

ende of the creatures ; and will never have Unity till they return to God.

III. In the next place let us consider , *What is the Necessity* that is here spoken of , and *How far this One thing is Necessary to us.*

And 1. *One thing is Necessary Morally [for it self]* which is our *ultimate end* : When other things are *Necessary* but [for that.]

2. *Comprehensively* of the Means we may say, that *One thing*, that is, *Sanctification*, is *Necessary* to the *Pleasing of God* ; which is to be regarded, 1. *As the end of Obedience* , and 2. *As the end of Love* : by the *obedient soul* in way of *duty* ; and by the *loving soul* devoted to God, as its *Delight*.

The world hath many *contrary Masters* , and therefore hath many things to do to *please* them ; and when they have done their best, they cannot please them all, but may leave more *displeased* than they please : For those that they must please, expect impossibilities ; and many a *single person* perhaps may look for as much as you can give to *all* : And they have such *contrary interests*, which you must serve if you will please them ; and *contrary minds* which you must humour , that the same things that *one* expects to *please him*, will *vehemently displease another* ; and perhaps the *more* displease the *other*, because it is *pleasing* to that *one*.

And *our selves* have our *contrarieties* in *our selves* , and are as hard to be pleased by *others* or *our selves*. We have our *sensual desires* which are *unreasonable* and *inordinate* , *unseasonable* and *importunate*, and will take no *Nay*. A *sensual* , *covetous* , *ambitious* *fantasie*, is a *bottomless vessel* : Your pouring in doth no whit fill it : It is a *devouring gulf* ; a *consuming* (that I say not an *unquenchable*) *fire* : Like the *horse-leech* it cryeth , *Give, Give*, and the more you give, the more it craveth , and is never *less satisfied*, then when it hath *glutted* it self with that from which it seeketh *satisfaction* :

But God is *One*, and with this *One thing* is he pleased ; even with a *Holy heart* and *life* : He hath no *contradictory interests* or *assertions* : and therefore hath no *contradictory commands* : that which must please him, must be *suitable* to his *blessed nature* :
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He is infinite in Wisdom, and therefore hath no pleasure in fools, that bring him sacrifice, and refuse obedience, and know not that they do evil, Eccles. 5. 1. and have not the wit to know what they do, and whom they speak to, and to know that which only is worth the knowing: How often do we read him rejecting the sacrifice of the wicked, and casting their costliest offerings in their faces, as things that he abhorreth, when they come to him without that humble, loving, and obedient heart, which he requireth! Psalm 50. 8, &c. Isa. 1. 11, 12. to ver. 20. *Their oblations are vain, the multitude of their sacrifice is to no purpose, and incense is an abomination to him; their Feasts and Sabbaths his soul hateth, they are a trouble to him, he cannot bear them, if they come without the One thing necessary.* Without this he careth not for their fastings, or formalities, Isa. 58. 5. It is not thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oyle, nor the fruit of their body, if they would give it for the sin of their soul, that he will accept: But he hath shewed thee O man what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God? Mic. 6. 7, 8. The conclusion of the whole matter is this; *Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man,* Eccles. 12. 13.

You are never the better beloved of God for being Rich, or honourable in the world, nor yet because you are poor, or in a mean condition, nor because you are sick or well, weak or strong, comely or uncomely; but because you Love him through his Son, and Believe in him whom the Father hath sent, John 16. 27. *Without faith it is impossible to please God:* Heb. 11. 6. The new man must be put on, which is renewed in knowledge, after the Image of him that created him, where there is neither Greek, nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all,] Col. 3. 10, 11. [For in Christ Jesus circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a New Creature, and Faith that works by Love, and the keeping of the commands of God, Gal. 5. 6. & 6. 15. 1 Cor. 7. 19.

This One thing (even Godliness which is profitable to all things) is necessary in us, (supposing the necessities in Christ) to render us acceptable to the Holy God: and without this all the accomplishments imaginable, will make us but as sounding brass, or as a tinkling Cymbal, 1 Cor. 13. 1.

