

THE DESIRE  
OF THE  
RIGHTEOUS GRANTED;  
OR,  
A DISCOURSE OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN'S DESIRES

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As the tree is known by its fruit, so is the state of a man's heart known by his desires. The desires of the righteous are the touchstone or standard of Christian sincerity — the evidence of the new birth — the spiritual barometer of faith and grace—and the springs of obedience. Christ and him crucified is the ground of all our hopes — the foundation upon which all our desires after God and holiness are built — and the root by which they are nourished. It is from this principle of Divine life which flows from Christ to his members, that these desires and struggles after holiness of thought and conduct arise, and are kept alive. They prove a fountain of consolation to the harassed and tried believer; for if we are in the sense of this scripture 'righteous,' we shall have those desires to enjoy the presence of God on earth, and with him felicity in heaven, which the voice of the Omnipotent declareth SHALL be granted. O! the blessedness of those in whose hearts are planted 'the desires of the righteous.'

This brings us to the most important of all the subjects of self-examination — am I one of the 'righteous'? or, in other words, 'am I born again?' Upon this solemn heart-trying inquiry hangs all our hopes of escape from misery and ascension to glory — a kingdom, a crown, a bright, a happy, an eternal inheritance, on the one hand, or the gloomy abodes of wretchedness on the other hand, are for ever to be decided. What are our desires? To guide our anxious inquiries into this all-important subject, our author unlocks the heavenly treasures, and in every point furnishes us with book, and chapter, and verse, that we may carefully and prayerfully weigh all that he displays in the unerring scales of the sanctuary. A desire after the presence of God — of conformity to his image and example — for a greater hatred of sin — yea, as Bunyan expresses it, a desire to desire more of those blessed fruits of the Spirit, inspires the inquirer with the cheering hope that he has passed from death unto life — that he has been born again, and has been made righteous. And if, as we progress in the Divine life, our experience of the delights of communion with God enables us to say with David, 'My soul panteth,' or crieth, or, as the margin of our Bibles have, brayeth, 'yea, thirsteth after God,' however we may be assaulted by the enemies within and without, we may say with confidence, 'Why art thou disquieted, O my soul? hope thou in God,

for I SHALL yet praise him.'

Deeply are the churches of Christ indebted to the Holy Spirit for having assisted his honoured servant to write this treatise; and we are under great obligation to his friend, Charles Doe, for having handed it down to us, as he found it prepared for the press, with other excellent treatises, among the author's papers after his decease. It abounds with those striking ideas peculiar to the works of the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*; most faithful home thrusts at conscience, which those who really desire to know themselves will greatly prize. It has been very properly observed that the words used by the author, as descriptive of the text, may, with great propriety, be applied to this treatise — 'It is a sharp and smart description' of the desires of a righteous man.

The desires of the righteous are very graphically impersonated and described. They reach beyond time and peep into eternity. 'The righteous have desires that reach further than this world, desires that have *so long a neck* as to look into the world to come.' 'So forcible and mighty are they in operation'; 'is there not life and mettle in them? They loose the bands of nature — harden the soul against sorrow — they are the fruits of an eagle-eyed confidence.' They enable the soul 'to see through the jaws of death — to see Christ preparing mansion-houses for his poor ones that are now kicked to and fro, like footballs in the world!' 'A desire will take a man upon its back and carry him away to God, if ten thousand men oppose it.' 'It will carry him away after God to do his will, let the work be never so hard.' The new man is subject to transient sickness, during which desire fails in its power when the inner man has caught a cold.

Bunyan's views of church fellowship are always lovely; they are delightfully expressed. He also introduces us to the unsearchable riches of Christ. 'The righteous desire a handful, God gives them a seaful; they desire a country, God prepares for them a city.' Wonders of grace to God belong.

Bunyan's pictures of the natural man are equally faithful and striking — when guilt and conviction take hold on him — when pestilence threatens to break up his house-keeping — and death takes him by the throat and hauls him down stairs to the grave; then he, who never prayed, crieth, Pray for me, and the poor soul is as loath to go out of the body for fear the devil should catch it, as the poor bird is to go out of the bush while she sees the hawk

waiting to receive her. But I must not detain the reader longer from entering on this solemn and impressive treatise, but commend it to the Divine blessing.

GEO. OFFOR.

# THE DESIRE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

## GRANTED

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*‘The desire of the righteous is only good.’ — Proverbs 11:23.*

*‘The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him; but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.’ — Proverbs 10:24.*

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This book of the Proverbs is so called because it is such as containeth hard, dark, and pithy sentences of wisdom, by which is taught unto young men knowledge and discretion (1-6). Wherefore this book is not such as discloseth truths by words antecedent or subsequent to the text, so as other scriptures generally do, but has its texts or sentences more independent; for usually each verse standeth upon its own bottom, and presenteth by itself some singular thing to the consideration of the reader; so that I shall not need to bid my reader go back to what went before, nor yet to that which follows, for the better opening of the text; and shall therefore come immediately to the words, and search into them for what hidden treasures are contained therein.

**[First.]** The words then, in the first place, present us with the general condition of the whole world; for all men are ranked under one of these conditions, the wicked or the righteous; for he that is not wicked is righteous, and he that is not righteous is wicked. So again, ‘Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous, spoil not his resting-place.’ I might give you out of this book many such instances, for it flows with such; but the truth hereof is plain enough.

The world is also divided by other general terms, as by these — believers, unbelievers; saints, sinners; good, bad; children of God, and children of the wicked one, &c. These, I say, are general terms, and comprehend not this or that sect, or order of each, but the whole. The believer, saint, good, and child of God, are one — to wit, the righteous; the unbeliever, the sinner, the bad, and the child of the devil, is one — to wit, the wicked; as also the text expresses it. So that I say, the text, or these two terms in it, comprehend all men; the one all that shall be saved, the other all that shall be damned for ever in hell-fire (Psa 9:17, 11:6). The *wicked*; who is he but the man that

loves not God, nor to do his will? The *righteous*; who is he but the man that loveth God, and his holy will, to do it?

Of the wicked there are several sorts, some more ignorant, some more knowing; the more ignorant of them are such as go to be executed, as the ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; that is, as creatures whose ignorance makes them as unconcerned, while they are going down the stairs to hell. But, alas! their ignorance will be no plea for them before the bar of God; for it is written, ‘It *is* a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour’ (Isa 27:11; Prov 7:22).

Though, I must confess, the more knowing the wicked is, or the more light and goodness such a one sins against, the greater will his judgment be; these shall have greater damnation: it shall be more tolerable at the judgment for Sodom than for them (Luke 10:12, 20:47). There is a wicked man that goes blinded, and a wicked man that goes with his eyes open to hell; there is a wicked man that cannot see, and a wicked man that will not see the danger he is in; but hell-fire will open both their eyes (Luke 16:23). There are that are wicked, and cover all with a cloak of religion, and there are that proclaim their profaneness; but they will meet both in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; ‘The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God’ (Psa 9:17).

There are also several sorts, if I may so express myself, of those that are truly righteous, as children, young men, fathers, or saints that fear God, both small and great (Rev 11:18; 1 John 2). Some have more grace than some, and some do better improve the grace they have than others of their brethren do; some also are more valiant for the truth upon the earth than others of their brethren are; yea, some are so swallowed up with God, and love to his word and ways, that they are fit to be a pattern or example in holiness to all that are about them; and some again have their light shining so dim, that they render themselves suspicious to their brethren, whether they are of the number of those that have grace or no.<sup>[1]</sup> But being gracious they shall not be lost, although such will at the day of reward suffer loss; for this is the will of the Father that sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, ‘That of all which he had given him he should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day’ (John 6:37-39; 1 Cor 3:15).

**[Second.]** In the next place, we are here presented with some of the qualities of the wicked and the righteous; the wicked has his fears, the righteous has his desires. The wicked has his fears. ‘The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him; but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.’ Indeed, it seems to the godly that the wicked feareth not, nor doth he after a godly sort; for he that feareth God aright must not be reputed a wicked man. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, declarereth that he feareth not God aright, because he doth not graciously call upon him; but yet for all that, the wicked at times are haunted, sorely haunted, and that with the worst of fears. ‘Terrors,’ says Bildad, ‘shall make him afraid on every side.’ And again, ‘His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors’ (Job 18:11-14).

A wicked man, though he may hector it at times with his proud heart, as though he feared neither God nor hell, yet again, at times, his soul is even drowned with terrors. ‘The morning *is* to them even as the shadow of death; if *one* knew *them*, *they are in* the terrors of the shadow of death’ (Job 24:14-17). At times, I say, it is thus with them, especially when they are under warm convictions that the day of judgment is at hand, or when they feel in themselves as if death was coming as a tempest, to steal them away from their enjoyments, and lusts, and delights; then the bed shakes on which they lie, then the proud tongue doth falter in their mouth, and their knees knock one against another; then their conscience stares, and roars, and tears, and arraigns them before God’s judgment-seat, or threatens to follow them down to hell, and there to wreck its fury on them, for all the abuses and affronts this wicked wretch offered to it in the day in which it controlled his unlawful deeds. O! none can imagine what fearful plights a wicked man is in sometimes; though God in his just judgment towards them suffers them again and again to stifle and choke such awakenings, from a purpose to reserve them unto the day of judgment to be punished (2 Peter 2:7-9).

**[Third.]** In the third place, as the wicked has his fears, so the righteous has his desires. ‘The desire of the righteous shall be granted’; but this must not be taken exclusively, as if the wicked had nothing but fears, and the righteous nothing but desires. For, both by Scripture and experience also, we find that the wicked has his desires, and the righteous man his fears.

**1.** For the wicked, they are not without their desires. ‘Let me die the death of

the righteous, and let my last end be like his,' was the desire of wicked Balaam (Num 23:10), and another place saith, 'the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire'; that he is for heaven as well as the best of you all, but yet, even then, 'he blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth' (Psa 10:3). Wicked men have their desires and their hopes too, but the hope and desire of unjust men perisheth (Prov 11:7, 14:32). Yea, and though they look and long, too, all the day long, with desires of life and glory, yet their fears, and them only, shall come upon them; for they are the desires of the righteous that shall be granted (Psa 112:10).

The desires of the wicked want a good bottom; they flow not from a sanctified mind, nor of love to the God, or the heaven now desired; but only from such a sense as devils have of torments, and so, as they, they cry out, 'I beseech thee torment me not' (Luke 8:28, 16:24). But their fears have a substantial foundation, for they are grounded upon the view of an ill-spent life, the due reward of which is hell-fire; 'the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,' their place is without; 'for without *are* dogs and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie' (1 Cor 6:9, 10; Rev 22:15).

Their fears, therefore, have a strong foundation; they have also matter to work upon, which is guilt and justice, the which they shall never be able to escape, without a miracle of grace and mercy (Heb 2:3). Therefore it saith, and that with emphasis, 'The fear of the wicked it shall come upon him'; wherefore his desires must die with him: for the promise of a grant of that which is desired is only entailed to righteousness. 'The desire of the righteous shall be granted,' but 'grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked,' saith David (Psa 140:8).

**2.** Nor are the righteous without their fears, and that even all their life long. Through fear of death, they, some of them, are all their life time subject to bondage (Heb 2:15). But as the desires of the wicked shall be frustrate, so shall also the fears of the godly; hence you have them admonished, yea commanded, not to be afraid neither of devils, death, nor hell; for the fear of the righteous shall not come upon them to eternal damnation (Isa 35:4, 41:10-14, 43:1, 44:28; Luke 8:50, 12:32; Rev 1:17).

'The desire of the righteous shall be granted.' No, they are not to fear what sin can do unto them, nor what all their sins can do unto them; I do not say

they should not be afraid of sinning, nor of those temporal judgments that sin shall bring upon them, for of such things they ought to be afraid, as saith the Psalmist, ‘My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments’ (Psa 119:120). But of eternal ruin, of that, they ought not to be afraid of with slavish fear. ‘Wherefore should I fear,’ said the prophet, ‘in the days of evil, *when* the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?’ (Psa 49:5). And again, ‘Ye have done all this wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord; — for the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake’ (1 Sam 12:20-22).

The reason is, because the righteous are secured by their faith in Christ Jesus; also their fears stand upon a mistake of the nature of the covenant, in which they are wrapped up, which is ordered for them in all things, and sure (2 Sam 23:5; Isa 55:3). Besides, God has purposed to magnify the riches of his grace in their salvation; therefore goodness and mercy shall, to that end, follow them all the days of their life, that they may ‘dwell in the house of the Lord for ever’ (Psa 23:6; Eph 1:3-7). They have also their intercessor and advocate ready with God, to take up matters for them in such a way as may maintain true peace betwixt their God and them; and as may encourage them to be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13; 1 John 2:1, 2). Wherefore, though the godly have their fears, yea, sometimes dreadful fears, and that of perishing for ever and ever; yet the day is coming, when their fears and tears shall be done away, and when their desires only shall be granted. ‘The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon them; but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.’

The words, then, are a prediction or prophecy, and that both concerning the wicked and the righteous, with reference to time and things to come, and shall certainly be fulfilled in their season. Hence it is said concerning the wicked, that their triumphing is short, and that the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment (Job 20:5). O, their end will be bitter as wormwood, and will cut like a two-edged sword! Of this Solomon admonishes youth, when he saith. ‘Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these *things* God will bring thee into judgment’ (Eccl 11:9).

This, therefore, sheweth the desperate spirit that possesses the children of men, who, though they hear and read all this, yet cannot be reclaimed from courses that are wicked, and that lead to such a condition (Prov 5:7-14). I say they will not be reclaimed from such courses as lead to ways that go down to hell, where their soul must mourn, even then when their flesh and their body are consumed. O! how dear bought are their pleasures, and how will their laughter be turned into tears and anguish unutterable! and that presently, for it is coming! Their ‘judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not’ (2 Peter 2:3). But what good will their covenant of death then do them? And will their agreement of hell yield them comfort? Is not God as well mighty to punish as to save? (Isa 28:18). Or can these sinners believe God out of the world, or cause that he should not pay them home for their sins, and recompense them for all the evil they have loved, and continued in the commission of? (Job 21:29-31). ‘Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong in the days that God shall deal with thee?’ (Eze 22:14). Thou art bold now, I mean bold in a wicked way; thou sayest now thou wilt keep thy sweet morsels of sin under thy tongue, thou wilt keep them still within thy mouth. Poor wretch! Thy sins shall lie down in the dust with thee (Job 20:11). Thou hast sucked the poison of asps, and the viper’s tongue shall slay thee (Job 20:16). ‘Thou shalt not see the rivers, the streaming floods, the brooks of butter and honey’ (Job 20:17). ‘All darkness shall be hid in thy secret places, a fire not blown shall consume thee.’ ‘This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God’ (Job 20:26-29).

And as they [the Scriptures] predict or prophesy what shall become of the wicked; so also they plentifully foretell what shall happen to the righteous, when he saith their desire shall be granted: of which more anon. Only here I will drop this short hint, That the righteous have great cause to rejoice; for what more pleasing, what more comfortable to a man, than to be assured, and that from the Spirit of truth, that what he desireth shall be granted? And this the righteous are assured of here; for he saith it in words at length, ‘The desire of the righteous shall be granted.’ This, then, should comfort them against their fears, and the sense of their unworthiness; it should also make them hold up their heads under all their temptations, and the affronts that is usual for them to meet with in the world. The righteous! Who so vilified as the righteous? He, by the wise men of the world, is counted a very Abraham,

[2] a fool; like to him who is the father of us all. But as he left all for the desire that he had of a better country, and at last obtained his desire; for after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise; so those that walk in the steps of that faith which our father Abraham had, even those also in the end shall find place in Abraham's bosom; wherefore it is meet that we should cheer up and be glad, because what we desire shall be granted unto us (Heb 6).

