much safety flows from God’s being for us, how safe are we when God is with us? “The beloved of the Lord (said Moses) shall dwell in safety by

him, and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.”

5. God’s presence keeps the heart awake to joy, and will make a man sing in the night: “can the children of the bridechamber mourn while the bridegroom is with them?” God’s presence is feasting, and feasting is made for mirth.

6. God’s presence keeps the heart tender, and makes it ready to fall in with what is made known, as duty or privilege: “I will run the ways of thy commandments, (said the Psalmist) when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

7. The presence of God makes a man affectionately and sincerely good; yea, makes him willing to be searched and stripped from all the remains of iniquity.

8. What shall I say? God’s presence is renewing, transforming, seasoning, sanctifying, commanding, and sweetening and lightening to the soul. Nothing like it in all the world; his presence supplies all wants, heals all maladies, saves from all dangers; is life in death, heaven in hell; all in all.

No marvel then if the presence of and communion with God are become the desire of a righteous man.

9. To conclude this: by the presence of God being with us, it is known to ourselves, and to others, what we are: “If thy presence (said Moses) go not with me, carry us not hence; for wherein shall it be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight; is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separate, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.”

1. They are then best known to themselves. They know they are his people, because God’s presence is with them; therefore he saith, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest;” that is, let thee know that thou hast found grace in my sight, and art accepted of me. For, if God withdraws himself, or hides his presence from his people, it is hard for them to bear up in the stedfast belief that they belong to him: “Be not thou silent unto me, O Lord, (said David) lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.” Be not silent unto me, that is, as he has it in another place, “Hide not thy face from me. Hear me speedily, O Lord (saith he) my spirit

faileth; hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.”

So that God’s presence is the desire of the righteous for this cause also, even for that by it they gather that God delighteth in them: “By this I know thou favourest me, because mine enemies do not triumph over me.”

And is this all? No: “And, as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.”

2. As by the presence of God being with us we know ourselves to be the people of God; so by this presence of God the world themselves are sometimes convinced who we are also.

- (1.) Thus Abimelech saw that God was with Abraham.
- (2.) Thus Abimelech saw that God was with Isaac.
- (3.) Pharaoh knew that God was with Joseph.
- (4.) Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with Samuel.
- (5.) Saul’s servant knew that the Lord was with Samuel.
- (6.) Belshazzar’s queen knew that God was with Daniel.
- (7.) Darius knew also that God was with Daniel.
- (8.) And, when the enemy saw the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.
- (9.) The girl that was a witch knew that Paul was a servant of the Most High God.

There is a glory upon them that have God with them, a glory that sometimes glances and flashes out into the faces of those that behold the people of God: “And all they that sat in the council, looking stedfastly upon him, saw Stephen’s face, as if it had been the face of an angel;” such rays of divine Majesty did shew themselves therein.

The reason is, for that,

- 1.** Such have with them the wisdom of God.
- 2.** Such also have special bowels and compassions of God for others.
- 3.** Such have more of his majesty upon them than others.

4. The words and ways of such, their behavior and conduct, are attended with that of God that others are destitute of.
5. Such are holier, and of more convincing lives in general than other people are.

Now there is both comfort and honor in this; for what comfort like that of being a holy man of God? And what honor like that of being a holy man of God?

This therefore is the desire of the righteous, to wit, to have communion with God. Indeed none like God, and to be desired as he, in the thoughts of a righteous man.

2. And this leads me to the second thing, namely,

The liberty of the enjoyment of his holy ordinances. For, next to God himself, nothing is so dear to a righteous man as the enjoyment of his holy ordinances.

“One thing (said David) have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, namely, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

The temple of the Lord was the dwelling-house of God; there he recorded his name, and there he made himself known unto his people. Wherefore this was the cause why David so earnestly desired to dwell there too, “To behold (saith he) the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

There he had promised his presence to his people, yea, and to bring thither a blessing for them: “In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.”

For this cause, therefore, as I said, it is why the righteous do so desire that they may enjoy the liberty of the ordinances and appointments of their God; to wit, that they may attain to and have communion maintained with him.

Alas, the righteous are as it were undone, if God’s ordinances be taken from them! “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” Behold what a taking the good man

was in, because at this time he could not attain to so frequent a being in the temple of God as his soul desired. It even longed and fainted, yea, and his heart and his flesh cried out for the God that dwelled in the temple at Jerusalem.

Yea, he seems in the next words to envy the very birds that could more commonly frequent the temple than he.

“The sparrow (saith he) hath found her a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young; even thine altars, O Lord, my King, and my God.”

And then blessed all them that had the liberty of temple worship, saying, “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.”

Then he cries up to the happiness of those that in Zion do appear before God.

After this he cries out unto God, that he would grant him to be partaker of this high favor, saying, O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer, etc. “for a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

But why is all this? What aileth the man thus to express himself? Why, as I said, the temple was the great ordinance of God; there was his true worship performed; there God appeared; and there his people were to find him. This was, I say, the reason why the Psalmist chose out, and desired, this one thing, above all the things that were under heaven, even “to behold all the things that were under heaven, even “to behold there the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.”

There were to be seen the shadows of things in the heavens; the candlestick, the table of shew-bread, the holiest of all, where was the golden censer, the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, the golden pot that had manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, the tables of the covenant, and the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, which were all of them then things by which God shewed himself merciful to them.

Do you think that love-letters are not desired between lovers? Why these God’s ordinances, they are his love-letters, and his love-tokens too: no

marvel then if the righteous do so desire them: “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than the honey and the honeycomb.”

Yea, this judgment Wisdom itself passes upon these things, “Receive (saith he) my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than fine gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.”

For this cause therefore are the ordinances of God so much desired by the righteous. In them they meet with God; and by them they are builded and nourished up to eternal life.

“As a new-born babes, (says Peter) desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” As milk is nourishing to children, so is the word heard, read, and meditated on, to the righteous; therefore it is their desire.

He made himself known to them in breaking of bread. Who would not then, that loves to know him, be present at such an ordinance?

Oftentimes the Holy Ghost, in his comfortable influence, has accompanied the baptized in the very act of administering it: therefore, “in the way of thy judgments (or appointments) O Lord, thy people have waited for thee; the desire of their soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.”

Church-fellowship, or the communion of saints, is the place where the Son of God loveth to walk. His first walking was in Eden, there he converted our first parents: “Come, my beloved, (says he) let us go early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grapes appear, and the pomegranates bud forth; there will I give thee my loves.”

Church-fellowship, rightly managed, is the glory of all the world. No place, no community, no fellowship, adorned and bespangled with those beauties as is a church rightly knit together to their head, and lovingly serving one another. In his temple every one speaks of his glory. Hence the church is called the place of God’s desire on earth: “This is my rest, here I will dwell for ever, for I have desired it.” And again, thus the church confesseth when she saith, “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is towards me.”

No marvel then if this be the one thing that David desired, and that which he would seek after, namely, “to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life.”

And this also shews you the reason why God’s people of old used to venture so hardly for ordinances, and to get to them with the peril of their lives, because of the sword of the wilderness.

Ordinances were their bread and their water; their milk and their honey. The sanctuary was called the desire of their eyes, and that which their soul pitied, or the pity of their soul. They had rather have died than lost it, or than that it should have been burned down as it was.

