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## Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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### God's Little Remnant Keeping their Garments Clean in an Evil Day

by Ebenezer Erskine<sup>1</sup>

*Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.* Revelation 3:4.

**T**HE first six verses of this chapter contain an epistle sent by Jesus Christ to the church of Sardis. Where we have, first, the preface, and then the body of the epistle. In the body of the epistle we may notice these three things: 1. An accusation or charge, in the close of the first verse. 2. An exhortation to several duties, such as repentance, watchfulness, and the like, ver. 2, 3. 3. We have a commendation given to this church, in the words of my text, *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, &c.* Where, more particularly, we have, 1st, The commendation itself, *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.* 2dly, A reward, *They shall walk with me in white.* 3dly, The reason and ground of this, *For they are worthy.* First, I say, we have the commendation itself. Where we may notice, the commender, the commended, and the ground on which the commendation runs. 1. The commender. Who he is may be gathered from the connexion. It is "he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars," ver. 1. It is Christ himself. And his commendation may be depended upon; for he trieth the heart and reins, and needs not that any should testify of man unto him, because he knows what is in man. 2. The party commended. Who are described, (1.) From their designation; they are called *names*. God had "given them a new name, a name better than of sons and of daughters," even a name "among the living in Jerusalem:" they were marked among the rolls of his chosen, redeemed, and sanctified ones. By their zeal, uprightness, integrity, and their

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<sup>1</sup> Preached on a sacramental occasion at Strathmiglo, Monday, June 3, 1714.

"The Whole Works of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine: Consisting of Sermons and Discourses. To which is Added, an enlarged memoir of the Author, by the Rev. D. Fraser," Volume 1 (of 3). Philadelphia: Wm. S. & A. Young, 1836. pp 37 to 63.

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honest appearance for God, in that degenerate day and place, they had distinguished themselves from others, and so purchased a name to themselves; and they were known to men as well as unto God: “The Lord knoweth the righteous;” and he knows them by name, they are marked out among others. (2.) They are described by their paucity; they are a few names. They were comparatively few, when laid in the balance with the multitude and bulk of carnal secure professors in this church; there was but a small part of them that had kept themselves free of the corruptions and defections of that church, and that had “not bowed the knee unto Baal.” (3.) They are described from the place of their residence, *Sardis*, one of the seven churches of the Lesser Asia. The expression here is observable, *A few names even in Sardis*. Christ’s character of this church, in the close of the first verse, was, that they were generally dead, though they had a name to live: “But,” as if he had said, “though the generality of this church he dead, yet even there I have a few lively and tender Christians.” But then, 3. Notice the ground on which the commendation runs; they have kept their garments clean, or, *have not defiled their garments*. Perhaps there may be an allusion in this expression to the Jews, who were not to come near any thing that was unclean, by the law of Moses, or to touch them with their garments, lest they should be defiled: or it may allude to the practice of the eastern countries, who used to gird up their long garments, to keep them from being defiled, or spotted. The meaning is, that this little remnant in Sardis had maintained their integrity, like Job; they were “perfect and upright men,” men that “feared God, and eschewed evil;” they had not complied with the abounding errors and corruptions of their day, but “exercised themselves to keep consciences void of offence towards God and man.” When others were sleeping, they were waking, about their work; when others in that church were dead and secure, they were lively. And so much for the commendation given by Christ to this remnant. *Secondly*, In the words we have a reward, or rather we may call it a consolatory promise made to this little remnant: *They shall walk with me in white*. Perhaps the expression may allude to the practice of the Romans, who clothed their nobility, at any solemnity, in white: or to their conquerors, who triumphed, upon any victory obtained, in white garments; or to the priests under the law, who ministered in the temple in white garments. The meaning is, *They shall walk with me in white*; that is, “They shall be admitted to the immediate enjoyment of fellowship and communion with me, and be partakers of my glory in heaven through eternity.” But the import of the expression may be more fully spoken to afterward. *Thirdly*, In the words we have the reason and ground why the Lord puts such a difference between his remnant and others, *For they are worthy*; that is, valuable, and excellent persons, as Solomon speaks, “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.” Not as if

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they had any worthiness or excellency in themselves beyond others by nature; no, no; “They are children of wrath and condemnation, even as others;” but they are made worthy by justifying and sanctifying grace, by imputed righteousness and inherent holiness. Some render the word, “For they are meet:” so the word is rendered, Matth. 3:8: “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.” So here the Lord promises, that they who keep their garments clean *should walk with him in white*; why, because it is meet or suitable it should be so, that they who are holy here, should be happy hereafter.

Doct. “That although there be but few in a visible church that keep their garments clean in a declining time, yet these few are highly valued by Christ, and shall be admitted to partake of his glory in heaven.”

This doctrine I take to be the scope of the verse, *Thou hast a few names*, &c. In discoursing on this point, I shall endeavour, through divine assistance, to do these six things: —

- I. Offer a few propositions concerning this little remnant.
- II. Show that Christ has a high value for this remnant; they are worthy in his esteem.
- III. What is imported in their keeping their garments clean.
- IV. What it is to walk with Christ in white.
- V. Inquire into the connexion between the duty and privilege.
- VI. Apply the whole.

I. The *first* thing is, to offer a few propositions concerning this remnant, who are said to *keep their garments clean*; and you may take these few following.

1. That God the Father gave a remnant to Christ of the posterity of Adam, in the covenant of redemption, to be ransomed and redeemed by him, from that woe and wrath, into which Adam, by his apostacy, had involved himself and all his posterity. That such a remnant was gifted to Christ by the Father, is plain from John 17; where Christ in his prayer frequently speaks of those that the Father gave him, particularly ver. 6: “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.” He promised to him, for his encouragement in that great undertaking, that he should have “a seed to serve him,” and “see of the travail of his soul.”

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2. The Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, in the fulness of time, took on the nature of man, and in our nature obeyed the law, and died in the room and stead of this remnant which the Father gave him. He did not obey the law, and satisfy justice for the whole world, or for all men, as Arminians talk; no; but he died for a select number. Hence he is said to “lay down his life for his *sheep*,” and not for the goats. And as his death, so his intercession is confined to this remnant, as is plain from John 17:9: “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.”

3. This redeemed remnant are, in God’s own time, sooner or later, under the ministry of gospel–ordinances, determined, by the power and efficacy of divine grace, to close with Christ, upon the call of the gospel, and to go in to the blessed contrivance of salvation and redemption through him: he translates them, in a day of his power, “out of darkness into his marvellous light, and into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Not one of this elected remnant, but shall in due time be brought home; for “whom he did predestinate, them he also called.”