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#### THE NATURE OF THE WORDS.

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But I shall here leave off this short way of paraphrasing upon the text, and shall come more distinctly to inquire into the nature of the words; but my subject-matter shall be the last part of the verse, 'The desire of the righteous shall be granted.' From which words there are these things to be inquired into.

**FIRST.** What, or who is the righteous man?

**SECOND.** What are the desires of a righteous man?

**THIRD.** What is meant or to be understood by the granting of the desires of the righteous? 'The desire of the righteous shall be granted.'

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#### [WHO IS THE RIGHTEOUS MAN?]

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**FIRST.** For the first of these, namely, 'WHAT OR WHO IS THE RIGHTEOUS MAN?'

My way of prosecuting this head shall be to show you, first, that I intend a righteous man not in every sense, but in that which is the best; otherwise I shall miscarry as to the intendment of the Holy Ghost; for it may not be supposed that these words reach to them that are righteous in a general, but in a special sense; such, I mean, that are so in the judgment of God. For, as I hinted, there are several sorts of righteous men that yet have nothing to do with this blessed promise, or that shall never, as such, have their desires granted.

**First.** There is one that is righteous in his own eyes, and is yet far enough off

from the blessing of the text: ‘*There is a generation that are* pure’ or righteous ‘in their own eyes, and *yet* is not washed from their filthiness’ (Prov 29:12). These are they that you also read of in the evangelist Luke, that are said to trust ‘in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others’ (Luke 18:9). These are set so low, by this their foolish confidence, in the eyes of Jesus Christ, that he even preferred a praying publican before them (Luke 18:13, 14). Wherefore these cannot be the men, I mean those righteous men, to whom this promise is made.

**Second.** There are those that by others are counted righteous; I mean they are so accounted by their neighbours. Thus Korah and his company are called the people of the Lord, and all the congregation by them also called holy, every one of them (Num 16:3, 41). But as he who commends himself is not approved, so it is no great matter if all the world shall count us righteous, if God esteemeth us not for such: ‘For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends’ (2 Cor 10:18).

**Third.** There are those that indeed are righteous when compared with others: ‘I came not to call the righteous’; ‘for scarcely for a righteous man will one die,’ and the like, are texts thus to be understood. For such as these are, as to life moral, better than others. But these, if they are none otherwise righteous than by acts and works of righteousness of their own, are not the persons contained in the text that are to have their desires granted.

**Fourth.** The righteous man therefore in the text is, and ought to be, thus described:

**First.** He is one whom God makes righteous, by reckoning him so.

**Second.** He is one that God makes righteous, by possessing of him with a principle of righteousness.

**Third.** He is one that is practically righteous.

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**First.** *He is one that God makes righteous.* Now, if God makes him righteous, his righteousness is not his own, I mean this sort of righteousness: ‘Their righteousness *is of me*, saith the Lord’ (Isa 54:17). God then makes a man righteous by putting righteousness upon him — by putting the righteousness of God upon him (Phil 3:6-9). Hence we are said to be made the

righteousness of God in Christ: ‘For God hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him’ (2 Cor 5:21). Thus God, therefore, reckoneth one righteous, even by imputing that unto us which is able to make us so: ‘Christ of God is made unto us — righteousness’ (1 Cor 1:30). Wherefore he saith again, ‘In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory’ (Isa 45:25).

The righteousness then by which a man is made righteous, with righteousness to justification of life before God, for that is it we are speaking of now, is the righteousness of another than he who is justified thereby. Hence it is said again by the soul thus justified and made righteous, ‘The Lord hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness’ (Isa 61:10). As he also saith in another place, ‘I spread my skirts over thee, and covered thy nakedness’ (Eze 16:8). This we call a being made righteous by reckoning, by the reckoning of God; for none is of power to reckon one righteous but God, because none can make one so to be but him. He that can make me rich, though I am in myself the poorest of men, may reckon me rich, if together with his so reckoning, he indeed doth make me rich. This is the case, God makes a man righteous by bestowing of righteousness upon him — by counting the righteousness of his Son for his. He gives him righteousness, a righteousness already performed and completed by the obedience of his Son (Rom 5:19).

Not that this righteousness, by being bestowed upon us, is severed from Jesus Christ; for it is still his and in him. How then, may some say, doth it become ours? I answer, by our being put into him. For of God are we in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us, of him, ‘righteousness.’ And again, we are made ‘the righteousness of God in him.’ So then, the righteousness of Christ covereth his, as a man’s garments cover the members of his body, for we are ‘the body of Christ, and members in particular’ (1 Cor 12:27). The righteousness therefore is Christ’s; resideth still in him, and covereth us, as the child is lapped up in its father’s skirt, or as the chicken is covered with the feathers of the hen. I make use of all these similitudes thereby to inform you of my meaning; for by all these things are set forth the way of our being made righteous to justification of life (Matt 23:37; Eze 16:8; Psa 36:7).

Now thus a man is made righteous, without any regard to what he has, or to what is of him; for as to him, it is utterly another’s. Just as if I should, with

the skirts of my garments, take up and clothe some poor and naked infant that I find cast out into the open field. Now if I cover the person, I cover scabs and sores, and ulcers, and all blemishes. Hence God, by putting this righteousness upon us, is said to hide and cover our sins. ‘Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin’ (Rom 4:7, 8). For since this righteousness is Christ’s, and counted or reckoned ours by the grace of God, it is therefore bestowed upon us, not because we are, but to make us righteous before the face of God. Hence, as I said, it is said to make us righteous, even as gay clothes do make a naked body fine. ‘He hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’

This is of absolute necessity to be known, and to be believed. For without this no man can be counted righteous before God; and if we stand not righteous before God, it will benefit us nothing as to life eternal, though we should be counted righteous by all the men on earth. Besides, if God counts me righteous, I am safe, though in and of myself I am nothing but a sinner, and ungodly. The reason is, because God has a right to bestow righteousness upon me, for he has righteousness to spare; he has also a right to forgive, because sin is the transgression of the law. Yea, he has therefore sent his Son into the world to accomplish righteousness for sinners, and God of his mercy bestows it upon those that shall receive it by faith. Now, if God shall count me righteous, who will be so hardy as to conclude I yet shall perish? ‘*It is* God that justifieth. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?’ (Rom 8:33-35).

Thus therefore is a man made righteous, even of God by Christ, or through his righteousness. Now if, as was said, a man is thus made righteous, then in this sense he is good before God, before he has done anything of that which the law calls good before men; for God maketh not men righteous with this righteousness, because they have been, or have done good, but before they are capable of doing good at all. Hence we are said to be justified while ungodly, even as an infant is clothed with the skirt of another, while naked, as touching itself (Rom 4:4, 5). Works therefore do not precede, but follow after

this righteousness; and even thus it is in nature, the tree must be good before it bear good fruit, and so also must a man. It is as impossible to make a man bring forth good fruit to God, before he is of God made good, as it is for a thorn or bramble bush to bring forth figs or grapes (Matt 7:15, 16).

But again, a man must be righteous before he can be good; righteous by imputation, before his person, his intellects, can be qualified with good, as to the principle of good. For neither faith, the Spirit, nor any grace, is given unto the sinner before God has made him righteous with this righteousness of Christ. Wherefore it is said, that after he had spread his skirt over us, he washed us with water, that is, with the washing of sanctification (Eze 16:8, 9). And to conclude otherwise, is as much as to say that an unjustified man has faith, the Spirit, and the graces thereof; which to say is to overthrow the gospel. For what need of Christ's righteousness if a man may have faith and the Spirit of Christ without it, since the Spirit is said to be the earnest of our inheritance, and that by which we are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph 1, 4). But the truth is, the Spirit which makes our person good, I mean that which sanctifies our natures, is the fruit of the righteousness which is by Jesus Christ. For as Christ died and rose again before he sent the Holy Ghost from heaven to his, so the benefit of his death and resurrection is by God bestowed upon us, in order to the Spirit's possessing of our souls.

**Second.** And this leads me to the second thing, namely, *That God makes a man righteous by possessing<sup>[3]</sup> of him with a principle of righteousness*, even with the spirit of righteousness (Rom 4:4, 5). For though, as to justification before God from the curse of the law, we are made righteous while we are ungodly, and yet sinners; yet being made free from sin thus, we forthwith become, through a change which the Holy Ghost works in our minds, the servants of God (Rom 5:7-9). Hence it is said, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (Rom 8:1). For though, as the apostle also insinuates here, that being in Christ Jesus is antecedent to our walking after the Spirit; yet a man can make no demonstration of his being in Christ Jesus, but by his walking in the Spirit; because the Spirit is an inseparable companion of imputed righteousness, and immediately follows it, to dwell with whosoever it is bestowed upon. Now it dwelling in us, principles<sup>[4]</sup> us in all the powers of our souls, with that which is righteousness in the habit and nature of it. Hence

the fruits of the Spirit are called ‘the fruits of goodness and righteousness,’ as the fruits of a tree are called the fruit of that tree (Eph 5:9).

And again, ‘He that doth righteousness is righteous,’ not only in our first sense, but even in this also. For who can do righteousness without he be principled so to do? who can act reason that hath not reason? So none can bring forth righteousness that hath not in him the root of righteousness, which is the Spirit of God, which comes to us by virtue of our being made sons of God (1 John 2:19, 3:7; Gal 4:5-7). Hence the fruits of the Spirit are called ‘the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God’ (Phil 1:11). This then is the thing we say, to wit, that he that is made righteous unto justification of life before God, is also habituated with a principle of righteousness, as that which follows that righteousness by which he stood just before. I say, as that which follows it; for it comes by Jesus Christ, and by our being justified before God, and made righteous through him.

This second then also comes to us before we do any act spiritually good. For how can a man act righteousness but from a principle of righteousness? And seeing this principle is not of or by nature, but of and by grace, through Christ, it follows that as no man is just before God that is not covered with the righteousness of Christ, so no man can do righteousness but by the power of the Spirit of God which must dwell in him. Hence we are said through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body, which works are preparatory to fruitful actions. The husbandman, says Paul, that laboureth, must first be partaker of the fruit; so he that worketh righteousness, must first be blessed with a principle of righteousness (2 Tim 2:1-6). Men must have eyes before they see, tongues before they speak, and legs before they go; even so must a man be made habitually good and righteous before he can work righteousness. This then is the second thing. God makes a man righteous by possessing him with a principle of righteousness; which principle is not of nature, but of grace; not of man, but of God.

**Third.** *The man in the text is practically righteous*, or one that declareth himself by works that are good; a virtuous, a righteous man, even as the tree declares by the apple or plum it beareth what manner of tree it is: ‘Ye shall know them by their fruits’ (Matt 7:16). Fruits show outwardly what the heart is principled with: show me then thy faith, which abideth in the heart, by thy

works in a well spent life. Mark how the apostle words it, We being, saith he, 'made free from sin, and become servants to God, have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life' (Rom 6:23).

Mark his order: first we are made free from sin; now that is by being justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. Now this is God's act, without any regard at all to any good that the sinner has or can accomplish; 'not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy' thus he saveth us (Titus 3:5; Rom 3:24; 2 Tim 1:9). Now, being made free from sin, what follows? We become the servants of God, that is, by that turn which the Holy Ghost makes upon our heart when it reconciles it to the Word of God's grace. For that, as was said afore, is the effect of the indwelling and operation of the Holy Ghost. Now having our hearts thus changed by God and his Word, the fruits of righteousness put forth themselves by us. For as when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which is in our members, did bring forth fruit unto death, so now, if we are in the Spirit, and we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, by the motions and workings of that we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life (Rom 8:6, 9).

But now by these fruits we are neither made righteous nor good; for the apple maketh not the tree good, it only declares it so to be. Here therefore all those are mistaken that think to be righteous by doing of righteous actions, or good by doing good. A man must first be righteous, or he cannot do righteousness; to wit, that which is evangelically such. Now if a man is, and must be righteous, before he acts righteousness, then all his works are born too late to make him just before God; for his works, if they be right, flow from the heart of a righteous man, of a man that had, before he had any good work, a twofold righteousness bestowed on him; one to make him righteous in the sight of God, the other to principle him to be righteous before the world. 'That he might be called a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified' (Isa 63:3).

The want of understanding of this, is that which keeps so many in a mist of darkness about the way of salvation. For they, poor hearts! when they hear of the need that they have of a righteousness to commend them to God, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, that is, of that which God imputeth to a

man, and that by which he counteth him righteous, have it not in their thoughts to accept of that unto justification of life. But presently betake themselves to the law of works, and fall to work there for the performing of a righteousness, that they may be accepted of God for the same; and so submit not themselves to the righteousness of God, by which, and by which only, the soul stands just before God (Rom 10:1-3). Wherefore, I say, it is necessary that this be distinctly laid down. That a man must be righteous first, even before he doth righteousness; the argument is plain from the order of nature: 'For a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit': wherefore make the tree good, and so his fruit good; or the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt (Luke 6:43).

Reason also says the same, for how can Blacks beget white children, when both father and mother are black? How can a man without grace, and the spirit of grace, do good; nature is defiled even to the mind and conscience; how then can good fruit come from such a stock? (Titus 1:15). Besides, God accepteth not any work of a person which is not first accepted of him; 'The Lord hath respect unto Abel and to his offering' (Gen 4:4). To Abel first, that is, before that Abel offered. But how could God have respect to Abel, if Abel was not pleasing in his sight? and how could Abel be yet pleasing in his sight, for the sake of his own righteousness, when it is plain that Abel had not yet done good works? he was therefore first made acceptable in the sight of God, by and for the sake of that righteousness which God of his grace had put upon him to justification of life; through and by which also the Holy Ghost in the graces of it dwelt in Abel's soul. Now Abel being justified, and also possessed with this holy principle, he offers his sacrifice to God. Hence it is said, that he offered 'by faith,' by the faith which he had precedent to his offering; for if through faith he offered, he had that faith before he offered; that is plain. Now his faith looked not for acceptance for the sake of what he offered, but for the sake of that righteousness which it did apprehend God had already put upon him, and by which he was made righteous; wherefore his offering was the offering of a righteous man, of a man made righteous first; and so the text saith, 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous' (Heb 11:4); that is antecedent to his offering; for he had faith in Christ to come, by which he was made righteous; he also had the spirit of faith, by which he was possessed with a righteous principle; and so being in this manner made

righteous, righteous before God, and also principled to work, he comes and offereth his more acceptable sacrifice to God. For this, all will grant, namely, that the works of a righteous man are more excellent than are even the best works of the wicked. Hence Cain's works came behind; for God had not made him righteous, had no respect unto his person, had not given him the Spirit and faith, whereby alone men are made capable to offer acceptably: 'But unto Cain and to his offering, the Lord had not respect' (Gen 4:5).

From all which it is manifest, that the person must be accepted before the duty performed can be pleasing unto God. And if the person must first be accepted, it is evident that the person must first be righteous; but if the person be righteous before he doth good, then it follows that he is made righteous by righteousness that is none of his own, that he hath no hand in, further than to receive it as the gracious gift of God. Deny this, and it follows that God accepteth men without respect to righteousness; and then what follows that, but that Christ is dead in vain?

We must not therefore be deceived, 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he,' the Lord, 'is righteous' (1 John 3:7). He doth not say he that doth righteousness shall be righteous; as if his doing works would make him so before God; but he that doth righteousness IS righteous, antecedent to his doing righteousness. And it must be thus understood, else that which follows signifies nothing; for he saith, 'He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he,' the Lord his God, 'is righteous.' But how is the Lord righteous? Even antecedent to his works. The Lord was righteous before he wrought righteousness in the world; and even so are we, to wit, every child of God. 'As he is, so are we, in this world'! (1 John 4:17). But we must in this admit of this difference; the Lord was eternally and essentially righteous before he did any work, but we are imputatively righteous, and also made so by a second work of creation, before we do good works. It holds therefore only as to order; God was righteous before he made the world, and we are righteous before we do good works.