When the children of Israel had lost the ark, they considered the glory was departed from Israel. But when they had lost all, what a complaint they made then! He hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden, he hath destroyed the places of the assembly: “The Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Sion, and hath despised, in the indignation of his anger, the king and the priest.”

Wherefore upon this account it was that the church in those days counted the punishment of her iniquity greater than the punishment of Sodom.

By these few hints you may perceive what is “the desire of the righteous.” But this is spoken of in reference to things present; to things that the righteous desire to enjoy while they are here; namely, communion with God, and his ordinances in their purity.

I come, therefore, in the second place, to shew you that the righteous have desires that reach further, desires that have so long a neck as to look into the world to come.

Secondly, Then the desires of the righteous are after that which yet they know cannot be enjoyed till after death. And those are comprehended under these two heads:

1. They desire that presence of their Lord which is personal.
2. They desire to be in that country where their Lord personally is--that heavenly country.

For the first of these, says Paul,

“I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ.”

Thus you have it in Philippians 1:23,

“I have a desire to be with Christ.”

In our first sort of desires I told you that the righteous desired spiritual communion with God; and now I tell you they desire to be with Christ's person: “I have a desire to be with Christ;” that is, with his person, that I may enjoy his personal presence, such as presence of his as we are not capable of enjoying while here. Hence he says, “I have a desire to depart,” that I might be with him, “knowing (as he says in another place) that while we are at home in the body we are (and cannot but be) absent from the Lord.”

Now this desire, as I said, is a desire that hath a long neck; for it can look over the brazen wall of this quite into another world; and, as it hath a long neck, so it is very forcible and mighty in its operation.

1. This desire breeds a divorce, a complete divorce, betwixt the soul and all inordinate love and affections to relations and worldly enjoyments. This desire makes a married man live as if he had no wife, a rich man live as if he possessed not what he has, etc.

This is a soul-sequestering desire: this desire makes a man willing rather to be absent from all enjoyments, that he may be present with the Lord. This is a famous desire; none hath this desire but a righteous man.

There are that profess much love to Christ, that yet never had such a desire in them all their life long. No, the relation that they stand in to the world, together with those many flesh-pleasing accommodations with which they are surrounded, would never yet suffer such a desire to enter into their hearts.

2. The strength of this desire is such that it is ready, so far forth as it can, to dissolve that sweet knot of union that is betwixt body and soul; a knot more dear to a reasonable creature than that can be which is betwixt wife and husband, parent and child, or a man and his estate; for even “all that a man hath will he give for his life,” and to keep body and soul firmly knit together. But, when this desire cometh, this silver cord is loosed, is loosed by consent. This desire grants, to him that comes to dissolve this union,

leave to do it delightfully. We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Yea, this desire makes this flesh, this mortal life, a burden. The man that has this desire exercises self-denial, while he waits till his desired change comes. For, were it not that the will of God is that he should live, and did he not hope that his life might be serviceable to the truth and church of God, he would not have wherewith to cool the heart of this desire, but would rather, in a holy passion, with holy Job cry out, "I loathe it; I would not live always; let me alone, (that I may die) for my days are vanity."

3. The strength of this desire shews itself in this also, namely, in that it is willing to grapple with the king of terrors rather than to be detained from that sweet communion that the soul looks for when it comes into the place where its Lord is. Death is not to be desired for itself; the apostle chose rather "to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

But yet, rather than he would be absent from the Lord, he was willing to be absent from the body. Death, in the very thoughts of it, is grievous to flesh and blood; and nothing can so master it in our apprehensions as that by which we attain to these desires. These desires deal with death as Jacob's love to Rachael dealt with the seven long years which he was to serve for her; it made them seem but few, and the time short. So, I say, do these desires deal with death itself. They make it seem little, nay, a privilege; for that thereby a man may come to enjoy the presence of his beloved Lord. I have a desire to depart, to go from the world and relations, to go from my body, that great piece of myself; I have a desire to venture the tugs and pains, and the harsh handling, of the king of terrors, so I may be with Jesus Christ. These are the desires of the righteous.

Are not these therefore strong desires? Is there not life and motion in them? Have they not in them power to loose the bands of nature, and to harden the soul against sorrow? Flow they not, think you, from faith of the finest sort, and are they not bred in the bosom of a truly mortified soul? Are these the effects of a purblind spirit? are they not rather the fruits of an eagle-eyed confidence? Oh, these desires! they are peculiar to the righteous; they are none others but the desires of the righteous.

Question: But why do the righteous desire to be with Christ?

Answer: And I ask, Why doth the wife, that is as the loving hind, love to be in the presence of her husband?

1. Christ in glory is worth the being with. If the man out of whom the Lord Jesus did cast a legion, prayed that he might be with him notwithstanding all the trials that attended him in this life, how can it be but that a righteous man must desire to be with him now he is in glory?

2. What we have heard concerning the excellency of his person, the unspeakableness of his love, the greatness of his sufferings, and the things that he still is doing for us, must needs command our souls into a desire to be with him.

3. When we have heard of a man among us that has done for us some excellent thing, the next thing that our hearts doth pitch upon is, I would I could set mine eyes upon him: but was ever heard the like to what Jesus Christ has done for sinners? Who then that hath the faith of him can do otherwise but desire to be with him? It was that which some time comforted John, that the time was coming that he should see him.

But that consideration made him bray like a hart, to hasten the time that he might set his eyes upon him quickly.

To see Jesus Christ then, to see him as he is, to see him as he is in glory, is a sight that is worth going from relations and out of the body, and through the jaws of death to see; for this is to see him head over all, to see him possessed of heaven for his church, to see him preparing mansion-houses for those of his poor ones, that are now by his enemies kicked to and fro like footballs in the world; and is not this a blessed sight?

Secondly, I have a desire to be with him, to see myself with him. This is more blessed still; for a man to see himself in glory, this is a sight worth seeing. Sometimes I look upon myself and say, Where am I now? and do quickly return answer to myself again, Why, I am in an evil world, a great way from heaven, in a sinful body, among devils and wicked men; sometimes benighted, sometimes beguiled, sometimes fearing, sometimes hoping, sometimes breathing, sometimes dying, and the like. But then I turn the tables and say, But where shall I be shortly? where shall I see

myself anon, after a few times more have passed over me? And when I can but answer this question thus, I shall see myself with Jesus Christ; this yields glory, even glory to one's spirit now. No marvel then if the righteous desire to be with Christ.

Thirdly, I have a desire to be with Christ; there the spirits of the just are perfected; there the spirits of the righteous are as full as they can hold. A sight of Jesus in the word, some know how it will change them from glory to glory; but how then shall we be changed and filled when we shall see him as he is! "When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Moses and Elias appeared to Peter, and James, and John, at the transfiguration of Christ in glory. How so? why they had been in the heavens, and came thence with some of the glories of heaven upon them. Gild a bit of wood, yea, gild it seven times over, and it must not compare in difference to wood not gilt, to the soul that but a little while has been dipped in glory.

Glory is a strange thing to men that are on this side of the heavens: it is that which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive;" only the Christian has a word and spirit, that at times doth give a little of the glimmering thereof unto him.

But oh! when he is in the Spirit, and sees in the Spirit, do you think his tongue can tell? But, I say, if the sight of heaven at so vast a distance is so excellent a prospect, what will it look like when one is in it?

No marvel then if the desires of the righteous are to be with Christ.

