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THE SERMONS OF JOHN BRINE

The Nature of True Holiness Explained:

by John Brine

(London: John Ward, 1749)

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth
— Psa. 60: 4*



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SERMON 11

THE NATURE OF TRUE HOLINESS EXPLAINED;

IN A DISCOURSE, DELIVERED
AT A MONTHLY EXERCISE OF PRAYER, WITH A SERMON,
ON THE TWENTIETH OF APRIL, 1749.

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PREFACE.

It is an Observation, which I have long made, that those who are charged with being licentious in their Principles, at least, because of their firm Attachment to the Doctrines of the true Grace of God, always express an Approbation of real Holiness: And that Discourses of Evangelical Obedience, are sure to meet with a cordial Reception from them, when others of different Sentiments about the Doctrines of the Grace of God, discover a Dislike to such Discourses. The Reason of which is, I am persuaded, the former really understand the Nature of Holiness, approve of, and aspire after true Purity, and that the latter are both ignorant of it, and Enemies to it. The Consideration of this alone, prevented my being Surprised that I should be desired to publish this Discourse. I believe, that those whose Desire this was, are much concerned to promote true Holiness, both of Heart and Life; and that, under the Influence of this Principle, they moved for this Publication, as what, in their very candid Opinion, might, through the divine Blessing, in some Measure, be subservient to that important Purpose. That this pious View may be answered by it, I trust, is the sincere Desire and Prayer of its unworthy Author,

J . B.

HEB. 12:14.

Follow Peace with all Men, and Holiness;
without which no Man shall See the Lord.

THE inspired Writer, in this Chapter, offers various Things to the Consideration of the Hebrews, in order to animate and encourage them under those Afflictions which they suffered, viz. that God was their compassionate Father, that he was determined to do them Good by all his Dispensations towards them: Particularly, that he designed to make them Partakers of his Holiness, by those Afflictions. And he exhorts them to endeavor to strengthen one another's Hands under Weakness and Fainting. In the Words which we have read, he recommends to them, the cultivating of Peace with all Men, and a Pursuit after Holiness, as what is necessary to future Happiness.

I. *We ought diligently to cultivate Peace with all Men.* The Saints are the Children of *the God of Peace*, and the Subjects of the *Prince of Peace*, and therefore it becomes them to be careful to promote Amity and Friendship with all. This is to be done,

1. By declining every thing which may irritate and provoke both in Words and Actions: All just Occasions of Offence are carefully to be avoided: A wrathful and injurious Temper is not by any means to be indulged, if we would preserve Peace among those with whom we are conversant.

2. We must be ready to perform all good Offices for all. It is not enough, that we be inoffensive and harmless in our Behavior, but we must do Good to all: 'Tis our Duty to imitate our Heavenly Father, by the Exercise of universal Benevolence and Goodness. He *maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust*; and we ought *to love our Enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do Good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us.* (Mat. 5:44, 45). Farther,

II. *The inspired Writer recommends an earnest Endeavour after Holiness. It was my Design principally to insist on this Part of the Subject, and, therefore, I have thus hastened to it. And, I propose,*

First, To consider the Causes of Holiness.

Secondly, The Nature of it, or what it is.

Thirdly, I would show, that we ought diligently to endeavor after

it.

Fourthly, That *without it no Man shall see the Lord*

First, I am to consider the Causes of Holiness.

We have lost that which was the true Glory of our Nature, *viz.* our original Rectitude and Righteousness; *The Crown is fallen from our Head; woe unto us, for we are spoiled!* Let us then attend unto the Consideration of the Causes of Holiness, wherein consists the true Exaltation of our Nature, which is dreadfully debased by Sin; the *impulsive, procuring, efficient, and instrumental* Causes or Means of that Purity which is absolutely necessary to future Blessedness.

1. The impulsive Cause, is the eternal Goodwill and Grace of God exerting itself in the Election of our Persons to everlasting Life; *God hath from the Beginning chosen us to Salvation, through Sanctification of the Spirit* (2Th. 2:13): And the *Apostle* affirms, that he *chose* us, that *we might be holy*. Our holy Vocation is according to his *Purpose and Grace*, which was given us in *Christ before the World began* (2Ti. 1: 9): Hence the Character of the Saints is, *the Called according to his Purpose*. Let some suggest what they please against the Doctrine of Election, as calculated to encourage Sloth, Negligence, and Carelessness in the Minds of those who believe themselves to be included in that gracious Decree; since it is an Appointment to a Participation of Holiness in order to Happiness, that is an entirely groundless Calumny; it is the Origin from which true Holiness springs; nor is there any thing of it in this World, but what is derived from that Fountain; and that which is the Cause of Holiness, cannot reasonably be thought of a Nature suited to encourage the Practice of its direct Contrary, *viz.* Sin.

2. The procuring Cause of real Holiness, is the Death and Satisfaction of Christ. Tho' it is true, that the Sufferings of our Savior did not cause a Will in God to communicate the Blessings of Grace and Glory to his People, yet his Atonement is the Foundation on which they are all conveyed to them. Hence is that Prayer of the inspired Writer in Behalf of the *Hebrews: Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the Dead the Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his Sight* (Heb. 13:20, 21). In that eternal Covenant which was entered into by the Father and Christ, it was a Condition required of him, and agreed to by him, to make his *Soul*

an Offering for Sin, and a Promise was made him, that on this Condition he should have the Satisfaction of seeing his Seed Participants of Holiness and Happiness. This Condition is fulfilled, hence he has a Right to expect the Fulfilment of that Promise relating to them all; nor can the Father, in Justice, fail of the Performance of his Promise. That invaluable Price which was paid for the Redemption of our Persons from Misery, ascertains our Participation of Holiness here, and complete Happiness hereafter.