Thus, therefore, we have described the righteous man.

**First.** He is one whom God makes righteous, by reckoning or imputation.

**Second.** He is one that God makes righteous by possessing of him

with a principle of righteousness.

**Third.** He is one that is practically righteous.

Nor dare I give a narrower description of a righteous man than this; nor otherwise than thus.

**1.** I dare not give a narrower description of a righteous man than this, because whoever pretends to justification, if he be not sanctified, pretends to what he is not; and whoever pretends to sanctification, if he shows not the fruits thereof by a holy life, he deceiveth his own heart, and professeth but in vain (James 1:22-27).<sup>[5]</sup>

**2.** Nor dare I give this description otherwise than thus, because there is a real distinction to be put between that righteousness by which we should be just before God, and that which is in us a principle of sanctification; the first being the obedience of the Son of God without us, the second being the work of the Spirit in our hearts. There is also a difference to be put betwixt the principle by which we work righteousness, and the works themselves; as a difference is to be put betwixt the cause and the effect, the tree and the apple.

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**[WHAT ARE THE DESIRES OF A  
RIGHTEOUS MAN?]**

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**SECOND.** I come now to the second thing into which we are to inquire, and that is,

**WHAT ARE THE DESIRES OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN?**

My way of handling this question shall be,

**FIRST**, To speak of the nature of desire in the general.

**SECOND**, And then to show you, more particularly, what are the desires of the righteous.

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**[*Desires in general.*]**

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**FIRST.** For the first; *desires in general* may be thus described: — They are the workings of the heart or mind, after that of which the soul is persuaded

that it is good to be enjoyed; this, I say, is so without respect to regulation; for we speak not now of good desires, but of desires themselves, even as they flow from the heart of a human creature; I say, desires are or may be called, the working of the heart after this or that; the strong motions of the mind unto it. Hence the love of women to their husbands is called ‘their desires’ (Gen 3:16); and the wife also is called ‘the desire of thine’ the husband’s ‘eyes’ (Eze 24:16). Also love to woman, to make her one’s wife, is called by the name of ‘desire’ (Deut 21:10, 11). Now, how strong the motions or passions of love are, who is there that is an utter stranger thereto? (Cant 8:6, 7).

Hunger is also a most vehement thing; and that which is called ‘hunger’ in one place, is called ‘desire’ in another; and he desired ‘to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table’ (Luke 16:21; Psa 145:16). Exceeding lustings are called ‘desires,’ to show the vehemency of desires (Psa 106:14, 78:27-30). Longings, pantings, thirstings, prayers, &c., if there be any life in them, are all fruits of a desirous soul. Desires therefore flow from the consideration of the goodness, or profitableness, or pleasurableness of a thing; yea, all desires flow from thence; for a man desires not that about which he has had no consideration, nor that neither on which he has thought, if he doth not judge it will yield him something worth desiring.

When Eve saw that the forbidden fruit was a beautiful tree — though her sight deceived her — then she desired it, and took thereof herself, and gave to her husband, and he did eat; yea, saith the text, ‘when she saw that it was a tree to be desired, to make *one* wise, she took’ (Gen 3:6). Hence that which is called ‘coveting’ in one place, is called ‘desiring’ in another; for desires are craving; and by desires a man seeks to enjoy what is not his (Exo 20:17; Deut 5:21). From all these things, therefore, we see what desire is. It is the working of the heart, after that which the soul is persuaded that it is good to be enjoyed; and of them there are these two effects.

**First.** One is — on a supposition that the soul is not satisfied with what it has — to cause the soul to range and hunt through the world for something that may fill up that vacancy that yet the soul finds in itself, and would have supplied. Hence desires are said to be wandering, and the soul said to walk by them; ‘Better *is* the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire,’ or than the walking of the soul (Eccl 6:8, 9). Desires are hunting things, and how many things do some empty souls seek after, both as to the world, and also as

to religion, who have desirous minds!

**Second.** The second effect is, If desires be strong, they carry all away with them; they are all like Samson, they will pull down the gates of a city; but they will go out abroad; nothing can stop the current of desires, but the enjoyment of the thing desired, or a change of opinion as to the worth or want of worth of the thing that is desired.

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**[*What are the desires of the righteous.*]**

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**SECOND.** But we will now come to the thing more particularly intended, which is, *To show what are the desires of the righteous*; that is that which the text calls us to the consideration of, because it saith, ‘The desire of the righteous shall be granted.’

We have hitherto spoken of desires, as to the nature of them, without respect to them as good or bad; but now we shall speak to them as they are the effects of a sanctified mind, as they are the breathings, pantings, lustings, hungerings, and thirstings of a righteous man.

The text says ‘the desire of the righteous shall be granted’; what then are the desires of the righteous? Now I will,

**First.** Speak to their desires in the general, or with reference to them as to their bulk.

**Second.** I will speak to them more particularly as they work this way and that.

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**[*The desires of the righteous in the general.*]**

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**First.** For their desires in the general: the same Solomon that saith, ‘The desire of the righteous shall be granted,’ saith also, ‘The desire of the righteous *is* only good’ (Prov 11:23). This text giveth us, in the general, a description of the desires of a righteous man; and a sharp and smart description it is: for where, may some say, is then the righteous man, or the

man that hath none but good desires? and if it be answered they are good in the main, or good in the general, yet that will seem to come short of an answer: for in that he saith ‘the desires of the righteous are only good,’ it is as much as to say, that a righteous man has none but good desires, or desireth nothing but things that are good. Wherefore, before we go any further, I must labour to reconcile the experience of good men with this text, which thus gives us a description of the desires of the righteous.

A righteous man is to be considered *more generally*, or *more strictly*.

**1.** *More generally*, as he consisteth of the whole man, of flesh and spirit, of body and soul, of grace and nature; now consider him thus, and you can by no means reconcile the text with his experience, nor his experience with the text. For as he is body, flesh, and nature — for all these are with him, though he is a righteous man — so he has desires vastly different from those described by this text, vastly differing from what is good; yea, what is it not, that is naught, that the flesh and nature, even of a righteous man, will not desire? ‘Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?’ (James 4:5). And again, ‘In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing’ (Rom 7:18). And again, ‘The flesh lusteth against the spirit’ (Gal 5:17). And again, The lusts thereof do ‘war against the soul’ (1 Peter 2:11).

From all these texts we find that a righteous man has other workings, lusts, and desires than such only that are good; here then, if we consider of a righteous man thus generally, is no place of agreement betwixt him and this text. We must consider of him, then, in the next place, more strictly, as he may and is to be distinguished from his flesh, his carnal lusts, and sinful nature.

**2.** *More strictly*. Then a righteous man is taken sometimes as to or for his best part, or as he is A SECOND CREATION; and so, or as so considered, his desires are only good.

**(1.)** He is taken sometimes as to or for his best part, or as he is a second creation, as these scriptures declare: ‘If any man *be* in Christ, he is a new creature, — all things are become new’ (2 Cor 5:17). ‘Created in Christ Jesus’ (Eph 2:10). ‘Born of God’ (John 3; 1 John 3:9). Become heavenly things, renewed after the image of him that

created them: Colossians 3:10; Hebrews 9:23 and the like. By all which places, the sinful flesh, the old man, the law of sin, the outward man, all which are corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, are excluded, and so pared off from the man, as he is righteous; for his ‘delight in the law of God’ is ‘after the inward man.’ And Paul himself was forced thus to distinguish of himself, before he could come to make a right judgment in this matter; saith he, ‘That which I do, I allow not; what I would, do I not; but what I hate, that do I.’ See you not here how he cleaves himself in twain, severing himself as he is spiritual, from himself as he is carnal; and ascribeth his motions to what is good to himself only as he is spiritual, or the new man: ‘If then I do that which I would not, I consent to the law that *it is good*’ (Rom 7).

But I trow, Sir, your consenting to what is good is not by that part which doth do what you would not; no, no, saith he, that which doth do what I would not, I disown, and count it no part of sanctified Paul: ‘Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me; for — in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good, I find not: for the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do: Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me’ (Rom 7). Thus you see Paul is forced to make two men of himself, saying, I and I; I do; I do not; I do, I would not do; what I hate, that I do. Now it cannot be the same I unto whom these contraries are applied; but his sinful flesh is one I, and his godly mind the other: and indeed so he concludes it in this chapter, saying, ‘So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.’

Thus therefore the Christian man must distinguish concerning himself; and doing so, he shall find, though he has flesh, and as he is such, he hath lusts contrary to God: yet as he is a new creature, he allows not, but hates the motions and desires of the flesh, and consents to, and wills and delights in the law of God (Rom 15:17-22). Yea, as a new creature, he can do nothing else: for the new man, inward man, or hidden man of the heart, being the immediate work of the Holy Ghost, and consisting only of that which is divine and heavenly, cannot breathe, or act, or desire to act, in ways and courses that are carnal. Wherefore, in this sense, or as the righteous man is

thus considered, ‘his desires are only good.’

(2.) As the righteous man must here be taken for the best part, for the I that would do good, for the I that hates the evil; so again, we must consider of the desires of this righteous man, as they flow from that fountain of grace, which is the Holy Ghost within him; and as they are immediately mixed with those foul channels, in and through which they must pass, before they can be put forth into acts. For though the desire, as to its birth, and first being, is only good; yet before it comes into much motion, it gathers that from the defilements of the passages through which it comes, as makes it to bear a tang of flesh and weakness in the skirts of it; and the evil that dwells in us is so universal, and also always so ready, that as sure as there is any motion to what is good, so sure evil is present with it; ‘for when’ or whenever ‘I would do good,’ says Paul, ‘evil is present with me’ (Rom 7:21). Hence it follows, that all our graces, and so our desires, receive disadvantage by our flesh, that mixing itself with what is good, and so abates the excellency of the good.

There is a spring that yieldeth water good and clear, but the channels through which this water comes to us are muddy, foul, or dirty: now, of the channels the waters receive a disadvantage, and so come to us as savouring of what came not with them from the fountain, but from the channels. This is the cause of the coolness, and of the weakness, of the flatness, and of the many extravagancies that attend some of our desires. They come warm from the Spirit and grace of God in us; but as hot water running through cold pipes, or as clear water running through dirty conveyances, so our desires [cool and] gather soil.

You read in Solomon’s Ecclesiastes of a time when desires fail, for that ‘man goeth to his long home’ (Eccl 12:5). And as to good desires, there is not one of them, when we are in our prime, but they fail also as to the perfecting of that which a man desires to do. ‘To will is present with me,’ says Paul, ‘but how to perform that which is good I find not’ (Rom 7:18). To will or to desire, that is present with me, but when I have willed or desired to do, to perform is what I cannot attain to. But why not attain to a performance? Why, says he, I find a law ‘in my members warring against the law of my mind’; and this law takes me prisoner, and brings ‘me into captivity to the law of sin,

which is in my members' (Rom 7:23). Now, where things willed and desired meet with such obstructions, no marvel if our willing and desiring, though they set out lustily at the beginning, come yet lame home in conclusion.

There is a man, when he first prostrates himself before God, doth it with desires as warm as fire coals; but erewhile he finds, for all that, that the metal of those desires, were it not revived with fresh supplies, would be quickly spent and grow cold.<sup>[6]</sup> But yet the desire is good, and only good, as it comes from the breathing of the Spirit of God within us. We must therefore, as I said, distinguish betwixt what is good and that which doth annoy it, as gold is to be distinguished from the earth and dross that doth attend it. The man that believed desired to believe better, and so cries out, 'Lord, help mine unbelief' (Mark 9:24). The man that feared God desired to fear him better, saying, 'I desire to fear thy name' (Neh 1:11). But these desires failed, as to the performance of what was begun, so that they were forced to come off but lamely, as to their faith and fear they had; yet the desires were true, good, and such as was accepted of God by Christ; not according to what they had not, but as to those good motions which they had. Distinguish then the desires of the righteous in the nature of them, from that corruption and weakness of ours that cleaveth to them, and then again, 'they are only good.'

**(3.)** There is another thing to be considered, and that is, the different frames that our inward man is in while we live as pilgrims in the world. A man, as he is not always well without, so neither is he always well within. Our inward man is subject to transient, though not to utter decays (Isa 1:5). And as it is when the outward man is sick, strength and stomach, and lust, or desire fails, so it is when our inward man has caught a cold likewise (Eze 34:4).

The inward man I call the new creature, of which the Spirit of God is the support, as my soul supports my body. But, I say, this new man is not always well. He knows nothing that knows not this. Now being sick, things fail. As when a man is not in health of body, his pulse beats so as to declare that he is sick; so when a man is not well within, his inward pulse, which are his desires — for I count the desires for the pulse of the inward man — they also declare that the man is not well within. They beat too little after God, weak and faintly after grace; they also have their halts, they beat not evenly, as when the soul is well, but so as to manifest all is not well there.

We read that the church of Sardis was under sore sickness, insomuch that some of her things were quite dead, and they that were not so were yet ready to die (Rev 3:2). Yet ‘life is life,’ we say, and as long as there is a pulse, or breath, though breath scarce able to shake a feather, we cast not away all hope of life. Desires, then, though they be weak, are, notwithstanding, true desires, if they be the desires of the righteous thus described, and therefore are truly good, according to our text. David says he ‘opened his mouth and panted,’ for he longed for God’s commandments (Psa 119:131). This was a sickness, but not such a one as we have been speaking of. The spouse also cried out that she was ‘sick of love.’ Such sickness would do us good, for in it the pulse beats strongly well (Cant 5:8).

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**[*Some objections answered.*]**

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**Object.** But it may be objected, I am yet in doubt of the goodness of my desires, both because my desires run both ways, and because those that run towards sin and the world seem more and stronger than those that run after God, and Christ, and grace.

**Answe.** There is not a Christian under heaven but has desires that run both ways, as is manifest from what hath been said already. Flesh will be flesh; grace shall not make it otherwise. By flesh I mean that body of sin and death that dwelleth in the godly (Rom 6:6). As grace will act according to its nature, so sin will act according to the nature of sin (Eph 2:3). Now, the flesh has desires, and the desires of the flesh and of the mind are both one in the ungodly; thank God it is not so in thee! (Rom 7:24). The flesh, I say, hath its desires in the godly; hence it is said to lust enviously; it lusts against the Spirit; ‘The flesh lusteth against the Spirit’ (Gal 5:17). And if it be so audacious as to fly in the face of the Holy Ghost, wonder that thou art not wholly carried away with it! (Rom 7:25).

**Object.** But those desires that run to the world and sin seem most and strongest in me.

**Answe.** The works of the flesh are manifest; that is, more plainly discovered even in the godly than are the works of the Holy Ghost (Gal 5:19). And this their manifestation ariseth from these following particulars:

- 1.** We know the least appearance of a sin better by its native hue than we know a grace of the Spirit.
- 2.** Sin is sooner felt in its bitterness to and upon a sanctified soul than is the grace of God. A little aloes will be sooner tasted than will much sweet, though mixed therewith.
- 3.** Sin is dreadful and murderous in the sight of a sanctified soul: wherefore the apprehending of that makes us often forget, and often question whether we have any grace or no.
- 4.** Grace lies deep in the hidden part, but sin lies high, and floats above in the flesh; wherefore it is easier, oftener seen than is the grace of God (Psa 51:6). The little fishes swim on the top of the water, but the biggest and best keep down below, and so are seldom seen.
- 5.** Grace, as to quantity, seems less than sin. What is leaven, or a grain of mustard seed, to the bulky lump of a body of death (Matt 13:31-33).
- 6.** Sin is seen by its own darkness, and also in the light of the Spirit; but the Spirit itself neither discovers itself, nor yet its graces, by every glance of its own light.
- 7.** A man may have the Spirit busily at work in him, he may also have many of his graces in their vigorous acts, and yet may be greatly ignorant of either; wherefore we are not competent judges in this case. There may a thousand acts of grace pass through thy soul, and thou be sensible of few, if any, of them.[\[7\]](#)
- 8.** Do you think that he that repents, believes, loves, fears, or humbles himself before God, and acts in other graces too, doth always know what he doth? No, no; grace many times, even in a man, is acted by him, unawares unto him. Did Gideon, think you, believe that he was so strong in grace as he was? Nay, was he not ready to give the lie to the angel, when he told him God was with him? (Judg 6:12, 13). Or what do you think of David, when he said he was cast off from God's eyes? (Psa 31:22). Or of Heman, when he said he was free among them whom God remembered no more?