4. God’s remnant are a holy people. They are a set of men that study to keep clean garments; they study to “purify themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord;” and therefore called “the people of his holiness,” Isa. 63:18. Holiness is the design of their election; for” he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.” Holiness is the design of their redemption by Christ Jesus: “He hath redeemed us from all iniquity, and purified unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” Tit. 2:14. Holiness is the design of their effectual calling: “For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness; and he hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling.” So that, I say, God’s remnant are a holy remnant.

5. The number of this remnant is but small; there are but a *few names in Sardis, that have not defiled their garments*. Christ’s flock is but a *little flock*. It is indeed a great flock, and an “innumerable multitude,” abstractly considered: but considered comparatively, or when laid in the balance with the droves and multitudes of the wicked, it is but a little flock, and a small remnant. They are few that are elected; “for many are called, but few are chosen;” they are few that are redeemed; it is only God’s elect that are “bought with a price:” they are few that are effectually called; for “to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Few that hold out in the time of temptation; but *seven thousand* among all the thousands of Israel “that have not bowed the knee to Baal.”

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6. Although they be but few, yet in the worst of times God has always some of this remnant, who cleave to him and his way, even when all about them are corrupting their ways. He had a Lot in Sodom, whose righteous soul was vexed with the abominations of the place; he has a remnant of mourners in Jerusalem, when the whole city was defiled with wickedness; he has his *two witnesses* to bear testimony to his truths, when “the whole world is wondering after the beast,” and over-run with Antichristian darkness and idolatry.

7. *Lastly*, God has a special eye of favour and kindness on this remnant, in a sinful and declining time. He has “a mark set upon the men that sigh and cry for the abominations in Jerusalem;” his “eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him,” &c. But this leads me to,

II. The *second* thing proposed, which was to show, *that Christ has a high value for this remnant*. They are the worthies of the world in his esteem, however they be disesteemed and undervalued by the world. This will appear from these following considerations: —

1. Consider what an account he makes of them, when compared with the rest of the world. He values them so highly, that he will give whole nations and kingdoms of the wicked for their ransom: Isa. 43:4: “Ever since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee; and I gave men for thee,” &c.; that is, he will sacrifice whole nations and kingdoms of wicked men, before he be bereft of his little remnant. The scriptures are very full to this purpose. His remnant is the gold, the rest of the world are but dross: “Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross,” Psal. 119:119: but “the precious sons of Zion are comparable to fine gold,” Lam. 4:2; not only gold, but fine gold, polished by the hand of the Spirit. Again, his little remnant is the wheat, but the rest of the world are the chaff; and “What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?” When he “comes with his fan in his hand, he will gather his wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with fire that is unquenchable,” Matth. 3:12. His little remnant is the good corn, but the wicked are the tares; and he will say to his reapers at the last judgment, “Gather the tares together, and bind them in bundles to burn them;” but, “Gather the good corn into my barn.” His remnant are his sheep, but the rest are the goats; and he will say to the sheep on his right hand, “Come, ye blessed;” but to the goats he will say, “Depart, ye cursed.” His remnant are his vessels of honour, whom he sets by as plenshing to garnish “the house not made with hands;” but the wicked are vessels of wrath, whom he “will break in

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pieces as a potter's vessel," and cast into the furnace of his anger. Thus, I say, that they are worthy in his esteem, is evident from the account he makes of them, when laid in the balance with others. That this little remnant are worthy in his esteem, is evident from the account he makes of them when laid in the balance with others.

2. That this little remnant are worthy on Christ's account, will appear, if we consider the names and appellations that he gives them. He sometimes calls them his *love*, his *dove*, his *undefiled*, his *Hephzibah*, his *Beulah*, his *Jedidiahs*, the very darlings of his heart. He calls them sometimes his *jewels*: Mal. 3:17: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." He calls them the very *apple of his eye*, the most tender part of the body: and the eyelid of his special providence doth cover them. Yes, such is the value that he has for them, that he calls them *himself* and speaks of them as if he and they were but one: "Saul, Saul," says the Lord, "why persecutest thou me?"

3. Consider the endeared relations they stand under to him; and from thence you will see, that they cannot but be worthy in his esteem. There is a legal, a moral, and a mystical union between him and them. He is their Head, and they are his members; he is the Root, and they are the branches that grow upon him; he is the Husband, and they are his spouse and bride; "Thy Maker is thy husband;" he is their Father, and they are his children; he is their Elder Brother, and they are his younger brethren; he is Heir of all things, and he makes them joint-heirs with himself of his heavenly kingdom; he is their Advocate, and they are his clients; he is their King, and they are his subjects.

4. They cannot but be worthy in his esteem, if you consider how much he values not only their persons, but whatever pertains to them. He values their names; *I have a few names in Sardis*; he keeps them among the records of heaven, and has them written in the Lamb's book of life. He values their prayers: Cant. 2:14: "O, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, let me hear thy voice; for it is sweet." The prayers of the wicked are like the howling of dogs to him; but the prayers of the upright remnant are his delight. He values their tears, and "puts them into his bottle;" he, as it were, gathers every drop from their eyes: "I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears," saith the Lord to Hezekiah. He values their blood: Psal. 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints:" and they that shed their blood, "he will give them blood to drink."

5. *Lastly*, That they are worthy in his esteem, appears from what he does for them. He remembered them in their low estate, and set his love on them when

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they were wallowing in their blood. He has loved them “with an everlasting love,” an unalterable love, with an ardent love; his love to them “is strong as death: he has redeemed them with his blood; for we are not redeemed by corruptible things, such as silver and gold,” &c. “He hath loved us and washed us with his own blood,” Rev. 1:5. He confers many excellent privileges upon them. They have an excellent pardon, it being full, final and irrevocable, Heb. 8:12. They have an excellent “peace, which passes all understanding;” an excellent joy, being “unspeakable, and full of glory;” excellent food; they “eat of the hidden manna;” have access to an excellent throne, “with boldness,” Heb. 4:16. They have excellent communion, even “fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” They have the interposition of an excellent Mediator, even Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. They have an excellent guard attending them; they are guarded with the divine attributes, even “as the mountains are about Jerusalem;” guarded with the “twenty thousand chariots of angels,” Mahanaim, “the two hosts of God.” They have an excellent store-house, even the “whole fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Christ. They are clothed with excellent robes, even “the garments of salvation, and robes of righteousness.” They are “heirs of an everlasting inheritance, that is incorruptible and undefiled; yea, heirs with God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.” And, to crown all, they have excellent security for all this; the word of God, his covenant, his oath, his blood, and the earnest of his Spirit. From all which it appears, what a high value he has for them, and how worthy they are in his account and reckoning.

