

## SERMON 13

### *PHILIPPIANS 2:12, 13*

*“Wherefore, my Beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my Presence only, but now much more in my Absence, work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling: For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good Pleasure.”*

### A CHRISTIAN'S DUTY AND DIVINE EFFICIENCY REPRESENTED

IN A SERMON PREACH'D ON LORD'S-DAY,  
**NOV. 11, 1750, NEAR CRIPPLEGATE.**

THE Apostle recommendeth Humility to the *Philippians*, and proposes to their Consideration, the great Example of Jesus Christ, in order to engage them unto the Exercise of that excellent Grace: And he commends them for their Christian Obedience, not only while he was present with them, but also when he was absent from them. They flourished in Faith and Holiness, even when they had not the great Advantage of his Ministry and Conversation.

***The Text consists of two Parts.***

**I.** An Exhortation: *Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.*

**II.** An important Truth is asserted, with a View to the Enforcement of it: *For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good Pleasure.*

**I. We have in the Words an Exhortation; wherein are two Things observable:** *Work out you own Salvation, with Fear and Trembling.*

**First.** The Duty itself: *Work out, etc.*

**Secondly.** The Manner in which we are required to attend unto it; *viz. with Fear and Trembling.*

**First.** Believers are required to *work out* their own Salvation. If we consider what of Salvation is already affected, it will prevent our falling into Mistakes.

The Salvation of the Saints is secured and far advanced, by what *each divine Person* hath already done in order to it.

**1st.** God the Father appointed them not to Wrath, but to obtain Salvation by Jesus Christ. He chose them to Salvation, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth. And it is according to the Purpose of his free, sovereign Grace and Mercy, that they are saved and called with an holy Calling. This gracious Decree is that solid Foundation, whereon their eternal Salvation securely rests.

**2dly.** He formed the Plan of their Recovery from Ruin in his everlasting Counsels. The Difficulties attending their Salvation were such, as infinite Wisdom alone could devise Means for the Removal of, Sin must be taken away: The Honor of the Law

must be maintained: The Rights of Justice must be fully secured, if they are *saved*, as well as all their spiritual Enemies conquered, and they rescued from under their Power, and Tyranny. How either of these Things might be affected, no finite Understanding, could ever have determined, as finite Merit and limited Power are absolutely unequal to such an Undertaking. The Contrivance of the *Method* of their Redemption, is as much to the Honor of the Wisdom of God, as the Design of it is to the *Praise of the Glory of his Grace*: For, *herein he hath abounded towards us in all Wisdom and Prudence*. Hence the Gospel of our Salvation is called *the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, the bidden Wisdom, which be ordained before the World to our Glory*. And much is done by Jesus Christ in order to our Salvation from Sin, and the dreadful Consequences of it.

*1st.* Sin itself is taken away. *Once in the End of the World he appeared to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself. When he had by himself, purged our Sins, he sat down on the right Hand of God.*

The whole Guilt of God's People was transferred from them to Christ, their Surety. It was laid upon and imputed to him, or placed to his Account; and he removed it from them, *as far as the East is from the West*. He *finished their Transgression, and made an End of their Sin*. And, as he was justified or acquitted by the Father, in the Character of a Judge, upon Satisfaction made by his Sufferings and Death to Law and Justice, they, in *consequence* thereof, are as clear of all Charges of Guilt by divine Justice, as if they had never transgressed the Law of God. *When their Iniquity shall be sought for, it shall not be found; there shall be haste: Not* because they are innocent in themselves, but because Remission contains in it all their Offences. *For I will pardon them, whom I reserve. The Lord hath not beheld Iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen Perverseness in Israel*. None think that justified Persons are without Sin, or that their Sins are concealed from the Knowledge of God: But true it is, let Men cavil as they please thereat, justified Persons are without all Spot in the view of God, as a Judge, because Christ hath *wafted them from their Sins in his own Blood*.

*2dly.* Our blessed Saviour made Peace and Reconciliation by that infinitely- valuable Sacrifice which he offered unto God. Hereby is not intended a Procurement of Divine Favor towards Sinners. It is indeed sometimes said, that the Death of Christ procured the Favor of God towards us: But that is as great a Mistake and Error, as Men can fall into; for *Good-Will* in God to poor Sinners is the *Cause*, and not the *Effect*, of the Death of Christ for them. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son*. The Gift of Christ, therefore, results from divine Love, and did not procure it. Making Peace supposes not a Change in the Disposition of God towards Sinners. His Affection to the Persons of Men is invariable and eternally the same: Nor can it be thought otherwise, without the *gross Absurdity* of Imputing Passions to Deity. Tho' some, it must be confessed, express themselves on this Subject, in

such a Manner, as necessarily implies this *absurd* Thought. Reconciliation by the Death of Christ is God's Approbation of and Well-pleasedness with the Sacrifice he offered for Sin, or a full, proper, and plenary Satisfaction of Justice for all the Crimes of all the Persons, in whose Stead our blessed Lord *made his Soul an Offering for Sin*. Hence Justice hath no Demand to make, either upon the Surety or the Principals, whom he undertook to redeem and save; nor any Thing to object to their Salvation and Happiness; but it moves for, grants, and concurs with Sovereign Grace, in securing Life and a Happy Immortality unto all those, who are interested in the Death of Christ.