(Psa 88). Did these, then, see their graces so clear, as they saw themselves by their sins to be unworthy ones? I tell you it is a rare thing for some Christians to see their graces, but a thing very common for such to see their sins; yea, and to feel them too, in their lusts and desires, to the shaking of their souls.

**Quest.** But since I have lusts and desires both ways, how shall I know to which my soul adheres?

**Answe.** This may be known thus:

1. Which wouldest thou have prevail? the desires of the flesh, or the lusts of the spirit, whose side art thou of? Doth not thy soul now inwardly say, and that with a strong indignation, O let God, let grace, let my desires that are good, prevail against my flesh, for Jesus Christ his sake?
2. What kind of secret wishes hast thou in thy soul when thou feelest the lusts of thy flesh to rage? Dost thou not inwardly, and with indignation against sin, say, O that I might never, never feel one such motion more? O that my soul were so full of grace, that there might be longer no room for ever for the least lust to come into my thoughts!
3. What kind of thoughts hast thou of thyself, now thou seest these desires of thine that are good so briskly opposed by those that are bad? Dost thou not say, O! I am the basest of creatures, I could even spew at myself? There is no man in all the world in my eyes so loathsome as myself is. I abhor myself; a toad is not so vile as I am. <sup>[8]</sup> O Lord, let me be anything but a sinner, anything, so thou subduest mine iniquities for me!
4. How dost thou like the discovery of that which thou thinkest is grace in other men? Dost thou not cry out, O, I bless them in my heart! O, methinks grace is the greatest beauty in the world! Yea, I could be content to live and die with those people that have the grace of God in their souls. A hundred times, and a hundred, when I have been upon my knees before God, I have desired, were it the will of God, that I might be in their condition.

5. How art thou when thou thinkest that thou thyself hast grace? O then, says the soul, I am as if I could leap out of myself; joy, joy, joy then is with my heart. It is, methinks, the greatest mercy under heaven to be made a gracious man.

And is it thus with thy soul indeed? Happy man! It is grace that has thy soul, though sin at present works in thy flesh. Yea, all these breathings are the very actings of grace, even of the grace of desire, of love, of humility, and of the fear of God within thee. Be of good courage, thou art on the right side. Thy desires are only good; for that thou hast desired against thy sin, thy sinful self; which indeed is not thyself, but sin that dwells in thee.[\[2\]](#)

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*[The distinct or particular desires  
of the righteous.]*

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**Second.** I come next to speak of desires more distinctly, or particularly, as they work this way and that.

**First**, then, the desires of the righteous are either such as they would have accomplished here; or else,

**Second**, such as they know they cannot come at the enjoyment of till after death.

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*[Desires that may be accomplished  
or enjoyed in this life.]*

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**First.** For the first of these, the desires of the righteous are for such good things *as they could have accomplished here*; that is, in this world, while they are on this side glory. And they, in general, are comprised under these two general heads: —

**1st.** Communion with their God in spirit, or spiritual communion with him;

**2nd.** The liberty of the enjoyment of his holy ordinances. And, indeed, this second is, that they may both attain to, and have the first maintained with them. But for the first:

**1st. They desire now communion with God.** ‘With my soul,’ said she, ‘have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early’ (Isa 26:9). The reason of this she renders in the verse foregoing, saying, ‘The desire of *our* soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.’

Now, thus to desire, declares one already made righteous. For herein there appears a mind reconciled to God. Wherefore the wicked are set on the other side, even in that opposition to these; ‘they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways’ (Job 21:14). They neither love his presence, nor to be frequenters of his ordinances. ‘What *is* the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?’ (Job 21:15). So, again, speaking of the wicked, he saith, ‘Ye have said it *is* vain to serve God, and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance?’ (Mal 3:14). This, then, to desire truly to have communion with God, is the property of a righteous man, of a righteous man only; for this desire arises from a suitableness which is in the righteous unto God; ‘Whom,’ said the Prophet, ‘have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee’ (Psa 73:25). This could never be the desire of a man, were he not a righteous man, a man with a truly sanctified mind. ‘The carnal mind *is* enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be’ (Rom 8:7).

When Moses, the man of God, was with the children of Israel in the wilderness, he prays that God would give them his presence unto Canaan, or else to let them die in that place. It was death to him to think of being in the wilderness without God! And he said unto God, ‘If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence’ (Exo 33:14, 15). Here, then, are the desires of a righteous man — namely, after communion with God. He chooses rather to be a stranger with God in the world, than to be a citizen of the world and a stranger to God. ‘For *I am*,’ said David, ‘a stranger with thee, *and* a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*’ (Psa 39:12). Indeed, he that walketh with God is but a stranger to this world. And the righteous man’s desires are to, for, and after communion with God, though he be so.

The reasons of these desires are many. In communion with God is life and favour; yea, the very presence of God with a man is a token of it (Psa 30:3-5). For by his presence he helps, succours, relieves, and supports the hearts of his people, and therefore is communion with him desired. ‘I will,’ said David,

‘behave myself wisely in a perfect way; O when wilt thou come unto me?’ (Psa 101:2). The pleasures that such a soul finds in God that has communion with him are surpassing all pleasures and delights, yea, infinitely surpassing them. ‘In thy presence *is* fulness of joy, at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore’ (Psa 16:11). Upon this account he is called the desire of all nations — of all in all nations that know him. Job desired God’s presence, that he might reason with God. ‘Surely,’ said he, ‘I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God’ (Job 13:3). And again, ‘O that one would hear me! Behold my desire *is that* the Almighty would answer me’ (Job 31:35). But why doth Job thus desire to be in the presence of God! O! he knew that God was good, and that he would speak to him that which would do him good. ‘Will he plead against me with *his* great power? No: but he would put *strength* into me. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge’ (Job 23:6, 7).

God’s presence is the safety of a man. If God *be* with one, who can hurt one? As HE said, ‘If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?’ Now, if so much safety flows from God’s being for one, how safe are we when God is with us? ‘The beloved of the Lord,’ said Moses, ‘shall dwell in safety by him, *and the* Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders’ (Deut 33:12). God’s presence keeps the heart awake to joy, and will make a man sing in the night (Job 35:10). ‘Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?’ (Matt 9:15). God’s presence is feasting, and feasting is made for mirth (Rev 3:20; Eccl 10:19). God’s presence keeps the heart tender, and makes it ready to fall in with what is made known as duty or privilege (Isa 64:1). ‘I will run the ways of thy commandments,’ said the Psalmist, ‘when thou shalt enlarge my heart’ (Psa 119:32). The presence of God makes a man affectionately and sincerely good; yea, makes him willing to be searched and stripped from all the remains of iniquity (Psa 26:1-3).

What, what shall I say? God’s presence is renewing, transforming, seasoning, sanctifying, commanding, sweetening, and enlightening to the soul! Nothing like it in all the world; his presence supplies all wants, heals all maladies, saves from all dangers; is life in death, heaven in hell; all in all. No marvel, then, if the presence of, and communion with, God, is become the desire of a righteous man (Psa 26:9). To conclude this, by the presence of God being

with us, it is known to ourselves, and to others, what we are. ‘If thy presence,’ said Moses, ‘go not *with me*, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here, that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight, *is it* not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth’ (Exo 33:15, 16).

They are then best known to themselves. They know they are his people, because God’s presence is with them. Therefore he saith, ‘My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest’ (Exo 33:14). That is, let thee know that thou hast found grace in my sight, and art accepted of me. For if God withdraws himself, or hides his presence from his people, it is hard for them to bear up in the steadfast belief that they belong to him. ‘Be not silent to me,’ O Lord, said David, ‘lest I become like them that go down into the pit’ (Psa 28:1). ‘Be not silent unto me,’ that is, as he has it in another place, ‘Hide not thy face from me. Hear me speedily, O Lord,’ saith he, ‘my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit’ (Psa 143:7). So that God’s presence is the desire of the righteous for this cause also, even for that by it they gather that God delighteth in them. ‘By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemies doth not triumph over me’ (Psa 41:11). And is this all? No. ‘And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever’ (Psa 41:12).

As by the presence of God being with us we know ourselves to be the people of God: so by this presence of God the world themselves are sometimes convinced who we are also.

Thus Abimelech saw that God was with Abraham (Gen 21:22). Thus Abimelech saw that God was with Isaac (Gen 26:20, 29). Pharaoh knew that God was with Joseph (Gen 41:38). Saul ‘saw and knew that the Lord *was* with David’ (1 Sam 18:28). Saul’s servant knew that the Lord was with Samuel (1 Sam 9:6). Belshazzar’s queen knew, also, that God was with Daniel. Darius knew, also, that God was with Daniel. And when the enemy saw the boldness of Peter and John, ‘they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus’ (Acts 4:13). The girl that was a witch, knew that Paul was a servant of the most high God (Acts 16:17). There is a glory upon them that have God with them, a glory that sometimes glances and flashes out into the faces of those that behold the people of God; ‘And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly upon him, saw Stephen’s face, as it had been the

face of an angel'; such rays of Divine majesty did show themselves therein (Acts 6:15).

The reason is, for that,

- (1.) Such have with them the wisdom of God (2 Sam 14:17-20).
- (2.) Such, also, have special bowels and compassions of God for others.
- (3.) Such have more of his majesty upon them than others (1 Sam 16:4).
- (4.) Such, their words and ways, their carriages and doings, are attended with that of God that others are destitute of (1 Sam 3:19, 20).
- (5.) Such are holier, and of more convincing lives in general, than other people are (2 Kings 4:9).

Now there is both comfort and honour in this; for what comfort like that of being a holy man of God? And what honour like that of being a holy man of God? This, therefore, is the desire of the righteous, to wit, to have communion with God. Indeed none like God, and to be desired as he, in the thoughts of a righteous man.

**2nd.** And this leads me to the second thing, namely, *The liberty of the enjoyment of his holy ordinances*; for, next to God himself, nothing is so dear to a righteous man as the enjoyment of his holy ordinances.

'One *thing*,' said David, 'have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after,' namely, 'that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple' (Psa 27:4). The temple of the Lord was the dwelling-house of God, there he recorded his name, and there he made known himself unto his people (Psa 11:4; Hab 2:20). Wherefore this was the cause why David so earnestly desired to dwell there too, 'To behold,' saith he, 'the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.' There he had promised his presence to his people, yea, and to bring thither a blessing for them; 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee' (Exo 20:24). For this cause, therefore, as I said, it is why the righteous do so desire that they may enjoy the liberty

of the ordinances and appointments of their God; to wit, that they may attain to, and have communion maintained with him. Alas! the righteous are as it were undone, if God's ordinances be taken from them: 'How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God' (Psa 84:1, 2). Behold what a taking the good man was in, because at this time he could not attain to so frequent a being in the temple of God as his soul desired. It even longed and fainted, yea, and his heart and his flesh cried out for the God that dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem.

Yea, he seems in the next words to envy the very birds that could more commonly frequent the temple than he: 'The sparrow,' saith he, 'hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God' (Psa 84:3). And then blesseth all them that had the liberty of temple worship, saying, 'Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee' (Psa 84:4). Then he cries up the happiness of those that in Zion do appear before God (Psa 84:7). After this he cries out unto God, that he would grant him to be partaker of this high favour, saying, 'O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer,' &c. 'For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness' (Psa 84:8-10).

But why is all this? what aileth the man thus to express himself? Why, as I said, the temple was the great ordinance of God; there was his true worship performed, there God appeared, and there his people were to find him. This was, I say, the reason why the Psalmist chose out, and desired this one thing, above all the things that were under heaven, even 'to behold there the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.' There were to be seen the shadows of things in the heavens; the candlestick, the table of shewbread, the holiest of all, where was the golden censer, the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, the golden pot that had manna, Aaron's rod that budded, the tables of the covenant, and the cherubims of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat, which were all of them then things by which God showed himself merciful to them (Heb 9:1-5 compared with 9:23 and 8:5).

Do you think that love-letters are not desired between lovers? Why these, God's ordinances, they are his love-letters, and his love-tokens too. No marvel then if the righteous do so desire them: 'More to be desired *are* they

than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb' (Psa 19:10, 119:72-127). Yea, this judgment wisdom itself passes upon these things. 'Receive,' saith he, 'my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom *is* better than rubies: and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it' (Prov 8:10, 11). For this cause therefore are the ordinances of God so much desired by the righteous. In them they meet with God; and by them they are builded, and nourished up to eternal life. 'As new born babes,' says Peter, 'desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby' (1 Peter 2:2). As milk is nourishing to children, so is the word heard, read, and meditated on, to the righteous. Therefore it is their desire.

Christ made himself known to them in breaking of bread; who, who would not then, that loves to know him, be present at such an ordinance? (Luke 24:35). Ofttimes the Holy Ghost, in the comfortable influence of it, has accompanied the baptized in the very act of administering it.<sup>[10]</sup> Therefore, 'in the way of thy judgments,' or appointments, 'O Lord, we thy people have waited for thee: the desire of *their* soul *is* to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee' (Isa 26:8). Church fellowship, or the communion of saints, is the place where the Son of God loveth to walk; his first walking was in Eden, there he converted our first parents: 'And come, my beloved,' says he, 'let us get up to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth; there will I give thee my loves' (Cant 7:12). Church fellowship, rightly managed, is the glory of all the world. No place, no community, no fellowship, is adorned and bespangled with those beauties as is a church rightly knit together to their head, and lovingly serving one another. 'In his temple doth every one speak of *his* glory' (Psa 29:9). Hence the church is called the place of God's desire on earth. 'This *is* my rest for ever, here I will dwell, for I have desired it' (Psa 132:13-16). And again, thus the church confesseth when she saith, 'I *am* my beloved's, and his desire *is* towards me' (Cant 7:10).<sup>[11]</sup>

No marvel then if this be the one thing that David desired, and that which he would seek after, namely, 'to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life.' And this also shows you the reason why God's people of old used to venture so hardly for ordinances, and to get to them with the peril of their lives, 'because of the sword of the wilderness' (Lam 5:9).<sup>[12]</sup>

They were their bread, they were their water, they were their milk, they were their honey. Hence the sanctuary was called ‘the desire of their eyes, and that which their soul pitieth, or the pity of their soul.’ They had rather have died than lost it, or than that it should have been burned down as it was (Eze 24:21, 25).

When the children of Israel had lost the ark, they count that the glory was departed from Israel. But when they had lost all, what a complaint made they then! ‘He hath violently taken away his tabernacles, as *if it were of* a garden, he hath destroyed his places of the assembly. The Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Sion, and hath despised, in the indignation of his anger, the king and the priest’ (Lam 2:6). Wherefore, upon this account, it was that the church in those days counted the punishment of her iniquity greater than the punishment of Sodom (Lam 4:6; 1 Sam 4:22).

By these few hints you may perceive what is the ‘desire of the righteous.’ But this is spoken of with reference to things present, to things that the righteous desire to enjoy while they are here; communion with God while here; and his ordinances in their purity while here. I come, therefore, in the second place, to show you that the righteous have desires that reach further, desires that have so long a neck as to look into the world to come.