III. The *third* thing proposed was, to *inquire into what is imported in the remnant keeping their garments clean.* And,

1. It imports, that God’s remnant are clothed, or, that they have garments given them: they are not naked, like the rest of the world. And there is a two-fold garment with which God’s remnant are arrayed; namely, a garment of imputed righteousness and a garment of inherent holiness. By the first, all their iniquities are covered, and they screened from the curse and condemnation of the law, and the stroke of avenging justice. By the last, namely, the garment of inherent holiness, their souls are beautified and adorned, the image of God restored, and they, like “the King’s daughter,” made “all glorious within.” And it is the last of these that is here principally intended.

2. It imports, that the garment which God gives his remnant is a pure and a cleanly robe; and therefore called *white raiment*, Rev. 3:18; and *fine linen*, chap. 19:8. Speaking of the bride, *the Lamb’s wife*, it is said, that “to her was granted,

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that she should be arrayed in fine linen, pure and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.” So that you see *white* is the livery with which Christ clothes his little remnant: and, Rev. 7:9, they are said to be “clothed with white robes.”

3. That sin is of a defiling and polluting nature. As mire and filth defile our garments, so does sin defile and pollute our souls, and render us vile and loathsome in the sight of God. Hence it is commonly called *uncleanness*; Zech. 13:1: “There is a fountain opened to the house of David, to take away sin and uncleanness.” It is the abominable thing which God’s soul doth hate, and is more loathsome in his sight, than the most detestable things in nature are to us.

4. That it may be the lot of the Lord’s people to live and walk among a people, the generality of whom are polluting and defiling themselves; for this is the commendation of the remnant here, that though the body of this church was corrupted, yet they had not gone along with them. Thus it fared with Noah in the old world, and with Lot in Sodom; and the prophet Isaiah, (chap 6.) cries out, “I dwell in the midst of a people of polluted lips.”

5. That even God’s remnant are not without danger of defiling themselves with the sins and defections of their day. Sin comes gilded with such fair and plausible pretences, and backed with such powerful motives and arguments, that even some of God’s own remnant are not only in danger, but some of them may be actually ensnared and defiled therewith; and, no doubt, some that had the root of the matter in Sardis, were tainted with the corruptions of that church; as I doubt not but many in our own church, who have made very wide steps, are, notwithstanding, dear and near to God.

6. That foul garments are very unbecoming and unsuitable to God’s remnant; for they that “name the name of Christ,” and profess to be his friends and favourers, are bound to “depart from all iniquity.” It brings up a reproach on religion, and makes “the name of God to be blasphemed,” when any of God’s remnant make a wrong step; as you see in the case of David: his murder and adultery opened the mouths of the wicked in his day, and made “the enemy to blaspheme.” And I am sure it cannot but be bitter to any that belong to God, when, through their untenderness, “the way of God is evil spoken of.”

7. A careful study of universal obedience to all known and commanded duties. God’s remnant are of David’s mind and principle; they “have a respect to all God’s commandments;” his law is the rule and standard of their walk; it is a “light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths:” and they are always breathing after more and more conformity to it, saying, with David, “O that my ways were

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directed to keep thy statutes .” They study to have a gospel–adorning conversation, and that “their light may so shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father which is in heaven.”

8. A holy caution and tenderness in guarding against all sin, especially the prevailing sins of the day and generation in which they live. They will not “walk according to the course of this world, but they are transformed by the renewing of their minds;” they keep at a distance from common defections, errors in doctrine, profanity in practice, and innovations in the worship of God; they will not so much as give their consent to these abominations; but endeavour, in their station, to oppose them, and give their honest testimony against them. *Keeping of the garments clean*, in a declining time, implies a steady adherence to the truths, laws, and ordinances, of Christ, and the government that he has appointed in his house. Hence they are said to “keep the word of his patience.” They will not sell one hoof of divine truth, no, not though it should cost them the warmest blood of their heart; they will “buy the truth” at any rate, but sell it at no rate. It implies, that they have supplies of covenanted strength given them, to uphold and keep them from defiling their garments: for they are not able to keep themselves; no, “The way of man is not in himself;” it is “the Lord that keepeth the feet of his saints,” when “the wicked shall be silent in darkness;” yea, they “are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation,” 1 Pet. 1:5: which implies, a keeping them as in a garrison: “The Lord Jehovah is their strength,” and the fortifications of rocks round about them.

9. *Lastly*, It imports the mortification of sin in the root and fruit of it, together with a holy care to have grace improved and exercised, till it be crowned with glory; for “he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself,” &c. And thus you see what is imported in keeping of the garments clean.

*IV.* The *fourth* thing proposed, was, to *inquire a little into the import of the consolatory promise made to the remnant that keep their garments clean; They shall walk with me in white*, saith the Lord: that is, as I told you in the explication of the words, “they shall be admitted to share of my glory at death and judgment.” But I shall endeavour more particularly to inquire into the import of this promise. And, 1. What is imported in walking with Christ? And, 2. What in walking with him in white?

*First*, What is imported in walking with him?

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1. It necessarily supposes the soul's subsistence in a separate state, or after its separation from the body; otherwise it could not be said to *walk with him*. This is one of the fundamental truths of our religion, which Christ himself proved and maintained against the Sadducees, from that scripture, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; God is not," says he, "the God of the dead, but of the living." No sooner are the souls of God's remnant divorced from their bodies, but, by the ministry of angels, they are carried into Abraham's bosom.

2. Their walking with Christ, not only supposes the soul's existence in a separate state, but also its activity, for it *walks* with Christ. The spirits of just men, upon their separation from the body, are made perfect, and so perfect, "as they serve him day and night in his holy temple," with infinitely more activity and liveliness, than when they were cooped up in the prison of the body; which, in this state of sin and imperfection, is a dead weight, as it were, upon the soul, in the service of God.