Peace with God must be an *immediate* Effect of Christ's Death, if that was *a* atoning Sacrifice for Sin; which cannot be denied, without *sapping* the Foundation of all our Hopes, as Christians, and *impeaching* the Wisdom of God, which contrived this Method of our Pardon and Salvation. Hence, surely, we must be convinced, that God is reconciled to his People, before they are reconciled to him: Though' some confidently assert, without any Explanation of what they intend, that he is not. If the Justice of God is not satisfied for our Sins by the Death of Christ, it never will be; for nothing, whereof we are the Subjects, can contribute, in the least Degree, unto the making Satisfaction for any of our Offences, Besides, it is on the Ground of Satisfaction already made, that we receive Grace from God, by which we become capable of performing Services acceptable to him by Jesus Christ; and therefore, Faith hath no causal Influence into, nor is a *proper* Condition of Reconciliation and Peace with God. Faith receives Atonement, as what existed *prior* to its self; and, consequently, its Being is independent of that Grace, and previous to it in Existence: Nor is this inconsistent with any Truth contained either in the Law, or in the Gospel of Christ: Nor does it take from Faith any Thing which the holy Spirit attributes to it, either in its Nature, or its Office and Work.

**3dly.** The Death of our Saviour was (Λυτρον ανδ Απολυτρωσι) a Price, and an adequate Price of Redemption, or a valuable Consideration by him paid into the Hands of God, our righteous Judge, for our Freedom from Condemnation, and Deliverance from that Misery, whereunto our Sin rendered us obnoxious. *We are not our own; we are bought with a Price. We are redeemed, not with Silver and Gold, as with those corruptible Things, but with the precious Blood of Christ. He hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us. He gave his Life a Ransom for many.* This Price is of such a Nature, that not only it is in Value equal to that Good it was intended to obtain for us; but, if that Good is not actually bestowed on us, or if we enjoy not that Liberty and Impunity, which it was designed to procure for us, God, to whom this Price was paid, must *restrain* Justice; for no suitable Return can be made to Christ for what he suffered, but the actual and full Release of all the Persons, for whom he died, from every Charge of Guilt, from all Condemnation, and from the Suffering of penal Evil. The Reason is clear: The

Sufferings of Christ were of a penal Nature, and that Penalty which we were liable unto: And, therefore, nothing but our Impunity is a proper Return to him for his penal Death. Nor can any Thing be required of us, in order to our escaping divine Wrath and Vengeance, which will render that uncertain. Justice requires the Bestowment of a Benefit, which is obtained, by the Payment of a valuable Consideration.

**4thly.** The blessed Jesus brought in an everlasting Righteousness. Christ, our Surety, became subject to the Covenant of Works. And he was that in his Nature which the Law requires; absolutely free from all sinful Taint and Impurity, *holy, harmless, undefiled*, the Subject of perfect Holiness and Purity in his Heart: And in his Conduct he was such as the Law demands: *He did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth*. So that his Obedience was as extensive as the Law's Precepts; and in him was found all that Righteousness which the divine Lawgiver expects. And the infinite Dignity of his Person puts an immense Value upon his Obedience; for, such as his Person is in Greatness, such is his Obedience in Worth and Efficacy: And, therefore, it is available unto the everlasting Justification of the many, whose Surety he was, and for whom he yielded that Obedience unto the Covenant of Works.

**5thly.** The Father accepted this Obedience of Christ, and graciously imputes it to us; this gives us a Right unto eternal Life. *The Lord is well pleased for his Righteousness Sake*. And we, *being justified freely by his Grace, are made Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life*. God, our righteous Judge, ceases not to require of us Obedience to his holy Will in all Things: He abates us nothing in Point of Duty; but he requires not any *obediential Acts* of us, in order to our Acceptance with him, and as the Ground of our Claim to future Blessedness: For *Christ is the End of the Law, for Righteousness, to everyone who believes*.

Again, the Holy Spirit, who reveals and applies what the Father designs unto, and what the Son hath impetrated, for the Elect, had begun a good Work in the *Philippians*. The *Apostle* takes this for granted; *Being confident of this very Thing, that he who hath begun a good Work in you will perform it until the Day of Christ*. They were not, therefore, in the State of Death and Darkness, nor under the Dominion of Sin and Power of Satan, or destitute of Grace and Holiness. But, on the contrary, they were Subjects of spiritual Life, and capable of performing spiritual Acts. They were made Light in the Lord. An Understanding was given unto them to know him that is true. In virtue of heavenly Light communicated to them, they discerned spiritual Things. Grace reigned in their Hearts, in Opposition to Sin, and would reign in them thro' Righteousness unto eternal Life, by Jesus Christ their Lord. They were translated out of the Kingdom of Satan into that of God's dear Son. In a Word, they were the happy Subjects of Faith, Hope, Love, Repentance, Patience, Meekness, Humility, or of a Meetness to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. For they were regenerated, converted, and sanctified by the Spirit of God.

