



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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The Sin of Resting in Duties

by Thomas Shephard
from *The Sincere Convert*

Eleven Degrees of Resting in Duties

This resting in duties appears in these eleven degrees:—

1. The soul of a poor sinner, if ignorantly bred and brought up, rests confidently in superstitious vanities. Ask a devout Papist how he hopes to be saved; he will answer, by his good works. But inquire, further, What are these good works?

Why, for the most part, superstitious ones of their own inventions, (for the crow thinks her own bird fairest,) as whipping themselves, pilgrimage, fasting, mumbling over their Paternosters, bowing down to images and crosses.

2. Now, these being banished from the church and kingdom, then men stand upon their token profession of the true religion, although they be devils incarnate in their lives. Look up and down the kingdom; you shall see some roaring, drinking, dicing, carding, whoring, in taverns and blind alehouses; others belching out their oaths, their mouths ever casting out, like raging seas, filthy, frothy speeches; others, like Ismaels, scoffing at the best men; yet these are confident they shall be saved. Why, (say they,) they are no Papists; hang them, they will die for their religion, and rather burn than turn again, by the grace of God. Thus the Jews boasted they were Abraham's seed; so our carnal people boast: Am not I a good Protestant? Am not I baptized? Do I not live in the church? And therefore, resting here, hope to be saved. I remember a judge, when one pleaded once with him for his life, that he might not be hanged because he was a gentleman; he told him that therefore he should have the gallows made higher for him: so when you plead, I am a Christian and a good Protestant, (yet you wilt drink, and swear, and whore, neglect prayer, and break God's Sabbath,) and therefore you hope to be saved; I tell you your condemnation shall be greater, and the plagues in hell the heavier.

3. If men have no peace here, then they fly to, and rest in, the goodness of their insides. You will have many a man, whom, if you follow to his chamber, you shall find very devout; and they pray heartily for the mercy of God, and forgiveness of

sins; but follow them out of their chambers, watch their discourses, you shall find it frothy and vain, and now and then powdered with faith and fidelity, and obscene speeches. Watch them when they are offended, you shall see them as angry as wasps, and swell like turkeys, and so spit out their venom like dragons. Watch them in their journeys, and you shall see them shoot into an alehouse, and there swill and swagger, and be familiar with the scum of the country for profaneness, and half drunk, too, sometimes. Watch them on the Lord's day; take them out of the church once, and set aside their best clothes, and they are then the same as at another time; and, because they must not work nor sport that day, they think they may with a good conscience sleep the longer on the morning. Ask, now, such men how they hope to be saved, seeing their lives are so bad; they say, though they make not such shows, they know what good prayers they make in private; their hearts, they say, are good. I tell you, brethren, he that trusts to his own heart and his good desires, and so rests in them, is a fool. I have heard of a man that would haunt the taverns, and theaters, and whore houses at London all day; but he would not dare to go forth without private prayer in a morning, and then would say, at his departure, Now, devil, do your worst; and so used his prayers (as many do) only as charms and spells against the poor, weak, cowardly devil, that they think dares not hurt them, so long as they have good hearts within them, and good prayers in their chambers; and hence they will go near to rail against the preacher as a harsh master, if he do not comfort them with this—that God accepts of their good desires.

4. If their good hearts can not quiet them, but conscience tells them they are unsound without, and rotten at core within, then men fall upon reformation; they will leave their whoring, drinking, cheating, gaming, company-keeping, swearing, and such like roaring sins; and now all the country says he is become a new man, and he himself thinks he shall be saved; (2 Pet. 2:20;) they escape the pollutions of the world, as swine that are escaped and washed from outward filth; yet the swinish nature remains still; like mariners that are going to some dangerous place, ignorantly, if they meet with storms, they go not backward, but cast out their goods that endanger their ship, and so go forward still; so many a man, going toward hell, is forced to cast out his lusts and sins; but he goes on in the same way still for all that. The wildest beasts, (as stags,) if they be kept waking from sleep long, will grow tame; so conscience giving a man no rest for some sins he lives in, he grows tame: he that was a wild gentleman before remains the same man still, only he is made tame now; that is, civil and smooth in his whole course; and hence they rest in reformation, which reformation is, commonly, but from some troublesome sin, and it is because they think it is better following their trade of sin at another market; and hence some men will leave their drinking and whoring, and

turn covetous, because there is more gain at that market; sometimes it is because sin has left them, as an old man.