3. Their walking with Christ implies perfect peace and agreement between Christ and them: for how can two walk together, except they be agreed? The Lord's people, while here, are many times under the affrighting apprehensions of his anger and displeasure, which makes them cry out with David, (Psal. 77:9,) "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah." But there will be no such complaint in heaven: no, no; there will not be the least grudge in his heart, or frown in his countenance, through eternity; nothing but a perpetual smile of his reconciled countenance.

4. It implies intimacy: which is more than agreement; for there may be a good understanding where there is little intimacy and familiarity. But the saints in glory shall *walk with Christ*; that is, he and they will be very intimate one with another. This intimacy is begun on earth; for sometimes, even in the wilderness, he brings them into the chamber of presence, and allows them sweet fellowship with himself; sometimes they "sit down under his shadow with great delight." But this intimate fellowship shall be consummated and completed in heaven, where all veils shall be rent, and all clouds shall be for ever dispelled, and nothing shall remain to interrupt the blessed familiarity betwixt him and them: then that word shall be fully accomplished, John 17:23: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

5. It implies, that they shall be in the presence of Christ: and this is an addition to intimacy; for two intimate friends may be at a distance one from another. The Lord's people, while "in the body," are said to be "absent from the Lord." But then they shall be at home; he and they shall dwell together through

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eternity, in the mansions of glory, the “house not made with hands.” So much Christ tells his disciples, John 12:26: “Where I am, there shall also my servants be.” And, John 14:3: “I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”

6. It implies, that they shall be privileged with the sight of Christ; for two cannot well walk together without seeing one another. Then they shall see the man Christ “exalted at his Father’s right hand, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” This is a privilege ensured to the little remnant by Christ’s own prayer, John 17:24: “Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me. O how ravishing a sight will this be, to behold the glory of Christ in heaven! When he was transfigured upon mount Tabor, “his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light:” what will he be on Mount Zion above, when he shall be seen with all his robes of Glory, and all his heavenly retinue attending him?

7. *They shall walk with me.* It implies, full pleasure, satisfaction, and complacency: for walking is an act of recreation. Heaven is a place of joy and pleasure, Psal. 16:11: “In thy presence there is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. Then the joy of the Lord shall not only enter into them, but they shall “enter into the joy of their Lord:” “The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads.”

*Secondly, What is imported in walking with him in white?*

*Ans.* 1. That then all their black and beggarly garments shall be laid aside. A “body of sin and death “shall not then molest them; they shall not any more complain of the errors of their hearts, or the iniquity of their heels: no, they shall be “presented without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

2. White is a badge of purity and innocence: *They shall walk with me in white*; that is, they shall not only lay aside their beggarly garments, but they shall be “clothed with change of raiment.” Perfect holiness shall then be their ornament: “They shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work;” and, like the King’s daughter, “they shall be all glorious within:” they who had “lain among the pots, shall become like the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold;” yea, “they shall shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

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3. White is a badge of victory, as we told you in the explication of the words, Rev. 7:9; the triumphant company there, “of all nations, tongues, and kindreds, stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,” as a sign of their complete victory over all their enemies, whether outward or inward. Sin is an enemy that the believer has many a hot conflict with, while here; but in heaven, “the inhabitants are all forgiven their iniquities;” there is no more sin, Rev. 22. As for Satan, that grand enemy, that went about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour them, they shall then tread him under their feet: “Know ye not that the saints shall judge angels?” saith the apostle. And as for the world, they shall never any more be ensnared either with its frowns or flatteries.

4. White is a badge of honour. The Romans clothed their nobility in white, as you heard. O what honour is reserved for the saints of God, his little remnant! They shall be honoured with a place among them that stand by in the new Jerusalem; yea, they shall be honoured with the *white stone* and the *new name*; they shall sit with Christ upon his throne, Rev. 3:21. They shall be honoured with a crown of burnished glory: “When the chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away.” They shall be honoured with a kingdom: “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.” They shall be honoured to be assessors with Christ at the last judgment: “Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? “They will applaud the Judge in all his proceedings, and cry, “True and righteous are thy judgments, Lord God Almighty;” then that passage will be fully accomplished, Psal. 149:5–9: “Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written. This honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord.”

5. White was a garment appointed for the priests under the law, when they were to minister about holy things. The saints of God are all priests, Rev. 1:5,6: “Unto him that loved us, and hath made us kings and priests unto God.” And as priests in the heavenly temple, their continual work shall be, to offer up eternal sacrifices of praise to God and the Lamb. There every bird in every bush shall sing, and say, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood. Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

6. We find the angels frequently appearing in white. Acts 1:10; while the disciples are looking towards heaven after their exalted Lord, “behold two men,”

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that is, two angels in the form of men, “stood by them in white apparel.” So the saints *shall walk with Christ in white*; they shall be like the angels of heaven: Matth. 22:30: “In the resurrection, they are as the angels of God in heaven.” The original word signifies, they shall be *equal to angels*, or *angels’ mates*. Like angels, they shall not be liable to hunger, thirst, weariness, or such bodily infirmities. The angels are said to “behold the face of God in heaven;” so shall ye who are God’s little remnant: “Now ye see darkly, as through a glass; but then ye shall see face to face.” The angels serve God with the greatest voluntariness and freedom, with the greatest activity and nimbleness; for “he maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire;” so shall the saints in glory; they shall do the will of God, as it is done by the angels in heaven.

7. We find Christ sometimes appearing in white, particularly at his transfiguration: “His countenance did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And so it may import this much, they *shall walk with me in white*; that is, there shall be a blessed conformity between them and me in glory. Rev. 19:11, 14. Christ is there represented as mounted upon “a white horse,” and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, “clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” Christ, and all his redeemed company, shall be clothed with the same livery: 1 John 3:2: “When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Their souls shall resemble him in righteousness and true holiness; yea, “their vile bodies shall be made like unto his glorious body.”

8. *Lastly*, White has a great reflection of light with it when the sun shines upon it. O how bright and dazzling will the glory of the saints be in that day, when the Sun of righteousness shall shine upon them with a meridian splendour! Christ will then “be admired in his saints;” for they shall “shine forth like the sun, and like the brightness of the firmament:” “the beauty of the Lord their God will then be upon them;” and such beauty as shall eternally astonish and confound the wicked, who contemned them upon earth, and did not reckon them worthy to sit with the dogs of their flock.” And this much for the fourth thing.

V. The fifth thing was, to *inquire into the connexion between the duty and the privilege, between keeping the garments clean, and walking with Christ in white*.