Objection: But if this be the character of a righteous man, to desire to depart and to be with Christ, I am none of them; for I never had such a desire in my heart; no, my fears of perishing will not suffer me either to desire to die to be with Christ, nor that Christ should come to judge the world.

Answer: Though thine is a case that must be excepted, for that thy desires may not as yet be grown so high; yet, if thou art a righteous man, thy heart has in it the very seeds thereof.

There are therefore desires, and desires to desire; as one child can reach so high, and the other can but desire to do so. Thou, if thou art a righteous man, hast desires, and these desires are ready to put forth into act when they are grown a little stronger, or when their impediment is removed.

Many times it is with our desires as it is with saffron, it will bloom and blossom and be ripe, and all in a night. Tell me, dost thou not desire to desire? Yea, dost thou not vehemently desire to desire to depart and to be with Christ? I know if thou art a righteous man thou dost. When a man sows his field with wheat, it is soon covered with great clods; now that which is under the clods, grows as well as the rest, though it runs not upright as yet; it grow though it is kept down, so do thy desires; and when the clod is removed the blade will soon point upwards.

I know thy mind; that which keeps thee that thou canst not yet arrive at a desire to depart and to be with Christ is, because some strong doubt or clod of unbelief, as to thy eternal welfare, lies hard upon thy desiring spirit: now let Jesus Christ but remove this clod, and thy desires will quickly start up to be gone.

I say, let Jesus Christ but give thee one kiss, and with his lips, as he kisses thee, whisper to thee the forgiveness of thy sins, and thou wilt quickly break out and say, Nay then, Lord, let me die in peace, since my soul is persuaded of thy salvation.

There is a man upon the bed of languishing; but oh! he dares not die, for all is not as he would have it betwixt God and his poor soul; and many a night he lies thus in great horror of mind: but do you think that he doth not desire to desire to depart? Yes, yes, he also waits and cries to God to set his desires at liberty: at last the visitor comes and sets his soul at ease, by persuading of him that he belongs to God; and what then? Oh, now let me die; welcome death!

Now he is like the man in Essex, who, when his neighbor at his bedside prayed for him that God would restore him to health, started up in his bed and pulled him by the arm, and cried out, "No, no, pray that God will take me away, for to me it is best to go to Christ."

The desires of some good Christians are pinioned and cannot stir, especially these sort of desires; but Christ can and will cut the cord some

time or other; and then thou that wouldst shalt be able to say, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Jesus Christ."

Mean time be thou earnest to desire to know thy interest in the grace of God; for there is nothing short of the knowledge of that can make thee desire to depart, that thou mayest be with Christ. This is that that Paul laid as the ground of his desires to be gone: "We know", says he, "that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven."

And know, that if thy desires be right they will grow as other graces do, from strength to strength; only in this they can grow no faster than faith grows as to justification, and than hope grows as to glory.

But we will leave this, and come to the second thing.

Secondly, As the righteous men desire to be present with Jesus Christ, so they desire to be with him in that country where he is: "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." "But now they desire a better country." Here is a comparison. There was another country, to wit, their native country, the country from whence they came out, that in which they left their friends and their pleasures for the sake of another world, which indeed is a better country, as is manifest from its character. It is an heavenly; as high as heaven is above the earth, so much better is that country which is an heavenly than is this in which now we are.

A heavenly country, where there is a heavenly Father, a heavenly host, heavenly things, heavenly visions, heavenly places, a heavenly kingdom, and the heavenly Jerusalem, for them that are partakers of the heavenly calling, and that are the heavenly things themselves.

This is a country to be desired; and therefore no marvel if any, except those that have lost their wits and senses, refuse to choose themselves a habitation here. Here is the mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and an innumerable company of angels: here is the

general assembly and church of the first-born, and God the judge of all, and Jesus, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Who would not be here?

This is the country that the righteous desire for an habitation; “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.”

Mark, they desire a country, and God prepareth for them a city; he goes beyond their desires, beyond their apprehensions, beyond what their hearts could conceive to ask for.

There are none that are weary of this world from a gracious disposition that they have to a heavenly, but God will take notice of them, will own them, and not be ashamed to own them; yea, such shall not lost their longing: they desire a handful, God gives them a seaful; they desire a country, God prepared for them a city; a city that is heavenly, a city that has foundations, a city whose builder and maker is God. And all this is that the promise to them might be fulfilled: “The desire of the righteous shall be granted.” And this is the last thing propounded to be spoken to them from the text. Therefore,

III. We then, in conclusion, come to inquire into what is meant, or to be understood, by the granting of the righteous their desires? “The desires of the righteous shall be granted.”

1. To grant is to yield to what is desired, to consent that it shall be even so as is requested: “The Lord hear thee in the time of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from his sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion; remember all thy sacrifices; grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel.”

2. To grant is to accomplish what is promised; thus God granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life, namely, for that he had promised it by his prophets from the days of old.

3. To grant, therefore, is an act of grace and condescending favor; for, if God is said to humble himself when he beholds things in heaven, what condescension is it for him to hearken to a sinful wretch on earth, and to tell him to have the thing which he desired? A wretch I call him, if

compared to him that hears him, though he is a righteous man when considered as the new creation of God.

4. To grant, then, is not to part with the thing desired as if a desire merited, purchased, earned, or deserved it; but of bounty and good will to bestow the thing desired, upon the humble. Hence God's grants are said to be gracious ones.

5. I will add, that to grant is sometimes taken for giving one authority or power to do, or possess, or enjoy such and such privileges; and so it may be taken here; for the righteous has a right to a power to enjoy the things bestowed on them by their God.

So, then, to grant is to give, to accomplish, even of free grace, the desires of the righteous.

- (1.)** This is acknowledged by David, where he saith to God, "Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the requests of his lips."
- (2.)** And this is promised to all that delight themselves in God: "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart." And again,
- (3.)** "He will fulfill the desires of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them."

By all these places it is plain that the promise of granting desires is entailed to the righteous, and also the grant to them is an act of grace and mercy.

But it also follows that, though the desires of the righteous are not meritorious, yet they are pleasing in his sight; and this is manifest several ways besides the promise of a grant of them.

First, In that the desires of God and the desires of the righteous jump or agree in one; they are of one mind in their desires: God's desire is to the work of his hands, and the righteous are for surrendering that up to him.

1. In giving up the heart unto him: "My son, (says God) give me thy heart." I lift my heart to thee, says the righteous man.

Here, therefore, there is an agreement between God and the righteous; it is, I say, agreed on both sides, that God should have the heart: God desires it, the righteous man desires it; yea, he desires it with a groan, saying, "Incline my heart unto thy testimony; let my heart be sound in thy statutes."

2. They are also agreed about the disposing of the whole man: God is for the body, and soul, and spirit; and the righteous desire that God should have them. Hence they are said to give themselves to the Lord, and to addict themselves to his service.

3. God desireth truth in the inward parts, that is, that truth may be at the bottom of all; and this is the desire of the righteous man likewise: "I have hid thy word in my heart, (said David) that I might not sin against thee."

4. They agree in the way of justification, in the way of sanctification, in the way of preservation, and in the way of glorification; to wit, which way to come at and enjoy all; wherefore, who should hinder the righteous man, or keep him back from enjoying the desire of his heart?

5. They also agree about the sanctifying of God's name in the world, saying, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." there is a strong agreement between God and the righteous; "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit:" No marvel, then, if their desires in the general, so far as the righteous man doth know the mind of his God, is one; consequently their desires must be granted, or God must deny himself.

