

## SERMON V. & VI.

Of walking humbly with God.

Micah vi. 8,

By

Samuel Wilson

**He hath shewed, thee, O man what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?**

**The First Sermon on this text,**

O be admitted into the friendship of a great and good man, and much more of a powerful and mighty prince, is justly esteemed among the most valuable blessings of this life; and in proportion to the greatness, or wisdom of the person, his conversation is regarded as an honor and a privilege. It is but now and then that we hear of a peasant being received into the confidence and familiarity of his prince. How extraordinary an instance of condescension is it then in the great and holy God to allow, nay even to require, his people to walk with him in a way of friendly communion? When, with David, *we consider the heavens the work of his hands, the sun moon and stars which he hath ordained*, and turn our thoughts to those ministering spirits those *sons of the morning*, who enjoy a constant view of the perfections of his nature, and incessantly adore his glory, we may well say, What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visit's him? <sup>1</sup> That God should require us to make him our fear and our dread, to walk before him in uprightness, and to tremble in his presence, is not so surprising : but, that he should fix an inseparable connection betwixt our happiness and our duty, or betwixt our reasonable service and our privilege, how amazing is such condescending goodness as this ? To measure the dimensions, or fathom the depths of this grace calls for the enlarged capacities of a perfected spirit, and yet even so it is, that he who

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 8:3-4

will not be pleased *with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil*, he who will not admit of the sacrifice of *the fruit of our bodies for our transgressions*, hath not only required us *to do justly, and to love, mercy*, but to *walk humbly* with him. The two former duties, I have shown you, respect the second table, in which the Lord calls for equity in our dealings, and for the love of mercy towards the objects of compassion, among our fellow creatures. We proceed now,

3. To the last clause of the words, and which contains the last branch of our duty, viz. *to walk humbly with our God*.

This indeed includes the whole of the first table; and I hope to make it evident that what God calls for at our hands, as agreeable to our relation to him as creatures, and especially as redeemed by the blood of his Son, is one main branch of our happiness, and the fruit of our belonging to the covenant of grace. And here, you will easily observe, that there are these three things to be inquired into from this clause of our text.

First, The duty it self, and that is to walk with God.  
Secondly, The manner of its performance; it is to be done humbly; and,  
Thirdly, The reason, or authority by which it is enjoined; the Lord hath required it of us. I begin,

First, with the duty itself, and this is to walk with God. In his presence, we are told, is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. <sup>2</sup> To enjoy the favorable smiles of the fountain of all Excellency must needs give joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Happy is the man, that is in such a case, yea thrice happy is the man whose God is the Lord. <sup>3</sup> . It is said of Enoch that he walked with God. <sup>4</sup> And you find the same expression, with little alteration, very frequent in scripture. As this evidently takes in the whole of our religion, so there are many things necessarily presupposed, as antecedent to such an honorable and gracious intimacy with the divine Being, as is intended by this phrase. For,

I. You know there must be a mutual agreement between two parties, before they can walk together. Enmity implies aversion; and there can be no

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 16:11

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 144:15

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 5:24

friendly communion, much less agreeable walk, between two that are directly opposite to each other. So that to walk with God, supposes that he is at peace with us, and we with him. This was the case originally betwixt the great Jehovah and our first parents, whilst they retained their integrity. God could converse with them with delight, and they commune with him with freedom. But no sooner had they sinned against him, than they discovered a principle of enmity, in flying from his presence. And methinks we need no other evidence, that in this we all bear their image, than the constant experience we have of a corrupt principle within us, which says unto the Almighty, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.<sup>5</sup> And hence it is the apostle observes, that whilst we are in the flesh, or strangers to the work of the Spirit upon our souls, we cannot please God; and assigns this reason for it, because the carnal mind is enmity against God<sup>6</sup> it is in league with his enemies, Sin and Satan, and Filled with the strongest aversion to him. And, as we are enemies to God by wicked works, so he is at enmity with us; being of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, he must abhor the workers of it, considered as his enemies. Of this you have many intimations in his word. See, instead of many others, these two very awful passages, Psalm 5:4, 5. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. To which you may add what is mentioned in Psalm 11: 5, 6; The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

Now this being the enmity that is naturally between God and us, as the prophet Amos observes.<sup>7</sup> Can two walk together except they be agreed? The way in which, or the person by whom, we arrive at this privilege is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is stilled our peace,<sup>8</sup> and is said, to have destroyed the enmity betwixt God and us. As we are made nigh to God through him, he having finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and reconciled God unto us by his everlasting righteousness. The means of our reconciliation to God, is the agency of his Spirit; who reveals the Saviour, in the glory of his person, and perfection of his atonement, and powerfully destroys every high thought and imagination, that would exalt it self against the Lord, and his