5. If they can have no rest here, they get into another avenue: they go to their humiliations, repentings, tears, sorrows, and confessions. They hear a man can not be saved by reforming his life, unless he come to afflict his soul too; he must sorrow and weep here, or else cry out in hell hereafter. Hereupon they betake themselves to their sorrows, tears, confession of sins; and now the wind is down, and the tempest is over, and they make themselves safe. They would have repented; that is, the heathen, as Beza speaks, when any wrath was kindled from Heaven, they would go to their sackcloth and sorrows, and so thought to pacify God's anger again; and here they rested. So it is with many a man; many people have sick fits and qualms of conscience, and then they do as crows, that give themselves a vomit by swallowing down some stone when they are sick, and then they are well again; so when men are troubled for their sins, they will give themselves a vomit of prayer, a vomit of confession and humiliation. (Isaiah 58:5.) Hence many, when they can get no good by this medicine, by their sorrows and tears, cast off all again; for, making these things their God and their Christ, they forsake them when they can not save them. (Matt. 3:7.) More are driven to Christ by the sense of the burden of a hard, dead, blind, filthy heart than by the sense of sorrows, because a man rests in the one, that is to say, in sorrows, most commonly, but trembles and flies out of himself when he feels the other. Thus men rest in their repentance; and therefore Augustine has a pretty saying which sounds harsh, that repentance damns more than sin; meaning that thousands did perish by resting in it; and hence we see, among many people, if they have great feelings, they think they are in good favor; if they lack them, they think they are castaways, when they can not mourn nor be affected as once they were, because they rest in them.

6. If they have no rest here, then they turn moral men; that is, strict in all the duties of the moral law, which is a greater matter than reformation or humiliation; that is, they grow very just and square in their dealings with men, and exceeding strict in the duties of the first table toward God, as fasting, prayer, hearing, reading, observing the Sabbath: and thus the Pharisees lived, and hence they are called "the strict sect of the Pharisees." Take heed you mistake me not; I speak not against strictness, but against resting in it; for except your righteousness exceed theirs, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. You shall find these men fly from base persons and places, like the pest houses, commend the best books, cry down the sins of the time, and cry against civil or moral men, (the eye sees not itself,) and cry up zeal and forwardness. Talk with him about many moral duties that are to be done toward God or man, he will speak well about the excellency

and necessity of it, because his trade and skill, whereby he hopes to get his living and earn eternal life, lies there; but speak about Christ, and living by faith in him and from him, and grounding the soul upon the promises, (pieces of evangelical righteousness,) he that is very skillful in any point of controversy is as ignorant almost as a beast, when he is examined here. Hence, if ministers preach against the sins of the time, they commend it for a special sermon, (as it haply deserves, too;) but let him speak of any spiritual, inward, soul-working points, they go away and say he was in their judgment confused and obscure; for their part they understood him not. (Beloved,) pictures are pretty things to look on, and that is all the goodness of them; so these men are, (as Christ looked on and loved the natural young man in the gospel,) and that is all their excellency. You know, in Noah's flood, all that were not in the ark, though they did climb and get to the top of the tallest mountains, they were drowned; so labor to climb never so high in morality, and the duties of both tables, if you enter not into God's ark, the Lord Jesus Christ, you are sure to perish eternally.