Secondly, The desires of the righteous are the life of all their prayers; and it is said, "The prayer of the upright is God's delight."

1. Jesus Christ put a difference betwixt the form and spirit that is in prayer; and intimates the soul of prayer is in the desires of a man: "Therefore (saith he) I say unto you, what things soever you desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

2. If a man prays ever so long, and has ever so many brave expressions in prayer, yet God counts it prayer no further than there are warm and fervent desires in it after those things the mouth maketh mention of. In Psalm 38:9, saith David, "Lord, all my desires are before thee, and my groanings are not hid from thee."

3. Can you say you desire when you pray; or that your prayers come from the braying, panting, and longing of your hearts? If not they shall not be granted; for God looks when men are at prayer to see if their hearts and spirits are in their prayers, for he counts all other but vain speaking: “Ye shall seek me, and find me (says he) when you shall search for me with all your heart.” The people that you read of in 2 Chronicles 15, are there said to do what they did with all their heart and with all their soul; for they sought God with their whole desire, ver. 11-15.

When a man’s desires put him upon prayer, run along with him in his prayer, break out of his heart, and ascend up to heaven with his prayers, it is a good sign that he is a righteous man, and that his desires shall be granted.

Thirdly, by desires a righteous man shews more of his mind for God than he can by any manner of ways besides; hence it is said, “The desire of a man is his kindness, and that a poor man (that is sincere in his desires) is better than (he that with his mouth shews much love, if he be) a liar.”

1. Desires, desires are copious things. You read that a man may enlarge his desires as hell, that is, if they be wicked; yea, and a righteous man may enlarge his desires as heaven.

2. No grace is so extensive as desires. Desires outgo all. Who believes as he desires to believe, and loves as he desires to love, and fears as he desires to fear God’s name? Might it be as a righteous man doth sometimes desire it should be, both with God’s church and also with his own soul, stranger things would be than there are; faith, and love, and holiness, would flourish more than they do. Oh! what does a righteous man desire? What do you think the prophet desired when he said, “O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down!” And Paul, when he said he could wish that himself were accursed from Christ, for the vehement desire that he had that the Jews might be saved? Yea, what do you think John desired, when he cried out to Christ to come quickly?

3. Love to God, as I said, is more seen in desires than in any Christian act. Do you think that the woman with her two mites cast in all that she desired to cast into the treasury of God? Or do you think, when David said that he had prepared for the house of God with all his might, that his

desires stunted when his ability was at its utmost? No, no; desires go beyond all actions; therefore I said, it is the desires of a man that are reckoned for his kindness.

4. Kindness is that which God will not forget; I mean the kindness which his people shew to him, especially in their desires to serve him in the world. When Israel were come out of Egypt, you know how many stumbles they had before they got to Canaan. But, forasmuch as they were willing, or desirous, to follow God, he passes by all their failures, saying, “I remember thee, (and that almost a thousand years after) the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” “Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase.” “Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase.”

5. There is nothing that God likes of ours better than he likes our true desires. For indeed true desires, they are the smoke of our incense, the flower of our graces, and the very vital part of our new man. They are our desires that ascend, and them that are the sweets of all sacrifices that we offer to God. The man of desires is the man of kindness.

Fourthly, Desires, true and right desires, are they by which a man is taken up from the ground, and brought away to God in spite of all opposers. A desire will take a man upon its back, and carry him away to God if ten thousand men stand by and oppose it. Hence, it is said that “through desire a man separates himself;” to wit, from what is contrary to the mind of God, and so seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

1. All convictions, conversions, illuminations, favors, tastes, revelations, knowledge, and mercies, will do nothing if the soul abides without desires. All, I say, if but like rain upon stones, or favors bestowed upon a dead dog. Oh! but a poor man with desires, a man that sees but little, that knows but little, that finds in himself but little, if he has but strong desires they will supply all.

2. Suppose thou wast a minister, and wast sent from God with a whip, whose cords were made of the flames of hell, thou mightest lash long enough before thou couldst so much as drive one man, that abides without desires, to God, or to his kingdom, by that thy so sore a whip.

3. Suppose again that thou wast a minister, and wast sent from God to sinners with a crown of glory in thy hand, to offer to him that first comes to thee for it; yet none can come without desires: but desire takes the man upon its back, and so brings him to thee.

4. What is the reason that men will with mouth commend God, and commend Christ, and commend and praise both heaven and glory, and yet all the while fly from him, and from his mercy, as from the worst of enemies? Why, they want good desires; their desires, being mischievous, carry them another way. Thou entrest thy wife, thy husband, and the son of thy womb, to fall in with thy Lord and thy Christ, but they will not. Ask them the reason why they will not, and they know none, only they have no desires: “When we shall see him, there is no beauty in him that we should desire him.” And I am sure, if they do not desire him, they can by no means be made to come to him.

But now desires, desires that are right, will carry a man quite away to God, and to do his will, let the work be never so hard. Take an instance or two for this.

1. You may see it in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The text says plainly, “They were not mindful of that country from whence they came out, through their desires of a better.”

God gave them intimation of a better country, and their minds did cleave to it with desires of it; and what then? Why, they went forth, and desired to go, though they did not know whither they went. Yea, they all sojourned in the land of promise, because it was but a shadow of what was designed for them by God, and looked to by their faith, as in a strange country: wherefore they also cast that behind their back, looking for that city that had foundations, of which mention was made before.

Now, had not these men desires that were mighty? They were their desires that thus separated them from their dearest and choice relations and enjoyments. Their desires were pitched upon the heavenly country, and so they broke through all difficulties for that.

2. You may see it in Moses, who had a kingdom at his foot, and was the alone visible heir thereof; but the desire of a better inheritance made him

refuse it, and choose rather to take part with the people of God, in their afflicted condition, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

You may say, the scripture attributes this to his faith. I answer, so it attributes to Abraham's faith his leaving of his country: but his faith begat in him these desires after the country that is above. So indeed Moses saw these things by faith, and therefore his faith begat in him these desires; for it was because of his desires that he did refuse, and did choose, as you read. And here we may properly take an opportunity to touch upon the vanity of that faith that is not breeding, and that knows not how to bring forth strong desires of enjoying what is pretended to be believed: all such faith is false. Abraham's, Isaac's, Jacob's, and Moses's faith, bred in them desires, strong desires; yea, desires so strong as to take them up, and to carry them after what by their faith was made known unto them. Yea, their desires were so mightily set upon the things made known to them by their faith, that neither difficulties nor dangers, nor yet frowns nor flatteries, could stop them from the use of all lawful attempts of enjoying what they believed was to be had, and what they desired to be possessed of.

3. The women also that you read of, and others that would not, upon unworthy terms, accept of deliverance from torments and sundry trials, that they might (or because they had a desire to) be made partakers of a better resurrection.

“And others (saith he) had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented: of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts, in mountains, and in caves of the earth.”

4. But we will come to the Lord Jesus himself. Whither did his desires bring him? Whither did they carry him? and to what did they make him stoop? For they were his desires after us, and after our good, that made him humble himself to do as he did.

What was it, think you, that made him cry out, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?” What was that baptism but his death? and why did he so long for it, but of desire

to do us good? Yea, the Passover being to be eaten on the eve of his sufferings, with what desires did he desire to eat it with his disciples?