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***[Desires that can only be accomplished  
or enjoyed in eternity.]***

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***Second.*** Then the desires of the righteous are after that which yet *they know cannot be enjoyed till after death*. And those are comprehended under these two heads —

***1st.*** They desire that presence of their Lord which is personal.

***2nd.*** They desire to be in that country where their Lord personally is, that heavenly country.

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***1st.*** [*They desire that presence of their Lord which is personal.*] For the first of these, says Paul, ‘I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ.’ Thus you have it in Philippians 1:23, ‘I have a desire to be with Christ.’

In our first sort of desires, I told you that the righteous desired spiritual communion with God; and now I tell you they desire to be with Christ's person — 'I have a desire to be with Christ'; that is, with his person, that I may enjoy his personal presence, such a presence of his as we are not capable to enjoy while here. Hence he says, 'I have a desire to depart, that I might be with him; knowing,' as he says in another place, 'that whilst we are at home in the body, we are,' and cannot but be, 'absent from the Lord' (2 Cor 5:6). Now this desire, as I said, is a desire that hath a long neck; for it can look over the brazen wall of this, quite into another world; and as it hath a long neck, so it is very forcible and mighty in its operation.

**(1.)** This desire breeds a divorce, a complete divorce, betwixt the soul and all inordinate love and affections to relations and worldly enjoyments. This desire makes a married man live as if he had no wife; a rich man lives as if he possessed not what he has, &c. (1 Cor 7:29, 30). This is a soul-sequestering desire. This desire makes a man willing rather to be absent from all enjoyments, that he may be present with the Lord. This is a famous desire; none hath this desire but a righteous man. There are that profess much love to Christ, that yet never had such a desire in them all their life long. No, the relation that they stand in to the world, together with those many flesh-pleasing accommodations with which they are surrounded, would never yet suffer such a desire to enter into their hearts.

**(2.)** The strength of this desire is such, that it is ready, so far forth as it can, to dissolve that sweet knot of union that is betwixt body and soul, a knot more dear to a reasonable creature than that can be which is betwixt wife and husband, parent and child, or a man and his estate. For even 'all that a man hath will he give for his life,' and to keep body and soul firmly knit together. But now, when this desire comes, this 'silver cord is loosed'; is loosed by consent. This desire grants to him that comes to dissolve this union leave to do it delightfully. 'We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord' (2 Cor 5:8). Yea, this desire makes this flesh, this mortal life, a burden. The man that has this desire exercises self-denial, while he waits till his desired change comes. For were it not that the will of God is that he should

live, and did he not hope that his life might be serviceable to the truth and church of God, he would not have wherewith to cool the heart of this desire, but would rather, in a holy passion with holy Job, cry out, 'I loathe,' or I abhor it, 'I would not live alway: let me alone,' that I may die, 'for my days are vanity' (Job 7:15-17).

(3.) The strength of this desire shows itself in this also, namely, in that it is willing to grapple with the king of terrors, rather than to be detained from that sweet communion that the soul looks for when it comes into the place where its Lord is. Death is not to be desired for itself; the apostle chose rather to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven, 'that mortality might be swallowed up of life' (2 Cor 5:1-4). But yet, rather than he would be absent from the Lord, he was willing to be absent from the body. Death, in the very thoughts of it, is grievous to flesh and blood; and nothing can so master it in our apprehensions as that by which we attain to these desires. These desires do deal with death, as Jacob's love to Rachel did deal with the seven long years which he was to serve for her. It made them seem few, or but a little time; now so, I say, doth these desires deal with death itself. They make it seem little, nay, a servant, nay, a privilege; for that, by that a man may come to enjoy the presence of his beloved Lord. 'I have a desire to depart,' to go from the world and relations, to go from my body, that great piece of myself; I have a desire to venture the tugs and pains, and the harsh handling of the king of terrors, so I may be with Jesus Christ! These are desires of the righteous.

Are not these therefore strong desires? is there not life and mettle in them? have they not in them power to loose the bands of nature, and to harden the soul against sorrow? flow they not, think you, from faith of the finest sort, and are they not bred in the bosom of a truly mortified soul? are these the effects of a purblind spirit? are they not rather the fruits of an eagle-eyed confidence? O these desires! they are peculiar to the righteous; they are none others but the desires of the righteous.

**Quest.** But why do the righteous desire to be with Christ?

**Answe.** And I ask, Why doth the wife — that is, as the loving hind — love to be in the presence of her husband?

**1.** Christ in glory is worth the being with. If the man out of whom the Lord Jesus did cast a legion, prayed that he might be with him, notwithstanding all the trials that attended him in this life, how can it be but that a righteous man must desire to be with him now he is in glory? What we have heard concerning the excellency of his person, the unspeakableness of his love, the greatness of his sufferings, and the things that he still is doing for us, must needs command our souls into a desire to be with him. When we have heard of a man among us that has done for us some excellent thing, the next thing that our hearts doth pitch upon is, I would I could set mine eyes upon him. But was ever heard the like to what Jesus Christ has done for sinners? who then that hath the faith of him can do otherwise but desire to be with him? It was that which some time comforted John, that the time was coming that he should see him (1 John 3:2). But that consideration made him Bray like a hart, [13] to hasten the time that he might set his eyes upon him quickly (Rev 22:20). To see Jesus Christ, then, to see him as he is, to see him as he is in glory, is a sight that is worth going from relations, and out of the body, and through the jaws of death to see; for this is to see him head over all, to see him possessed of heaven for his church, to see him preparing of mansion-houses for those his poor ones that are now by his enemies kicked to and fro, like footballs in the world; and is not this a blessed sight?

**2.** I have a desire to be with him, to see myself with him; this is more blessed still; for, for a man to see himself in glory, this is a sight worthy seeing. Sometimes I look upon myself, and say, Where am I now? and do quickly return answer to myself again, Why, I am in an evil world, a great way from heaven; in a sinful body, among devils and wicked men; sometimes benighted, sometimes beguiled, sometimes fearing, sometimes hoping, sometimes breathing, sometimes dying, and the like. But then I turn the tables, and say, But where shall I be shortly? where shall I see myself anon, after a few times more have passed over me? And when I can but answer this question thus — I shall see myself with Jesus Christ; this yields glory, even glory to one's spirit now: no marvel, then, if the righteous desire to be with Christ.

**3.** I have a desire to be with Christ; there the spirits of the just are perfected; there the spirits of the righteous are as full as they can hold (Heb 12:23). A sight of Jesus in the Word, some know how it will change them from glory to

glory (2 Cor 3:18), but how then shall we be changed and filled, when we shall see him as he is? ‘When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is’ (1 John 3:2). Moses and Elias appeared to Peter, and James, and John, at the transfiguration of Christ, in glory. How so? Why, they had been in the heavens, and came thence with some of the glories of heaven upon them. Gild a bit of wood, yea, gild it seven times over, and it must not compare in difference to wood not gilt, to the soul that but a little while has been dipped in glory! Glory is a strange thing to men that are on this side of the heavens; it is that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man to conceive of; only the Christian has a Word and Spirit that at times doth give a little of the glimmering thereof unto him. But O! when he is in the Spirit, and sees in the Spirit, do you think his tongue can tell? But, I say, if the sight of heaven, at so vast a distance, is so excellent a prospect, what will it look like when one is in it? No marvel, then, if the desires of the righteous are to be with Christ.

**Object.** But if this be the character of a righteous man, to desire to depart and to be with Christ, I am none of them, for I never had such a desire in my heart; no, my fears of perishing will not suffer me either to desire to die to be with Christ, nor that Christ should come to judge the world.

**Answe.** Though thine is a case that must be excepted, for that thy desires may not as yet be grown so high; yet if thou art a righteous man, thy heart has in it the very seeds thereof. There are therefore desires, and desires to desire; as one child can reach so high, and the other can but desire to do so. Thou, if thou art a righteous man, hast desires, these desires ready to put forth into act, when they are grown a little stronger, or when their impediment is removed. Many times it is with our desires as it is with saffron,<sup>[14]</sup> it will bloom and blossom, and be ripe, and all in a night. Tell me, dost thou not desire to desire? Yea, dost thou not vehemently desire to desire to depart and to be with Christ? I know, if thou art a righteous man, thou dost. There is a man sows his field with wheat, but as he sows, soon it is covered with great clods; now, that grows as well as the rest, though it runs not upright as yet; it grows, and yet is kept down, so do thy desires; and when one shall remove the clod, the blade will soon point upwards.

I know thy mind; that which keeps thee that thou canst not yet arrive to this — to desire to depart and to be with Christ, is because some strong doubt or

clod of unbelief, as to thy eternal welfare, lies hard upon thy desiring spirit. Now let but Jesus Christ remove this clod, and thy desires will quickly start up to be gone. I say, let but Jesus Christ give thee one kiss, and with his lips, as he kisses thee, whisper to thee the forgiveness of thy sins, and thou wilt quickly break out, and say, Nay then, Lord, let me die in peace, since my soul is persuaded of thy salvation!

There is a man upon the bed of languishing; but O! he dares not die, for all is not as he would have it betwixt God and his poor soul; and many a night he lies thus in great horror of mind; but do you think that he doth not desire to depart? Yes, yes, he also waits and cries to God to set his desires at liberty. At last the visitor comes and sets his soul at ease, by persuading of him that he belongs to God: and what then? 'O! now let me die, welcome death!' Now he is like the man in Essex, who, when his neighbour at his bedside prayed for him that God would restore him to health, started up in his bed, and pulled him by the arm, and cried out, No, no, pray that God will take me away, for to me it is best to go to Christ.

The desires of some good Christians are pinioned, and cannot stir, especially these sort of desires; but Christ can and will cut the cord some time or other: and then thou that wouldest shalt be able to say, 'I have a desire to depart, and to be with Jesus Christ.' Meantime, be thou earnest to desire to know thy interest in the grace of God; for there is nothing short of the knowledge of that can make thee desire to depart, that thou mayest be with Christ. This is that that Paul laid as the ground of his desires to be gone: 'We know,' says he, 'that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven' (2 Cor 5:1, 2). And know, that if thy desires be right they will grow as other graces do, from strength to strength; only in this they can grow no faster than faith grows as to justification, and then hope grows as to glory. But we will leave this and come to the second thing.

**2nd.** [*They desire to be in that country where their Lord personally is.*] As the righteous men desire to be present with Jesus Christ, so they desire to be with him in that country where he is: 'But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city' (Heb 11:14-16). 'But now they desire a better

*country.*' Here is a comparison. There was another country, to wit, their native country, the country from whence they came out, that in which they left their friends and their pleasures for the sake of another world, which, indeed, is a better country, as is manifest from its character. 'It is an heavenly.' As high as heaven is above the earth, so much better is that country which is a heavenly, than is this in which now we are.

A heavenly country, where there is a heavenly Father (Matt 6:14-16, 15:13, 18:35), a heavenly host (Luke 2:13), heavenly things (John 3:12), heavenly visions (Acts 26:19), heavenly places (Eph 1:3, 20), a heavenly kingdom (2 Tim 4:18), and the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22), for them that are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb 3:1), and that are the heavenly things themselves (Heb 9:23). This is a country to be desired, and therefore no marvel if any, except those that have lost their wits and senses, refuse to choose themselves an habitation here. Here is the 'Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and an innumerable company of angels: here is the general assembly and church of the firstborn, and God the Judge of all, and Jesus, and the spirits of just men made perfect' (Heb 12:22-24). Who would not be here? This is the country that the righteous desire for a habitation: 'but now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city' (Heb 11:16).

Mark, they desire a country, and God prepareth for them a city; he goes beyond their desires, beyond their apprehensions, beyond what their hearts could conceive to ask for. There is none that are weary of this world from a gracious disposition that they have to an heavenly, but God will take notice of them, will own them, and not be ashamed to own them; yea, such shall not lose their longing. They desire a handful, God gives them a seaful; they desire a country, God prepares for them a city; a city that is an heavenly; a city that has foundation, a city whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11:10; Rev 3:12). And all this is, that the promise to them might be fulfilled, 'The desire of the righteous shall be granted.' And this is the last thing propounded to be spoken to from the text. Therefore,

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**[WHAT IS MEANT BY GRANTING  
THESE DESIRES.]**

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**THIRD.** We then, in conclusion, come to inquire into WHAT IS MEANT, or to be understood, BY THE GRANTING OF THE RIGHTEOUS THEIR DESIRES; ‘The desire of the righteous shall be granted.’

**First.** To grant is to yield to what is desired, to consent that it shall be even so as is requested: ‘The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion, remember all thy — sacrifices: grant thee according to thine own heart and fulfil all thy counsel’ (Psa 20:1-4).

**Second.** To grant is to accomplish what is promised; thus God granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life, namely, for that he had promised it by the prophets from the days of old (Acts 11:18; Rom 15:9-12).

**Third.** To grant, therefore, is an act of grace and condescending favour; for if God is said to humble himself when he beholds things in heaven, what condescension is it for him to hearken to a sinful wretch on earth, and to tell him, Have the thing which thou desirest. A wretch, I call him, if compared to him that hears him, though he is a righteous man, when considered as the new creation of God.

**Fourth.** To grant, then, is not to part with the thing desired, as if a desire merited, purchased, earned, or deserved it, but of bounty and goodwill, to bestow the thing desired upon the humble. Hence God’s grants are said to be gracious ones (Psa 119:29).

**Fifth.** I will add, that to grant is sometimes taken for giving one authority or power to do, or possess, or enjoy such and such privileges; and so it may be taken here: for the righteous has a right to a power, to enjoy the things bestowed on them by their God. So, then, to grant is to give, to accomplish, even of free grace, the desire of the righteous.

This is acknowledged by David, where he saith to God, ‘Thou hast given him

his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips' (Psa 21:2). And this is promised unto all that delight themselves in God, 'Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart' (Psa 37:4). And again, 'He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry, and will save them' (Psa 145:19). By all these places it is plain, that the promise of granting desires is entailed to the righteous, and also that the grant to them is an act of grace and mercy.

But it also follows, that though the desires of the righteous are not meritorious, yet they are pleasing in his sight; and this is manifest several ways, besides the promise of a grant of them.

**First.** In that the desires of God, and the desires of the righteous, jump or agree in one, they are of one mind in their desires: God's desire is to the work of his hands, and the righteous are for surrendering that up to him.

**1.** In giving up the heart unto him; 'My son,' says God, 'give me thy heart' (Prov 23:26). 'I lift my soul to thee,' says the righteous man (Psa 25:1, 86:4; Lam 3:41). Here, therefore, there is an agreement between God and the righteous; it is, I say, agreed on both sides that God should have the heart: God desires it, the righteous man desires it, yea, he desires it with a groan, saying, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimony' (Psa 119:36). 'Let my heart be sound in thy statutes' (Psa 119:80).

**2.** They are also agreed about the disposing of the whole man: God is for body, and soul, and spirit; and the righteous desires that God should have it all. Hence they are said to give themselves to the Lord (2 Cor 8:5), and to addict themselves to his service (1 Cor 15:16).

**3.** God desireth truth in the inward parts, that is, that truth may be at the bottom of all (Psa 51:6, 16), and this is the desire of the righteous man likewise: 'Thy word have I hid in my heart,' said David, 'that I might not sin against thee' (Psa 119:11).

**4.** They agree in the way of justification, in the way of sanctification, in the way of preservation, and in the way of glorification, to wit, which way to come at and enjoy all: wherefore, who should hinder the righteous man, or keep him back from

enjoying the desire of his heart?

**5.** They also agree about the sanctifying of God's name in the world, saying, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' There is a great agreement between God and the righteous; 'he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit' (1 Cor 6:17). No marvel, then, if their desires in the general, so far as the righteous man doth know the mind of his God, are one, consequently their desires must be granted, or God must deny himself.