1. Then, negatively, you would know, that there is no connexion of merit, as if our *keeping of clean garments* did deserve that we should *walk with Christ in white*: no, no; let “every mouth be stopped; for all the world is guilty before God;” and therefore can merit nothing but wrath and vengeance at the hand of God. “By

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the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified,” or saved; it is by the merits of Christ, his doing and dying, as the surety of the little remnant, that they are brought *to walk with him in white*. But though there be no connexion of merit, yet,

2. And positively, there is, *1st*, A connexion of decree or purpose in this matter. God, by an unalterable decree, has ordained, that they who are holy shall be happy; that *they who keep their garments clean shall walk with him in white*. 2 Thess. 2:13: “God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” *2dly*, there is a connexion of promise, as well as of purpose. You have them linked together in this promise in the text, and every where almost through the scriptures of truth. You have a cluster of these promises in the second and third of the Revelation: “To him that overcometh,” which is the same thing with keeping the garments clean, “will I give to eat of the hidden manna.” And this link is so strong, that it can never be broken; for it is one of these “immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie.” *3dly*, There is a connexion of meetness or congruity. It is suitable, that these who are holy should be happy; that they who have white garments here, should be clothed with white hereafter. It is suitable to the nature of God for he “cannot behold iniquity, neither can evil dwell with him:” none but holy ones shall enjoy a holy God. It is suitable to the work of heaven; for “no unclean thing can enter the gates of the new Jerusalem;” to this purpose is the last clause of our text, *They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy, or meet*, as the word may be rendered, Col. 1:12: “Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” *4thly*, There is a connexion of evidence. Holiness, or clean garments, is an evidence of the soul’s title or claim to glory; for “whom he sanctified, them he also glorified.” “Who is the man that shall ascend into the hill of God? and who shall stand in his holy place?” The answer is, “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart,” Psal. 24:3, 4. *5thly*, There is a connexion of legacy. Christ, by his latter will, has ensured the kingdom to his little remnant that keep their garments clean: Luke 22:28, 29: “Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.”

VI. The *sixth* thing is the application. And the first use shall be of information, in these particulars.

1. See hence, holiness is to be studied and pursued, however it may be ridiculed and mocked at by a profane world; for it is they that *do not defile their garments that shall walk with Christ in white*. The blind world is ready to

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imagine, that the way to heaven is not so strait and narrow as ministers call it; that there needs not be so much ado, and all is but a piece of needless nicety, preciseness, and the like. But remember, that strict holiness will carry the day at the long-run; and you that are for a lax religion, and a broad way to heaven, will at length land in hell, unless mercy and repentance prevent. “Walk circumspectly,” therefore, “not as fools, but as wise,” &c.

2. See from this doctrine, that they labour under a damnable mistake, who think or say, that it is a vain or unprofitable thing to serve the Lord, and to keep his way; for they that *Walk with Christ* here, shall partake of his glory hereafter: “Godliness,” saith the apostle, “is great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Religion carries a reward in its bosom, beside the reward that is prepared for the saint in the life to come. “In keeping of thy commandments,” says David, “there is a great reward. O how great is the goodness thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!” &c. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,” 1 Cor. 2:9.

3. We may see, that gospel-purity and holiness is not such a common thing as the world apprehend; for there are but *a few names*, few persons that are helped to *keep their garments clean*. My friends, beware of taking every thing for holiness that has the shadow and appearance of it. Some are ready to think, that their garments are clean enough, if they keep free of gross scandalous outbreakings, such as lying, swearing, stealing, uncleanness, and the like; but the proud Pharisee came this length, who said, “God, I thank thee, I am not as other men; I am no extortioner, adulterer, or injurious person,” &c. Some think their garments clean, if they be moral in their walk, just in their dealings between man and man. I wish, indeed, there were more morality among these that profess the name of Christ. But, O sirs, mere morality, in the highest degree now attainable, comes infinitely short of the nature of true holiness; it is quite another thing: and to put morality in the room of gospel-holiness, is in effect to renounce Christ and the covenant of grace, and to run back to Adam’s covenant for life and salvation. Some think their garments clean enough, because of some personal reformation that they have made in their outward walk; they have left off lying, swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like. But this will not amount to true holiness. Herod reformed his life, and did many things through the ministry of John the Baptist, and yet beheaded him at last. Some reckon upon their diligence in the outward duties of religion: they read, hear, pray, communicate, and run the round of outward performances, and thereupon conclude, that they are holy persons. But who more diligent in the externals of religion than the Pharisees, who “fasted

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twice a week, and gave tithes of all that they possessed?” and yet Christ tells us, that “except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” So that, I say, gospel-holiness is no common thing.

4. See hence, that the division of mankind, and particularly of these that live in the visible church, between Christ and the devil, is very unequal as to the number; for the greatest part even of the visible church, go to the devil’s share, for there are *but a few names in Sardis that do not defile their garments*. Christ’s flock is a *little flock*: “I will take them one of a city, and two of a family,” or tribe, “and bring them to Zion.” It is true, they will be a great company, and make a goodly appearance, when they shall be gathered by the angels from the four winds of heaven; but yet they are only like the gleanings after the vintage, in comparison of the vast multitudes of mankind that run in the broad way to destruction.

5. See hence what it is that sweetens the pale countenance of the king of terrors to believers; it is this, they see that upon the back of death, they will be admitted to *walk with Christ in while*. This made the apostle to long so vehemently for his dissolution, saying, “I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ.” Faith’s views and prospect of this makes the believer to triumph over death, as a vanquished and slain enemy, Saying, “O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?”

6 See hence what they may expect upon the back of death, who habitually wallow in the puddle of sin. It is only they that have *clean garments*, that *shall walk with Christ* in glory; and therefore it inevitably follows, that the gates of glory shall be shut upon you: Rev. 21:27: “There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie.” And ver. 8: “The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” O sirs! You that live and die in this condition, with the guilt and filth of sin and lying on your consciences, you will find a sting in death which will stick in your souls through eternity: for it is only God’s little remnant, “whose garments are washed and made white in the blood of the lamb,” that shall triumph with him in glory; while you that wallow in sin now, shall be found flames of Tophet.

7. See hence, that honesty is the best policy in a declining time; for it is only the honest-hearted remnant that shall walk with Christ above. Keep God’s ways, sirs, whatever come; and beware of sinful shifts to shun the cross: “They that walk uprightly shall walk surely;” whereas, they who think to shun danger by

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shifting duty, really run themselves into greater danger and inconveniencies, than those which they imagined to avoid.