Yea, his desire to suffer for his people made him go with more strength to lay down his life for them, than they for want of them had to go to see him suffer. And they were in their way going up to Jerusalem, he to suffer and they to look on, “And Jesus went before them, and they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid.”

I tell you, desires are strange things if they be right; they jump with God’s mind; they are the life of prayer; they are a man’s kindness to God, and they which will take him up from the ground, and carry him away after God to do his will, let the work be never so hard. Is it any marvel, then, if the desires of the righteous are so pleasing to God as they are? and that God has so graciously promised that the desires of the righteous shall be granted?

But we come now to the use and application.

The first use shall be a use of information. You have heard what hath been said of desires, and what pleasing things right desires are unto God. But you must know that they are the desires of his people, of the righteous, that are so. No wicked man’s desires are regarded.

This men must be informed of, lest their desires become a snare to their souls. You read of a man whose desire kills him. And why? Because he rests in desiring, without considering whether he himself is such an one unto whom the promise of granting desires is made: he coveteth greedily all the day long, but to little purpose. The grant of desires, of the fulfilling of desires, is entailed to the righteous man.

There are four sorts of people that desire the kingdom of heaven; consequently desires have a four-fold root from whence they flow.

First, The natural man desires to be saved, and to go to heaven when he dies. Ask any natural man, and he will tell you so. Besides, we see it is so with them, especially at certain seasons. As when some guilt or conviction for sin takes hold upon them; or when some sudden fear terrifies them; when they are afraid that the plague or pestilence will come upon them, and break up housekeeping for them; or when death has taken them by the

throat, and is haling them down stairs to the grave. Then, O then, Lord saved me! Oh, whither shall I go when I die, if sweet Christ has not pity for my soul! And now the bed shakes, and the poor soul is as loath to go out of the body, for fear the devil should catch it, as the poor bird is to go out of the bush, while it sees the hawk waits there to receive her. But the fears of the wicked, they must come upon the wicked; they are the desires of the righteous that must be granted. pray take good notice of this. And to back this with the authority of God, consider,

1. That scripture, “The wicked travails with pain all his days, and the number of his years is hidden from the oppressor. A dreadful sound is in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him as a king ready to the battle.”

Can it be imagined that, when the wicked are in this distress, they will not desire to be saved? Therefore he saith again,

2. “Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind, that blasting wind, carrieth him away, and he departeth, and as a storm hurrieth him out of (the world) his place. For God shall cast upon, and not spare; in flying he would fain fly out of his hand.”

Their terrors and their fears must come upon them; their desires and wishes for salvation must not be granted: “They shall call upon me,” says God, “but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me.”

Secondly, There is the hypocrite’s desire. Now his desire seems to have life and spirit in it. Also he desires in his youth, in his health, and the like; yet it comes to naught. You shall see him drawn to the life in Mark 10:17. He comes running and kneeling, and asking, and that, as I said, in youth and health; and that is more than men merely natural do. But al to no purpose; he went as he came, without the thing desired. The conditions propounded were too hard for this hypocrite to comply withal.

Some indeed make a great noise with their desires more than others do; but in conclusion all are alike; they meet together where they go whose desires are not granted.

For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained to a higher strain of desires, when God taketh away his soul? “Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?”

Did he not, even when he desired life, yet break with God, in the day when conditions of life were propounded to him? Did he not, even when he asked what good things were to be done that he might have eternal life, refuse to hear or to comply with what was propounded to him? How then can his desires be granted, who himself refused to have them answered?

No marvel then if he perishes like his own dung, if they that have seen him shall say they miss him among those that are to have their desires granted.

Thirdly, There are also desire of the cold formal professor; the desires of him whose religion lies in a few of the shells of religion; even as the foolish virgins who were content with their lamps, but gave not heed to take oil in their vessels. These I take to be those whom the wise man calls the slothful: “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” The sluggard is one that comes to poverty through idleness, that contents himself with forms, that “will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore he shall beg in harvest (or at the day of judgment), and have nothing.”

Thus you see that there are many who desire; the natural man, the hypocrite, the formalist, they all desire; for heaven is a brave place, and nobody would go to hell: “Lord, Lord, open to us,” is the cry of many in this world, and will be the cry of more in the day of judgment.

Of this therefore thou shouldst be informed; and that for these reasons:

1. Because ignorance of this may keep thee asleep in security, and cause thee to fall under such disappointments as are the worst, and the worst to be borne. For, for a man to think to go to heaven because he desires it, and when all is done to fall into hell, is a frustration of the most dismal complexion. And yet thus it will be when desires shall fail, “when man goes to his long home, and when the mourners go about the city.”

2. Because, as was said before, else thy desires, and that which should be for thy good, will kill thee.

(1.) They kill thee at death, when thou shalt find them every one

empty.

- (2.) And at judgment, when thou shalt be convinced that thou oughtest to go without what thou desirest, because thou wast not the man to whose desires the promise was made, nor the man that didst desire aright.
- (3.) To be informed of this is the way to put thee upon such sense and sight of thy case, as will make thee in earnest betake thyself in that way to him that is accessible, who grants the desires of the righteous.

And then shalt thou be happy when thou shunnest to desire as the natural man desireth, as the hypocrite desireth, or as the formalist desireth: when thou desirest as the righteous do, thy desires shall be granted.

Second use is of examination.

If this be so, then what cause hast thou, who art conscious to thyself that thou art a desiring man, to examine thyself whether thou art one whose desires shall be granted? For to what purpose would a man desire, or what fruits will desires bring him whose desires shall not be granted? Such a man is but like to her that longs, but loses her longing; or like to him that looks for peace while evil overtakes him.

Thou hast heard it over and over, that the grant of desires belongs to the righteous: shouldst thou then not inquire into thy condition, and examine thyself whether thou art a righteous man or not? The apostle said to the Corinthians, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know you not how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" You may be reprobates and not be aware of it, if you do not examine and prove your own selves.

It is therefore for thy life; wherefore do not deceive thyself.

I have given you before a description of a righteous man, namely, that he is one made so of God by imputation, by an inward principle, and one that brings forth fruit to God. Now this last thou mayest think thou hast; for it is easy and common for men to think, when they bring forth fruit to themselves, that they bring it forth to God. Wherefore examine thyself.

1. Art thou righteous? If thou sayest Yea, I ask, How comest thou righteous? If thou thinkest that obedience to the law of righteousness has made thee so, thou art utterly deceived. For he that thus seeks righteousness yet is not righteous, because he cannot by so doing attain the thing he seeketh for.

Did not I tell thee before, that a man must be righteous before he doth one good work, or he can never be righteous? The tree must be good first, even before it brings forth one good apple.

2. Art thou righteous? In whose judgment art thou righteous? Is it in the judgment of God or of man? If not of God, it is no matter though all the men on earth should justify thee; thou for that art no whit the more righteous.

3. Art thou righteous in the judgment of God? Who told thee so? or dost thou but dream thereof? Indeed, to be righteous in God's sight is that, and only that, which can secure a man from wrath to come; for "if God justifies, who is he that condemns?" And this only is the man whose desires shall be granted.

4. But still I say is the question, How comest thou to know that thou art righteous in the judgment of God? Dost thou know by what it is that God makes a man righteous? Dost thou know where that is by or with which God makes a man righteous? and also how God doth make a man righteous with it? These are questions in the answer of which thou must have some heavenly skill, or else all that thou sayest about thy being righteous will seem without a bottom.