**Second.** The desires of the righteous are the life of all their prayers; and it is said, 'The prayer of the upright is God's delight.'

Jesus Christ put a difference betwixt the form and spirit that is in prayer, and intimates the soul of prayer is in the desires of a man; 'Therefore,' saith he, 'I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*' (Mark 11:24). If a man prays never so long, and has never so many brave expressions in prayer, yet God counts it prayer no further than there are warm and fervent desires in it, after those things the mouth maketh mention of. David saith, 'Lord, all my desire *is* before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee' (Psa 38:9). Can you say you desire, when you pray? or that your prayers come from the braying, panting, and longing of your hearts? If not, they shall not be granted: for God looks, when men are at prayer, to see if their heart and spirit is in their prayers; for he counts all other but vain speaking. Ye shall seek me, and find me, says he, when you shall search for me with all your heart (Rom 8:26, 27; Matt 6:7; Jer 29:12). The people that you read of in 2 Chronicles 15 are there said to do what they did 'with all their heart, and with all their soul.' 'For they sought God with their whole desire' (2 Chron 15:11-15). When a man's desires put him upon prayer, run along with him in his prayer, break out of his heart and ascend up to heaven with his prayers, it is a good sign that he is a righteous man, and that his desire shall be granted.

**Third.** By desire a righteous man shows more of his mind for God, than he can by any manner of way besides; hence it is said, 'The desire of man *is* his kindness, and a poor man,' that is sincere in his desires, '*is* better than' he that with his mouth shows much love, if he be 'a liar' (Prov 19:22).

Desires, desires, are copious things; you read that a man may 'enlarge his

desire as hell' (Hab 2:5), that is, if they be wicked; yea, and a righteous man may enlarge his desires as heaven (Psa 73:25). No grace is so extensive as desires. Desires out-go all. Who believes as he desires to believe? and loves as he desires to love? and fears as he desires to fear God's name? (Neh 1:11). Might it be as a righteous man doth sometimes desire it should be, both with God's church, and also with his own soul, stranger things would be than there are; faith, and love, and holiness, would flourish more than it does! O! what does a righteous man desire? What do you think the prophet desired, when he said, 'O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and — come down?' (Isa 54:1). And Paul, when he said, he could wish that himself were accursed from Christ, for the vehement desire that he had that the Jews might be saved? (Rom 9:1-3, 10:1). Yea, what do you think John desired, when he cried out to Christ to come quickly?

Love to God, as I said, is more seen in desires than in any Christian act. Do you think that the woman with her two mites cast in all that she desired to cast into the treasury of God? Or do you think, when David said that he had prepared for the house of God with all his might, that his desires stinted when his ability was at its utmost? (1 Chron 29). No, no; desires go beyond all actions; therefore I said it is the desires of a man that are reckoned for his kindness. Kindness is that which God will not forget; I mean the kindness which his people show to him, especially in their desires to serve him in the world. When Israel was come out of Egypt, you know how many stumbles they had before they got to Canaan. But forasmuch as they were willing or desirous to follow God, he passes by all their failures, saying, 'I remember thee,' and that almost a thousand years after,<sup>[15]</sup> 'the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land *that was not sown*' (Jer 2:2). Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase. There is nothing that God likes of ours better than he likes our true desires. For indeed true desires, they are the smoke of our incense, the flower of our graces, and the very vital part of our new man. They are our desires that ascend, and they that are the sweet of all the sacrifices that we offer to God. The man of desires is the man of kindness.

**Fourth.** Desires, true and right desires, they are they by which a man is taken up from the ground, and brought away to God, in spite of all opposers. A desire will take a man upon its back, and carry him away to God, if ten

thousand men stand by and oppose it. Hence it is said, that ‘through desire a man having separated himself,’ to wit, from what is contrary to the mind of God, and so ‘seeketh *and* intermeddleth with all wisdom’ (Prov 18:1).

All convictions, conversions, illuminations, favours, tastes, revelations, knowledge, and mercies, will do nothing if the soul abides without desires. All, I say, is but like rain upon stones, or favours bestowed upon a dead dog. O! but a poor man with desires, a man that sees but little, that knows but little, that finds in himself but little, if he has but strong desires, they will supply all. His desires take him up from his sins, from his companions, from his pleasures, and carry him away to God. Suppose thou wast a minister, and wast sent from God with a whip, whose cords were made of the flames of hell, thou mightest lash long enough before thou couldest so much as drive one man that abides without desires to God, or to his kingdom, by that thy so sore a whip. Suppose again that thou wast a minister, and wast sent from God to sinners with a crown of glory in thy hand, to offer to him that first comes to thee for it; yet none can come without desires: but desire takes the man upon its back, and so brings him to thee.<sup>[16]</sup> What is the reason that men will with mouth commend God, and commend Christ, and commend and praise both heaven and glory, and yet all the while fly from him, and from his mercy, as from the worst of enemies? Why, they want good desires; their desires being mischievous, carry them another way. Thou entreatest thy wife, thy husband, and the son of thy womb, to fall in with thy Lord and thy Christ, but they will not. Ask them the reason why they will not, and they know none, only they have no desires. ‘When we shall see him, *there is* no beauty in him that we should desire him’ (Isa 53:1-3). And I am sure if they do not desire him, they can by no means be made to come to him.

But now, desires, desires that are right, will carry a man quite away to God, and to do his will, let the work be never so hard. Take an instance or two for this.

**1.** You may see it in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The text says plainly, they were not mindful of that country from whence they came out, through their desires of a better (Heb 11:8-16). God gave them intimation of a better country, and their minds did cleave to it with desires of it; and what then? Why, they went forth, and desired to go, though they did not know whither they went. Yea, they all sojourned in the land of promise, because it was but a

shadow of what was designed for them by God, and looked to by their faith, as in a strange country; wherefore they also cast that behind their back, looking for that city that had foundations, of which mention was made before. Had not now these men desires that were mighty? They were their desires that thus separated them from their dearest and choice relations and enjoyments. Their desires were pitched upon the heavenly country, and so they broke through all difficulties for that.

**2.** You may see it in Moses, who had a kingdom at his foot, and was the alone visible heir thereof; but desire of a better inheritance made him refuse it, and choose rather to take part with the people of God in their afflicted condition, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. You may say, the Scripture attributes this to his faith. I answer, so it attributes to Abraham's faith his leaving of his country. But his faith begat in him these desires after the country that is above. So indeed Moses saw these things by faith; and therefore his faith begat in him these desires. For it was because of his desires that he did refuse, and did choose as you read. And here we may opportunely take an opportunity to touch upon the vanity of that faith that is not breeding, and that knows not how to bring forth strong desires of enjoying what is pretended to be believed; all such faith is false. Abraham's, Isaac's, Jacob's, and Moses' faith, bred in them desires, strong desires; yea, desires so strong as to take them up, and to carry them after what, by their faith, was made known unto them. Yea, their desires were so mightily set upon the things made known to them by their faith, that neither difficulties nor dangers, nor yet frowns nor flatteries, could stop them from the use of all lawful attempts of enjoying what they believed was to be had, and what they desired to be possessed of.

**3.** The women also that you read of, and others that would not, upon unworthy terms, accept of deliverance from torments and sundry trials, that they might,, or because they had a desire to, be made partakers of a better resurrection. 'And others,' saith he, 'had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins, and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and caves of the earth' (Heb 11:35-38).

4. But we will come to the Lord Jesus himself. Whither did his desires bring him? Whither did they carry him? and to what did they make him stoop? For they were his desires after us, and after our good, that made him humble himself to do as he did (Cant 7:10). What was it, think you, that made him cry out, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished'? (Luke 12:50). What was that baptism but his death? and why did he so long for it, but of desire to do us good? Yea, the passover being to be eaten on the even of his sufferings, with what desires did he desire to eat it with his disciples? (Luke 22:15). Yea, his desires to suffer for his people made him go with more strength to lay down his life for them than they, for want of them, had to go to see him suffer. And they were in their way going up to Jerusalem, he to suffer, and they to look on, 'And Jesus went before them, and they were amazed, and as they followed, they were afraid' (Mark 10:32; Matt 20:17).

I tell you, desires are strange things, if they be right; they jump with God's mind; they are the life of prayer; they are a man's kindness to God, and they which will take him up from the ground, and carry him away after God to do his will, let the work be never so hard. Is it any marvel, then, if the desires of the righteous are so pleasing to God as they are, and that God has so graciously promised that the desires of the righteous shall be granted? But we come now to:

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#### **[THE USE AND APPLICATION.]**

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##### **THE FIRST USE SHALL BE A USE OF INFORMATION.**

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You have heard what hath been said of desires, and what pleasing things right desires are unto God. But you must know that they are the desires of his people, of the righteous, that are so. No wicked man's desires are regarded (Psa 112:10). This men must be informed of, lest their desires become a snare to their souls. You read of a man whose 'desire killeth him' (Prov 21:25). And why? but because he rests in desiring, without considering what he is, whether such a one unto whom the promise of granting desires is made; he coveteth greedily all the day long, but to little purpose. The grant of desires, of the fulfilling of desires, is entailed to the righteous man. There are four

sorts of people that desire, that desire the kingdom of heaven; consequently, desires have a fourfold root from whence they flow.

**First.** The natural man desires to be saved, and to go to heaven when he dies. Ask any natural man, and he will tell you so. Besides, we see it is so with them, especially at certain seasons. As when some guilt or conviction for sin takes hold upon them; or when some sudden fear terrifies them; when they are afraid that the plague or pestilence will come upon them, and break up house-keeping for them; or when death has taken them by the throat, and is hauling them down stairs to the grave. Then, ‘Lord, save me, Lord, have mercy upon me; good people, pray for me! O! whither shall I go when I die, if sweet Christ has not pity for my soul?’ And now the bed shakes, and the poor soul is as loath to go out of the body, for fear the devil should catch it, as the poor bird is to go out of the bush, while it sees the hawk waits there to receive her. But the fears of the wicked, they must come upon the wicked; they are the desires of the righteous that must be granted. Pray, take good notice of this. And to back this with the authority of God, consider that scripture, ‘The wicked man travaileth with pain all *his* days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. A dreadful sound *is* in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him as a king ready to the battle’ (Job 15:20-24).[\[17\]](#)

Can it be imagined that when the wicked are in this distress, but that they will desire to be saved? Therefore he saith again, ‘Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind,’ that blasting wind, ‘carrieth him away, and he departeth, and as a storm hurleth him out of’ the world, ‘his place. For *God* shall cast upon him, and not spare’; in flying ‘he would fain fly out of his hand’ (Job 27:20-23). Their terrors and their fears must come upon them: their desires and wishes for salvation must not be granted (Isa 65:13, 66:4). ‘They shall call upon me,’ says God, ‘but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me’ (Prov 1:28).

**Second.** There is the hypocrite’s desire. Now his desire seems to have life and spirit in it. Also he desires, in his youth, his health, and the like; yet it comes to naught. You shall see him drawn to the life in Mark 10:17. He comes running and kneeling, and asking, and that, as I said, in youth and health; and that is more than men merely natural do. But all to no purpose; he

went as he came, without the thing desired. The conditions propounded were too hard for this hypocrite to comply withal (Mark 10:21, 22).<sup>[18]</sup> Some indeed make a great noise with their desires over some again do; but in conclusion all comes to one, they meet together there where they go, whose desires are not granted.

‘For what *is* the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained’ to a higher strain of desires, ‘when God taketh away his soul?’ ‘Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?’ (Job 27:8, 9). Did he not, even when he desired life, yet break with God in the day when conditions of life were propounded to him? Did he not, even when he asked what good things were to be done that he might have eternal life, refuse to hear or to comply with what was propounded to him? How then can his desires be granted, who himself refused to have them answered? No marvel then if he perishes like his own dung, if they that have seen him shall say they miss him among those that are to have their desires granted.

**Third.** There are the desires of the cold formal professor; the desires, I say, of him whose religion lies in a few of the shells of religion; even as the foolish virgins who were content with their lamps, but gave not heed to take oil in their vessels. These I take to be those whom the wise man calls the slothful: ‘The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat’ (Prov 13:4). The sluggard is one that comes to poverty through idleness — that contents himself with forms: ‘that will not plough’ in winter ‘by reason of the cold; *therefore* shall he beg in harvest,’ or at the day of judgment, ‘and *have* nothing’ (Prov 20:4).

Thus you see that there are many that desire; the natural man, the hypocrite, the formalist, they all desire. For heaven is a brave place, and nobody would go to hell. ‘Lord, Lord, open to us,’ is the cry of many in this world, and will be the cry of more in the day of judgment.

Of this therefore thou shouldst be informed; and that for these reasons: —

**1.** Because ignorance of this may keep thee asleep in security, and cause thee to fall under such disappointments as are the worst, and the worst to be borne. For, for a man to think to go to heaven because he desires it, and when all is done to fall into hell, is a frustration of the most dismal complexion. And yet thus it will be when desires shall fail, ‘when man goes to his long home, and

when the mourners go about the streets' (Eccl 12:5).

**2.** Because, as was said before, else thy desires, and that which should be for thy good, will kill thee.

(1.) They kill thee at death, when thou shalt find them every one empty.

(2.) And at judgment, when thou shalt be convinced that thou oughtest to go without what thou desirest, because thou wast not the man to whose desires the promise was made, nor the man that didst desire aright.

**3.** To be informed of this is the way to put thee upon such sense and sight of thy case as will make thee in earnest betake thyself in that way to him that is acceptable, who grants the desires of the righteous. And then shalt thou be happy when thou shunnest to desire as the natural man desireth, as the hypocrite desireth, or as the formalist desireth. When thou desirest as the righteous do, thy desire shall be granted.

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#### THE SECOND USE IS OF EXAMINATION.

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If this be so, then what cause hast thou that art conscious to thyself that thou art a desiring man to examine thyself whether thou art one whose desires shall be granted? For to what purpose should a man desire, or what fruits will desire bring him whose desires shall not be granted? Such a man is but like to her that longs, but loses her longing; or like to him that looks for peace while evil overtakes him.

Thou hast heard it over and over that the grant of desires belong to the righteous: shouldst thou then not inquire into thy condition, and examine thyself whether thou art a righteous man or no? The apostle said to the Corinthians, 'Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know you not — how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' (2 Cor 13:5). You may be reprobates and not be aware of it, if you do not examine and prove your own selves. It is therefore FOR THY LIFE, wherefore do not deceive thyself. I have given you before a description of a righteous man, namely, that he is one made so of God by imputation — by an inward principle, and one that brings forth fruit to God. Now, this last

thou mayst think thou hast; for it is easy and common for men to think when they bring forth fruit to themselves, that they bring it forth to God. Wherefore examine thyself.

**First.** Art thou righteous? If thou sayest, Yea; I ask, How comest thou righteous? If thou thinkest that obedience to the law of righteousness has made thee so, thou art utterly deceived; for he that thus seeks righteousness, yet is not righteous, because he cannot, by so doing, attain that thing he seeketh for (Rom 9:31, 32). Did not I tell thee before, that a man must be righteous before he doth one good work, or he can never be righteous? The tree must be good first, even before it brings forth one good apple.

**Second.** Art thou righteous? In whose judgment art thou righteous? Is it in the judgment of God, or of man? If not of God, it is no matter though all the men on earth should justify thee; thou for that art no whit the more righteous.

**Third.** Art thou righteous in the judgment of God? Who told thee so? or dost thou but dream thereof? Indeed, to be righteous in God's sight is that, and only that, which can secure a man from wrath to come; for 'if God justifies, who is he that condemns?' (Rom 8:33,34). And this only is the man whose desires shall be granted.

**Fourth.** But still, I say, the question is, How comest thou to know that thou art righteous in the judgment of God? Dost thou know by what it is that God makes a man righteous? Dost thou know where that is by or with which God makes a man righteous? and also how God doth make a man righteous with it? These are questions, in the answer of which thou must have some heavenly skill, or else all that thou sayest about thy being righteous will seem without a bottom.