3. The efficient Cause of true Holiness is the Spirit of God; Grace in the Mind of a poor Sinner, is his Production; hence we are said to be *born of the Spirit*. Some speak of Grace, as being *partly acquired, and partly infused*: I greatly question whether this agrees with good Sense, and the Nature of Things in relation to Habits of the Mind. It may be, that no Habit of our Minds is partly infused, and partly acquired; but that all Habits are either wholly infused, or wholly acquired. That a Man may be assisted in the acquiring of Habits, is easy of Apprehension; but that because Assistance is afforded to a Person in the acquiring of an Habit, it should be said that, that Habit was partly infused, and partly acquired, seems not to me to agree with good Sense, and the Nature of Things. However, this is not the Case here; so far as any Habit is *acquired*, it is not infused: And if Holiness of Heart is partly infused, and partly acquired, then it will follow, not only that in Part we make ourselves to differ; but also, that holy Acts may be performed, where there is no holy Principle, which cannot be. The Saints are said to be *new Creatures*, because they are *the Workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works*, and the Holy Spirit is the Author of our Regeneration. Grace in the Heart is the Effect of his gracious Operation upon us; *That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh, that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit*. If there is any Thing in us of a truly spiritual Nature, it is the Produce of the Spirit of God, for we are naturally *Flesh*; the very *Reverse* of what is *holy and Spiritual*.

4. The instrumental Causes, or Means of our Improvement in Holiness are various, *viz.* the Gospel; that alone is the Food of the new Creature, and suited to feed and nourish, and invigorate the Principle of Grace in the Hearts of Believers, and, therefore, the Apostle exhorts us, *as new born Babes, to desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby* (1Pe. 2: 2): And our dear Lord prays the Father *to Sanctify, his People through his Truth, whose Word is Truth* (Joh. 17:17). It is in vain to hope

for an Increase of Grace in the Heart, without receiving, feeding upon, and digesting the Doctrines of Grace.

Again, The sacred Institutions of Christ are appointed to this End. In those sacred Rites, Christ Is represented in his Person, Offices, Work, and Benefits, and Grace; and, therefore, they are adapted wisely to corroborate the Heaven-born Principle in our Souls. Farther, the afflictive Dispensations of Providence are graciously designed to this Purpose. Sometimes, it is the Pleasure of God to throw his Children into the Furnace of Affliction, there *to try them*, as *Gold is tried*. In their better Part they suffer no Loss, but are Gainers; all his Corrections are intended for their Good, and, under his Blessing, are subservient to that End; thereby, as it is declared in the Context, they become *Partakers of his Holiness*. And, they are purified from their Dross; *By this shall the Iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the Fruit, to take away his Sin* (Isa. 27: 9); a blessed Fruit of Affliction this. The Christian, if he does not give Thanks to God for the Matter of the Affliction, he will for the Advantage which he gains to his nobler Part thereby. Besides, spiritual and holy Conversation tends to promote Holiness; *No corrupt Communication ought to proceed out of our Mouths; but such as is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace to the Hearers*: There are the Causes of Holiness, supreme and subordinate.

The Nature of true Holiness, as I apprehend, is very much mistaken by many, and that is thought to be Holiness, which hath not any Thing of that Kind in it, and, therefore, an Enquiry into the Nature of Holiness, which we are exhorted to follow after, may be proper and beneficial. I proceed then,

Secondly, *To show what true Holiness is: And I would do this negatively and positively.*

1. Negatively: This is to be done in several Particulars, *viz.*

(1.) What Men usually call Virtue, is not Holiness. By this I intend the Propriety and Impropriety of Things, in relation to human Actions; this is very often called, in our Times, the Fitness and Unfitness of Things; this Action is fit to be done, and the other is unfit. Now this is an abstracted Consideration of Actions, as in themselves, without Regard to the governing Authority of God in his Law; and, therefore, it is at a very great Remove from Holiness, which is an Obedience to the Will and Command

of that infinite Being, on whom we are absolutely dependent. Hence it follows, that a Man may be virtuous, or practice what is fit to be done, and decline doing what is unfit to be acted, without the least Degree of that Holiness, concerning which the Inquiry is.

(2.) Legal Obedience, which rises higher than the former, is not Holiness. The Light of natural Conscience may be much heightened and improved by the Word of God, and a Man's Sins may be set in Order before him: He also may have an awful View of their Demerit, which will awaken dreadful Fears, and influence him to make an Inquiry how he may *escape the Damnation of Hell*. In this Inquiry he presently apprehends and concludes, that an Alteration in his Behavior is necessary, and he determines with himself, that he will immediately change the Course of his Actions, decline what is evil, and perform what is good. Upon doing which, he begins to cherish Hopes of regaining an Interest in divine Favour; on this Principle, that God is a merciful Being, and will make all reasonable Allowances for his necessary and unavoidable Imperfections, and for all those numerous Temptations, wherewith he finds himself surrounded in every State. This indeed is the common Doctrine of our *sad Times*. Such Persons doubt not, but that if they do the best they are able in their present Circumstances, God will be favorable to them in Judgment, and cry to themselves, *Peace, Peace*, though certain Destruction, if rich and sovereign Mercy prevents not, awaits them. Sometimes, they proceed so far as to celebrate the sacred Rites of Christianity, and in their own, and in the Opinion of others also, they commence true Christians; whereas all their Obedience is carnal, and arises from the Flesh. As one well observes, *they obey, not because they love the Gospel; but because they fear the Law*. This it is to *follow after the Law of Righteousness*, as the *Jews* did, *who attained not to the Law of Righteousness, because they sought it not by Faith, but as it were by the Works of the Law* (Rom. 9:31, 32). Lust, notwithstanding this Change in a Person, if it retains its Dominion in the Heart, and will so do, until sovereign and efficacious Grace takes it away, and brings a Man to submit to be saved in the Way of God's Appointment. Sin still preserves its Rule in the Mind, though the Form of its Government is altered, and none of the Actions of such a one are holy, they all spring from a selfish Principle, and are directed to selfish Ends, which is not serving God, but is a Man's Aim to serve himself. This legal Obedience, therefore, hath not any Thing of true Holiness in it.