USE 2*d*, may be of *lamentation*, that there are so many foul garments among us at this day. Alas! sirs, may we not say, that there are but *a few names* in Scotland, that have not defiled their garments with the corruptions and pollutions of the time? All ranks have corrupted their ways, magistrates, ministers, and people. May not the character which God gave of Israel of old, be too justly applied to us, Isa. 1:4: that we are “a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, who have provoked the holy One of Israel unto anger, and are gone away backward?” I cannot now stand to show wherein we have defiled our garments. Has not the land been defiled with the blood of many of the saints of God under the late reigns, from which it is not as yet purged? Is not the whole land defiled with breach of solemn national engagements, while these solemn covenants have been scandalously burnt in the capital city of the nation, and that by the countenance and command of authority? And are there not many at this day amongst us, who profess to be of the communion of the church of Scotland, that renounce and disown the obligation of these solemn ties? Are not many defiling their garments with Arminian and Socinian heresies? others with a superstitious worship, which, to the reproach of our holy religion, is tolerated among us by law? Have not many defiled their garments in our land, with a customary swearing by the name of God? Others by jesting with God in the matter of solemn oaths, abjuring a Popish Pretender, with a design to put themselves in a better capacity to do him service, and promote his interest? Others have, even in this province, lately defiled their garments, by putting their hands to scandalous libels, by way of address to the sovereign: in which they represent ministers as rebels against authority, for appointing fasts, and preaching against the sins of the time, and for giving warning to people of the tokens of God’s anger that are visible among us. And, alas! may we not all lament, that we have defiled our garments, by the breach of sacramental and sick-bed vows? But I must not stand on these things.

USE 3*d*, is of *trial* and *examination*. Try, sirs, whether you be among God’s little remnant, that are keeping their garments clean, when all round about you are defiling themselves. And, for your trial, I offer you the few following marks of God’s remnant: —

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1. God's remnant are a people to whom Christ is exceedingly precious. His very *name* is unto them *as ointment poured forth*; they love to hear of him, they love to speak of him, and their meditations of him are sweet; "the desire of their soul is unto him, and the remembrance of his name;" and they are ready to say with David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" &c., or with Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

2. God's remnant are a people that do not reckon themselves at home while they are here. This is not their proper country; but "they look for a better country, that is a heavenly," Heb. 11:16. They "look for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," ver. 16. See this to be the character of God's remnant, ver. 13; the apostle tells us of these worthies, that "they confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." This confession David makes, Psal. 119:19: "I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me." So then, if your home be here, you are none of God's remnant; if your thoughts and affections be confined within the narrow limits of time. God's remnant are a people that are "coming up from the wilderness;" they are always ascending and mounting heavenward, in their affections and desires: they "look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen."

3. God's remnant are a people that speak and think much on God. See this to be their character, Mal. 3:16: "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Try yourselves by this. It is the character of the wicked, that "God is not in all their thoughts;" and he is as seldom in their mouths, except in a way of profanation. But God's remnant, I say, think much on God; and their thoughts of God, O how precious are they to their souls! Psal. 139:17; and out of the abundance of their hearts their mouths speak honourably and reverently of him. They will speak to one another of his word, of his work's, of his providences, and of his ordinances; their "lips are like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh."

4. God's remnant are a praying people: Psal. 24:6: "This is the generation that seek thy face, O Jacob!" or, "O God of Jacob!" whereas it is given as the character of the wicked, Psal. 14:4, that they *call not upon God*. They either live in the total neglect of this duty; or, if they do it at all, it is in a hypocritical, formal, and overly manner. But God's remnant seek the face of God; they seek him with fervency, with *truth in the inward parts*; they seek him believingly; they seek him constantly and perseveringly, which the hypocrite will not do: Job 27:10: "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?"

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5. God's remnant are a mourning people. They mourn over their own sins, in the first place: Ezek. 7:16. The remnant of Jacob "that escape, they shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, every one mourning for their iniquity." They mourn over the errors of their hearts, and the iniquity of their lives, and are ready to cry out, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold on me," &c. And then they mourn, not only for their own personal sins, but for public sins; the sins of others, by which the land is defiled: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law; I beheld transgressors, and was grieved." That this is the character of God's remnant, you may see from Ezek. 9:4: "Go through the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and cry for all the abominations done in the midst thereof." And then they mourn for the calamities and desolations of Zion, when they see "the boar out of the wood wasting her, and the wild beasts out of the forest devouring her:" Psal. 137:1: "By the rivers of Bahylon we sat down, and wept when we remembered Zion." And then they mourn when they see ordinances corrupted, or God's candlestick in any measure removed, the Lord's people deprived of their wonted freedom and liberty in waiting upon him in these galleries: Zeph. 3:18: "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, to whom the reproach of it was a burden."

6. God's remnant are a people that will rather venture upon suffering than sinning. They rather venture to run the risk of displeasing kings and queens, potentates and parliaments, than venture upon the displeasing of God: they can rather venture on the rack of outward torments, than upon the rack of an accusing conscience. See this to be the character of God's remnant in the three children, Dan. 3 &c.; and Moses, (Heb. 9:27,) "who forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." Many other marks of God's remnant might be insisted upon. They are a people that cannot live without Christ, and fellowship and communion with him, Cant. 3:1; Job 23:3: "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" They are a people that will not rest in their attainments, but press towards the uttermost of grace and holiness, Phil. 3:12. They press after more nearness to Christ, Cant. 8:1. They love holiness for itself, Psal. 119:140. Christ for himself; yea, they love heaven for Christ and holiness. In a word, they love holiness, be the event what it will.

USE 4, is of exhortation. Is it so, that God's remnant, who are privileged to *walk with Christ in white*, are such as keep their garments clean? O then! let me exhort all hearing me, particularly you who have been professing yourselves among the number of God's remnant, by drawing near to him in the holy

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ordinance of his supper; let me, I say, exhort you to keep your garments clean; be exhorted to the study of true gospel–holiness, both in heart and life. And, by way of motive, I would have you to consider these things following.