7. If they have no rest here in their morality, they grow hot within, and turn marvellously zealous for good causes and courses; and there they stay and warm themselves at their own fire: thus Paul (Phil. 3:6) was zealous, and there rested. They will not live, as many do, like snails in their shells, but rather than they will be damned for want of doing, they are content to give away their estate, children, any thing almost, to get pardon for the sin of their soul. (Micah 6:7.)

8. If they find no help from hence, but are forced to see and say, when they have done all, they are unprofitable servants, and they sin in all that which they do, then they rest in that which is like to evangelical obedience; they think to please God by mourning for their failings in their good duties, desiring to be better, and promising for the time to come to be so, and therein rest. (Deut. 5:29.)

9. If they feel a lack of all these, then they dig within themselves for power to leave sin, power to be more holy and humble, and so think to work out themselves, in time, out of this estate, and so they dig for pearls in their own dunghills, and will not be beholding to the Lord Jesus; to live on him in the want of all; they think to set up themselves out of their own stock, without Jesus Christ, and so, as the prophet Hosea speaks (14:3,4), think to save themselves, by their riding on horses, that is, by their own abilities.

10. If they feel no help here, then they go unto Christ for grace and power to leave sin and do better, whereby they may save themselves; and so they live upon Christ, that they may live of themselves; they go unto Christ, they get not into Christ (Psalm 78:34,35), like hirelings that go for power to do their work, that they may earn their wages. A child of God contents himself with, and lives upon, the inheritance itself the Lord in his free mercy has given him.

But now we shall see many poor Christians that run in the very road the Papists devoutly go to hell in.

First. The Papist will confess his misery, that he is (and all men are) by nature a child of wrath, and under the power of sin and Satan.

Secondly. They hold Christ is the only Saviour.

Thirdly. That this salvation is not by any righteousness in a Christ, but righteousness from a Christ, only by giving a man power to do, and then dipping men's doings in his blood, he merits their life. Thus the wisest and most devoted of them profess, as I am able to manifest; just so do many Christians live. First. They feel themselves full of sin, and are sometimes tired and weary of themselves, for their vile hearts, and they find no power to help themselves. Secondly.

Hereupon hearing that only Christ can save them, they go unto Christ to remove these sins that tire them, and load them, that he would enable them to do better than formerly. Thirdly. If they get these sins subdued and removed, and if they find power to do better, then they hope they shall be saved: whereas you may be damned, and go to the devil at the last, although you should escape all the pollutions of the world, and that not from your self and strength, but from the knowledge of Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 2:20.) I say, woe to you forever if you die in this estate; it is with our Christians in this case as it is with the ivy, which clasps and grows about the tree, and draws sap from the tree, but it grows not one with the tree, because it is not engrafted into the tree; so many a soul comes to Christ, to suck juice from Christ to maintain his own berries, (his own stock of grace:) alas! He is but ivy, he is no member or branch of this tree, and hence he never grows to be one with Christ.

Why Men Rest in Duties

Now, the reasons why men rest in their duties are these:—

First. Because it is natural to a man out of Christ to do so. Adam and all his posterity were to be saved by his doing: “Do this and live;” work, and here is your wages; win life, and wear it.

Hence all his posterity seeks to this day to be saved by doing; like father, like son. Now, to come out of all duties truly to Christ, is a course hardly to be expected from a corrupt nature; hence men seek to find something in themselves. Now, as it is with a bankrupt, when his stock is spent, and his estate cracked, before he will work for wages, or live upon another, he will turn peddler of small wares, and so follow his old trade with a less stock: so men naturally follow their old trade of doing, and hope to get their living that way; and hence men, having no experience

of trading with Christ by faith, live of themselves. Samson, when all his strength was lost, would go to shake himself as at other times: so when men's strength is lost, and God and grace are lost, yet men will go and try how they can live by shifts and working for themselves still.