**Fifth.** Now, if thou answerest, That that which makes me righteous is the obedience of Christ to his Father's will, that this righteousness is before the throne of God, and that it is made mine by an act of God's free grace; I shall ask thee yet again,

**Sixth.** How comest thou to see thy need of this righteousness? And by what is this righteousness by thee applied to thyself? For this righteousness is bestowed upon those that see their need thereof.

This righteousness is the refuge whereto the guilty fly for succour, that they may be sheltered from the wrath to come. Hast thou then fled, or dost thou indeed fly to it? (Heb 6:16-19).

**Seventh.** None flies to this righteousness for life, but those who feel the sentence of condemnation by God's law upon their conscience; and that in that extremity have sought for righteousness first elsewhere, but cannot find it in all the world.

**Eighth.** For man, when he findesth himself at first a sinner, doth not straightway betake himself for righteousness to God by Christ; but, in the first place, seeks it in the law on earth, by labouring to yield obedience thereto, to the end he may, when he stands before God at death and judgment, have something to commend him to him, and for the sake of which he may at least help forward his acceptance with him.

**Ninth.** But being wearied out of this, and if God loves him he will weary him out of it, then he looks unto heaven and cries to God for righteousness; the which God shows him in his own good time he hath reckoned to him, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

**Tenth.** Now by this very discovery the heart is also principled with the spirit of the gospel; for the Spirit comes with the gospel down from heaven to such an one, and fills his soul with good; by which he is capacitated to bring forth fruit, true fruit, which are the fruits of righteousness imputed, and of righteousness infused, to the glory and praise of God.

**Eleventh.** Nor can anything but faith make a man see himself thus made righteous; for this righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, from the object of faith to the grace of faith, by the Spirit of faith. A faithless man, then, can see this no more than a blind man can see colours; nor relish this, no more than a dead man tasteth victuals. As, therefore, blind men talk of colours, and as dead men relish food, so do carnal men talk of Jesus Christ; to wit, without sense or savour; without sense of the want, or savour of the worth and goodness of him to the soul.

**Twelfth.** Wherfore, I say, it is of absolute necessity that with thy

heart thou deal in this point, and beware of self-deceiving; for if thou fail here, thy desires will fail thee for ever: ‘for the desire of the righteous,’ and that only, ‘must be granted.’

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**THE THIRD USE IS CAUTIONARY.**

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Let me here, therefore, caution thee to beware of some things, by which else, perhaps, thou mayest deceive thyself.

**First.** Take heed of taking such things for grants of desires, that accidentally fall out; accidentally, I mean, as to thy desires; for it is possible that that very thing that thou desirest may come to pass in the current of providence, not as an answer of thy desires. Now, if thou takest such things for a grant of thy desires, and consequently concludest thyself a righteous man, how mayest thou be deceived? The ark of God was delivered into the hand of the Philistines, which they desired; but not for the sake of their desires, but for the sins of the children of Israel. The land of Canaan was given unto Israel, not for the sake of their desires, but for the sins of those whom God cast out before them; and to fulfil the promise that God, before they were born, had made unto their fathers (Deut 9:5, 6). Israel was carried away captive out of their own land, not to fulfil the desires of their enemies, but to punish them for their transgressions. These, with many of smaller importance, and more personal, might be mentioned, to show that many things happen to us, some to our pleasing, and some to the pleasing of our enemies; which, if either we or they should count the returns of our prayer, or the fruits of our desires, and so draw conclusions of our estate to be for the future happy, because in such things we seemed to be answered of God, we might greatly swerve in our judgments, and become the greatest at self-deceiving.

**Second.** Or shouldest thou take it for granted that what thou enjoyest thou hast it as the fruit of thy desires; yet if the things thou boast of are things pertaining to this life, such may be granted thee as thou art considered of God as his creature, though thyself art far enough off from being a righteous man. ‘Thou openest thy hand,’ says the Psalmist, ‘and satisfiest the desire of every living thing’ (Psa 145:16). Again, ‘He feeds the young ravens that cry to him; and the young lions seek their meat from God’ (Psa 147:9, 104:21). Cain, Ishmael, Ahab too, had in some things their desires granted them of God

(Gen 4:14, 15, 21:17, 18; 1 Kings 21:29). For if God will hear the desire of the beast of the field, the fishes of the sea, and of the fowls of heaven; no marvel if the wicked also may boast him of his heart's desire (Psa 10:3). Into whose hand, as he saith in another place, 'God bringeth abundantly.' Take heed, therefore, neither these things, nor the grant of them, are any signs that thou art a righteous man, or that the promise made to the righteous in granting their desires are accomplished upon thee. I think a man may say, that the men that know not God have a fuller grant, I mean generally, of their desires of temporal things, than has the child of God himself; for his portion lying in better things, his desires are answered another way.

**Third.** Take heed, God grants to some men their desires in anger, and to their destruction. He gave to some 'their own desire,' 'but sent leanness into their soul' (Psa 78:29, 106:15; Jer 42:22). All that God gives to the sons of men, he gives not in mercy; he gives to some an inferior, and to some a superior portion; and yet so also he answereth them in the joy of their heart. Some men's hearts are narrow upwards, and wide downwards; narrow as to God, but wide for the world; they gape for the one, but shut themselves up against the other; so as they desire they have of what they desire; 'whose belly thou fillest with thy hid *treasure*,' for that they do desire; but 'as for me,' said David, these things will not satisfy, 'I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness' (Psa 17:14, 15).

I told you before, that the heart of a wicked man was widest downward, but it is not so with the righteous: therefore the portion of Jacob is not like them; God has given to him himself. The temple that Ezekiel saw in the vision was still widest upward; it spread itself toward heaven (Eze 41:7). So is the church, and so is the righteous, and so are his desires. Thy great concern, therefore, is to consider, since thou art confident that God also heareth thy desires; I say, to consider, whether he answereth thee in his anger; for if he doth so, thy desires come with a woe; therefore, I say, look to thyself. A full purse and a lean soul, is a sign of a great curse. 'He gave them their desire, but he sent leanness into their soul.' Take heed of that; many men crave by their desires, as the dropsical man craves drink; his drinking makes his belly swell big, but consumes other parts of his body. O! it is a sad grant, when the desire is granted, only to make the belly big, the estate big, the name big; when even by this bigness the soul pines, is made to dwindle, to grow lean,

and to look like an anatomy.

I am persuaded that it is thus with many, who, while they were lean in estates, had fat souls; but the fattening of their estates has made their souls as to good, as lean as a rake. They cannot now breathe after God; they cannot now look to their hearts; they cannot now set watch and ward over their ways; they cannot now spare time to examine who goes out, or who comes in. They have so much their desires in things below, that they have no leisure to concern themselves with, or to look after things above; their hearts are now as fat as grease; their eyes do now too much start out, to be turned and made to look inward (Psa 119:70, 83:7). They are now become, as to their best part, like the garden of the slothful, all grown over with nettles and briars, that cover the face thereof; or, like Saul, removed from a little estate, and low condition, to much, even worse and worse. Men do not know what they do in desiring things of this life, things over and above what are necessary; they desire them, and they have them with a woe. ‘Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly,’ his belly is taken for his conscience (Prov 20:27). ‘He shall not save of that which he desired,’ to help him in an evil day (Job 20:20, 1 Tim 6:17-19).

I shall not here give my caution to the righteous, but shall reserve that for the next use. But, O! that men were as wise in judging of the answering of the desires, as they are in judging of the extravagancies of their appetites. You shall have a man even from experience reclaim himself from such an excess of eating, drinking, smoking, sleeping, talking, or pleasurable actions, as by his experience he finds is hurtful to him, and yet all this may but hurt the body, at least the body directly; but how blind, how unskilled are they in the evils that attend desires! For, like the man in the dropsy, made mention of before, they desire this world, as he doth drink, till they desire themselves quite down to hell. Look to it, therefore, and take heed; God’s granting the things pertaining to this life unto thee, doth neither prove that thou art righteous, nor that he acts in mercy towards thee, by giving of thee thy desires.

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#### THE FOURTH USE IS FOR ENCOURAGEMENT.

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Is it so? shall the desire of the righteous be granted? Then this should

encourage them that in the first place have sought the kingdom of God and his Son's righteousness, to go on in their desires. God has given thee his Son's righteousness to justify thee; he has also, because thou art a son, sent forth the Spirit of his Son into thy heart to sanctify thee, and to help thee to cry unto him, Father, Father. Wilt thou not cry? wilt thou not desire? thy God has bidden thee 'open thy mouth wide'; he has bid thee open it wide, and promised, saying, 'And I will fill it'; and wilt thou not desire? (Psa 81:10). O! thou hast a licence, a leave, a grant to desire; wherefore be not afraid to desire great mercies of the God of heaven; this was Daniel's way, and he set others to do it too (Dan 2:18).

**Object.** But I am an unworthy creature.

**Answe.** That is true; but God gives to no man for his worthiness, nor rejects any for their sinfulness, that come to him sensible of the want and worth of mercy for them. Besides, I told thee before, that the desires of a righteous man, and the desires of his God, do jump or agree. God has a desire to thee; thou hast a desire to him (Job 14:15). God desires truth in the inward parts, and so dost thou with all thy heart (Psa 5:1-6; Hosea 6:5). God desires mercy, and to show it to the needy; that is it thou also wantest, and that which thy soul craves at his hand. Seek, man, ask, knock, and do not be discouraged; the Lord grant all thy desires. Thou sayest thou art unworthy to ask the biggest things, things spiritual and heavenly; well, will carnal things serve thee, and answer the desires of thy heart? Canst thou be content to be put off with a belly well filled, and a back well clothed? O! better I never had been born!

See, thou wilt not ask the best, and yet canst not make shift without them. Shift, no, no shift without them; I am undone without them, undone for ever and ever, sayest thou; well then desire; so I do, sayest thou. Ah! but desire with more strong desires, desire with more large desires, desire spiritual gifts, covet them earnestly, thou hast a licence too to do so (1 Cor 14:1). God bids thee do so; and I, says the apostle, 'desire that ye faint not' (Eph 3:13), that is, in the prosecution of your desires, what discouragements soever you may meet with in the way; for he hath said, 'The desire of the righteous shall be granted.'

**Object.** But I find it not so, says one: for though I have desired and desired, a thousand times upon my knees, for something that I want, yet I have not my

desire; and indeed the consideration of this hath made me question whether I am one of those to whom the promise of granting desires is made.

**Answe.** To this objection many things must be replied.

**First.** By way of question.

**Second.** Then by way of answer.

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**First. By way of question;** what are the things thou desirest, are they lawful or unlawful? for a Christian may desire unlawful things; as the mother of Zebedee's children did when she came to Christ, nay, her sons themselves had their hearts therein, saying, 'Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire' (Mark 10:35; Matt 20:20). They came with a wide mouth, but their desire was unlawful, as is evident, for that Christ would not grant it. James also himself caught those unto whom he wrote, in such a fault as this, where he says, 'Ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain' (James 4:2).

There are four things that are unlawful to be desired.

1. To desire the life of thine enemy is unlawful (1 Kings 3:11; Deut 5:21).
2. To desire anything that is thy neighbour's is unlawful.
3. To desire to share in the prosperity of the wicked is unlawful (Psa 73:3).
4. To desire spiritual things for evil ends is unlawful (Prov 24:1, 19; James 4:2-4).

Are they lawful things which thou desirest? Yet the question is, Are they absolutely or conditionally promised? If absolutely promised, hold on in desiring; if conditionally promised, then thou must consider whether they are such as are essential to the well-being of thy soul in thy Christian course in this life. Or whether they are things that are of a more inferior sort.

If they are such as are essential to the well-being of thy soul in thy Christian course in this world, then hold on in thy desires; and look also for the conditions that that word calls for, that proffereth them to thee; and if it be

not possible to find them in thyself, look for them in Christ, and cry to God for them, for the Lord's sake. But if they be of an inferior sort, and thou canst be a good Christian without them, desire them, and yet be content to go without them; for who knows but it may be better that thou shouldest be denied, than that thou shouldest have now a grant of some things thou desirest? and herein thou hast thy Lord for thy pattern; who, though he desired that his life might be prolonged, yet wound up that prayer with a 'nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done' (Matt 26:39-42; Mark 14:36).

**Second. By way of answer;** but we will suppose that the thing thou desirest is good; and that thy heart may be right in asking; as suppose thou desirest more grace; or as David has it, more 'truth in the inward and hidden part' (Psa 51:6). Yet there are several things for thy instruction, may be replied to thy objection, as,

**1.** Thou, though thou desirest more of this, mayest not yet be sensible of the worth of what thou askest, as perhaps God will have thee be, before he granteth thy desire; sometimes Christians ask for good things without having in themselves an estimate proportionable to the worth of what they desire; and God may hold it therefore back, to learn them to know better the worth and greatness of that thing they ask for. The good disciples asked they knew not what (Mark 10:38). I know they asked what was unlawful, but they were ignorant of the value of that thing; and the same may be thy fault when thou askest for things most lawful and necessary.

**2.** Hast thou well improved what thou hast received already? Fathers will hold back more money, when the sons have spent that profusely which they had received before. 'He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.' 'And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?' (Luke 16:10, 12). See here an objection made against a further supply, or rather against such a supply as some would have, because they have misspent, or been unfaithful in what they have already had. If thou, therefore, hast been faulty here, go, humble thyself to thy friend, and beg pardon for thy faults that are past, when thou art desiring of him more grace.

**3.** When God gives to his the grant of their desires, he doth it so as may be best for our advantage; now there are times wherein the giving of grace may be best to our advantage; as,

**(1.)** Just before a temptation comes, then, if it rains grace on thee from heaven, it may be most for thy advantage. This is like God's sending of plenty in Egypt just before the years of famine came.

**(2.)** For God to restrain that which thou desirest, even till the spirit of prayer is in a manner spent, may be further to inform thee, that though prayer and desires are a duty, and such also to which the promise is made; yet God sees those imperfections in both thy prayers and desires, as would utterly bind his hands, did he not act towards thee merely from motives drawn from his own bowels and compassion, rather than from any deserving that he sees in thy prayers. Christians, even righteous men, are apt to lean too much to their own doings; and God, to wean them from them, oftentimes defers to do what they by doing expect, even until in doing their spirits are spent, and they as to doing can do no longer. When they that cried for water had cried till their spirits failed, and their tongue clave to the roof of their mouth for thirst; then the Lord did hear, and then the God of Israel did give them their desire. Also when Jonas his soul fainted under the consideration of all the evils that he had brought upon himself; then his prayer came unto God into his holy temple (Jonah 2:7; Isa 41:17, 18). The righteous would be too light in asking, and would too much overprize their works, if their God should not sometimes deal in this manner with them.

**(3.)** It is also to the advantage of the righteous, that they be kept and led in that way which will best improve grace already received, and that is, when they spin it out and use it to the utmost; when they do with it as the prophet did with that meal's meat that he ate under the juniper-tree, 'he went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, even to the mount of God' (1 Kings 19:8). Or when they do as the widow did, spend upon their handful of flour in the barrel, and upon that little oil in the cruse, till God shall send more plenty (1 Kings 17:9-16). The righteous are apt to be like well fed children, too wanton, if God should not appoint them some fasting days. Or they would be apt to cast away fragments, if God should give them every day a new dish. So then God will grant the desires of the righteous in that way which will be most for their advantage.

And that is, when they have made the best of the old store (1 Kings 19:4-8). If God should give us two or three harvests in a year, we should incline to feed our horse and hogs with wheat; but being as it is, we learn better to husband the matter.