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<sup>5</sup> Job 21:14

<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:6-8

<sup>7</sup> Chapter 3:3

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 2:14

Christ; and leads the believer into a discovery of the excellencies of the wisdom, grace, and glory of this way of redemption; enabling him to bless God for it, and rejoice in it. This you have represented to you, in both the branches of it, in a very just light by the apostle Paul: And all things are of God, says he, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.<sup>9</sup> In which passage you have, first an intimation of the way of reconciliation on God's part. It is by Christ that he becomes one with us; by putting away our sins, and imputing them unto his Son. Again, our being friends with God being necessary, as well as his friendship to us; he hath committed unto his ministers this word of reconciliation : in the ministration of which they, as ambassadors for Christ, in his name, and by his authority, deliver this message of peace unto sinners; in which they earnestly beseech them to be reconciled unto God: and, in order to it, represent to them the grace of God, in making him to be sin for us, who knew no sin. So that before we can walk with God, we must be acquainted with his Son, and have some good ground to hope that we are accepted in him. God must be at peace with us, and we reconciled to him, other wise all our endeavors to walk with God will be insignificant. And, as one well observes, "All that we do for God, will in this case, be as the gifts of an enemy; and though they may possibly be rewarded in this life, yet as the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, so they will be rejected as to any worthiness in the day of the Lord." But again.

2. It supposes such a reconciliation, as that the consequence of this agreement, the end and design of the persons should be the same. Persons, you know, in walking together are traveling towards one and the same place; and, taking the words in a moral sense, where any are said to walk together, they are supposed to have one common aim and view. The design that God has in every thing, is the manifestation of his own perfections; to set forth to view the glory of his wisdom, power, and faithfulness. Thus he is said to have made all things for himself:<sup>10</sup> and the world is said, with all things that

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

<sup>10</sup> Proverbs 16:4

are in it, to be created by his agency, and for his pleasure. <sup>11</sup> In the work of our salvation, among other perfections, that of his grace is mentioned in a very peculiar manner, as illustrated in every part of it. Now to walk with God supposes that we are regarding the same end with him. Does he design to be glorious in showing mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin? Then the saint that walks with him in truth, is breathing after the same; and would be better acquainted with the greatness of his kindness, and have the Lord alone exalted in his soul. He would be glad to improve in the knowledge of his love, as sovereign, and undeserved; and is aiming, in every thing that he does, more or less, that Christ may be magnified, as the foundation and glory of the whole spiritual building. Again, does the Lord design, after he hath guided the believer by his counsel, to receive him to his glory? Or having finished the work of grace in his soul here, to crown him with the reward of eternal life? The believer is also, in some measure, one with him in this respect, waiting and longing to enjoy him, as the inheritance, and portion of his soul. He would be more and more loosened from time, and grow in his longings after the God of his salvation. As the Lord says unto him, fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward; <sup>12</sup> so he takes leave humbly to reply, Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. <sup>13</sup>

3. And lastly, before we can walk with God, there must be a spiritual principle of life and motion given to, or created in our souls. Natural death leaves the body inactive, destroys the power of the organs to discharge their several functions ; and so, whilst, in a spiritual sense, we are dead in trespasses and sins, there can be no walk with God maintained : We are alive unto sin, but dead unto God. <sup>14</sup> As the body of Adam would have been like the earth from whence it was taken, had not God breathed into it the breath of life; so our souls, while in this natural state, may very justly be compared to dry bones scattered at the grave's mouth. And as there can be no converse between the living and the dead; so, whilst we are spiritually dead, we must needs be strangers to communion with the saints, and much more with God himself. These things are necessarily supposed antecedent to our walking with God. He must be at peace with us in Christ, and we reconciled to him by the power of his Spirit, bestowing knowledge and faith upon our souls.

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<sup>11</sup> Revelation 4:11

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 16:1

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 73:25

<sup>14</sup> Romans 6:11

We must have, in some measure, one and the same aim, and from death in sin, be made alive unto God.

Having premised these things, I proceed to a more particular enquiry into the duty itself. And you may observe, that the expression is metaphorical, and to be taken in a moral, and not a natural sense, consisting, as I apprehend, in the believers communion with the divine Being, as his God in covenant, and his regard unto his will as the Lord his Sovereign.

First, To walk with God, is to maintain communion or fellowship with him as our God in covenant. And this may be considered either as extraordinary, or more common.