Secondly. Because men are ignorant of Jesus Christ and his righteousness; hence men can not go unto him, because they see him not; hence they shift as well as they can for themselves by their duties. Men seek to save themselves by their own swimming, when they see no rope cast out to help them.

Thirdly. Because this is the easiest way to comfort the heart, and pacify conscience, and to please God, as the soul thinks; because by this means a man goes no farther than himself.

Now, in forsaking all duties, a soul goes to heaven quite out of himself, and there he must wait many a year, and that for a little, it may be. Now, if a fainting man has medicine at his bed's head, he will not go to the shopkeeper for it. Men that have a balm of their own to heal them will not go to the physician.

Fourthly. Because by virtue of these duties a man may hide his sin, and live quietly in his sin, yet be accounted an honest man, as the whore in Prov. 7:15, 16, having performed her vows, can entice without suspicion of men or check of conscience: so the scribes and Pharisees were horribly covetous, but their long prayers covered their deformities, (Matt. 23:14;) and hence men set their duties at a higher value than they are worth, thinking they shall save them because they are so useful to them. Good duties, like new apparel on a man pursued with hue and cry of conscience, keep him from being known.

Take heed of resting in duties; good duties are men's money, without which they think themselves poor and miserable; but take heed that you and your money perish not together. (Gal. 5:3.) The paths to hell are but two. The first is the path of sin, which is a dirty way. Secondly, the path of duties, which (rested in) is but a clearer way. When the Israelites were in distress, (Judges 10:14,) the Lord bids them go to the gods they served: so when you shall lie howling on your death bed, the Lord will say, Go unto the good prayers and performances you have made, and the tears you have shed. O, they will be miserable comforters at that day.

Objection. But I think you will say, no true Christian man hopes to be saved by his good works and duties, but only by the mercy of God and merits of Christ.

Answer. It is one thing to trust to be saved by duties, another thing to rest in duties. A man trusts unto them when he is of this opinion, that only good duties can save him. A man rests in duties when he is of this opinion, that only Christ can save him, but in his practice he goes about to save himself. The wisest of the Papists are so at this day, and so are our common Protestants. And this is a great

subtlety of the heart, that is, when a man thinks he can not be saved by his good works and duties, but only by Christ: he then hopes, because he is of this opinion, that when he has done all he is an unprofitable servant; (which is only an act or work of the judgment informed aright;) that, therefore, because he is of this opinion, he shall be saved.

Signs of Resting in Duties

But because it is hard for to know when a man rests in duties, and few men find themselves guilty of this sin, which ruins so many, I will show two things:—

1. The signs of a man's resting in duties.
2. The insufficiency of all duties to save men; that so those that be found guilty of this sin may not go on in it.

First. For the signs whereby a man may certainly know, when he rests in his duties, which if he do, (as few professors especially but they do,) he will perish eternally.

First. Those that yet never saw they rested in them, they that never found it a hard matter to come out of their duties. For it is most natural for a man to stick in them, because nature sets men upon duties; hence it is a hard matter to come out of resting in duties. For two things keep a man from Christ:—

1. Sin. 2. Self. Now, as a man is broken off from sin by seeing and feeling it, and groaning under the power of it, so is a man broken from himself. For men had rather do any thing than come unto Christ, there is such a great deal of self in them. Therefore, if you have no experience, that at no time you have rested too much in your duties, and then did groan to be delivered from these entanglements, (I mean not from the doing of them,—this is presumption and profaneness,—but from resting in the bare performance of them,) you indeed rely upon your duties to this day.