(3.) The Knowledge of the Truth of Evangelical Doctrines is not Holiness; Orthodoxy is not Grace; nor is Soundness of Judgment, Holiness. The Perception of the Evidence of divine Truths, is the Business of Reason, not of Grace. A Man, therefore, who hath no Principle of Holiness in him, may discern that Evidence, and the strict Connection, Dependence and Harmony of the several Branches of Evangelical Truth, and give an assent unto those Truths, though the Things themselves he is wholly unacquainted with. It is a sad Mistake to think that we are holy Persons, because we are persuaded of the Truth of Gospel Mysteries, for that Persuasion springs up in the Mind from Acts merely rational upon the Evidence Revelation affords of the Truth of those mysterious Doctrines. Where there is not a spiritual understanding of spiritual Things, and a Savor and Relish of them as such, there is no true Holiness.

(4.) Gifts, and the Exercise of them, is not Grace or Holiness. By Gifts, I mean an Ability to discourse of Gospel Doctrines in such a Manner, as may be very instructive and beneficial to others. And it is with me unquestionable, that a Man may be what we call an *accurate Divine*, and yet not have the least Measure of Grace; such a one, of what Use soever he may be to others, for their Edification, he is of none to himself, by all he expresses. There are awful Words of our Lord's, *Many will say to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name? and in thy Name have cast out Devils? and in thy Name done many wonderful Works?* They seem to flatter themselves, that their eminent Gifts, and the Exercise of them, would procure them an Admission into Heaven. Very awful indeed is the Answer they receive from Christ: *Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity* (Mat. 7:22, 23). As Gifts and Grace are distinct Things, it is very necessary for those who are employed in public Work, to look as well to their Graces, as to their Gifts: Without this, a Minister, while he is improving in his Gifts, may, and will, I think, *dwindle sadly* in his Graces. Other Acts are necessary, and Diligence of another Kind is needful to an Improvement in Grace and Holiness, than those which will serve to the Improvement of our Gifts. Having observed what Holiness is not: I go on to show,

2. In a positive Sense, what it is: And it is to be considered as a Principle, and Acts flowing from that Principle.

(1.) True Holiness is a *new, spiritual* Principle or Spring of Action in the Mind. It is *new*, for which Reason, it is called a *new Heart*, and the Subject of it is said to be a *new Creature*; *If any Man is in Christ, he is a*

new Creature: Old Things are passed away, behold, all Things are become new (2Co. 5:17). This is called new, in Opposition to the Flesh, or corrupt Habits of the Mind, and it is the very Reverse, and direct contrary of all that was in a Person before. Grace is not corrupt Nature mended, but it is a Disposition opposite and contrary to it. Flesh and Spirit are distinct Principles in the Mind, two Opposites in the same Person; *That which is born of the Flesh, is Flesh; that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit.* The Flesh still remains what it was, and its Nature will never be changed. From these contrary Principles proceed contrary Acts, and there is a mutual Opposition between them; *The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh, there are contrary the one to the other* (Gal. 5:17). Again, this Principle may be called *new*, though not in Opposition to, yet in Distinction from, that original Righteousness, which Man possessed in a State of Innocency. There is an Agreement in their general Nature, as the one and the other are truly holy; but, in some Respects, there is a Difference between these two Principles: This latter was not due to Man by the Laws of Creation, and, therefore, as Men have it not in Fact, they never had it in Right; and God may communicate this Principle to whomsoever he pleases, upon the Foot of Sovereignty. The former was not a Life upon God, considered in a Mediator, nor was it, in its Nature, disposed and fitted to such a kind of Life; but this latter is such a Life, agreeable to the Nature of that new Covenant-relation, in which the Saints stand to God. Farther, it is a spiritual Principle; for this Reason it is called Spirit; *That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit;* and all the Acts which arise from it, are of a pure and spiritual Kind, and of the same Nature with itself. This Principle alone is the Spring of holy Actions in a Believer; none of his Acts are heavenly, but those which take their Rise from it; his Mind, or spiritual Part only, serves the Law of God. That is a Service into which the Flesh will never enter.

(2.) This Principle exerts itself various Ways, to the Glory of God who wrought it in the Soul, and to the Comfort and Advantage of those in whom it is, *viz.*

[1.] In believing; or in Acts of Faith on Jesus Christ. It discerns our Need of him, his Suitableness to our Condition; applies to him, and receives him, as he *of God is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption* (1Co. 1:30); yea, as *our all in all* (Col. 3:11): And this Faith purifies the Heart: *Putting no Difference between us and them, purifying their Hearts by Faith.* It influences unto a cheerful and holy

Obedience, for which Reason it is called the *Obedience of Faith*, which is alone acceptable and pleasing unto God, through Christ, *For without Faith it is impossible to please him* (Heb. 11: 6); and we are no farther truly holy and spiritual in the Discharge of Duty, than Faith is acted therein.