Since all these Things were wrought for them, and in them, by the Father, Son, and Spirit, none of these Particulars can be included in that Exhortation the Apostle gives them to work out their own Salvation. They are not called upon to get an Interest in the Love of God, to contrive the Method of their Recovery; for they were Objects of God's everlasting Love, and the Scheme of their eternal Redemption was drawn in his eternal Counsels. They are not required to expiate their Guilt; for Christ had purged their Sin. It was not a Branch of their Duty to make their Peace with God; for Peace was made by the Blood of the Cross of Christ, complete Atonement for Sin was already made by his Sacrifice. Nor was the Redemption of their Persons from Curse, Wrath, and divine Vengeance, a Thing to be affected; it was done already by the infinitely- valuable Price of Christ's precious Blood. Farther, it was no Part of their Business to work out a justifying Righteousness before God, and thereby procure a Right to eternal Blessedness; because an everlasting Righteousness was brought in by their dear Redeemer: It was graciously imputed to them, and they were therein accepted with God, and were intitled to eternal Life. Moreover, as they were Persons regenerated, converted, and sanctified by the Grace of God, it can't be thought, that the Apostle requires them to get the Grace of Faith, Hope, or any other Grace of the Spirit. His Intention is not to put them upon acquiring a Meetness for Heaven, because he considers them, as being already the Subjects of that Meetness. If some Persons were to hear me express these Things, they would, it is probable, say, What was left for the *Philippians* to do? If all these Things are done, what remains for Christians to do? I answer, I fear much more than some, who discover a Concern left they should not have Work enough left for them, are really willing to do: I am afraid that it is not Labor, which they have any great Inclination unto; but it is Wages for their Work, that they are concerned for. If the Particulars above-mentioned are true, then whatever we do in Obedience to the Will of God can have no causal Influence into our Salvation, nor can be a proper Condition of it.

This is the distasteful Matter, that which galls and irritates Men. If it was Work only, that they were intent upon, there Principles could not be displeasing to them. The Gospel abates nothing of Duty; but it allows us not to expect Heaven, as a Reward due to us on account of our Obedience: And that is it which offends Men. This Exhortation, doubtless, includes in it the whole Compass of our Duty, as Christians, *viz.* Opposition to Lust in all its Branches; Caution to avoid all Temptations to Sin; Mortification to the World in its Pleasures, Honors, and Advantages; Patience, and Submission to the Will of God, under Sufferings; Readiness for the Cross; Self-Denial; Diligence in the Practice of religious Duties; Prayer; Reading; serious, close, and fixed Meditation on spiritual Things; a reverential Regard to the Gospel, and a Christian Contention for it; the solemn Celebration of evangelical Ordinances, and a conscientious Discharge of all Duties towards the Saints; such as Sympathy,

Compassion, Forbearance, brotherly Love, Kindness, Charity, yea, every Thing that tends to their spiritual Advantage; and a Behavior towards all Men, just, benevolent, humble, meek, and friendly. Besides, in all Duties suitable Graces ought to be acted; Faith, Hope, Love, Fear, Humility, and Zeal for the Glory of God.

These Things tend unto the Salvation of the Soul from Sin, and its Perfection in Holiness, and, without Scruple, are intended in this Exhortation, with every other Christian Duty. He who shall take them into proper Consideration will not be of Opinion, that the Saints have not Work enough assigned unto them. If Men would but be content with Labor, without challenging a Reward of God, as a due Debt, they could have no Reason to complain for Want of Business and Employ thro' Life: But the Occasion of their quarrelling with the Gospel is, it permits them not to expect eternal Blessedness, as proper Wages for the Toil of Duty; but represents it as the free, unmerited Gift of sovereign and distinguishing Grace.

This is what is so displeasing to the Generality of Mankind, and not the Want of Labor; for to that *merely they* have no Inclination, or as it is a Duty which they owe unto their Maker. Who that will may work for them, if they may not *have Life for working*. And, because they are governed by a *selfish* Disposition, they think others are so too; and that the Reason, why any embrace the Gospel of free Grace, is, they are unwilling to perform Duty, and hope to be happy hereafter without being holy here; which is a great Mistake. But I confess, that this is not to be wondered at; for without a Principle, that is in its Nature *congruous* to the Gospel, Men will always adhere to the Law, and the Works of it, in Opposition to the Gospel of the *true Grace of God*.