I. There are some seasons in which the Christian walks with God in a more near and intimate way, as his own God, in whom he hath a special propriety. This I call a more extraordinary walk with God, as is not commonly maintained with constancy by the saints. It is impossible to give a just description of this to the man, who is a stranger to it in his own experience. When we think of the familiarity which a father allows his child, or that which one friend will take with another, both fall vastly short of this divine communion. For as there is the greatest disproportion between the two parties engaged in it, God, and man; so, when God manifests himself unto us, it is in a way that is agreeable to his infinitely glorious nature. The best account that I can give of it, is something like this. When the Lord designs to visit a believer with these remarkable intimations of his loving-kindness, he leads him, by the special agency of his Spirit, to his Son, as one in whom he is well pleased, discovers to him the largeness of his grace in him, and witnesses by his Spirit that he is interested in it, and thus, in a special and delightful way, he looks into such a soul with that love, that seals it unto the day of redemption ; and as thus receiving the grace of God, he allows such an one the liberty to contemplate his divine perfections, as engaged in his favor. Of this the royal psalmist seems to have had frequent experience, There be many, says he, that say, who will show us any good? But the voice of my soul is, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: and, as if the mercy had been given in upon its being asked, he adds, Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.<sup>15</sup> And therefore, in another place, he calls

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<sup>15</sup> Psalm 4:6-7

upon the saints, <sup>16</sup> Sing unto the Lord, (O ye saints of his) and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment in his favor is life: weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning. <sup>17</sup> And again, he says, I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. <sup>18</sup> And, to add no more, How excellent, says he, is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life, in thy light shall we see light. <sup>19</sup> Thus, as in the multitude of his thoughts within him, the Lord visited him with the special consolations of his Spirit; so, more or less, it hath been the experience of every chosen vessel: at some seasons such have been enabled to say, Our beloved is ours and we are his, <sup>20</sup> we know in whom we have believed, <sup>21</sup> and are even confident that he will keep thee from fallings and present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. <sup>22</sup> But then,

2. There is a more constant and habitual walking with God by faith, whereby we converse with him in his Son as a merciful God, and ready to communicate every necessary good unto us. Thus, though the apostle Paul, could not always say he felt the bliss of the third heaven, yet you know, as to his more common experience, he says, The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God; <sup>23</sup> that is, he was desirous to walk in Christ Jesus, as he had at first received him, as the Lord his righteousness for acceptance, and the Lord his strength for assistance. And thus the believer is said to walk with God, when he converses with him, as he manifests himself in his Son. And to this purpose you find the word explained in the eleventh of the Hebrews, where you have a large catalogue of worthies, who lived and died in faith, several of whom, as we are informed in the Old Testament, walked with God. And indeed there can be no walking with God without

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<sup>16</sup> Psalm 30:4

<sup>17</sup> Psalm 30:5

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 34:1-3

<sup>19</sup> Psalm 36:7-8

<sup>20</sup> Cant. 2:16

<sup>21</sup> 2 Timothy 1:12

<sup>22</sup> Jude 1:24

<sup>23</sup> Galatians 2:20

faith, for without faith it is impossible to please him. <sup>24</sup> Nay, it is the property of faith, in the hand of the Spirit of God to empty a man of himself, and to fill him with his Lord, or in other words, to lead him to look for all that in, and from Christ of which he finds he is deficient in himself, and which maybe reduced to two heads, viz. righteousness and strength, as we are both impotent and guilty. But again.

Secondly, As walking with God implies communion with him and dependence upon, him, so also it includes a regard unto him as the Lord our sovereign, or to his will as our law. We are expressly told, his servants we are to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, whether of sin unto deaths or of obedience unto righteousness. <sup>25</sup> God calls, not only for all the regard of the soul as to its dependence on him, but also its obedience to him; and this must be, (1.) Universal in its extent; and, (2.) Ingenuous in its principle.

1. It must be universal in its extent. It is impossible, indeed, that it should be perfect in the degree of it; because every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil, and that continually. <sup>26</sup> But then we are not to say of this or that part of God's law, we will pay a ready obedience to it, in the neglect of any other of the same authority. He that hath enjoined one precept hath enjoined all. Abraham not only left his native country, at the command of God, but parted with Hagar and Ishmael and almost with his beloved son Isaac and that in a dreadful way too. Nor do we indeed justly acknowledge our Redeemer's dominion, or properly call him Lord, if we willfully constantly, and habitually neglect the things which he commands. It is said of Zacharias and Elisabeth that they walked in all the commandments, and ordinances of the Lord blameless: <sup>27</sup> by which we are not to understand that they were absolutely perfect in their regard to the law either moral or ceremonial; but had received a principle of grace from God, which, as far as it was in exercise, influenced them to an universal concern for his glory in all their ways. In walking with God no part of known duty is to be neglected, nor any instance of transgression willfully to be allowed of. 'Tis true, when we have done all, we must say we have come vastly short of our duty, and therefore bless God for our salvation in his Son. And the ascribing our salvation wholly to Christ Jesus is so entirely consistent with an habitual desire to honor God by an holy regard to all his revealed will,