[2.] This gracious Principle loves and delights in heavenly Things. In the Understanding, it is a Perception of their infinitely excellent and glorious Nature. In the Will, it is a closing with, and Adherence unto them. In the Affections, it is a Delight and Complacency in them, as pure, holy, and spiritual, and congruous to its own Nature; no Acts of which Kind can ever arise in an unsanctified Mind. A natural or unregenerate Person cannot know, nor relish and favor *the Things of the Spirit of God, to him they are Foolishness*, and, therefore, it is not possible that they should be the Objects of his Choice and Pleasure.

[3.] Grace hopes for better Things than it hath in present Possession. They are good Things it now enjoys, but they are far better which it hath in Right and Prospect. It is an humble Expectation of celestial Glory and consummate Happiness, in the immediate Presence of God and a dear Redeemer; on account of which, that glorious State bears the Name of Hope; *Looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ* (Tit. 2:13). The Christian, in the Exercise of Grace, *enters into that within the Vail whither the Fore-runner is for him entered* (Heb. 6:19,20), and hath *his Conversation in Heaven*. Where he shall actually be, hereafter, there he now is, sometimes, in *Desire*, and in a way of *gracious Communion*.

[4.] This spiritual Principle exerts itself in a holy Reverence of God. It adores him on account of his infinite Perfections and Glory, in the religious Services which the happy Subject of it performs: *Let us have Grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with Reverence and godly Fear* (Heb. 12:28); And there is no true Reverence of God in a Mind destitute of this holy Principle, for from that alone it springs; and there is more or less of this Fear of the Divine Majesty, as this gracious Principle is more or less lively and vigorous.

[5.] Grace disposes the Mind to submit to the Will of God, in the various Dispensations of his Providence, whether prosperous or adverse. It is an Acquiescence in his Pleasure concerning us, who knows what is best for us, and whose infinite Love to our Persons, will always so order every Occurrence, as to issue in our Advantage, if not as Men, yet as we are

Christians; *We know, that all Things work together for Good, to them who love God, and are the Called according to his Purpose* (Rom. 8:28). And,

[6.] This holy Principle is a Disposition to practice all the Branches of Righteousness in our Conversation in the World; Sobriety, Justice, Compassion, Benevolence, and whatever else Morality includes; *The Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, and hath appeared to all Men, teaches the Saints to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.* True Grace in the Heart is a solicitous *Care to maintain good Works* in the Life. Farther,

[7.] The regenerate Part of a Believer casts a holy Contempt on the World, and all the most delectable Things in it. It is of a Nature far more sublime than the best of earthly Treasures, and it elevates the Mind towards, and fixes it on Objects infinitely more glorious than the gayest and most splendid Things, which please the Fancy, and attract the Affections of an unsanctified Person. This Heaven-born Principle aspires towards unseen and heavenly Objects. From Heaven it came, that is its proper Centre, and thither it tends. So far as our Affections are under its Influence, they are raised above sublunary Things, and placed on the noble Objects, which Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, constantly view with Wonder and Delight; *Seek those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the Right Hand of God. Set our Affections on Things above, not on the Things on the Earth* (Col. 3: 1, 2). True Grace refuses the latter with a holy Disdain, because it is of a Nature far more noble and refined, than the most eligible of them all. Once more,

[8.] This Principle aims at the Glory of God in all its Acts. Real Grace is the most generous Principle in the World: Nay, I am bold to affirm, that there is no truly generous Principle in the World, but this gracious one: It is disinterested. Grace is not a selfish Thing; it seeks not its own Honour, but the Glory of the God of all Grace, from whom it is derived. Unless we design the Glory of God in our Acts of Obedience, there is nothing of true Holiness in what we do. It is not enough that the Matter of our Actions is good: Works truly good spring from Love in the Heart, are directed to the Glory of God, as their End, and are performed under the Influence of spiritual Considerations and Motives. We may pray, read the Word of God, attend on his Worship, and discharge the Duties of Civil Life in a blameless Manner, as to Men's Observation, and yet not have the least Degree of Grace. Whatever we think of ourselves, and what Opinion soever others may have of us, we are no farther truly holy, than Grace is

acted in our Obedience. If our Graces are not exercised in holy Duties, no Holiness attends them.

This Account of Holiness, I am sensible, would not be pleasing to many, who are professed Advocates for what, as it is usually called, practical Religion. I have sometimes thought, that it is a *little hard*, however, *it is unjust*, they are pleased to object to us, when we treat of the Doctrines of the Grace of God, that we have no Concern for Holiness and practical Religion: And when we discourse of *real* Holiness, they are disgusted, and say, that we are too *precise, strict, and rigid* in our Account of it. This is a sufficient Testimony, even from themselves, that they *abuse* us, when they say, that we have no Regard to practical Holiness, because we assert the Doctrines of Free Grace; they have forgot, as I suppose, what they object to us of this Kind, when they declare themselves to be displeas'd with our Account of Holiness, as too *strict and rigid*. But why are they dissatisfied with that Account? the Reason is, they thought themselves *rich, and increased with Goods, and had Need of nothing*: And, therefore, to be pronounced and proved Bankrupts and Beggars, very much displeas'd them. All their Gold, on which they valued themselves, if indeed our Explanation of Holiness agrees with Truth, they find that it is *mere Dross*. This gives them much Uneasiness, and is what they cannot bear with. As was before observed, Lust maintains its Rule in the Heart, even when it is checked by Conviction, under which these Persons are supposed to act. The Form of its Government in the Mind is altered, but its Dominion is not taken away, nor *the Extent* of it diminished. Holiness is indeed a great, yea, a most excellent Thing. I fear, that but little of it is found with many, who, yet, go on in a constant Course of religious Duties: And the best among us are very defective herein. Those who most study the Nature of Holiness, and keep the strictest Watch over their Hearts, will best discern their Defects and Imperfections, and be much stirred up to practice the great and necessary Duty here recommended, *viz.* Following after Holiness, which I proceed to consider,