These rest in duties, that prize the bare performance of duties wonderfully; for those duties that carry you out of yourself unto Christ make you to prize *Christ*. Now, tell me, do you glory in yourself? Now I am somebody. I was ignorant, forgetful, hardhearted; now I understand, and remember better, and can sorrow for my sins: if you do rest here, your duties never carried you farther than yourself. Do you think, after that you have prayed with some life, Now I have done very well, and now you verily think (meaning for your duties) the Lord will save you, though you never come to Christ, and say, as he in another case, “Now I hope the Lord will do good to me, seeing I have got a priest into my house.” (Judges 17:13) Do you enhance the price of duties thus, that you so dote on them? Then I do pronounce from God, you are resting in them. “These things” (says Paul) “I

counted gain,” (that is, before his conversion to Christ, he prized them exceedingly,) but “now I account them loss.” And this is the reason why a child of God, commonly, after all his prayers, tears, and confessions, doubts much of God’s love toward him; whereas another man, that falls short of him, never questions his estate; the first sees much rottenness and vileness in his best duties, and so judges meanly of himself; the other, ignorant of the vileness of them, prizes them, and esteems himself highly because of them; and setting his corn at so high a price, he may keep them to himself; the Lord never accepts them, nor buys them at so high a rate.

Thirdly. Those that never came to be sensible of their poverty and utter emptiness of all good; for so long as a man has a penny in his purse, that is, feels any good in himself, he will never come a-begging unto Jesus Christ, and therefore rests in himself. Now, did you never feel yourself in this manner poor? That is to say, I am as ignorant as any beast, as vile as any devil. O Lord, what a nest and pile of sin and rebellion lurk in my heart! I once thought at least my heart and desires were good, but now I feel no spiritual life. O dead heart! I am the poorest, vilest, lowest, and blindest creature that ever lived. If you do not thus feel yourself poor, you never came out of your duties; for when the Lord brings any man to Christ, he brings him empty, that so he may make him in debt to Christ for every farthing token.

Fourthly. Those that gain no evangelical righteousness by duties, that is to say—resting in duties. I say, evangelical righteousness, that is more prizing of acquaintance with, desire after, loving and delighting in union with the Lord Jesus Christ; for a mortal man may grow in legal righteousness, (as the stony and thorny ground seed sprang up, and increased much, and came near unto maturity,) and yet rest in duties all this while. For as it is with tradesmen, they rest in their buying and selling, though they make no gain of their trading. Now Jesus Christ is a Christian’s gain, (Phil. 1:21;) and hence a child of God asks himself after sermon, after prayer, after sacrament, What have I gained of Christ? Have I got more knowledge of Christ, more admiring of the Lord Jesus? Now, a carnal heart, that rests in his duties, asks only what he has done, as the Pharisee: “I thank God I am not as other men; I fast twice a week, I give alms,” and the like; and thinks indeed that he shall be saved, because he prays, and because he hears, and because he reforms, and because he sorrows for his sins; that is, not because of the gaining of Christ in a duty, but because of his naked performance of the duty. And so they are like that man that I have heard of, that thought truly he should be rich, because he had got a wallet to beg: so men, because they perform duties, think verily they shall be saved. No such matter: let a man have a bucket made of gold; does he think to get water because he has a bucket? No, no; he must let it down into the

well, and draw up water with it: so must you let down all your duties into Christ, and draw light and life from his fullness, otherwise, though your duties be golden duties, you shall perish without Christ. When a man has bread in his wallet, and got water in his bucket, he may boldly say, So long as these last, I shall not starve; so you may say, when you has found and got Christ, in the performance of any duty, So long as Christ's life lasts, I shall live; as long as he has any wisdom or power, so long shall I be directed and enabled in well doing.

Fifthly. If your duties make you sin more boldly, you do then rest in duties; for these duties, which carry a man out of himself unto Christ, ever fetch power against sin; but duties that a man rests in arm him and fence him in his sin. (Is. 1:14.) A cart that has no wheels to rest on can hardly be drawn into the dirt; but one that has wheels comes loaded through it: so a child of God that has no wheels, no duties, to rest upon, can not willingly be drawn into sin; but another man, though he be loaded with sin, (even sometimes against his conscience,) yet having duties to bear him up, goes merrily on in a sinful course, and makes no bones of sin. When we see a beggarly man insult a great prince, and strike him, we say, Surely, he dares not do it unless he had somebody to bear him out in it, that he rests and trusts unto: so when we see men sin against the great God, we conceive, certainly, they dare not do it, if they had not some duties to bear them out in it, and to encourage them in their way, that they trust unto.