5. Now is thou answerest, that that which makes me righteous is the obedience of Christ to his Father's will; that this righteousness is before the throne of God, and that it is made mine by an act of God's free grace; I shall ask thee yet again,

6. How camest thou to see thy need of this righteousness? And how is this righteousness by thee applied to thyself? For this righteousness is bestowed upon those that see their need thereof.

This righteousness is the refuge whereto the guilty fly to succor, that they may be sheltered from the wrath to come. Hast thou then fled, or dost thou indeed fly to it?

7. None fly to this righteousness for life but those who feel the sentence of condemnation by God's law upon their conscience, and who in that extremity have sought for righteousness first elsewhere, but cannot find it in all the world.

8. For man, when he findeth himself at first a sinner, doth not straightway betake himself for righteousness to God by Christ, but in the first place seeks it in the law on earth, by laboring to yield obedience thereto, to the end he may, when he stands before God at death and judgment, have something to commend him to him, and for the sake of which he may at least help forward his acceptance with him.

9. But, being wearied out of this, (and if God loves him he will weary him out of it) then he looks unto heaven, and cries to God for righteousness, the which God shews him, in his own good time, that he hath reckoned to him for the sake of Jesus Christ.

10. Now by this very discovery the heart is also principled with the spirit of the gospel; for the Spirit comes with the gospel down from heaven to such an one, and fills his soul with good; by which he is capacitated to bring forth fruit, true fruit, yea, the fruits of righteousness imputed, and of righteousness applied, to the glory and praise of God.

11. Nor can any thing but faith make a man see himself thus made righteous; for this righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, from the object of faith to the grace of faith, by the spirit of faith. A faithless man then can see this no more than a blind man can see colors, nor relish this more than a dead man tasteth victuals. As therefore blind men talk of colors, and as dead men relish food, so do carnal men talk of Jesus Christ, to wit, without sense or savor; without sense of the want, or savor of the worth and goodness of him to the soul.

12. Wherefore, I say, it is of absolute necessity that with thy heart thou deal in this point, and beware of self-deceiving; for if thou fail here thy desires will fail thee for ever; "for the desire of the righteous," and that only, "must be granted."

Third use is cautionary.

Let me here therefore caution thee to beware of some things, by which else, perhaps, thou mayest deceive thyself.

1. Take heed of taking such things for grants of desires that accidentally fall out; accidentally I mean as to thy desires; for it is possible that that very thing that thou desirest may come to pass in the current of providence, not as an answer of thy desires. Now, if thou takest such things for a grant of thy desires, and consequently concludest thyself a righteous man, how mayest thou be deceived? The ark of God was delivered into the hand of the Philistines, which they desired; but not for the sake of their desires, but for the sins of the children of Israel.

The land of Canaan was given unto Israel, not for the sake of their desires, but for the sins of those whom God cast out before them, and to fulfill the promise that God, before they were born, had made unto their fathers.

Israel was carried away captive out of their own land, not to fulfill the desires of their enemies, but to punish them for their transgressions. These, with many of smaller importance, or more personal, might be mentioned, to shew that many things happen to us, some to our pleasing and some to the pleasing of our enemies, which, if either we or they should count as the returns of our prayer or the fruits of our desires, and so draw conclusions of our estate to be for the future happy, because in such things we seemed to be answered of God, we might greatly swerve in our judgments, and become the greatest of self-deceivers. Or, shouldst thou,

2. Take it for granted, that what thou enjoyest thou hast as the fruit of thy desires; yet, if the things thou boastest of are things pertaining to this life, such may be granted thee, as thou art considered of God as his creature, though thyself art far enough off from being a righteous man: “Thou openest thy hand (says the Psalmist) and satisfiest the desires of every living thing.” Again, “He feeds the young ravens that cry to him; and the young lions seek their meat from God.” Cain, Ishmael, Ahab too, had in some things their desires granted them of God.

For, if God will hear the desire of the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea, and of the fowls of heaven, no marvel if the wicked also may boast him of his heart’s desire.

Into whose hand, as he saith in another place, God bringeth abundantly. Reckon not, therefore, these things, nor the grant of them, to be any signs that thou art a righteous man, or that the promise made to the righteous in granting their desires are accomplished upon thee.

I think a man may say, that the men that know not God have a fuller grant, I mean generally, of their desires of temporal things than has the child of God himself; for, his portion lying in better things, his desires are answered another way.

1. Remember that God grants to some men their desires in anger, and to their destruction.

He gave to some their own desires, but sent leanness into their souls. All that God gives to the sons of men he gives not in mercy; for he gives to some an inferior, and to others a superior portion; and yet so also he answereth them in the joy of their heart.

Some men's hearts are narrow upwards and wide downwards; narrow as to God, but wide for the world; they gape for the one, but shut themselves up against the other; so, as they desire, they have of what they desire: "Thou fillest their belly with thy hid treasures," for that they desire; but as for me (said David) these things will not satisfy, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

I told you before that the heart of a wicked man was widest downwards, but it is not so with the righteous; therefore the portion of Jacob is not like theirs; God has given to him himself. The temple that Ezekiel saw in the vision was still widest upward; it spread itself toward heaven: so is the church, and so is the righteous, and so are his desires.

Thy great concern therefore is to consider, since thou art confident that God also heareth thy desires, I say, to consider whether he answereth thee in his anger; for, if he doth so, thy desires come with a woe; therefore I say look to thyself.

A full purse and a lean soul are a sign of a great curse: "he gave them their own desires, but sent leanness into their soul." Take heed of that; many men crave by their desires, as the dropsical man craves drink; his drinking makes his belly swell big, but consumes other parts of his body. Oh, it is a

sad grant, when the desire is granted, only to make the belly big, the estate big, the name big; when even by this bigness the soul pines, is made to dwindle, to grow lean, and to look like an anatomy!

I am persuaded that it is thus with many, who, while they were lean in estate, had fat souls; but the fattening of their estates has made their souls, as to good, as lean as a rake. They cannot now breathe after God; they cannot now look to their hearts; they cannot now set watch and ward over their ways; they cannot now spare time to examine who goes out or who comes in.

They have so much their desires in things below, that they have no leisure to concern themselves with, or that they have no leisure to concern themselves with, or to look after, things above; their hearts are now as fat as grease; their eyes do now too much start out to be turned and made to look inward.

They are now become, as to their beset part, like the garden of the slothful, all grown over with nettles and briers, that cover the face thereof; or, like Saul, removed from a little estate and low condition to much, even worse and worse.

Men do not know what they do in desiring things of this life, things over and above what are necessary; they desire them, and they have them with a woe: "Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, (his belly is taken for his conscience) he shall not save of that which he desired," (to help him in an evil day).

I shall not here give my caution to the righteous, but shall reserve that for the next use. But oh that men were as wise in judging of the answering of the desires, as they are in judging of the extravagances of their appetites! You shall have a man, even from experience, reclaim himself from such an excess of eating, drinking, smoking, sleeping, talking, or pleasurable actions, as by his experience he finds is hurtful to him (and yet all this may but hurt the body, at least the body directly); but how blind, how unskilled are they in the evils that attend desires! For, like the man in the dropsy, made mention of before, they desire this world, as he doth drink, till they desire themselves quite down to hell. Look to it, therefore, and take heed; God's granting the things pertaining to this life unto thee, doth

neither prove that thou art righteous, nor that he acts in mercy towards thee by giving of thee thy desires.