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<sup>24</sup> Hebrews 11:6

<sup>25</sup> Romans 6:16

<sup>26</sup> Genesis 6:5

<sup>27</sup> Luke 1:6

that, in proportion to our increase in communion with him, we shall find those desires the more earnest to shew forth the praises of that grace, whereby we are made acceptable in the sight of God, by a conversation becoming the gospel. And, for my part, I must think that, let a man's pretensions to faith or privileges be ever so great, whilst he manifestly discovers no proper sense of his obligation to duty, and lives in an habitual neglect and contempt of it, I ought to conclude that such a man's faith is vain, that is, that he hath no true faith at all. And I think what the apostle John observes very abundantly strengthens the conclusion: Hereby, says he, we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.<sup>28</sup> And those are very awful words of the apostle Paul, that the damnation of such persons is just, who only slanderously report, that is barely, though unjustly affirm, that we may do evil that good may come.<sup>29</sup> And if the very report of these things deserves condemnation, how much more the willful acknowledgement of them in their daily conversation? How then can a man be said to walk with God, who allows himself, in the course of his conversation, to act contrary to his revealed will, to trample upon his authority, and neglect his grace?

2. This obedience must be ingenuous in the principle, as well as universal in the extent of it. Paul seemed to have an unlimited concern for the law of God, before conversion, as far as he was acquainted with it; but then it was the obedience of an enemy, and not of a son. He was walking with himself rather than with his God; but after his conversion, being experimentally acquainted with the mercies of God himself, he presses the saints at Rome, by these mercies to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God, as their most reasonable service.<sup>30</sup> Our obedience can never deserve the name of gospel obedience, unless it flows from a view of our interest in God through Jesus Christ: this our Lord seems to intimate, when he says, If ye love me keep my commandments.<sup>31</sup> Love must precede obedience. Which leads us to consider,

II. The way and manner in which this duty is to be discharged. But of that and what follows in a future discourse.

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<sup>28</sup> 1 John 2:4-5

<sup>29</sup> Romans 3:8

<sup>30</sup> Romans 12:1

<sup>31</sup> John 14:5

## SERMON VI.

### Of walking humbly with God.

#### Micah vi. 8.

He hath shewed thee, O man; what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

#### **The Second Sermon on this text.**

IN speaking from the last clause of these words, I have in a former discourse proposed.

- I. To consider the duty itself; and what it is to walk with God.
- II. The manner of its performance; it is to be done humbly. And,
- III. The reason, or authority by which it is enjoined. The Lord hath required it of us.

#### *The first of these I have considered, and proceed now,*

II. To treat on the way and manner how this duty should be performed. It is to be done humbly; with becoming apprehensions of the privilege we are admitted to, and our unworthiness of it.

The term *humility* is as frequently used, and as little understood, in the genuine meaning of it, by the generality of professing Christians, as any one word by which any branch of our religion is expressed. Some take it for a

free, ingenuous, and unreserved deportment towards our equals and inferiors, in opposition to a lofty imperious carriage. And this is certainly one lower branch of humility. Others confine it to a serious form of countenance, or a particular tone of voice in religious services, attended with a distinguished meanness of apparel and behavior ; when at the same time, there may be as much pride in such affected singularities, as in the most pompous and expensive excesses. No, as the soul is the seat of humility, and God the author, and primary object of this grace, it must needs contain something of a much more excellent nature in it. If we were not acquainted with the vileness of our nature, we might be tempted to think that there could be little or no occasion for the exhortation in our text, to walk humbly with God: but, if we know any thing, we must be sensible of the infinite disproportion betwixt him and us, both as to nature, and perfections. For a worm to be allowed to walk with the Creator of all things, and a sinful creature to be admitted to converse with perfect purity, are wonders of grace, which must needs astonish the soul that is a partaker of so inestimable a privilege: and the higher we are listed up in the enjoyment of it, the lower we must needs sink in our own eyes. The nearer we are to our God, the further we shall be from vanity, and carnal pride. There is indeed a sort of external communion with God in ordinances and privileges, that may be separated from humility. Thus the church of the Jews was, you know, for several ages distinguished by some special tokens of the divine presence; in which sense, God might be said to walk, or to dwell externally with them. This favor they abused to a fond conceit of themselves, and a haughty contemptuous treatment of the rest of the world; and by their gross pursuit of bodily services, and resting in them, they at last sunk into an utter neglect of all spiritual and vital religion. But where the soul is taken by the Spirit of Christ into the immediate presence of God, and indulged with communion with him, every look of love is of a humbling nature, and each testimony of his grace leaves such an one more abased in his own eyes. And that we may the better come at the meaning of the Spirit of God in the text, as to the manner of the discharge of this duty. I shall,

*First,* Consider the believer in his first setting out for God.