MOTIVE 1. Consider, that you are in continual hazard of defiling your garments. You are in danger from every quarter: As,

*1st*, You are in danger from the world. There are many things in the world that are of a very defiling and polluting nature. There are many polluting opinions broached in the world, which go very glib away with nature, and which nature is very ready to catch at and embrace; as, That God is altogether made up of mercy, and will never damn any of his creatures: That Christ died for all: That morality runs parallel with grace: That empty profession is enough to save folk: That it is better to keep the body whole than the conscience pure: That to be zealous for religion is to be “righteous overmuch.” These, and many other such opinions, are of a polluting nature; and we are in danger of defiling ourselves with them. And then, the examples of the world are very infectious; the examples of magistrates and ministers, as you see from Hos. 5:1: “hear ye this, O priests; give ye ear, O house of the king; because ye have been a snare on Mizpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor.” And then you are in danger from the example of professors, who, perhaps, have a great name for religion in the church of God. O! Will you say, such a man doth so and so, and why may not I do it also? But remember, sirs, that there are many hypocrites in the church of God, that go under a mask of religion. And supposing them to have the reality of grace, yet they may be under a spiritual decay; they may be sadly deserted of God: And do you think, that in this case they are to be imitated? And besides, suppose them to be ever such eminent persons, yet, according to the apostle’s direction, we are to be followers of them no farther than they are followers of Christ. And besides, we are in danger from the frowns and flatteries of the world. If the world cannot get us allured into sin by its enticing promises, it will study to drive us into a compliance, by threats of trouble and persecution. Thus, I say, we are in imminent danger from the world. The apostle James exhorts us to “keep ourselves unspotted from the world,” chap. 1:27.

*2dly*, You are in danger from Satan, that subtle and malicious enemy, who “goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” He waits for your halting, and is always ready to trip up your heels. And I assure you, sirs, if you have got any love–token from the Lord at this occasion, this enemy will do his best, or worst rather, to you and it. It was but a little after Peter had been feasting with Christ, at this holy ordinance of the supper, that Christ told him, (Luke 22:31,) “Simon, Simon, Satan hath sought to winnow thee as wheat.” And

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therefore you had need to be on your guard as to this enemy, and labour “not to be ignorant of his devices.”

*3dly*, You are in danger of defiling your garments from your own hearts. My friends, would not that city be exposed to great danger, which is not only besieged with an army from without, but has a strong and powerful party within, that keeps a correspondence with the enemy without, and is ready to comply with all his demands? Just so is it with us: we are not only besieged with the world, and with Satan, who are our enemies without; but there is a strong party of indwelling sin and corruption within us, that is ready, upon all occasions, to betray us into our enemies’ hands. This made David cry out, “Who can understand his errors?” and Paul, “Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death!” So much for the first motive.

MOT. 2. By keeping your garments clean, you comply and fall in with God’s great design in all his dispensations towards you, whether more immediate or mediate. God’s great end in all is to bring his people to the study of gospel-purity and holiness. This is the design of his electing some of the posterity of Adam from all eternity: Eph. 1:4: “He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.” It is a very foolish way of arguing that some people have: If I be elected, I shall be saved, let me live as I list; for God, like all other wise agents, not only decrees the end, but the means leading to that end. Now, holiness is the King’s high-way, in which he has ordained and decreed to bring the elect to glory: 2 Thes. 2:13: “God hath chosen us from the beginning to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” This is the design of redemption. Christ did not die, sirs, to purchase a latitude for us to sin: No, no: Tit. 2:14: “He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” This is the design of our creation. Why did you get a being, but that you might glorify and serve God? “This people have I formed for myself, that they may show forth my praise.” And this is not only the design of our first, but of our second creation; “for he hath created us in Christ unto good works.” This is the design of our effectual calling; “for God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness:” no; “he hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling.” This is the design of the whole word of God. Why has God privileged us with his statutes and testimonies, but that they may be “a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path,” to keep us out of the polluting ways of sin? Psal. 119:9. “Whereby shalt a young man cleanse his way, but by taking heed thereto, according to thy word?” This is the design of the promises of the word. However carnal persons may make the promises a pillow of security, yet

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God's design in giving them, is to excite his people to keep clean garments: 2 Cor. 7:1: "Dearly beloved, having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness, in the fear of God." This is the design of the threatenings of the word, that so men, knowing the terror of God, may be persuaded to keep at a distance from sin, the abominable thing that his soul hates, and may not defile their garments therewith. This is the design of all providences by which God exercises his people. Why doth God cast thee into the furnace? O man! His design is to purge away thy dross: Isa. 27:9: "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." The Lord chastens us, that we may be "partakers of his holiness," Heb. 12:10. This is the design, not only of cross, but of favourable providences. "The goodness of God" should "lead us to repentance," and lays a deep obligation on us to stand off from sin, which is offensive to our gracious Benefactor. This is the design, not only of all providences, but of all ordinances, and of the whole dispensation of the grace of God in the gospel: Tit. 2:11, 12: "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." This is the design, not only of the preaching of the word, but of the administration of the sacraments. In baptism, we are solemnly devoted to the service of God, and are engaged to walk as those that are called by "the name of Christ," who are bound "to depart from iniquity." And in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we solemnly renew, before God, angels, and men, our baptismal engagements and swear to keep our garments clean from the pollution of sin; and that by laying our hands on the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. This is the design of every frown, and of every smile. Doth God at any time fill thee with "joy and peace in believing?" lifts he up the light of his countenance upon thee? The language of this is, O do not defile thy garments! "God will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not return again to folly." And why doth God at any time bide his face, and leave thee in the dark, but to engage you to more tenderness in time to come, in keeping at a distance from these pollutions, by which he has been provoked to forsake thee? Thus, I say, if you do not keep your garments clean, you counteract the great design of God in all his dispensations towards you. How dangerous is it to be found fighting against God!

MOT. 3. Consider the dismal effects that will follow upon your defiling your garments.

1st, You will ruin your reputation, and render your names unsavoury in the world. And this is no small loss; for "a good name," says Solomon, "is as precious ointment," and renders a man capable to do service to God in his day and

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generation. In Prov. 6:33, it is said of the adulterer, “A wound and dishonour shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away.” When professors of religion, or ministers, defile their garments by sin, especially sins of a public nature, they wound their reputation, being a reproach upon themselves that is not easily wiped away; and not only so, but make the word of the Lord, in their mouths, to be contemned and despised. You may read a scripture for this, Mal. 2:8, 9: It is spoken of the priests of that day, “Ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.”

*2dly*, You will stain and pollute your souls, which you ought to keep pure as a holy temple unto God. And how dangerous a thing this is, you may see from 1 Cor. 3:16, 17: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” My friends, you have been solemnly consecrating your souls and bodies unto God, as his temple; and if any of you shall after this *return with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow, that seemed to be washed, to wallow* again in the puddle of sin, you run a very dreadful risk. Utter “destruction from the Lord, and from the glory of his power,” is abiding all those that are hypocrites in heart. And dreadful temporal destruction from the Lord may over-take even his own children, who defile their garments: “For this cause many are weak and sickly, and many sleep.”