Fourth use is for encouragement.

Is it so? shall the desire of the righteous be granted? Then this should encourage them that, in the first place, have sought the kingdom of God and his Son's righteousness, to go on in their desires.

God has given thee his Son's righteousness to justify thee; he has also, because thou art a son, sent forth the spirit of his Son into thy heart to satisfy thee, and to help thee to cry unto him, Father, Father! Wilt thou not cry? wilt thou not desire? Thy God has bidden thee open thy mouth; he has bid thee open it wide, and promised, saying, "and I will fill it" and wilt thou not desire?

Oh! thou hast a licence, a leave, a grant to desire; wherefore be not afraid to desire great mercies of the God of heaven: this was Daniel's way, and he set others to do it, too.

Objection: But I am an unworthy creature.

Answer: That is true; but God gives to no man for his worthiness, nor rejects any for their sinfulness, that come to him sensible of the want and worth of mercy for them. Besides, I told thee before, that the desires of a righteous man, and the desires of his God, do unite or agree. God has a desire to thee, thou hast a desire to him: God desireth truth in the inward parts, and so dost thou with all thy heart: God desires mercy, and to shew it to the needy; that is it thou also wantest, and that which thy soul craves at his hand.

Seek, man; ask, knock, and do not be discouraged; the Lord will grant all thy desires. Thou sayest thou art unworthy to ask the biggest things, things spiritual and heavenly; well, will carnal things serve thee, and answer the desires of thy heart? Canst thou be content to be put off with a belly well filled, and a back well clothed?

Oh, better I never had been born!

See, thou wilt not ask the best, and yet canst not make shift without them. Shift, no, no shift without them; I am undone without them, undone for

ever and ever, sayest thou. Well then desire. So I do, sayest thou. Ah! but desire with more strong desires, desire with more large desires; desire spiritual gifts, covet them earnestly, for thou hast a license so to do. God bids thee do so; “And I (says the apostle) desire that ye faint not, that is in the prosecution of your desires, what discouragements soever you may meet with in the way; for he hath said, “The desires of the righteous shall be granted.”

Objection: But I find it not so, says one; for, though I have desired, and desired a thousand times upon my knees, for something that I want, yet I have not my desire: and indeed the consideration of this hath made me question whether I am one of those to whom the promise of granting desires is made.

Answer: To this objection many things must be replied:

- (1.) By way of question.
- (2.) Then by way of answer.

1. By way of question. What are the things thou desirest; are they lawful or unlawful? for a Christian may desire unlawful things; as the mother of Zebedee’s children did when she came to Christ, (nay, her sons themselves had their hearts therein) saying, “Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire.”

They came with a wide mouth, but their desire was unlawful, as is evident, for that Christ would not grant it. James also himself caught those unto whom he wrote in such a fault as this, where he says, “Ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain.”

There are four things that are unlawful to be desired.

- (1.) To desire the life of thine enemy is unlawful.
- (2.) To desire any thing that is thy neighbor’s is unlawful.
- (3.) (To desire to share in the prosperity of the wicked is unlawful.
- (4.) To desire spiritual things for evil ends is unlawful.

2. Are they lawful things which thou desirest? Yet, the question is, Are they absolutely or conditionally promised? If absolutely promised, hold on in desiring: if conditionally promised, then thou must consider,

- (1.)** Whether they are such as are essential to the well-being of thy soul in thy Christian course in this world, then hold on in thy desires; and look also for the conditions that that word calls for, that proffereth them to thee; and, if it be not possible to find them in thyself, look for them in Christ, and cry to God for them, for the Lord's sake.

But if they be of an inferior sort, and thou canst be a good Christian without them, desire them, and yet be content to go without them; for who knows but it may be better that thou shouldst be denied, than that thou shouldst have now a grant of some things thou desirest? And herein thou hast thy Lord for thy pattern; who, though he desired that his life might be prolonged, yet wound up that prayer with a "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

But we will suppose that the thing thou desirest is good, and that thy heart may be right in asking; as suppose thou desirest more grace; or, as David has it, more "truth in the inward and hidden part;" yet there are several things for thy instruction may be replied to thy objection; as,

1. Thou, though thou desirest more of this, mayest not yet be sensible of the worth of what thou askest, as perhaps God will have thee be, before he granteth thy desire. Sometimes Christians ask for good things without having in themselves an estimate proportionable to the worth of what they desire; and God may hold it therefore back, to teach them to know better the worth and greatness of the thing they ask for. The good disciples asked they knew not what.

I know they asked what was unlawful, but they were ignorant of the value of the thing; and the same may be thy fault when thou askest for things most lawful and necessary.

2. Hast thou well improved what thou hast received already? Fathers will hold back more money when the sons have spent that profusely which they had received before. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in that which is least, is unjust also in much. And if you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

See here an objection made against a further supply, or rather against such a supply as some would have, because they have mis-spent or been unfaithful in what they have already had.

If thou therefore hast been faulty here, go, humble thyself to thy friend, and beg pardon for thy faults that are past, when thou art desiring of him more grace.

3. When God gives to his the grant of their desires, he doth it so as may be best for our advantage. now there are times wherein the giving of grace may be best to our advantage; as,

- (1.) Just before a temptation comes; then, if it rains grace on thee from heaven, it may be most for thy advantage. This is like God's sending of plenty in Egypt just before the years of famine came.
- (2.) For God to restrain that which thou desirest, even till the spirit of prayer is in a manner spent, may be further to inform thee that, though prayer and desires are a duty, and such also to which the promise is made; yet God sees such imperfections in both thy prayers and desires, as would utterly bind his hands, did he not act towards thee merely from motives drawn from his own bowels and compassion, rather than from any deserving that he sees in thy prayers. Christians, even righteous men, are apt to lean too much to their own doings; and God, to wean them therefrom, oftentimes defers to do what they by doing expect, even until in doing their spirits are spent and they as to doing can do no longer. When they that cried for water, had cried till their spirits failed, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth for thirst, then the Lord did hear, and then the God of Israel did give them their desire. Also, when Jonah's soul fainted under the consideration of all the evils that he had brought upon himself, then his prayer came unto God in his holy temple.

The righteous would be too light in asking, and would too much overprize their works, if their God should not sometimes deal in this manner with them.

- (3.) It is also to the advantage of the righteous that they be kept and led in that way which will best improve grace already received;

and that is, when they spin it out and use it to the utmost; when they do with it as the prophet did with that meal's meat that he ate under the juniper-tree, "go in the strength of it forty days and forty nights, even to the mount of God." Or when they do as the widow did, spend upon their handful of flour in the barrel, and upon that little oil in the cruise, until God shall send more plenty.

The righteous are apt to be like well-fed children, too wanton, if God should not appoint them some fasting days; or they would be apt to cast away fragments, if God should give them every day a new dish. So, then, God will grant the desires of the righteous in that way which will be most for their advantage; and that is, when they have made the best of the old store.

If God should give us two or three harvests in a year, we should incline to feed our horses and hogs with wheat; but, being as it is, we learn better to husband the matter.

By this means also we are made to see that there is virtue sufficient in our old store of grace to keep us with God in the way of our duty longer than we could imagine it would.