Thirdly, *We ought to follow Holiness, i.e. in an earnest Manner we should endeavor after our Improvement therein.* The original Word ($\delta\iota\omega\kappa\omega$) is elsewhere rendered, I press (Php. 3:14). It signifies a Fervency of Desire, and an Earnestness in Endeavour. If we are desirous of an Improvement in Grace, we must, in order to it, make it our *Scope* and *Aim*; not rest satisfied with our present Measure of Grace, but use a holy

Diligence to increase it; without this, we cannot reasonably expect and hope for an Advancement in Holiness and Spirituality.

1. We must oppose, and *make no Provision for the Flesh*. So far as we gratify and feed the carnal Part in us, we prejudice our nobler Part. Grace is always a Sufferer by those Acts of the Mind, which spring from, and are pleasing to its opposite; for as Corruption and Grace are contrary Principles in the same Subject, whatever serves the Interest of the one, prejudices the other. If, therefore, we are not careful to deny the Flesh those Gratifications, which it is continually seeking after, we shall diminish the Vigor of the Spirit, and greatly interrupt its Exercise. Hence, we must, I think, be convinced of the Necessity of observing the Nature and Tendency of our Thoughts, whereby we may, without much Difficulty, form a true Judgment of their Origin; from what Spring of Action, in us, they take their Rise, whether from the Flesh, or from the Spirit. All vain Imaginations, all irregular Thoughts, all corrupt Motions of the Will and Affections, arise from the Flesh. Now, if we really design and desire an Improvement in Grace and Holiness, we must be observant of the Acts of our Souls, and oppose those which are vain and carnal; Negligence in this Matter, will issue in unspeakable Advantage to the Flesh, and necessarily end in great Damage to our spiritual Part, which it is our Wisdom, Interest, and Duty, to be solicitously careful of, that we no way prejudice it. The noxious Weeds of Corruption in our Hearts, cannot be nourished without Injury to the precious Seed of true Grace. *Worldly, selfish, ambitious, and covetous* Thoughts, when countenanced and cherished in the Mind, greatly hinder the Exercise of Grace, and assuredly prevent its Growth. There is great Reason to fear, that many, who go on in a *Round* of religious Duties, are not able to say, that they are much spiritual in those Duties, through the abounding of such kind of Thoughts in their Hearts; and yet their religious Performances give them Satisfaction at least, if they are not with them the Occasion of Self-Admiration and Applause. We shall never arrive to any *Emminency* in Holiness, without much Self-Denial, and a *strict* Watch kept upon Lust, which hath numberless Ways of exerting itself, and a constant Opposition to it, in What Manner soever it acts its Part in us.

2. We must make it our *Scope* and *Aim*, in religious Exercises, to act our Graces, if we would improve in Holiness: Attendance to them is a necessary Branch of our Duty, and the Neglect of that Attendance is *inexcusable*; but a bare external Performance of those Exercises, will be of

no Efficacy towards our Improvement in Grace. As there is no greater Degree of Holiness in our religious Services, than what consists in the Actings of the spiritual Principle in our Souls; so all our Advancement in Holiness in those Services, is from the Exercise of this holy Principle. Unless, therefore, we aim at performing Spiritual Duties, in *a spiritual Manner*, our Expectations of gaining Advantage to our spiritual Part thereby, must be disappointed, because we have no Ground for such Expectations.

3. We ought to desire *the Sincere Milk of the Word*. The Grace of the Gospel *alone* is suited to feed and nourish our heavenly Part. The Doctrine of the Law acquaints us what Holiness is; but it is only the Grace of the Gospel which disposes us to the Practice of it. Let us not flatter ourselves with a Hope of increasing the Vigor of the gracious Principle in us, by any other Doctrine, than that of free Grace; for if we do, we shall certainly meet with a Disappointment. Because the Doctrine of Grace is that Food which God has provided and appointed for the Support and Nourishment of the Principle of Grace, and no other than what infinite Wisdom has provided for that Purpose, will ever, in the least Degree, (let some suggest what they please) serve to that important End. Real Holiness, and the Practice of true Religion, by sinful Men, can only be promoted by those Principles which are peculiar to the Gospel; the Reason is, that Holiness, and that Religion, is no other than the Exercise of *Grace* in the Hearts of Believers, the Strength and Vigor of which wholly arises from that Nourishment it receives, by digesting the glorious Truths of the Gospel. *Evangelical Obedience*, than which *no other* deserves the Name of Holiness, *nor is the Thing*, can only be promoted by Evangelical Doctrines. Indeed, a Disposition to a *merely moral Obedience* may be excited by Discourses of Morality and Virtue; but that is not Holiness, or a *Meetness* for future Blessedness, whereof I am to treat in the last Place.