Or the Sense of this Exhortation is, *Work about your own Salvation; i.e.* attend unto those Duties which *accompany* Salvation, and the spiritual Performance of which is no inconsiderable Part of your Salvation, and in its own Nature tends unto your Salvation from Sin, and Perfection in Holiness; which is the Aim of the gracious Principle in the Hearts of the Saints, though' it is not attainable in this State.

**Secondly.** The Manner, how Believers should do this, must be considered, viz. *With Fear and Trembling*. With Fear: This intends not Consternation, or servile Dread, and Terror of Mind, thro' an Apprehension of divine Vengeance being likely to fall upon them for Sin. As this may be without the least Degree of *real* Holiness in the Heart, it will not ingenerate and promote it: For it *genders to Bondage*, and drives the Mind from God. We shall never love, delight in, and adhere to, an Object we dread; but, on the contrary, seek to avoid and flee from it, as *Adam* did, under the Influence of a Fear of this Kind, upon his Apostacy, and Tokens of God's approaching to him. His Conduct is a just Representation of that Part we shall always be inclined to act, under a Sense of Guilt, Wrath, and Vengeance, without some Degree of Hope of Mercy and Pardon. This Fear is a holy Reverence of God, arising from a Perception of his Glory in Christ, our gracious Mediator. It springs up in the

Soul from an Apprehension of Divine Goodness: *They shall fear the Lord and his Goodness*. And it is cherished by a View of Remission of Sin thro' the Blood of Christ: *There is Forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared*. Men cannot be guilty of a greater Mistake, than to imagine, that a Hope of the Pardon of Sin excludes a holy Fear of God, and a Dread of sinning against him. Where such a Disposition rules the Mind, as that Imagination necessarily supposes, there all *real* Religion is wanting, whatever a Man's Profession and Character may be. He, who hath not some gracious, spiritual Experience of a holy Fear of God, springing up in his Soul from a Sense of Pardon, *through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant*, is at present utterly unacquainted with the acting's of that Faith, which is of *the Operation of God*, and is absolutely necessary unto the Salvation of the Souls of Men. By how much the more Believers act Faith on free pardoning Mercy, by so much the more will their Reverence of God, and their Hatred of Sin, be promoted. And he is no Christian, who is otherwise minded. A Principle of Grace is acted on God, under the endearing Character, of the God, of all Grace; and that influences them *to serve him acceptably with Reverence and godly Fear*.

Blessed be God! Some can attest, from their own happy Experience, that a Sense of Pardon, Peace, and eternal Redemption, being obtained and secured by the Sacrifice of Christ, engages to a free, gracious, and spiritual Obedience of all God's Command and unto a holy Reverence of his infinite Majesty; let others reproach the Doctrine of free and full Pardon of Sin thro' the Blood of the Son of God, as they please.

Again, this is to be done with *Trembling*, not with a *dreadful Panic*, which throws the Mind into *Confusion*, and, therefore, is not productive of an *orderly, becoming* Obedience; but with suitable Awe, and proper Humility, considering in whole View we are, to whom we are accountable, and whole Glory is concerned in all our Actions; viz. God, who is *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*; in whose *Sight the Heavens are not clean, and who charges his Angels with Folly*. Some object to an inspired Phrase — *Serve the Lord with Fear, and rejoice with Trembling* — as *improper, strange, and uncouth*: But it is a certain Truth, that such have not a suitable Apprehension of the Majesty of God, who can persuade themselves to think, that the *deepest* Humility, the *greatest* Self- Abasement, and the *highest* Reverence, are inconsistent with spiritual Peace, and the *largest* Measure of holy Joy in God, that Christians are at any Seasons favored with. Some will tell you, and tell truly, that they never have been possessed with such an Awe of God, as when they have enjoyed clear Prospects, by Faith, of the glorious Display of the divine Perfections in the Contrivance and Accomplishment of the Salvation of poor Sinners by Jesus Christ. They know. that the greatest Indignation against Sin, Self-Loathing and Abhorrence on account of it, and *Trembling* in the divine Presence, not only consist with, but also are always produced and cherished in the Saints, by the fullest Persuasion, their Souls can be blessed with, of an Interest in Pardon, Peace, and all

spiritual Blessings. The contrary Opinion is a *sad Evidence* of an Unacquaintedness with a holy, spiritual Experience of the Glory, Sweetness, and Power of *real Religion*, in the Minds of those, by whom it is embraced; let their Convictions of Sin, Dread of Wrath, and their Concern to escape infernal Torments, be what they may. A Reverence of God's infinite Greatness, Abasement under a Sense of his immense Purity, and Trembling at the Thought of his peerless and incomprehensible Majesty, perfectly consist with the highest Degree of Joy, which our Minds can possibly possess, under the Consideration of an everlasting Interest in him, as a reconciled God and Father, thro' the glorious Mediator, Jesus Christ. If these Things are duly considered, we shall see, that there is no Reason to complain of the evangelical Revelation, as what lessens the Compass of our Duty: The Truth is, it enlarges it, not by additional Precepts, as new Law, but as it is a farther Discovery of God in the Perfections of his Nature; which Discovery heightens and increases our Duty, by virtue of the Authority of the moral Law, which is an eternal Standard and Rule of Righteousness unto Men.