3. One thing is needfull to the saving of our souls; without which

which all things else are vain. There are *many* wayes to Hell; but to Heaven there is *but One*: There are a *thousand* wayes to delude and blind a soul, but *only one* for its true and saving illumination. *Erroneous* Sectaries are blinded in *some particular points*, by the seducing words of men: And *ungodly sensualists* are blinded in the *main*, and damnably err from the necessary practical doctrines of salvation, being deceived by the inclination of their own concupiscence: *Errors* are *multifarious*; and abound even in many that inveigh most fiercely against the *erroneous*: But *Truth* is *simple*; We have *One Teacher* to instruct us; *One Spirit* to enlighten us, *One Word* of God to be our *Rule*; *One Light* to guide us through all the darkness and mazes of the world, and recover our deluded darkened minds. Thousands are ready to draw us away from God; Temptations lye thick on every hand; Within us, and without us; before us and on each side: Which way can you look or go, but you will meet with baits and snares? And if *Eve* be once deceived, *Adam* is the easilier overcome. When the *appetite* and *senses* are ensnared by their objects, and the *imagination* corrupted, the understanding is in danger of deceit. You may go into an Hospital, and see *variety* of *diseases*: but *Health* is *one* and the same: One hath the pestilence, and another hath the leprosie, and another a palsie, and another is distracted: but among a thousand people in *Health*, you see no such difference: *Health* only is *formally* the cure of all.

What abundance of miserable sinners be in the world, that are almost at Hell already? But *only one sort* of men, even the *regenerate*, are rescued by grace, and shall be saved from it. *Many inventions* have men found out for their *destruction*; but there is no way but by *Christ*, through *faith* and *holiness*, to their *salvation*. Set as light by *Christ* and *Holiness* as you will, and deride it as foolishly and perversly as you please, you will find at last, that *this way* or *none* must bring you to Heaven. Either ignorance, or pride, or covetousness, or malice, or gluttony, or drunkenness, or voluptuousness or lust, or any one sin of an hundred may be your ruine: But there is *only One* *salve* to heal these sores; and *only one cordiall* or antidote that can expell these several sorts of poison from your hearts; *Godliness* is *profitable* to all things, 1 Tim. 4. 8.

Drudge for the world as long as you will, and gaze after
honour,

honour and applause from men, and try a thousand wayes for your content; but when you have all done, you must return by *sound Repentance* into the way of holiness, or you are lost forever. When you have slighted grace, you must give up your selves to the power of that grace: When you have set light by a life of holy Love to God, and the fruition of him in Glory, you *must* make it your treasure and delight, and your hearts must be upon it, or you are undone: *Matth. 6. 21.* When you have made a jeast of a Holy life, you *must* come about, and take *your selves* that course that you jeasted at, though you be as much jeasted at by others; yea, and make it the principal business of your lives, or perish in hell under the vengeance of the Almighty, whose justice you provoked, and whose mercy you neglected: Choose you whether, but one of them will be your part. Even as *Saul* that was exceeding mad against Believers, and persecuted them even to strange Cities, *Acts 26. 10, 11.* was glad to become one of them himself though he suffered as much as he had caused them to suffer; and accounted it the greatest mercy of his life, that God vouchsafed him such a change, what ever it cost him.

IV. Quest. *But is nothing necessary but this One? Are not other things also Needfull in their places?*

Ans. I told you that other things are not other, so far as they stand in due subordination to this one, or are the parts of it: He that saith to a sick man, [You would do well if you had such a skilfull man for your Physicion] doth not by these words intend to exclude his Apothecary, or his medicines, or the taking of them, or the instruments and means by which they are applyed; but rather includeth and impliyeth all these in the One thing mentioned to which they do subserve. So all Gods graces, and all the means of grace, and Christian duties, are contained or implied in the One thing Necessary, or supposed to it. Because it is One thing that is necessary as the End, therefore many means are necessary to the obtaining of it: Though there be also a kind of unity (as hath been shewed) among those means.