*Secondly,* In his conversation afterwards in his passage to heaven. And,

*Thirdly,* In the reward that he is to receive, when he comes to see as he is seen, and know as he is known.

Under each of which it will be evident, that it is the great work of the Spirit of God, to bring us to low thoughts of ourselves, and to engage us to glory only in the Lord.

First, We are to take a view of the believer in his first setting out in religion. We shall then find him brought under a sense of his being a lost, undone, perishing creature, viler than the beasts of the earth, deserving the same torments with the very devils themselves. We are naturally prone to think ourselves something, when in reality we are nothing; and to fancy ourselves rich, and increased with goods, when we are poor, and stand in need of every thing. Nay, so great is our pride, that we say in our practice, if not in words, Who is the Lord that we should obey him? <sup>32</sup> The spirit of man, thus vainly exalted, requires the agency of a divine hand to humble and bring it down: and till we feel the power of almighty grace in bringing us to a just knowledge of ourselves, we cannot be said to walk with God. Many indeed have, to appearance, set out very well, with determined resolutions for new obedience, and perhaps have done many things for God, and yet, after all, have turned back. And the apostle assures us, concerning himself and his brethren the Jews that they were zealous for God, and followed after righteousness, but never obtained life by it, as seeking to be justified by the works of the law. <sup>33</sup> They hoped to be the end of the law unto themselves for righteousness; but when informed by the ministration of the gospel, that they must have no confidence in the flesh, they discover that they never had felt the power of divine grace, by their stumbling at this, as an offence unto them. <sup>34</sup> And indeed the doctrine of the cross, or reconciliation to God by the blood of Jesus as it reduces the creature to the necessity of acknowledging that all the salvation is of grace, and not of debt, hath ever been rejected by the wisdom and pride of this world. And this will always be the case, till men become the workmanship of Christ Jesus, and receive a new creation from his Spirit. As our Lord's errand into this world was to save sinners, to call, not the righteous, but lost, sick and perishing souls; so there never was one that came to the Father by him but was made sensible, in some good degree, of his having sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and of the plague of his own heart, as being deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. And this is the very first step towards walking with God: for they are the poor and hungry that he fills with good things, whilst the rich and the

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<sup>32</sup> Exodus 5:2

<sup>33</sup> Romans 9:31

<sup>34</sup> Verse 33

full he sends empty away. <sup>35</sup> It is to the humble and contrite one that he looks, as one made desirous of his presence by his Spirit, and having a right to it by his relation to his Son. Till we can see ourselves in some measure in the same light with the apostle Paul, we must not think of walking with God. He who now came not behind the very chiefest apostles, could remember the time, and was ready enough to acknowledge it, when he was a blasphemer, a persecutory and injurious: and therefore he recommends the grace of God to others, as bestowed on himself when he was the chief of sinners. But I obtained mercy, says he, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief: And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundantly with faith, and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus, came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. <sup>36</sup> And this I take to be one great thing included in that promise made to Christ, Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power; <sup>37</sup> willing to own themselves what they really are, sinners by nature and practice, deserving death as the wages of their iniquities; willing to submit to the grace of God as given to the most unworthy, and in this way to maintain fellowship with God. Let the thoughts of the heart be never so much exalted before conversion, no sooner doth the Lord visit the spirit of a man with his grace, but when the commandment comes, sin revives, and the sinner dies; <sup>38</sup> that is, is dead in himself; he sees what he is, what he deserves, and what would become of him, unless an arm of infinite power and grace relieve him. Thus then, in the first setting out of a believer, it is the constant way of the Holy Spirit to lay him low in his own eyes, and this partly by representing to him the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and more especially, by leading him to an acquaintance with the nature of rich and undeserved mercy: and this agrees with the experience of every child of God. Can we not look back and remember what mean thoughts we once had of ourselves? How were we made to loath ourselves, and lie in the dust before God? Even the common mercies of life, such as food and raiment appeared as favors we had forfeited, and the least glimmering of hope was received with unspeakable wonder, as an instance of marvelous love. But again,

Secondly, If we consider the believer in his conversation, while passing through this world, we shall find that, as he grows in grace, he will increase in humility. He is not only convinced, in his first setting out for

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<sup>35</sup> Luke 1:53

<sup>36</sup> 1 Timothy 1:13-15

<sup>37</sup> Psalm 110:3

<sup>38</sup> Romans 7:9

God, that he is less than the least of all his mercies; but this in some measure abides upon him, and he carries it about with him, more or less, through the whole of his conversion. And this is manifested, (i.) In all that he doth for God, and all that he receives from him; and, (ii.) In all that he meets with in the way of his providence, whether of an afflictive or prosperous nature.

1. The man that is truly under the leadings of the Divine Spirit walks humbly with God in all that he doth for him, and receives from him.