**II. An important Truth is asserted to enforce the Exhortation, and to encourage the Saints in their Attendance unto it, For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good Pleasure.**

**1st.** Believers are Subjects of a Divine Operation; they are under an immediate, positive Influence of God.. This is clearly expressed, in various Phrases, in the Scripture. *You hath be quickened. For we are the Workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works. Who bath begotten us again to a lively Hope. Who were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God. Therefore, with loving Kindness have I drawn thee. No Man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. God, who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined in our Hearts: Hath given us an Understanding to know him that is true. Unto you it is given to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom. And hast revealed them to Babes. Every Man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. They shall be all taught of God.* These Expressions, and abundance more which might be produced, are a full Evidence, that God in an *immediate* and *positive* Manner operates upon the Minds of Men, to make them holy and spiritual, and to excite and stir up the Christian unto spiritual Acts. This Influence must be of Efficacy unto the Production of the Effect therein intended: For, if *God will work, who shall let?* God either designs to make Men holy by his gracious Operations upon them, or he does not. If not, then what is his End in those Operations? If any Man can, let him declare the divine Intention therein. If he really purposes to make them holy, in order to their eternal Salvation, by his gracious Operations on them, the Effect intended must certainly be produced, except God is unable to accomplish his own Designs, or operates in such a Manner only, as he knows will be ineffectual. If the former is supposed, then the Power of God is not



equal to his Goodness and Mercy, or it is not infinite, as his Grace is; and it must be concluded, that he wills, and endeavors to do, what is beyond the Extent of his Capacity; which is *a most absurd* Imagination. If the latter is supposed, then God disappoints himself of his own End in working, because he wills not to operate in such a Manner, as would secure it; which is not *less absurd* than the former Supposition. And, therefore, it is impossible but that the gracious Influence of God upon Men, to regenerate and sanctify them, must be effectual thereunto.

The Sanctification of a Sinner includes in it a holy Principle, and the Exercise of that Principle. That God is able to excite a holy Principle into Act, when it hath Existence in the human Mind, is, I suppose, what none will scruple: The only Things, therefore, which can be questioned, relating to this Matter, are, whether God is capable of creating such a Principle, or whether it becomes him to give Existence unto such a Principle, in the Minds of Men, or whether the Nature of the human Mind will admit of it. All allow, that it is not impossible to the human Mind to become the Subject of good Habits; and the Generality of Men suppose that it is capable of acquiring such Habits with divine Help. Cannot God then, by an Act of his all-powerful Grace, give Being to what is possible to be? Doubtless he can. And, since this is a good Work, it is not unbecoming God to exert his Power unto its Production. Nor is the Nature of the human Mind such, as not to allow of that Work upon it; for it offers no Violence to the Will, because there is no Reference had unto it, in this Influence upon the Mind, in order to its Consent, or Refusal: And, consequently, such a creating Act of God may be put forth on the human Mind, as infallibly and immediately is productive of a holy, spiritual Principle therein, without the least Abridgment of the natural Freedom of the Will. And, when such a Principle is produced in the Heart, a divine Influence upon it, to excite it unto Acts, can't reasonably be thought destructive of its free Agency; because that is no more than stirring up the Will unto such Volitions and Acts, as are agreeable to it, being thus truly sanctified by the Grace of God. And, therefore, it is a just and reasonable Conclusion, that God never fails of making Men holy, when he operates upon them by his Grace with that View. To doubt hereof, is to question his Capacity, or his Will, to bring to pass that, wherein his Glory is more concerned than in any other Work of his. Besides, the *Greek* Word signifies to work in an effectual Manner, (ἐνεργῶν), or with Power and Energy. And as to what is objected, from the Use of it to express the Influence of Satan upon the Minds of Unbelievers — *The Spirit that now worketh* (ἐνεργούντῳ) *in the Children of Disobedience* — it is of no Weight at all; for, tho' the Devil is not able to accomplish the utmost of what he wishes to effect, even when he exerts all his Force, that is no Reason to think, that God doth not assuredly and infallibly execute his Purposes of Grace, when he powerfully works to that End. The Energy expressed, or implied, when attributed to Acts of a

finite Power, may not in all Instances be effectual; but it don't follow, that that Energy in divine Operations is insufficient to bring about the End intended.