Quest. *But are not outward things also necessary: Must we not have food and rayment? and must we not labour and provide*

vide it, and take care for our families, and follow our callings? Must we not by lawfull means avoid reproach and poverty in the world?

Ans. In the way of *Duty* it is as necessary that we labour in our callings, and provide things honest, and subserve Gods providence for the maintenance of our selves and others; And the things of this life are Needful so far as *Life* is needful, that we may have *Time* and *strength* to do our works, and be supported while we seek the *One thing needful*. But that which is not Necessary for it self, but for another thing, is not simply or principally Necessary. So far as *Heaven* may be obtained, and the work of Christianity done without the accommodations of the flesh, so far these worldly things are needless. There is no Necessity that you be *Rich* or *Honourable*, or that you live in *Health* or *Wealth*; or that you escape the hatred, and reproach, and trouble of a malicious world: There is no Necessity that you should save your lives when Christ requireth them: For he that so saveth his life, shall lose it, *Matth.* 16. 25. And that Usefulness (which you may in a lower sense call Necessity) that any of these things are of, is but in their respect to the *One thing Necessary*, as they are sanctified means to the service of God and our salvation: If your *daily bread* be to be called Necessary, it is not for it self, or for your *fleshy pleasure*, nor ultimately for your life it self; but to sustain your life while you are seeking after life eternal, and serving him that is the Lord of life: Your *Credit*, or *Honour*, or *Pleasure* in the world, are no further Necessary or Usefull to you, then they promote this great End for your selves or others: Nothing but God is simply Necessary for himself, and Nothing else is any way truly Necessary but for him.

And therefore as by Necessity of precept you must labour in your Callings, and seek provision for your selves and families, you must most carefully watch your Hearts that your desires and labours be not carnal, as tending only to carnal ends; but that you sincerely subject the things desired, to the *One thing necessary*, for which you must desire them; and therefore that you desire but such measures and proportions as are most suitable to that End which is only for it self desirable: Even life it self must not be desired simply and ultimately for it self.

As you must pray but for your daily bread, and be content with food and rayment, so you must see, that these be but for better things; even in order to the doing of the Will of God, the promoting of his Kingdom, and the Hallowing of his Name, which must be first and most desired. The order of your duty is, to seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and then other things are promised with it, Matth. 6. 33. and therefore for it, must be desired and sought.

And if your very food and life must be desired but for this everlasting End, then it is still but one thing that is necessary, and finally to be desired. For the Means is willed but with an imperfect willing, because not for it self; and that only hath our full and perfect Love, which is Loved for it self: Even in the act of Love unto the Means, it is more properly the End that is Loved then the Means, and the Means is chosen for that End. So that you see that for all the necessity of creatures, and of diligence in our Callings, the truth is still clear, that it is only One thing that is truly Necessary.

Use.

THE understanding is the subservient faculty, to let in that light, which may by direction and excitation, guide the will: Having shewed you the Truth, I am next to shew you how you may improve it, and so to apply it, as may best help you to apply it to your selves.

And if I should here fall upon things impertinent, or make it my work to claw your ears, or exalt my self in your esteem, by an unseasonable ostentation of learning or eloquence, or carry on any such corrupt design, while I should faithfully do the work of God, my Text it self would openly condemn me. If One thing be needful, it is that One that I must do my self, while I am exhorting you to do it: And woe be to me, if I should lay by that, to do any other unnecessary work, even to fish for the applause of Carnal wits, while my very subject is the Reproofs of Christ against a much more tolerable error.

And as to the manner of my admonition, if One thing be needful, I hope you will allow me to be as plain and serious as I can, about this One: And my first address to you shall be for tryall.