(1.) In all that he doth for God: and this he evidences, partly by the apprehensions that he has justly entertained of his own insufficiency and impotency to do any thing that is spiritually good, by any power of his own; and partly by an acknowledgement of his unworthiness, when he hath been afflicted to do his best.

1. He walks humbly with God as a necessitous, weak, and helpless creature. One of the first lessons which the Spirit of God teaches us, is, that we cannot of ourselves either speak a good word, or think a good thought, and that all our sufficiency is of God. <sup>39</sup> No sooner do we feel, that when we would do good, evil is present with us, <sup>40</sup> or that the will may be present, when the power to perform is absent, but we must necessarily, if under the influence of grace, be led to acknowledge that all our springs are in our God, and our help alone can come from him. In the beginning of our profession, perhaps, through the strength of our affections, we thought that we had received grace enough for many days, that no duty could be too great, nor any service too hard for us: but, in proportion to our experience, we learn that if we do any thing acceptably, it is God who must work in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. <sup>41</sup> And as this gives the glory to him, to whom alone it is due; so it hath a natural tendency to humble the soul in itself; and the believer will be ready to say, " To what a strange degree of " wretchedness and impotency am I reduced " by my original apostasy ? That which I believe to be my most reasonable service, is now out of my power. Adam, like an angel, could have once sung the praise, and adored the grace of his God at pleasure, without weariness or interruption; but now, if a serious reflection, or a spiritual meditation were to save my soul (as blessed be God my salvation is not put on this footing, yet were this the case) and were God

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<sup>39</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:5

<sup>40</sup> Romans 7:21

<sup>41</sup> Philippians 2:13

to leave me to myself, I could not command my heart into such an exercise. Thus in all the believer does, as far as he is led by the Spirit of Christ, he remembers his own insufficiency, and his dependence upon God.

2. As he is humbled, as impotent or helpless, so also as an unworthy creature. Grace hath taught him that the law of God is holy, just, and good, and perfectly agreeable to the divine nature; and the same principle, hath acquainted him with his engagements to obedience as a creature, and as an obliged creature, who hath been preserved and supplied through his whole life, by the care and bounty of heaven. Now, as he is sensible, after all his labor and industry to make some grateful returns, that there hath cleaved abundance of imperfection and defilement to every part of his service, this is made use of by the Spirit of God, to lead him out of himself, to an entire dependence upon the righteousness of Christ for acceptance. And is it not a very humbling consideration, although there is great comfort attending it, that man now, being fallen, cannot possibly redeem his own soul; but if ever he is accepted, it must be by the complete atonement of the Son of God? What the apostle Paul says concerning the ceremonial law, is certainly as true of the moral; If any other man thinketh, that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the flock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Well, what account doth he make of all this? Why instead of boasting before God, says he, what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. And lest this should be confined to the ceremonial law, he adds, Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the Excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.<sup>42</sup> Let our obedience be never so universal, or never so complete, whilst there is but one flaw in it, it cannot be answerable to the demands of the divine law, and therefore will stand us in no stead in that respect. For a man to rejoice in a few sparks of his own kindling,<sup>43</sup> or to sacrifice to his own net, and to burn incense unto his own drag,<sup>44</sup> is to declare that he is a stranger, so far, to himself, and the power of divine grace. But where a man is under the guidance of the Spirit of God, he knows that,

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<sup>42</sup> Philippians 3:4-9

<sup>43</sup> Isaiah 50:11

<sup>44</sup> Habakkuk 1:16

as his sufficiency for duty, so his acceptance is only in, and from the Lord Jesus Christ; by his power he is made ready to every good word and work, and by the sprinkling of his blood he is made acceptable in the sight of God and therefore his language is, Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name be all the glory. <sup>45</sup> And the more he advances in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, the more this conviction, and these dispositions increase upon him.

(2.) As in duty, so in enjoyment the believer is made sensible of himself, and walks humbly with God. This I have shewed in some measure already, as what he is apprised of in his first conversion and is improved afterwards. And I think I need only appeal for this to the experience of every child of God. Did the Lord ever speak peace to your souls? Did he ever say, in the whispers of his Spirit, I am thy salvation, and thus, give you joy in believing? And has it not in this case been the constant language of your hearts, Who am I, and what is my house that the Lord should thus manifest himself unto me? <sup>46</sup> When God hath been pleased to discover himself at any time in his greatness, or in the glory of his perfections, we find this hath been the consequence of it. Thus you know it was with Job, when the Lord answered him out of the whirlwind, and discovered to him the glory of his power, and wisdom; in the works of creation and providence. What was the reply he made him but this? Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth, Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further. <sup>47</sup> And again, he says, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. <sup>48</sup> And thus the prophet Isaiah, after he had been honored with an extraordinary discovery of the glory of God, says, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. <sup>49</sup> Now if such a discovery of the greatness of God hath been attended with these effects, we may readily suppose that the apprehension of his goodness, and the believer's interest in it, hath laid him still lower, if possible, in his own eyes. Nor need we have any other proof of this than a Christian's own experience. He never enjoys communion with God, but he is sensible, in some measure, of his