The *Philippians* were already regenerated, as was before observed; and, therefore, the Work of Regeneration was not now to be wrought in them. And, with respect unto that Work, we may observe, that it is an *habitual Disposition* unto Holiness, as the Depravity of our Nature is an habitual Disposition unto Evil: So that the Will is habitually inclined to what is good according to the regenerate Part, as it is habitually inclined to sin according to the unregenerate Part. God's disposing the Will to Holiness, by regenerating Grace, is here included; but I think, that his Influence upon it, to produce holy Volitions and Acts, is principally intended. Until the human Mind is the Subject of this habitual Disposition to Holiness, it is *absolutely* impossible to raise in it any holy, spiritual Desires, by the most *striking* and *rational* Considerations, which can be represented and set before it, of the evil Nature of Sin, and its dreadful Consequences, of the Excellency of Holiness, and of *the substantial*. Good, or Happiness, which consists in the intelligent Creature's Conformity to the Will of God, and in the Enjoyment of a Sense of his Favour. Some will say, this is exceedingly strange indeed! What! is Reason lost? Are Men irrational, and utterly sunk into Brutality?

**Ans.** No: Their Nature is rational, and ever will be; but it is the subject of an *Infatuation* and *Madness*, in relation unto spiritual Things, which is *incurable* without the Grace of God. That, Opposition to God, and the Choice of Evil are *unreasonable*, is undoubtedly a Truth; but an apostate intelligent Creature will never be disengaged from that Opposition, and withdrawn from that Choice, by any Reasoning, however just and forcible it is. Good Men, I think, must be convinced that this is Fact from their own Experience; tho' sometimes they may express themselves, in *Expostulations with Sinners*, in such a Manner, as supposes the contrary. We are not to conclude, from the Reasonableness of Duty, upon the Inclination and Power of corrupted Reason to comply it, even when it is represented in the best Light any Man is capable of doing it. If the actual Infliction of Punishment for sin changes not the natural Disposition of a Sinner, (than which nothing is more true) there is no Reason to think, that Threatening's of Penalty, when pressed in the closest Manner on the Consciences of Men, will ever alter the corrupt Bias of their depraved Will. If it is a real Fact, that the human Mind is *alienated from the Life of God*, and is *Enmity against him*, then not the most affecting Representations of eternal Felicity, which consists in the Enjoyment of Him, the Origin of all Blessedness, will prevail with it unto a Choice of God. And that this is really the Case, both Scripture and Experience testify, beyond all modest and reasonable Contradiction. Hence we must conclude, that a Disposition or habitual Inclination to Holiness is not, cannot be, acquired, even with divine Help; but that it is a *supernatural* Effect, which is solely produced by the infinite Power of God; and that

no Acts of an holy, spiritual Nature, can spring up in the human Mind, before such a Disposition is created therein. And, therefore, God is the alone Author of all holy Volitions and Acts in Men. In Regeneration he gives Existence to a Disposition, which is the Root and Spring of all *obediential* Acts to his holy Will: That is the Holiness of the human Will radically; and good Volitions arising from it, as it is sanctified and influenced by divine Grace, are its Holiness actually.

**2dly.** The Necessity of a gracious and heavenly Influence upon the Will of a Christian, to draw it forth into Acts of holy Obedience, will appear, if we consider, that he is the Subject of a Law of Sin.

None who are Subjects of Grace, I dare to say, will scruple to grant, that Sin dwells in them. All, who are *Spirit*, know themselves to be *Flesh* also. There is the *old Man*, as well as the *new Man*, in all the Saints. The Heart of every Believer hath in it a Fountain, which is corrupt, as well as a Spring and Source of Purity. Nor is this bitter Fountain sweetened by Grace. Its Nature is as *vile*, *impure*, and *deadly*, as ever. Neither are the acting's of the Mind, according to this corrupt and evil Principle, of a Nature different from what they were, before that Principle of Grace was infused into the Soul. All its Imaginations are evil, and only evil, continually. The Thoughts which spring up in the Mind from it are *disorderly*, *vain*, and *wholly unspiritual*. Its Volitions likewise are of a sinful Nature. The Objects it pursues are *carnal*, *vain*, and *pernicious*. The Tendencies of the Affections, as under its Influence, are unto Thing, *unprofitable*, *light*, and attended with *baneful* Effects, to the better Part. And the old Man is ever ready for Action; he is at no Time unprepared for that Service wherein he is engaged. Nor does the Mind tire and wax weary in sinful Gratifications. So far is it from that, that its Desires after what is evil are enlarged, by those Gratifications. The Power, Deceitfulness, Treachery, and Violence of the Law of Sin, in the Minds of the Saints, are *wonderful*, *terrifying*, and *extremely dangerous*. As far as indwelling Sin acts its Part, so far is the gracious Principle interrupted and impeded in its Exercise: For, as far as the Mind is under the Influence of the old Man, so far it is prevented from acting under the Direction of the new Man. There contrary Principles may and do inhabit in the same Breast, but the Will can't be determined in its Volitions at the same Time by each Principle. If it makes a Choice agreeable to the Flesh, it cannot, at that Season, and in those Instances, determine itself on the Side of the spiritual Part. Now, if we take there Things into due Consideration, with much more that might be observed concerning the corrupt Part of the Believer, surely we must be convinced, that a divine Influence is absolutely necessary unto the Will's closing with a spiritual Good, presented to it, even where it hath an habitual Inclination thereunto; because the Counter- acting's of Lust are great Hindrances, and Impediments to the Acting's of Grace in the Soul. Farther, nothing more is required to the Acting of the Flesh in a Believer, than the Preservation of the Mind in a State of Being and Activity; but the Spirit in a