For, take a profane man: what makes him drink, swear, cheat, game, whore? Is there no God to punish? Is there no hell hot enough to torment? Are there no plagues to confound him? Yes. Why does he sin so then? O, he prays to God for forgiveness, and sorrows, and repents in secret, (as he says,) and this bears him up in his lewd tricks.

Take a moral man: he knows he has his failings, and his sins, as the best have, and is overtaken sometimes as the best are: why does he not remove these sins then? He confesses them to God every morning when he awakens. Why is he not more humbled under his sin then? The reason is, he constantly observes morning and evening prayer, and then he craves forgiveness for his failings, by which course he hopes he makes his peace with God; and hence he sins without fear, and rises up out of his falls into sin without sorrow. And thus they see and maintain their sins by their duties, and therefore rest in duties.

Sixthly. Those that see little of their vile hearts by duties, rest in their duties; for if a man be brought nearer to Christ, and to the light, by duties, he will notice more blemishes; for the more a man participates of Christ, his health, and life, the more he feels the vileness and sickness of sin. As Paul when he rested in duties before his conversion, before the law had humbled him, he was alive; that is, he thought himself a sound man, because his duties covered his sins, like fig leaves.

Therefore ask your own heart if it be troubled sometimes for sin, and if after your praying and sorrowing you grow well, and think yourself safe, and feel not yourself more vile. If it be thus, I tell you, your duties be but fig leaves to cover your nakedness, and the Lord will find you out, and unmask you one day; and woe to you if you should perish here.

The Inability of All Duties to Save

Therefore behold the insufficiency of all duties to save us; which will appear in these three things which I speak, that you may learn hereafter never to rest in duties:—

First. Consider, your best duties are tainted, poisoned, and mingled with some sin, and therefore are most odious in the eyes of a holy God, (nakedly and barely considered in themselves,) for, if the best actions of God's people be filthy, as they come from them, then, to be sure, all wicked men's actions are much more filthy and polluted with sin; but the first is true—"All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" for as the fountain is so is the stream; but the fountain of all good actions (that is, the heart) is mingled partly with sin, partly with grace; therefore every action participates of some sin, which sins are daggers at God's heart, even when a man is praying and begging for his life; therefore there is no hope to be saved by duties.

Secondly. Suppose you could perform them without sin; yet you could not continue in doing so. (Is. 40:6,) "All flesh and the glory thereof is but grass." So your best actions would soon wither if they were not perfect; and if you cannot persevere in performing all duties perfectly, you are forever undone, though you should do so for a time, live like an angel, shine like a sun, and, at your last gasp, have but an idle thought, commit the least sin, that one rock will sink you down even in the harbour, though never so richly laden. One sin, like a penknife at the heart, will stab you; one sin, like a little burning twig in the thatch, will burn you; one act of treason will hang you, though you has lived never so devoutly before, (Ezek. 18:24;) for it is a crooked life when all the parts of the line of your life be not straight before Almighty God.

Thirdly. Suppose you should persevere; yet it is clear you have sinned grievously already; and do you think your obedience for the time to come can satisfy the Lord for all those previous obligations, for all those sins past? Can a man that pays his rent honestly every year satisfy hereby for the old rent not paid in twenty years? All your obedience is a new debt, which can not satisfy for debts past. Indeed, men may forgive wrong and debts, because they be but finite; but the least sin is an infinite evil, and therefore God must be satisfied for it. Men may remit debts, and yet remain men; but the Lord having said, "The soul that sins shall die," and

his truth being himself, he can not remain God, if he forgive it without satisfaction. Therefore duties are but rotten crutches for a soul to rest upon. But to what end should we use any duties? Can not a man be saved by his good prayers, nor sorrows, nor repentings? Why should we pray any more then? Let us cast off all duties, if all are to no purpose to save us; it is as good to play for nothing as to work for nothing.