By this means, we are also made to see, that there is virtue sufficient in our old store of grace to keep us with God in the way of our duty, longer than we could imagine it would. I myself have cried out I can stand no longer, hold out no longer, without a further supply of grace; and yet I have by my old grace been kept even after this, days, and weeks, and months, in a way of waiting on God. A little true grace will go a great way, yea, and do more wonders than we are aware of. If we have but grace enough to keep us groaning after God, it is not all the world that can destroy us.[\[19\]](#)

**4.** Perhaps thou mayest be mistaken. The grace thou prayest for, may in great measure be come unto thee. Thou hast been desiring of God, thou sayest, more grace; but hast it not.

But how, if whilst thou lookest for it to come to thee at one door, it should come to thee in at another? And that we may a little inquire into the truth of this, let us a little consider what are the effects of grace in its coming to the soul, and then see if it has not been coming unto thee almost ever since thou hast set upon this fresh desire after it.

**(1.)** Grace, in the general effect of it, is to mend the soul, and to make it better disposed. Hence when it comes, it brings convincing light along with it, by which a man sees more of his baseness than at other times. More, I say, of his inward baseness. It is through the shinings of the Spirit of grace that those cobwebs and stinks that yet remain in thee are discovered: ‘In thy light shall we see light.’ And again, whatsoever makes manifest is light. If then thou seest thyself more vile than formerly, grace by its coming to thee has done this for thee.

**(2.)** Grace, when it comes, breaks and crumbles the heart, in the sense and sight of its vileness. A man stands amazed and confounded in himself; breaks and falls down on his face before God; is ashamed to lift up so much as his face to God, at the sight

and apprehension of how wicked he is.

**(3.)** Grace, when it comes, shows to a man more of the holiness and patience of God; his holiness to make us wonder at his patience, and his patience to make us wonder at his mercy, that yet, even yet, such a vile one as I am, should be admitted to breathe in the land of the living, yea more, suffered to come to the throne of grace.

**(4.)** Grace is of a heart-humbling nature: it will make a man count himself the most unworthy of anything, of all saints. It will make a man put all others afore him, and be glad too, if he may be one beloved, though least beloved, because most unworthy. It will make him with gladness accept of the lowest room, as counting all saints more worthy of exaltation than himself.

**(5.)** Grace will make a man prize other men's graces and gracious actions above his own. As he thinks every man's candle burns brighter than his, every man improves grace better than he, every good man does more sincerely his duty than he. And if these be not some of the effects of the renewings of grace, I will confess I have taken my mark amiss.

**(6.)** Renewings of grace beget renewed self-bemoanings, self-condemnation, self-abhorrences.

And say thou prayest for communion with, and the presence of God. God can have communion with thee, and grant thee his presence, and all this shall, instead of comforting of thee at present, more confound thee, and make thee see thy wickedness (Isa 6:1-5). Some people think they never have the presence and the renewings of God's grace upon them but when they are comforted, and when they are cheered up; when, alas! God may be richly with them, while they cry out, By these visions my sorrows are multiplied; or, because I have seen God, I shall die (Dan 10:8-17; Judg 13:22).

And tell me now, all these things considered, has not grace, even the grace of God, which thou hast so much desired, been coming to thee, and working in thee in all these hidden methods? And so doing, has it not also accommodated thee with all the aforesaid conveniences? The which when thou considerest, I know thou wouldest not be without for all the good of the world. Thus, therefore, thy desire is accomplishing; and when it is

accomplished, will be sweet to thy soul (Prov 13:19).

**5.** But we will follow thee a little in the way of thy heart. Thou sayest thou desirest, and desirest grace, yea, hast been a thousand times upon thy knees before God for more grace, and yet thou canst not attain.

I *answer*,

**(1.)** It may be the grace which thou prayest for, is worthy thy being upon thy knees yet a thousand times more. We find, that usually they that go to king's courts for preferment, are there at great expenses; yea, and wait a great while, even until they have spent their whole estates, and worn out their patience too. Yet they at last prevail, and the thing desired comes. Yea, and when it is come, it sets them up anew, and makes them better men — though they did spend all that they had to obtain it — than ever they were before. Wait, therefore, wait, I say, on the Lord (Psa 27:14). Wait therefore with David, wait patiently; bid thy soul cheer up, and wait (Psa 37:7, 62:5). 'Blessed are all they that wait for him' (Isa 30:18).

**(2.)** Thou must consider, that great grace is reserved for great service; thou desirest abundance of grace, thou dost well, and thou shalt have what shall qualify and fit thee for the service that God has for thee to do for him, and for his name in the world. The apostles themselves were to stay for great grace until the time of their work was come (Acts 1:4-8, 4:33). I will not allot thy service, but assure thyself, when thy desire cometh, thou wilt have occasion for it; new work, new trials, new sufferings, or something that will call for the power and virtue of all the grace thou shalt have to keep thy spirit even, and thy feet from slipping, while thou art exercised in new engagements. Assure thyself, thy God will not give thee straw, but he will expect brick: 'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more' (Luke 12:48). Wherefore, as thou art busy in desiring more grace, be also desirous that wisdom to manage it with faithfulness may also be granted unto thee. Thou wilt say, Grace, if I had it, will do all this for me. It will, and will not. It will, if thou watch and be sober; it will not, if thou be foolish and remiss. Men of great grace may grow consumptive in grace, and idleness

may turn him that wears a plush jacket into rags.<sup>[20]</sup> David was once a man of great grace, but his sin made the grace which he had to shrink up, and dwindle away, as to make him cry out, O! ‘take not thy holy spirit’ utterly ‘from me’ (Psa 51:11, 119:8). Or, perhaps God withholds what thou wouldest have, that it may be the more prized by thee when it comes: ‘Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but *when* the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life’ (Prov 13:12).

**6.** *Lastly*, but dost thou think that thy more grace will exempt thee from temptations? Alas! the more grace, as was hinted, the greater trials. Thou must be, for all that, like the ship of which thou readest, sometimes high, sometimes low; sometimes steady, sometimes staggering; sometimes in, and sometimes even at the end of thy very wits. For ‘so he brings us to our desired haven’ (Psa 107:23-30). Yet grace is the gold and preciousness of the righteous man: yea, and herein appears the uprightness of his soul, in that though all these things attend the grace of God in him, yet he chooseth grace here above all, for that it makes him the more like God and his Christ, and for that it seasons his heart best to his own content; and also for that it capacitates him to glorify God in the world.

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#### [THE CONCLUSION.]

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Is it so? Is this the sum of all, namely, That ‘the fear of the wicked it shall come upon him,’ and that ‘the desire of the righteous shall be granted?’ Then this shows us what is determined concerning both. Concerning the wicked, that all his hopes shall not bring him to heaven; and concerning the righteous, that all his fears shall not bring him to hell. But what a sad thing is it for one to be a wicked man! Nothing can help him, his wickedness is too strong for him: ‘His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins’ (Prov 5:22). He may twist and twine, and seek to work himself from under the sentence passed upon him; but all will do him no pleasure: ‘the wicked is driven away in his wickedness. But the righteous hath hope in his death’ (Prov 14:32). Loth he is to be righteous now; and as loth he will be to be found in his sins at the dreadful day of doom. But so it must be: ‘Upon the wicked God shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible’ burning ‘tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup’ (Psa 11:6).

‘Woe unto the wicked’ therefore: ‘*it shall be ill with him*, for the reward of his hands shall be given him’ (Isa 3:10). The just God will recompense both the righteous and the wicked, even according to their works. And yet for all this the wicked will not hear! When I read God’s Word, and see how the wicked follow their sins, yea, dance in the ways of their own destruction, it is astonishing to me. Their actions declare them, though not Atheists in principle, yet such in practice.<sup>[21]</sup> What do all their acts declare, but this, that they either know not God, or fear not what he can do unto them? But, O! how will they change their note, when they see what will become of them! How wan will they look! Yea, the hair of their heads will stand on end for fear; for their fear is their portion; nor can their fears, nor their prayers, nor their entreaties, nor their wishes, nor their repentings, help them in this day. And thus have I showed you what are the ‘desires of the righteous,’ and that the ‘fear of the wicked shall come upon him, but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.’

## FOOTNOTES:

[1] How blessed are those whose light shines so clearly as to be known and read of all men. A brand plucked from the burning bears the marks of fire, but is not consuming. — Ed.

[2] ‘A very Abraham,’ or an Abraham cove. Cant terms formerly applied to poor silly half-naked men, or to sturdy beggars. Thus the fraternity of Vacabondes, 1575, describes them: — ‘An Abraham man is he that walketh bare-armed or bare-legged, and fayneth hymselfe mad, and caryeth a packe of wool, or a stycke with baken on it, or suche lyke toy, and nameth poore Tom.’ Shakespeare alludes to them under the name of Bedlam Beggars. — Ed.

[3] To possess with or of; to cause to possess or to be possessed with —

*‘At the port (Lord) he give her to thy hand,  
And by the way possesse thee what she is.’*

*Troylus and Cressida*, act 4, s. 4.

*‘thou hast given me to possess  
Life in myself for ever.’*

Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, book iii, 243.

[4] Establishes our opinions, or fixes them in us. ‘Our young men being *principled* by these new philosophers.’ — *Cudworth*.

*‘A Parliament so principled will sink  
All ancient schools of empire in disgrace.’*

*Dr. Young*. — Ed.

[5] Where is the man, except he be a willful perverter of Divine truth, who can charge the doctrines of grace with licentiousness? All hope of election or predestination arises from conformity to the image of Christ. Vain is hope except it is founded upon redemption *from* the curse, to walk in newness and holiness of life; equally vain is a hope founded on the wicked assumption of man to the power of forgiveness of sin. — Ed.

[6] This is admirably illustrated by the Interpreter in the *Pilgrim’s Progress*. He shows Christian a fire burning against the wall, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it to quench it, yet did the fire burn higher

and hotter. Christian wonders until he is taken behind the wall, and sees Christ secretly pouring the oil of grace into the fire. Before Bunyan had been behind the wall, he was scared by the father of lies, who suggested to him — ‘You are very hot for mercy, but I will cool you, though I be seven years in chilling your heart.’ *Grace Abounding*, No. 118. — Ed.

[7] As we escape a thousand bodily dangers unseen and unknown to us in time, so, doubtless, acts of grace pass through the soul without our being sensible of them, although they may be the means of saving us from severe tribulations. How wondrous will be the review of our lives when we shall see face to face, and know all things. — Ed.

[8] However disgusting the appearance of a toad may be, this is not the first time that Bunyan considered sin as rendering its slave more loathsome even than a toad. ‘Now I blessed,’ said he, ‘the condition of the dog and the toad, and counted the state of everything that God had made far better than this state of mine.’ *Grace Abounding*, No. 104. — Ed.

[9] ‘This inward conflict between opposing principles constitutes the very distinction between the regenerate and the unregenerate, and forms part of the recorded experience of the most advanced, and elevated, and spiritually-minded believers. Freedom from this conflict is not to be expected here by any child of God.’ — *Dr. Wardlaw*.

[10] This is one of the very few instances, if not the only one, in which Bunyan’s attachment to believers’ baptism appears, except when writing expressly upon the subject. Of all men, he was the most eminent for non-sectarian feelings, arising from his soul being so baptized into Christ as to leave no room for controversy upon ceremonial observances. I feel bound to confirm the truth of his observation, for if ever I enjoyed a heaven upon earth, it was on the Lord’s day morning, when, publicly professing my faith in the Redeemer, I was solemnly baptized. Nor have I ever witnessed this ceremony since without the strongest emotions of love, and joy, and hope. — Ed.

[11] Church fellowship, *rightly managed*, abounds with blessings, when the bishops or elders and the people are united in gospel bonds to promote each other’s peace and holy enjoyments — their great happiness being to extend the benign influence of the Redeemer’s kingdom. Let Watchful be the porter;

Discretion admit the members; Prudence take the oversight; Piety conduct the worship; and Charity endear the members to each other, and it is a house ‘beautiful.’ ‘Christians are like the several flowers in a garden; they have upon each of them the dew of heaven, which, being shaken, they let fall at each other’s roots, and are jointly nourished and nourishers of each other.’ Bunyan’s *Pilgrim* and *Christian Behaviour*. — Ed.

[12] Blessed be God the sword is for the present sheathed. Marvellous was the indomitable courage of the martyrs under papacy, and, in a later day, of the Scottish Covenanters. They saw their friends and ministers tortured and murdered — the pain of the boots must have been inconceivable — the bones of their legs were crushed between pieces of iron, and, even when death had released the victim, savage barbarity was practised upon his mutilated remains; the head and hands were cut off and exhibited upon a pike, the hands fixed as in the attitude of prayer, to mock the holiest duty. Can we wonder that lambs became lions, overthrew the horrid enemy, and drove out State Episcopacy for ever? — Ed.

[13] The noise made by animals of the stag or hart species is called, by Goldsmith, bellowing. It strikes the ear as something beneath the dignity of a hart to bray like an ass. Bunyan found the word in the margin of Psalm 42:1, ‘The hart panteth.’ Heb. ‘Brayeth, after the water brooks.’ — Ed.

[14] Saffron was formerly cultivated near Bunyan’s residence, but, although sold at a very high price, it scarcely paid for its expense. In the flowering season, it was needful to gather the flowers every morning as they came to perfection. — Ed.

[15] The Israelites entered the wilderness fourteen hundred and ninety-one years before Christ. The prophecy of Jeremiah was delivered six hundred and twenty-nine years before Christ. This remembrance was eight hundred and sixty-two years after that memorable event. With God there can be no forgetfulness; a thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday. — Ed.

[16] How striking the contrast, but yet how true! A whip, whose cords were made of the flames of hell, could no more arouse a sinner dead in trespass and sins than a crown of glory could allure him. With all the dread realities of the world to come pressed upon the conscience by a faithful minister, still, alas! how many maintain their downward course. The duty is ours to

prophecy upon the dry bones. God and his gracious Spirit alone can raise them up to holy, happy enjoyments. — Ed.

[17] This language is as expressive and original as it is like Bunyan. Death takes the sinner by the throat, and ‘hands him down stairs to the grave.’ The indulgence in any sinful propensity has this downward, deathly tendency. Every lust, whether for riches or honours, for gambling, wine, or women, leads the deluded wretched votary step by step to the chambers of death. There is no hope in the dread prospect; trouble and anguish possess the spirit. Hast thou escaped, O my soul, from the net of the infernal fowler? Never forget that it is as a brand *snatched* from the burning. O to grace how great a debtor. — Ed.

[18] It is not usual to call the rich young man a hypocrite. To outward appearance he was in earnest. Negatively, he had kept the commandments. Now he is required to perform positive duties, and to live by faith. Here the mask falls off, and he concludes that eternal life is not worth the sacrifice. — Ed.

[19] We have here an additional section to the *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. The result of long experience convinced him that if he possessed a spark of grace which impelled him to groan after God, all the powers of earth and hell could not destroy him. — Ed.

[20] As it is in temporal things, so it is in spiritual. If new discoveries of Divine love lead to want of watchfulness, trial and sorrow must ensue. About sixty years ago a next door neighbour, a hatter, gained a prize in the lottery of ten thousand pounds — he became intoxicated with his wealth, moved to the fashionable end of London, went into a large way of business, dissipated his fortune, and died in a workhouse! Christian, if you have unexpected enjoyments, be watchful; it is to fit you for trials. — Ed.

[21] This is one of the most decisive proofs of the awfully degraded state of human nature. Men believe, or pretend to believe, that this life is but a span in companions with eternity — that there is a heaven to reward the righteous and a hell to receive the unconverted sinner; and yet make no personal inquiry at the holy oracles of God whether they have been born again to newness of life, or whether they remain in their sins. The great mass of mankind prefer paying their pence to a priest to mislead them to destruction,

than to trouble themselves with God's holy Word. O for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that men may be released from such bondage and slavery, and enter upon the happy glorious liberty of the sons of God. — Ed.