Christian, with relation unto its actual Exercise, is dependent on the Influence of that Grace, which gave it Existence. Saints can act in a sinful Manner, without any Operation upon them to elicit and draw forth their corrupt Inclinations; but they are not able to act in a holy, spiritual Sort, unless that gracious Principle in them is drawn forth into Exercise by Influence upon it from above. If divine Power supports but the depraved Mind in Being, it can act in an unlawful Manner of itself; but supporting in Existence the spiritual Principle is not the only the Thing required unto the Exertion of itself. The Flesh in all its Motions acts without any positive Influence upon it from God; but the Spirit is dependent on his Aid, Assistance, and gracious Influence in its actual Exercise. Such who are Sanctified can think of and choose what is evil of themselves; but they are not sufficient of themselves, as of themselves, to think any Thing that is good and holy. And, therefore, all holy Thoughts, all holy Desires, and heavenly Motions in their Hearts, owe their actual Rise, unto the Influence of the Grace of God upon their spiritual Part, which, as to its Exercise, is dependent on that Influence, as, with respect to its Continuance in Existence, it is dependent on a constant Influx of divine Power to support it. The latter is common to it with all created Beings: The former hath a Specialty in it, agreeable unto its special and peculiar Nature. Natural Being is derived from God, as the Author of Nature; and an Influence from him, as such, is sufficient to its Acts: But a spiritual Being is derived from him, as the God of all Grace; and the Influences of his Grace are necessary unto the Acts of that Being.

**3dly.** It is by virtue of a divine Influence that a Christian performs what his spiritual Part wills to do. The Volitions of the gracious Principle are always pure, spiritual, and holy; for, such as that Principle is in its Nature, such are all the Acts of the Mind springing from it. As the corrupt Part is an Inclination to Evil, so Grace is an Inclination to Holiness: And it is, in its actual Exercise, a Will to universal Purity, or a Desire to yield a perfect and uninterrupted Obedience to the Will of God. Unholy Desires naturally arise from the Flesh; and it is capable of pursuing and acting what it causes; yea, many Times it is with great Difficulty, that it is prevented proceeding in a sinful Pursuit. But the regenerate Part being dependent on an external Influence in its actual Exercise, it is incapable of reiterated Acts of Holiness, without the Favor of a heavenly Influence upon it is continued to maintain its Exercise.

And, as the Flesh is constantly counter acting the Spirit in a Believer, he is often prevented doing what he chooses to do thro' that Opposition from his corrupt Part. O! how many delightful, sweet, and spiritual Meditations are quite marred, and broke off, by the contrary Acting's of the carnal Part! In what a sad Manner does the Mind of a poor Believer many Times change from a holy, heavenly Frame, in solemn Duties, into a carnal, cold, wandering, and careless one! How soon is the Mind diverted from converting, with the most glorious Objects, which fill it with Joy and Complacency, by the Presentation of some worthless and vain Object, thro' the

Strength of Corruption, and the Weakness of Grace, in itself! There Things give a full Conviction to the Saints of the Necessity of gracious and constant Supplies of spiritual Strength from God, to enable them unto a uniform, holy, and continued Obedience to his righteous Precepts. *To will is sometimes present with them; but how to perform what is good they find not.* And, therefore, they resolve to go in the *Strength of the Lord*, and to be *strong in the Grace, which is in Christ Jesus*, not depending on their innate Ability; for they are sensible, that what they are: as to Spirituality and Holiness, both in Principle and Acts, they are *by the Grace of God*; that it is *not they who live, but Christ liveth in them*, as they are Christians; and that whatever is done by them in a holy Obedience, it is not they that do it, *but the Grace of God, which is with them.* They are most free to acknowledge, that they are NOTHING, and that without Christ they can do *Nothing*; that they are unable to think a good Thought, to raise any holy Desires in their Minds, and are incapable performing any Duty in a holy, acceptable Manner, without Supplies of Grace from Christ, their Head of Life, and Influence, *who filleth all in all.*

They know, that all they do without him is *nothing*; that there is no more of *Spirituality* and *real Holiness* in any of their Meditations, Prayers, or other Duties they perform, than what they are filled with from Him, the Fountain of all their Life and Purity. Hence, we may see what a *foolish*, as well as evil Thing spiritual Pride is. What Ground can we have of Self Commendation and Applause, who have no more of Holiness, either as to Principle or Acts, than what is derived from the Fountain of free Grace, and unto which we are influenced by the Spirit of Christ? And from hence we may safely collect, that we are real Saints, if there is any Thing of true Holiness in our Hearts, tho' we may have much Occasion of Sorrow, Humiliation, and Self-Abasement, on account of indwelling Corruption: But let not that prevent us giving Thanks to God, for making us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. Let us also be encouraged to hope, yea, firmly to believe, while we are struggling with our strong, raging, and furious Lusts, that God will take care of our better Part, and *perfect what concerns us*: He certainly intends to give us Glory, if he hath given us Grace. This surely is also sufficient to convince us, that Salvation is not *properly* conditional. The Experience of every Christian is an Evidence thereof in itself; tho' some, for Want of due Attention to it, may endeavor to maintain that it is.