Though your good duties can not save you, yet your bad works will damn you. You are, therefore, not to cast off the duties, but the resting in these duties. You are not to cast them away, but to cast them down at the feet of Jesus Christ, as they did their crowns, (Rev. 4:10,11,) saying, If there be any good or graces in these duties, it is yours, Lord; for it is the prince's favor that exalts a man, not his own gifts: they came from his good pleasure.

The Proper Purpose of Duties

But you will say, To what end should I perform duties, if I can not be saved by them?

For these three ends:—

First. To carry you to the Lord Jesus, the only Saviour. (Heb.7:25.) He only is able to save (not duties) all that come unto God (that is, in the use of means) by him. Hear a sermon to carry you to Jesus Christ; fast and pray, and get a full tide of affections in them to carry you to the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to get more love to him, more acquaintance with him, more union with him; so sorrow for your sins that you may be more suitable for Christ, that you may prize Christ the more; use your duties as Noah's dove did her wings, to carry you to the ark of the Lord Jesus Christ, where only there is rest. If she had never used her wings, she would have fallen into the waters, so, if you would use no duties, but cast them all off, you are sure to perish. Or, as it is with a poor man that is to go over a great water for a treasure on the other side, though he can not fetch the boat, he calls for it; and, though there be no treasure in the boat, yet he uses the boat to carry him over to the treasure. So Christ is in heaven, and you on earth; he does not come to you, and you cannot go to him; now call for a boat; though there is no grace, no good, no salvation, in the duty itself, yet use it to carry you over to the treasure—the Lord Jesus Christ. When you come to hear, say, exercise your authority, Lord, by this sermon; when you come to pray, say, exercise your authority, Lord, by this prayer to a Saviour. But this is the misery of people. Like foolish lovers, when they are to woo for the lady, they fall in love with her handmaid that is only to lead them to her; so men fall in love with, and dote upon, their own duties, and

rest contented with the naked performance of them, which are only handmaids to lead the soul unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly. Use duties as evidences of God's everlasting love to you when you be in Christ; for the graces and duties of God's people, although they be not causes, yet they be tokens and pledges of salvation to one in Christ: they do not save a man, but accompany and follow such a man as shall be saved, (Heb. 6:9.) Let a man boast of his joys, feelings, gifts, spirit, grace, if he walks in the commission of any one sin, or the omission of any one known duty, or in the slovenly, ill-favored performance of duties, this man, I say, can have no assurance without flattering himself. (2 Pet. 1:8,9,10.) Duties, therefore, being evidences and pledges of salvation, use them to that end, and make much of them therefore; as a man that has a fair evidence for his lordship, because he did not purchase his lordship, will he therefore cast it away? No, no; because it is an evidence to assure him that it is his own; and so, to defend him against all such as seek to take it from him, he will carefully preserve the same; so, because duties do not save you, will you cast away good duties? No; for they are evidences (if you are in Christ) that the Lord and mercy are your own. Women will not cast away their love tokens, although they are such things as did not purchase or merit the love of their husbands; but because they are tokens of his love, therefore they will keep them safe.

That God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may be honored by the performance of these duties, therefore use them. Christ shed his blood that he might purchase unto himself a people zealous of good works, (Tit. 2:14,) not to save our souls by them, but to honor him. O, let not the blood of Christ be shed in vain! Grace and good duties are a Christian's crown; it is sin only makes a man base. Now, shall a king cast away his crown, because he bought not his kingdom by it? No; because it is his ornament and glory to wear it when he is made a king. So I say to you, It is better that Christ should be honored than your soul saved; and, therefore, perform duties, because they honor the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus use your duties, but rest not in duties; nay, go out of duties, and match your soul to the Lord Jesus; take him for better and for worse; so live in him and upon him all your days.