*3dly*, You will break your peace, and mar your comfort. If you keep not your garments clean, you may provoke the Lord to fill you with terrors, and to cast such a spark of hell-fire into your bosoms as shall make you roar, and cry out of broken bones, with David; or, with Job, “The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit.”

*4thly*, You will cast a blot upon religion, and on “the good ways of the Lord.” If you who have been professing to own Christ at his table, shall be found defiling your garments, by lying, swearing, drunkenness, or the like, what will the graceless world say? They will conclude, that professors are but a company of hypocrites; that religion is nothing but a piece of trick and imposture. You will be a blemish to Christian society: “These are spots,” says the apostle, “in your feasts of charity.” And he speaks of some, who, through their untenderness, “made the way of the Lord to be *evil spoken of*.”

*5thly*, You will dishonour Christ, that glorious Master whom you have been professing to own. Hence the Lord complains of the children of Israel, that

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they, by their wickedness, caused his “name to be polluted among the Heathen.” David’s sin made the name of God to be blasphemed and reproached.

*6thly*, By polluting your garments, you will “offend the generation of the righteous;” and “it were better for you that a millstone were hanged about your necks, and ye cast into the midst of the sea, than that ye should offend one of Christ’s little ones.” It is a dangerous thing to grieve the hearts of those that are dear unto God; for God will not grieve their hearts; and *he* will resent it, if any other do it by their untenderness.

*7thly*, You will harden others in their sins. When the wicked see professors, or ministers, going along with them, they conclude, that their way is the best of it, and preferable to the way of religion. Thus, you see the dismal effects that will follow upon your defiling your garments.

MOT. 4. Consider the great advantages that shall accrue to you by keeping your garments clean.

*1st*, It will yield you great peace; peace in life; for “as many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon them.” Peace in the midst of all troubles: “This is our rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience.” Peace at death: Psal. 37:37: “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.” Peace after death. In Isa. 57:2, we are told, that “the righteous,” at death, “enter into peace; they rest upon their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.” Peace at the last judgment. It is only the cleanly remnant to whom the Lord will say then, “Lift up your heads; for the day of *your* redemption draweth nigh.”

*2dly*, By keeping clean garments, you will be in a continual fitness for maintaining fellowship and communion with God in any ordinance of his appointment; for it is the man that “hath clean hands, and a pure heart,” that shall stand on God’s holy hill, and have a place in his tabernacle. And not only so, but it will fill you with a holy boldness and confidence, in your approaches to God in the ordinances of his appointment: Job 11:14, 15: “If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away,” &c.

*3dly*, The influences of ordinances will stay the longer upon you, that you keep your garments clean. What is the reason why the impression of anything of God, that we meet with in ordinances, so soon vanishes, like the morning cloud? The reason is, the untenderness of our walk: we lie down among the pots of sin, and this makes God to withdraw from us. We read of some mountains that are so high, that if men draw figures in the sand upon the tops of them, they will abide

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for many years. The reason is, they are so high, that they are above the winds and rains. O sirs, if we were living and walking on high with God, the impression of ordinances would stay longer with us than they do.

*4thly*, By keeping your garments clean, you will perhaps save the souls of others, and commend religion to them. Hence is that [direction] of Christ, (Matth. 5:10,) “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

*5thly*, By keeping your garments clean, you will find more strength to keep yourselves: “for the way of the Lord is strength to the upright.” If ye keep God’s way, he will “keep you in the hour of temptation,” Rev. 3:10. God will keep you by his power through faith unto salvation.

*6thly*, After a little time is elapsed, ye shall be clothed in white, and walk with Christ in the new Jerusalem, according to his promise in the text.

Now, I conclude all with directions and advices, in order to your keeping of your garments clean.

1. Be persuaded of your own utter inability to keep your garments clean by your own power, or the strength of created grace: for “the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps.”

2. Take care that you be united to Christ, the fountain of holiness; for you do but wash the Ethiopian, while you attempt to make yourselves clean and holy, while you grow on the root of the old Adam. You may indeed “wash the outside of the cup and platter,” but you will remain “filthy still” in the sight of God, till you be created in Christ, the true root of sanctification: “Can a man gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” The tree must be good before the fruit be good.

3. Being united to Christ, you must make daily use of him by faith. Do not think, that, when you have first believed in Christ, your work is done; no, your life must be a life of faith. By faith we live, by faith we stand, by faith we work, by faith we fight; and “whatever we do, in word or deed,” we must “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” You must be always “building up yourselves in your most holy faith,” and going on from faith to faith; and whenever you have, through infirmity, or the prevalency of temptation, defiled your garments, be sure to run by faith unto the blood of sprinkling, that you may get your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.

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4. Set God continually before you, and keep up the impression of his all-seeing eye on your spirits: Psal. 16:8: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

5. Be much in viewing and meditating on the dismal and terrible effects of sin; how it did cast angels out of heaven, Adam out of Paradise, and brought God's curse upon all his posterity; how it brought a deluge on the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah burnt by fire and brimstone; how it made the earth to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

6. If you would keep your garments clean, O then beware of going to the utmost length of Christian liberty; it is dangerous to come too near God's marches. We should take heed to ourselves, even in the use of things that are in themselves lawful; "many things are lawful," but every thing lawful is not at all times "expedient." You would shun every "appearance of evil;" do not stand in the way of temptations, or occasions of sin. And, in particular, take care to avoid evil company; for "can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt?"

7. Beware of giving your consent and countenance to the sins of others; for hereby ye shall be "partakers with them in their sins." We may not only defile our garments by personal sins, but by the sins of others, when we encourage them in an evil way, when we assent or consent to them, or do not faithfully warn and reprove them, or endeavour to reclaim them.

8. *Lastly*, Be importunate with God, at the throne of grace, for guidance and direction; for "unless the Lord keep the city, the watchmen watch in vain." Unless his "grace be sufficient for" us, we will soon be carried down the stream of temptation and corruption; for "the way of man is not in himself." And therefore, I say, plead hard at the throne, that the Lord would keep you, who "keeps the feet of his saints." And for this end plead the promise that he has made to his people, Jer. 32:40: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Zech. 10:12: "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord."

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