Fourthly, *Without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*. Two Things must be attended unto, in this Branch of the subject, *viz.* the Sight of God: And, that no Man who is nor the Subject of Holiness, shall have this happy Vision of him. In discoursing on the former, I would show, what are the Properties of this View, and then the Objects, which are beheld with a Joy to us, at present inconceivable.

1. *I begin with the Properties of this Vision of God*. And they are such as must be exceedingly delightful to every one who truly desires to enjoy it. For,

(1.) It will be immediate, clear, and full. Here the Saints sometimes have spiritual Views of God by Faith, which fill them with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory: But these Prospects are far inferior to that View they will have of God in the heavenly State. They are attended with a double Disadvantage, at present, which renders it impossible to have the same View of God now, that they will enjoy hereafter. So long as they are in this State, they will be Subjects of Darkness, which incapacitates them to discern the Glory of heavenly Objects in a full and perfect Manner. They are Subjects of the Light of Grace: *For, God who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined into their Hearts, to give them the Light of the Knowledge of his Glory in the Person of Christ* (2Co. 4: 6). But, then, they are also Subjects of Darkness, and, therefore, must be incapable of taking a complete View of spiritual Things. Besides, they only discern those Objects through a Medium at present. *Now we see through Glass darkly*. It is not an immediate View of those glorious Objects we now enjoy, but a Representation of them in the *Glass* of the Word: And this Representation of them is below their true Nature, for Language cannot fully express it. The Beauty and Glory of those bright Objects, Words can give us but an imperfect Image of. Since, in this State, we are attended with this double Disadvantage, our Prospects of heavenly Things, must be far inferior to that View we shall have of them in the blessed World *When we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known*. And, if the present imperfect View fills our Minds with inexpressible Delight, what Joy! what Pleasure! what Complacency must possess our Souls, when we shall have an *immediate, clear, and full* View of those inconceivably glorious Objects!

(2.) The Saints will enjoy an uninterrupted View of God hereafter. Their Prospects of him by Faith, in this State, are often interrupted by Unbelief, and numerous other Causes: But no Interruptions will take place in their future Views of their heavenly Father, through the Interposition of any Clouds. No Shades of Darkness will ever pass over them in the World above, which is all Light and Glory; nor will their Minds at all be diverted from beholding God and a dear Redeemer, by a Presentation of any other Objects, which now too frequently is the Case. This Consideration, added to the former, gives us a most delightful Idea of the heavenly State. I subjoin,

(3.) This Prospect will be endless. That State of Happiness is permanent, and will continue forever. *Here we have no continuing City; but we seek*

one to come, a City which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. The Saints will ever be with the Lord, in whose Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right Hand are Pleasures for evermore. As their Existence will be eternal, so their Views of God will be without a Period. As no Change can possibly happen in the Nature of that blissful State, so it shall never have an End. If we consider the infinitely glorious Nature of the Objects seen; if we consider the Properties of this heavenly Vision, viz. that it is clear and full, that it is uninterrupted, and without End; surely we must conclude, that this State is most desirable, and perfectly blessed.

2. *This is a Vision, or Sight of God.*

(1.) We shall distinctly discern what each Person in the adorable Trinity hath acted, in order to our eternal Salvation and Happiness.

[1.] The kind Part the divine Father hath acted in our Favour. Our Election to everlasting Life, was his gracious Act. He *chose us in Christ before the Foundation of the World*; and this Choice of us, was unto perfect Holiness. The Contrivance of the Way of our Recovery from that Ruin brought on us by Sin, is his. He appointed Christ to be our Mediator, Head, and Surety, and decreed his taking upon him our Obligation to the Law. It was his sovereign Purpose, that he should bear our Guilt, and suffer that Penalty to which it rendered our Persons obnoxious, according to the *just Constitution* in the Law, and, thereby, satisfy its *equitable Demands*, and fully maintain the Rights of Justice, to whose terrible Resentment our Crimes exposed us. He gave all the invaluable Treasures of Grace and Glory into the Hand of Christ for us; and on the Foundation of his Atonement, he dispenses the Blessings of Grace to us in Time, and will communicate to us the Blessings of Glory in Eternity. *He will give Grace and Glory, and no good Thing will he withhold from us* (Psa. 84:11). Since he *spared not his own Son, and delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all Things*? If the imperfect Views we have at present of the stupendous Acts of the Father in our Favour, yield us inexpressible Pleasure, what transcendent Delight will be produced in our Minds, by the future Prospect of them?

[2.] We shall forever have in View the compassionate Part, which the eternal Son hath performed in our Favour. His undertaking for us, in the eternal Covenant transacted between the Father and himself, and the Holy Spirit. His Assumption of our Nature, *in the Fulness of Time*, coming under the Law to redeem us from it, agreeably to the foreign Purpose of

the Father, and his own free Engagement. His Susception of our Guilt, and voluntary Submission to the Father's Pleasure, in *making his Soul an Offering for our Sins*, whereby he expiated our Guilt, *made Peace* for us, and secured our Persons from that *direful* Vengeance, which we, in Consequence of our Sins, were liable unto. Besides, he *brought in* for us an *everlasting Righteousness*, which justifies our Persons, and gives us an *unalienable* Right to eternal Life. And now he is in Heaven, it is his continual Employ to make Intercession for us, as a sympathizing and compassionate High Priest, under all our Difficulties, Temptations, and Sorrows, in this State of Imperfection, and Snares and Dangers. The imperfect View we have of these Things now, affords us the highest Pleasure; the clear, distinct, and endless Prospect of them hereafter, therefore, must possess our Souls with a Delight, that far surpasses our present Comprehension. For, since ineffable Joy arises from those low and imperfect Views of heavenly Objects, which this State admits of; certainly unknown and inconceivable Delight will result from the clear and perfect, and uninterrupted Prospects of those Objects, in the happy World above.