Fourthly. By reason of man's headstrong presumption, or false faith, whereby men seek to save themselves by catching hold on Christ, when they see an insufficiency in all duties to help them, and themselves unworthy of mercy; for this is the last and most dangerous rock that these times are split upon. Men make a bridge of their own to carry them to Christ. I mean, they look not after faith wrought by an omnipotent power, which the eternal Spirit of the Lord Jesus must work in them, but they content themselves with a faith of their own forging and framing; and hence they think verily and believe that Christ is their sweet Saviour, and so doubt not but they are safe, when there is no such matter; but even as dogs

they snatch away children's bread, and shall be shut out of doors (out of heaven hereafter forever) for their labor.

All men are of this opinion, that there is no salvation but by the merit of Jesus Christ; and because they hold fast this opinion, therefore they think they hold fast Jesus Christ in the hand of faith, and so perish by catching at their own catch, and hanging on their own imaginations and shadows. Some others catch hold of Christ before they come to feel their lack of faith and ability to believe, and catching hold on 'him, (like dust on a man's coat, whom God will shake off, or like burrs and briers, clinging to one's garment, which the Lord will trample under foot,) now they say, they thank God, they have got comfort by this means, and though God kills them, yet they will trust him. (Micah 3:11.)

It is in this respect a harder matter to convert a man in England than in the India, for there they have no such dodges and fortresses against our sermons; to say they believe in Christ already, as most amongst us do, we can not rap off men's fingers from catching hold on Christ before they are fit for him; like a company of thieves in the street, you shall see a hundred hands scrambling for a jewel that is fallen there, that have least, nay, nothing to do with it. Every man says, almost, I hope Christ is mine; I put my whole trust and confidence in him, and will not be beaten from this. What! Must a man despair? Must not a man trust unto Christ? Thus men will hope and trust, though they have no ground, no graces to prove they may lay hold and claim unto Christ. This hope, scared out of his wits, damns thousands; for I am persuaded, if men did see themselves Christless creatures, as well as sinful creatures, they would cry out, "Lord, what shall I do to be saved?" This faith is a precious faith. (2 Pet. 1:2.) Precious things cost much, and we set them at a high price; if your faith be so, it has cost you many a prayer, many a sob, many a salty tear. But ask most men how they come by their faith in Christ, they say very easily; when the lion sleeps, a man may lie and sleep by it; but when it awakens, woe to that man that does so: so while God is silent and patient, you may fool yourself with thinking you do trust in God; but woe to you when the Lord appears in his wrath, as one day he will; for by virtue of this false faith, men sinning take Christ for a dishcloth to wipe them clean again, and that is all the use they have of this faith. They sin indeed, but they trust unto Christ for his mercy, and so lie still in their sins: God will revenge with blood, and fire, and plagues, this horrible condemnation from heaven.

Hence many of you trust to Christ, as the apricot tree, that leans against the wall, but it is fast rooted in the earth: so you lean upon Christ for salvation, but you are rooted in the world, rooted in your pride, rooted in your filthiness still. Woe to you if you perish in this estate; God will hew you down as fuel for his wrath, whatever mad hope you have to be saved by Christ. This, therefore, I proclaim from the God of heaven:—

1. You that never felt yourselves as unable to believe as a dead man to raise himself, you have as yet no faith at all.
2. You that would get faith, first must feel your inability to believe: and fetch not this flower out of your own garden; it must come down from Heaven to your soul, if ever you are a partaker thereof.

Other things I should have spoken of this large subject, but I am forced here to end abruptly; the Lord lay not this sin to their charge who have “stopped my mouth, laboring to withhold the truth in unrighteousness.” And blessed be the good God, who has stood by his unworthy servant thus long, enabling him to lead you so far as to show you the rocks and dangers of your passage to another world.

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