I myself have cried out, I can stand no longer, hold out no longer, without a further supply of grace; and yet I have by my old grace been kept even after this, days, and weeks, and months, in a way of waiting upon God. A little true grace will go a great way, yea, and do more wonders than we are aware of. If we have but grace enough to keep us groaning after God, it is not all the world can destroy us.

4. Perhaps thou mayest be mistaken: the grace thou prayest for may in a great measure be come unto thee. Thou hast been desiring of God more grace, thou sayest, but hast it not.

But how if whilst thou lookest for it to come to thee at one door, it should come in to thee at another? And, that we may a little inquire into the truth of this, let us a little consider what are the effects of grace in its coming to the soul, and then see if it has not been coming unto thee almost ever since thou hast been set upon this fresh desire after it.

(1.) Grace, in the general effect of it, is to mend the soul, and to make

it better disposed: hence when it comes it brings convincing light along with it, by which a man sees more of his baseness than at other times; more, I say, of his inward baseness. It is through the shinings of the Spirit of grace that those cobwebs and stinks that yet remain in thee are discovered: “In thy light we see light.” And again, “Whatsoever maketh manifest is light.” If, then, thou seest thyself more vile than formerly, grace, by its coming to thee, has done this for thee.

- (2.) Grace, when it comes, breaks and crumbles the heart in the sense and sight of its vileness. A man stands amazed and confounded in himself, breaks and falls down on his face before God, is ashamed to lift up so much as his face to God at the sight and apprehension of his wickedness.
- (3.) Grace, when it comes, shews to a man more of the holiness and patience of God; his holiness to make us wonder at his patience, and his patience to make us wonder at his mercy, that yet, even yet, such a vile one as he is should be admitted to breathe in the land of the living, yea more, suffered to come to the throne of grace.
- (4.) Grace is of a heart-humbling nature: it will make a man count himself the most unworthy of any thing, of all saints. It will make a man put all others before him, and be glad too if he may be one beloved, though least beloved, because most unworthy. It will make him with gladness accept of the lowest room, as counting all saints more worthy of exaltation than himself.
- (5.) Grace will make a man prize other men’s graces and gracious actions above his own. As he thinks every man’s candle burns brighter than his, every man improves grace better than he, every good man does more sincerely his duty than he: and, if these be not some of the effects of the renewings of grace, I will confess I have taken my mark amiss.
- (6.) Renewings of grace beget renewed self-bemoanings, self-condemnations, self-abhorrences.

And say thou prayest for communion with and the presence of God. God can have communion with thee, and grant thee his presence; and all this

shall, instead of comforting of thee at present, more confound thee, and make thee see thy wickedness.

Some people they never have the presence and renewings of God's grace upon them but when they are comforted and when they are cheered up; when, alas, God may be richly with them, while they cry out by these visions, "My sorrows are multiplied;" or, "Because I have seen God I shall die!"

And tell me now, all these things considered, has not grace, even the grace of God, which thou hast so much desired, been coming to thee and working in thee in all these hidden methods? And, so doing, has it not also accommodated thee with all the before-named conveniences? The which, when thou considerest, I know thou wouldst not be without for all the good of the world. Thus, therefore, thy desire is accomplishing; and when it is accomplished will be sweet to thy soul.

5. But we will follow thee a little in the way of thy heart. Thou sayest thou desirest, and desirest grace; yea, hast been a thousand times upon thy knees before God for more grace, and yet thou canst not attain?

I answer,

- (1.)** It may be the grace which thou prayest for is worth thy being upon thy knees yet a thousand times more. We find that, usually, they that go to kings' courts for preferment are there at great expenses; yea, and wait a great while, even until they have spent their whole estates and worn out their patience too; yet they at last prevail, and the thing desired comes. Yea, and when it is come it sets them up anew and makes them better men, though they did spend all that they had to obtain it, than ever they were before. Wait, therefore; wait, I say, on the Lord.

Wait, therefore, with David, wait patiently; bid thy soul cheer up and wait: "Blessed are all they that wait for him."

- (2.)** Thou must consider that great grace is reserved for great service. Thou desirest abundance of grace: thou dost well, and thou shalt have what shall qualify and fit thee for the service that God has for thee to do for him, and for his name in the world. The apostles

themselves were to stay for great grace until the time of their work was come.

I will not allot thy service; but assure thyself, when thy desire cometh thou wilt have occasion for it; new work, new trials, new sufferings; or something that will call for the power and virtue of all the grace thou shalt have, to keep thy spirit even and thy feet from slipping while thou art exercised in new engagements.

Assure thyself thy God will not give thee straw but he will expect brick: "For unto whomsoever much is given of him much shall be required, and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Wherefore, as thou art busy in desiring more grace, be also desirous that wisdom to manage it with faithfulness may also be granted unto thee. Thou wilt say, Grace, if I had it, will do all this for me. It will, and will not. It will if thou watch and be sober; it will not if thou be foolish and remiss. Men of great grace may grow consumptive in grace, and idleness may turn him that wears a plush jacket into rags. David was once a man of great grace, but his sin made the grace which he had to shrink and dwindle away, so as to make him cry out, "O, take not thy Spirit utterly from me!"

- (3.) Or perhaps God withholds what thou wouldst have, that it may be the more prized by thee when it comes: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick; but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life."
- (4.) Lastly, But dost thou think that thy more grace will exempt thee from temptations? Alas, the more grace, as was hinted, the greater trials! Thou must be, for all that, like the ship of which thou readest, sometimes high, sometimes low; sometimes steady, sometimes staggering; sometimes in, and sometimes even at the end of, thy very wits: for so he brings us to our desired haven.

Yet grace is the gold and preciousness of the righteous man; yea, and herein appears the uprightness of his soul; in that, though all these things attend the grace of God in him, yet he chooseth grace here above all, for that it makes him the more like God and his Christ, and for that it seasons his heart best to his own content, and also for that it capacitates him to glorify God in the world.

THE CONCLUSION.

Is it so? Is this the sum of all, namely, that the fears of the wicked shall come upon them, and that “the desires of the righteous shall be granted?” Then this shews us what is determined concerning both: concerning the wicked, that all his hopes shall not bring him to heaven; and concerning the righteous, that all his fears shall not bring him to hell. But what a sad thing it is for one to be a wicked man! Nothing can help him; his wickedness is too strong for him:

“His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself,
and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins,” Proverbs 5:22.

He may twist and twine, and seek to work himself from under the sentence passed upon him; but all will do him no pleasure: “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous man hath hope in his death.”

Loath he is to be righteous now, and as loath he will be to be found in his sins at the dreadful day of doom: but so it must be: “Upon the wicked God shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.”

“Woe to the wicked,” therefore: “it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” The just God will recompense both the righteous and the wicked, even according to their works: and yet for all this the wicked will not hear. When I read God’s word, and see how the wicked follow their sins, yea, dance in the ways of their own destruction, it is astonishing to me.

Their actions declare them, though not atheists in principle, yet such in practice. What do all their acts declare but this, that they either know not God, nor fear what he can do unto them?

But oh, how will they change their note when they see what will become of them! How pale will they look! Yea, the hairs of their head will stand an end for fear; for their fear is their portion: nor can their fears, nor their prayers, nor their entreaties, nor their wishes, nor their repentings, help them in this day.

And thus have I shewn you what are “the desires of the righteous;” and that “the fear of the wicked shall come upon him; but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.”