[3.] We shall eternally behold what a gracious Part the blessed Spirit acts in our Favour, who inspires us with spiritual Life, when we are *dead in Trespasses and Sins*; infuses heavenly Light into our Souls, which are naturally Darkness; operates on us in a Way of spiritual Conviction; gives us a Sense of the Evil of Sin; shows us the exceeding Sinfulness of our Nature; presents us with a View of our inevitable Misery, as in ourselves considered; discovers to us the Ability and Suitableness of Christ, as a Savior; encourages and assists us to make a humble Application to him for Life and Salvation; applies his Blood to our Souls, to ease us of the *pressing* Load of our Guilt, and heal the Wounds it gives us; shows us the Glory of his Righteousness, and enables us to lay hold on it, and embrace it, as the Matter of our Acceptance with God, our righteous Judge; open, to our View the Secrets of the Almighty, relating to the stupendous Design of our Recovery, and powerfully applies to us the *precious Promises* of his Word, whereby we are encouraged to hope in him, and draw near to him, as our gracious Covenant-Father, and in this Character to ask of him all that is needful to our Support, Guidance, and Consolation: He bears with all our Provocations, heals all our Backslidings, reduces our Souls when we go astray, revives the good Work under its Decays, and *restores to us the Joy of God's Salvation*, and establishes us afresh in the Ways of Holiness and Peace, and will continue so to do, until we arrive safe to the heavenly World, where we shall see

the Wonders of his Love, in that perspicuous Manner the present State admits not of.

(2.) We shall enjoy a constant View of the divine Perfections, as they are exercised and displayed in our eternal Salvation. Everlasting, free and sovereign Love gave Rise to the Design, and runs through every Part of it: That is the Fountain from which all our Salvation, and the whole of our Happiness spring. Infinite Wisdom concerted the fit Methods of our Recovery, fate for us, and glorious to God. Who could ever have thought that Sin might be pardoned, and yet punished; that the Sinner might be saved, and yet Justice executed? This Contrivance is the highest Effect of the Wisdom of God, how much soever an *ignorant* and *proud* Generation of Men despise it as *Folly*. It is *the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, the hidden Wisdom, which he ordained before the World to our Glory*. Besides, in this Affair, the infinite Rectitude and Righteousness of God most evidently appear. His Love to our Persons is not more conspicuous, than his just Abhorrence of, and Indignation against our Sins, in this Method he has took to pardon and save us. He appears to be just in justifying those who believe in Jesus, on the glorious Foundation of his Atonement and Satisfaction. This is saving us in a Way becoming himself; *It became him for whom are all Things, and by whom are all Things, in bringing many Sons to Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings*. Again, the Truth and Faithfulness of God, shine most eminently in the Accomplishment of his Promises, relating to our everlasting Salvation and Happiness; and his absolute Immutability, on which our Security rests, is fully manifested. Much of the Glory of Heaven will consist in clear, distinct, and endless Views of the infinitely glorious Perfections of God, as exercised in our Redemption, and as they shine through the Person of the Mediator.

(3.) We shall always behold the Glory of Christ our dear Redeemer. He who was crowned with Thorns for our Sakes, we shall have the Satisfaction of viewing seated on a Throne of Majesty, and crowned with Glory, and surrounded with the whole Number of the Elect of God, and Myriads of holy Angels, all uniting in joyful Songs of Praise to him for his redeeming Love to us miserable and worthless Creatures. For this he prays, and this he demands of the Father for us, which he has a Right to do; *Father, I will, that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my Glory, which thou hast given me*.

(4.) We shall have a constant and full Perception of the Love of each divine Person to us, and of the infinite Delight Father, Son, and Spirit will eternally take in our complete Felicity. It is Matter of Joy to the divine Persons to do us Good now, and when the Design of our Salvation shall be completed, our Souls will have a ravishing Sense of that Pleasure, which arises to them from the Accomplishment of that gracious Design. The divine Persons *rejoice over us to do us Good*, as we are the Objects of their infinite Affection and Love. The Design of our Salvation was infinitely pleasing to the Father, Son, and Spirit; and the Accomplishment of that Design will be Matter of eternal Delight unto each of them. When we have once arrived to the heavenly World, we shall enjoy a perfect and constant Sense of that Pleasure which God takes in our Felicity, and that Sense must be productive of a most exquisite Joy.