**4thly.** God works in a gracious Manner upon the Minds of Men, of his good Pleasure. The Implantation of the spiritual Principle in Regeneration is of the free and sovereign Favor of God. Nothing in them could induce him to it; for their Nature is wholly corrupt, and their Conduct is one continued Act of Rebellion against him, until that Principle is created in them. They are under the Dominion of Sin, and entirely engaged in serving of Lusts, either of a sensitive intellectual Kind, before this good Work is begun in them. And, therefore, Grace communicated in

Regeneration is what springs from Goodness, sovereign, free, and entirely unmerited. There was nothing more in the Subjects of this Work, than a mere natural Capacity to receive Grace from God; which the greatest Sinners upon Earth are capable of. There was no Congruity to Grace in the Disposition and Temper of our Minds, moving unto the Communication of it. The most we can say of ourselves is, that our Souls, as they are of a rational Nature, were Subjects capable of being thus wrought upon by God, the Father of Spirits. And, therefore, this was an Act of pure Mercy and Grace to beget us again to a lively Hope by the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead. As we are fared, so we are called with an holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to God's Purpose and Grace. That is the *sole* Cause of it, without any Motive in us.

And it is a glorious Instance of rich Mercy, that we were quickened, when dead in Trespasses and Sins. It is a Fruit of Love to our Persons, yea, of great and infinite Love in the Heart of God towards us, when we were altogether unlovely, and the Subjects of nothing but what rendered us *hateful* and *abominable*. His Grace was exceeding abundant with Faith and Love, which is in Christ Jesus. Divine Love to our Persons was *prior* to, and is the Cause of, all in us that is good and pleasing to God. No other Reason can be assigned, why God formed us for himself, that we might shew forth his Praise, but his own rich Grace. He had Mercy on us, because he would have Mercy, and for no other Reason whatever. Let us, therefore, give him all the Glory, and say always, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, unto thy Name give Glory. We had no more Concern in this gracious Work upon our Hearts, than our Lusts have in the Cherishing and Improvement of this holy Principle, to which they are entirely contrary in Nature, and in all Instances, more or less, oppose its Acting's. Influence upon this Principle, to preserve its Being, and draw it forth into Act, is of God's good Pleasure. As we were brought into a State of Grace by sovereign Kindness and Mercy, so we are upheld in that State by the same Cause. This is the solid Basis of our Security. If we consider our many Imperfections; if we consider our numerous and great Provocations, thro' the Power of Sin in us, and the Force of Temptations without us; if we consider how little we honor God, and how much we dishonor him by Unbelief, Pride, Covetousness, and a Fondness for Things that perish in the Using; if we consider, that we are regardless too often, not only of God and his Glory, but also of our own best Interest, (which we always are, when we neglect to glorify our heavenly Father by a humble, close, and spiritual Walk with him); if we consider that in nothing we can be profitable to God, when we are most holy in our Dispositions and Behavior; I say, if we consider these Things, surely we cannot but fully be convinced, that divine Good-Will and Favor is the Cause of the Preservations of our Persons in a State of Grace, and of the Animating and Reviving of our Graces, Faith, Hope, Love, and all others, unto the unspeakable Joy of our Souls. Now, what Enforcement may this important Truth give unto the Exhortation

before considered? If it is God who works in us, in the Acting's of all our Graces, and in our spiritual Performance of all Duties, what Fear, Reverence, and holy Awe, ought ever to possess our Minds in our Acts of Christian Obedience! God dwells in our Hearts, not as an unconcerned Spectator of the Part we act but as an exact Observer of our Thoughts, Volitions, Pleasures, and of all the Tendencies of our Affections: And, therefore, how watchful, holy, humble, and spiritual, ought we ever to be, in walking before him! Again, what Encouragement does this precious Truth afford to our Faith and Hope! Tho' we are conscious to ourselves of the greatest Unworthiness, which might provoke God finally to withdraw from and leave us, we may conclude upon it, that he will not so do, since all his benign and salutary Influences are Effects of his good Pleasure, that is a never-changing Cause: And, consequently, what Effects so ever depend on that Cause will assuredly continue to be. Infinite Grace, which gave us Life, when we were dead in Sin, will certainly maintain, revive, and perfect that living Principle in a Life of eternal Glory, whereunto the God of all Grace hath called us.