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<sup>45</sup> Psalm 115:1

<sup>46</sup> 2 Samuel 7:18

<sup>47</sup> Job 40:4-5

<sup>48</sup> Chapter 42:4-5

<sup>49</sup> Isaiah 6:5

unworthiness of it: and this is equally true of whatever grace he derives from God. If he increases in knowledge of him, or in love to him, or in faith and dependence upon him, he will still be ready to say, By the grace of God I am what I am.<sup>50</sup> And thus, the greater progress he makes in true and vital religion, the more will he lose of that spiritual pride, which is, more or less, the disgrace and unhappiness of every one of us.

2. And this humility will further be made manifest, in all that the Christian meets with from God, in the way of his providence. If the Lord smiles upon him in the bounties of his goodness, as far as he walks with him, he will regard every mercy as afforded in the way of his gracious covenant, and designed to engage him more to his service: and whilst he remembers how unworthy he is of these things, he will be the more ready to acknowledge that he is indebted to pure Sovereign kindness for the enjoyment of them. And thus in proportion to his improvement in communion with God, the addition of temporal blessings, instead of raising and increasing a vain opinion of himself, will serve as a means, in the hand of the Spirit of God, to make him walk more humbly, and more thankfully with him. He will be ready to say, “What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?<sup>51</sup> what obligations doth he lay me under? And how much have I reason, to be humbled, that I improve his bounty no more, nor walk no more thankfully in the sense of it?”

But if the same wisdom and goodness should see it necessary to empty him from vessel to vessel, to strip him of all, and reduce him to extremity, if he walks with God in a humble way,

I. He will be concerned to eye his Sovereignty and equity, in his proceedings towards him, as one who hath a right to dispose of his own at his pleasure. It is only ignorance or pride that tempts the believer to think hard of God in this case, on account of the appearance of severity in his dealings towards him: for we have no reason to be angry at the removal of a mercy, till we can lay some claim to it. Job seemed to have a just sense of this, when he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.<sup>52</sup> It was the Lord that gave, or who in a way of Sovereignty bestowed the mercy, and he had a just right in the same way to remove it. In all this, it is

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<sup>50</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:10

<sup>51</sup> Psalm 116:12

<sup>52</sup> Job 1:21

said; Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly, or as it is in the margin, attributed folly to him.<sup>53</sup> And thus you find Aaron, when he lost his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, by fire from the Lord: though it was a very severe dispensation, yet he held his peace,<sup>54</sup> he was silent because the Lord had done it. And you are well acquainted with the answer of Eli, when judgment was denounced against his family, it is the Lord, says he, let him do what seemeth him good.<sup>55</sup> There seems to be abundance of force in that expression, Be still, and know that I am God.<sup>56</sup> To walk humbly with him under afflictive circumstances, must needs include a willingness to view him as our Sovereign, and the just judge of all, who can do nothing but what is right.

2. The believer in such circumstances is concerned to act faith upon the wisdom and goodness of God, which will make every thing to issue in his advantage. He should not only manifest his humility in being still; but in hoping against hope, when there is but little probability of any appearance for him. This made the prophet Habakkuk conclude, although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.<sup>57</sup> One would think he could have but very little occasion to rejoice, in the Want of every thing; but he gives us the reason of it: The Lord God was his strength<sup>58</sup> and therefore he knew that his grace would be sufficient for him. And, methinks, this is the most: genuine humility a Christian can manifest, when, in very dark appearances, he is enabled to look to him who is the head over all things to the church<sup>59</sup> and able to do exceeding abundantly above all that he can ask or think Chap. 3:20. We are too apt to say, why should we wait for the Lord any longer?<sup>60</sup> But it is the desire of a true believer to wait upon God, and commit his way unto him, as one who doth great and marvelous things: this seemed to be the case of David, when he says to his soul, why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise

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<sup>53</sup> Verse 22

<sup>54</sup> Leviticus 10:3

<sup>55</sup> 1 Samuel 3:18

<sup>56</sup> Psalm 46:10

<sup>57</sup> Habakkuk 3:17-18

<sup>58</sup> Habakkuk 3:19

<sup>59</sup> Ephesians 1:22

<sup>60</sup> 2 Kings 6:33

him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God <sup>61</sup> He was ready to sink and give up all: but, as his last refuge, He encourages himself in his God. We are for hasty immediate deliverances, like the people of Israel, as represented by the prophet Isaiah, that took council, but not of the Lord: that walked to go down into Egypt, (but had not asked at his mouth) to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust, in the shadow of Egypt. <sup>62</sup> Whereas, we are told their strength was to sit still, <sup>63</sup> not in a way of indifference, but of duty, to look and cry to God, and leave the event to him. And again, thus saith the Lord God, the holy one of Israel in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not. <sup>64</sup> And we are further told, therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him. <sup>65</sup> Well, this is what the Christian is longing after. He would be a follower of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises <sup>66</sup> he would submit to the wisdom and judgment of God, and leave it to him to choose his lot for him, in a firm belief that he will issue every thing for his own glory, and to his advantage. And this is especially the case, when the believer is called out to hard services, for which he apprehends his entire insufficiency, or that, to all appearance; his way is quite blocked up. As it was with Abraham, who without doubt concluded, that God must work a miracle, or else his son Isaac could not be born, or restored to him, after his intended sacrifice. And yet he staggered not <sup>67</sup> knowing the power, goodness, and faithfulness of him who promised. Well, in this we are to walk humbly, submitting our darkest concerns to him, who is able to fulfill all his promises, and perform all his pleasure. Which leads us,

Thirdly, To consider the temper of the soul, when all imperfection shall be done away, and it shall be admitted into the most intimate and eternal walk, or communion with God. And we have a very full description of this in that well known passage in the Revelation: *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

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<sup>61</sup> Psalm 43:5

<sup>62</sup> Isaiah 30:1-2

<sup>63</sup> Verse 7

<sup>64</sup> Isaiah 30:15

<sup>65</sup> Verse 18

<sup>66</sup> Hebrews 6:14

<sup>67</sup> Romans 4:20

*thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power : for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* <sup>68</sup> As it hath been observed by all the people of God in this world, that the nearer they have approached to him in a way of communion, the less they have thought of themselves ; so we are sure there is no proud inhabitant in the new Jerusalem. There the Lord alone is exalted. All that dwell there are perfectly happy, and perfectly humble. Their humility justly arises from the sense they have of the infinite distance there is betwixt God and them. And thus I have considered the believer in his first setting out, in his walk in this world, and in his reward in a better, But to shut up all with a few reflections,

I. We may learn from hence the sovereignty of divine grace that God should never invite offending angels to walk with him, but that his delights should be with the sons of men. As the capacities of those spirits are doubtless larger, so, had they been the objects of divine grace, they might have been furnished, for such a privilege as this, more fully than we are; and yet he dwells with man upon the earth? Whilst they are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. <sup>69</sup> And thus, by the way, let me observe, that we have no reason to quarrel with the Sovereignty of divine grace, in choosing one man and leaving another, till we can charge God with injustice, in leaving the angels to this perdition, and visiting sinful men with his mercy and salvation.

2. From hence we may learn that most men begin at the wrong end, in their obedience. They are for obedience before reconciliation, whereas, whilst God is our enemy, we can have no friendly correspondence with him. And,

3. We may also discover the mistake of poor saints in the dark, who think it essential to walking with God, that they should always have the light of his countenance : whereas we are, for the most part, to live by faith, and not by sight. And our close and uninterrupted enjoyment is reserved for a better World,

4. As there are such pleasures attending communion with God here below, what will be the joy of his presence in that blessed state?

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<sup>68</sup> Revelation 4:10-11

<sup>69</sup> Jude 1:6

5. Hence we may also learn, that he who is a stranger to the Lord Jesus cannot be said to walk humbly with God, let his other pretensions to humility be what they will. Such may walk humbly with men, but they cannot be said to walk so with God; while they are practically opposing their pretended wisdom and authority, to that of their Creator, and are despising the only way of salvation which he has revealed.

6. The greatest privileges and the highest attainments have nothing in them that should cause us to think better of ourselves, than is meet. The apostle's reasoning upon this head is so very just, that he that runs may read it. For who, says he, *maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as is thou hadst not received it?*<sup>70</sup> With this you may compare what he says in his epistle to the Romans: *For I say, thro' the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.*<sup>71</sup> And surely, if all that we have comes from God, if we glory, it must be in the Lord.<sup>72</sup>

7. May not this serve as a reproof to us, who have come so short in this grace. How many times have we gone forth in our own strength into a duty, or against a temptation? How many times have we boasted ourselves in our services, and abused our privileges? May this serve to lay us low in the sight of God. In one word,

8. And lastly, Let what has been said engage us to admire that God should humble himself to walk with us; and let it stir us up to be importunate for more of his presence, grace, and assistance, that we may walk more becomingly with him.

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<sup>70</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:7

<sup>71</sup> Romans 12:3

<sup>72</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:31