The Knowledge which the Saints now have of heavenly Things, they shall never lose. All Gifts and Acquirements, on account of which Men are very apt to value themselves, will cease in that State, as there will be no need of their Exercise; but our spiritual Knowledge of spiritual Things shall then be fully ripened and brought to Perfection; *We know in Part, and prophecy in Part, when that which is perfect is come, that which is in Part shall be done away*. The Objects are the same we now see by Faith, that we shall have an immediate, clear, full, and endless Prospect of in the World above; Glory, therefore, is Grace in its full Maturity, or our spiritual Knowledge of spiritual Things grown up to its intended Perfection. A most pleasing Thought this, and it is what may very justly be considered as a most persuasive Motive, diligently to study those sacred Truths. Who that considers this, and is acquainted with the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ, and of God, in and through him, will not be excited to use the *utmost* Diligence to increase and enlarge his Acquaintance with those sublime and heavenly Truths? If we really desire to possess future Glory, surely it must be a most eligible Thing, in our Esteem, to enjoy as much as we can, of that Satisfaction and Delight, which arise from a spiritual Perception of the Nature of those Objects, in the perfect Knowledge of which, will consist our complete Felicity, when with us Time shall have an End. Unless somewhat of this Kind is found in us, I know not of any Evidence we can possibly have of a Right unto, or of a Meetness in us for the Enjoyment of the blissful Vision of God. For, if we have no Inclination to be separate from the World, and all Things in it, in our Thoughts, Desires, and Affections, whilst here we dwell, what solid Foundation can we be supposed to have, to support a Hope, that the

heavenly State is *really* desirable to us? None at all, as I think. If the *First-Fruits* are not valued and fought after, why should it be thought, that reaping the plentiful Harvest is *really* desired? Are we at great Pains to acquire Knowledge which will vanish, as useless, at Death, and shall we not labor to add to that Knowledge, which will never be lost; but ripen into Glory, when our Souls shall be dislodged of our mortal Bodies. And, if it be so, our Approbation of, and Delight in those Things, may be allowed as a good Evidence of our Meetness for the Enjoyment of this glorious State. On the other Hand, can we think, that those Persons are in the Way to Heaven, or desire to enjoy it, who discern no Excellency and Glory in these Things; but slight and despise them, as mere Foolishness? No surely; it is not Heaven they desire the Enjoyment of, but a mistaken Image which they have framed to themselves of that glorious State. An unregenerate Person neither knows what Heaven is, nor can desire it. That alone desires the Enjoyment of Heavenly Glory, which is a true Preparation for it, and is the real Commencement of it in the Soul, *viz.* that gracious, holy, and spiritual Principle which is implanted in a Person, at the Time of Regeneration, and is Regeneration itself. This leads me to observe,

Lastly. *That no Man, without Holiness, shall have this happy Sight of God.* No Man whatever, let him be what he may, as to Descent, Education, State Gifts, Usefulness to others, whether in the Civil or Religious Life, unless he partakes of Holiness in this, he shall not participate of Happiness in the next. As God designed all to become Subjects of Holiness in this World, whom he appointed to eternal Salvation; so holy Persons *only* are capable of that Glory, which consists in the Vision of him, Communion with him, and in a constant Adoration of him, which is maintained in the Mind by a Perception of his infinitely glorious Excellencies and Perfections; and, consequently, no Man, without Holiness, shall ever see the Lord.

Some, it may be, will be ready to fear, from the Consideration of what has been observed concerning the Nature of *real* Holiness, that they are not the subjects of it, and may say, if that Spirituality enters into the Nature of true Holiness, which you have expressed, I am afraid that, for my Part, I am a Stranger to it; I find, to my Sorrow, so much of the contrary of it in me. To such I would observe, that every Man in this World, who is the Subject of Holiness, he also is the Subject of Sin: Tho' every Man that is the Subject of Sin, is not the Subject of Holiness; every one here, who is a

subject of Holiness, is likewise a Subject of Sin. Do not, therefore, think, because you have Sin, that you have no Holiness. What is it in you, that prays, watches, and strives against Sin, as Sin? Is it the Flesh? No, that will never become an Opposer of itself. What is it in you that approves of the Law, as *holy, just, and good*? Is it corrupt Nature? No; that is *not subject to the Law, of God, nor ever will be*; these are Acts proper to a Principle of Holiness and Grace. The Flesh will still *serve the Law of Sin*, and you will be deceived if you think otherwise, for it is only the spiritual Part of a Believer that *serves the Law of God*. Hence, the *Apostle* resolves the contrary Actings of his Heart, into these two contrary Springs of Action in himself; *Flesh and Spirit, or Corruption and Grace: So then with my Mind, I myself serve the Law of God; but with the Flesh the Law of Sin*. The Being of Corruption in the Mind as an active Principle, engaged in the Service of the Law of Sin, is not to be considered as an Evidence, that there is not present in the Soul, a holy Principle, which is disposed unto, and engaged in the Service of the divine Law. It is the Dominion of Sin that is such an Evidence, and not the Presence of it, as an active Principle, always ready to exert itself in an Opposition to what is truly good, or of a spiritual Nature, and inclined to act what is evil. Regeneration neither takes away the Being of Sin, nor deprives it of a Power to act in Opposition to what is holy: And as Sin in the Regenerate does exert itself in Opposition to that which is holy, so it is a Disposition to do what is sinful. A Principle of Grace really takes away the Reign of Sin, but leaves it existent in the Mind, and changes not its Nature, it still is, and will always continue to be what it was; Conviction doth not that: The Flesh, as has been observed, how much soever it is checked by Conviction, as to the Manner of exerting itself, it preserves its Rule entire: Tho' the Form of its Government is altered, it still maintains its Dominion in the Unregenerate. If, therefore, there is any Thing *at all* of this Spirituality and Subjection to the Law', in you, and Approbation of heavenly Things themselves, there is a Principle of Holiness in your Hearts, and you have proper Foundation for a *holy Confidence, that he who hath begun a good Work in you, will perform it until the Day of Christ*.



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IF that affiance which is necessary to finishing of a Work that I have under my Hand, shall be graciously afforded, and the Design meet wits Encouragement, I shall present the Reader with a Treatise on various Subjects, viz.

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