And I shall make it now my earnest request to you, that you will

will bethink you how much you are concerned, to compare your hearts and lives with this passage, and judge your selves by the Word of God that is now before you : And for your own sakes do it seriously and faithfully, as passengers that are hasting to the great Assize. What say your Consciences, Sirs, to this Question? *Have you indeed lived in the world as men that believe that One thing is necessary?* Hath this *One* had your *chiefest* care and labour, and have you chosen rather to neglect all other things then this? Look behind you, and judge of the course that you have taken by the light of this one text. I do not ask you Whether you have heard that *One thing is Necessary* : nor whether you have talked of it, and confessed it to be true : nor whether you have been called *Christians* by your selves and others, and have come to Church, and forborn those sins that would have most blemished your honour in the world : This is nothing to the question : Thus many thousands do, that were never acquainted with the *One thing Necessary*. Nor do I ask you, Whether you have used to allow God half an hours lip-service or formal drowsie prayer at night, when you have served the world and flesh all day? Nor whether you have been Religious on the by, and given God some lean devotion which cost you little, and which your flesh can spare without any great diminution or detriment in its ease, and honour, and profit, and sensual delights : Nor whether you run to some kinde of duties of Religion, to make all whole, when you come from wilful reigning sin; and so make Religion a *fortress* to your *lusts*, to quiet your Consciences while you serve the flesh : I confess such a kind of Religiousness as this, the world is acquainted with : But this is unanswerable to the Rule before us.

But the question is, Whether this *One thing* hath been the *Treasure* and *jewel* of your estimation; the *darling* of your affections; the *prize* of your most diligent endeavours, and the *only felicity* of your souls?

Sirs, as lightly as you hear this question now, you will One day find that your *lives*, yea your *salvation* lyeth upon your answer to it. Can you say truly, as before the searcher of hearts, that it is *he* that hath had your *hearts*? That this *One thing* hath been more esteemed by you, than all the world besides? That other things have all stooped unto this *One*, and served under it? And that this hath had the *stream* of your heartiest affections,

and the drift of your endeavours, and hath been the matter that you have had *first* to do, and the thing for which you have *lived* in the world?

If this be not so, never talk of your *Christianity* for shame : Your Religion is *vain*, if *this* be not your Religion. Alas I know that we have all of us yet too much of the flesh, and are too cold in our affections, and too slow and uneven in our endeavours for our end : But yet for all that I must still tell you, (as I have often done because it is necessary) that *here lyeth the difference between the truly sanctified soul, and all the hypocrites and half-Christians in the world* : [*Every true Christian is devoted unto God, and hath made an hearty and absolute resignation of himself and all that he hath unto him; and therefore loveth him with his superlative, most appretiative love, and serveth him with the best he hath, and thinks nothing too good or too dear for God, and for the attainment of his everlasting Rest : Christ hath the chiefest room in his heart, and the bent and drift of his life is for him : He studyeth how he may best serve and please him with his time, his interest, and all that he hath : and if he fall, as it is contrary to the habitual resolution of his soul, and contrary to the scope and current of his heart and life, so he riseth again by repentance with sorrow for his sin, and loathing of himself, and sincerely endeavours to amend, and goeth on resolutely in his holy course.*] This is the state of every one that is in a state of life.

But for all hypocrites and half-Christians, their case is otherwise : The world and flesh is dearest to them, and highest in their *practical estimation*, though not in their *speculative* : and it hath their highest affections of Love and Delight, and the very bent and stream of heart and life, while God is served heartlessly on the by, for fear lest they be damned, when they can enjoy the world and sin no longer, and is put off with the leavings of the flesh, and hath no more of their hearts, their tongues, their time, their wealth, then it can spare : They ask their flesh how far they shall be Religious, and will go no further then will stand with their prosperity in the world : With the *first* and *best* they serve the *flesh*, and with the *cheapest* and the *refuse* they serve the *Lord* : When they go highest in their out-side carnal Religiousness, they go not beyond this hypocritical reserved state; (and usually, as *Cain*, they hate *Abel* for offering a more acceptable sacrifice) : God must take up with this from them, or
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be without : They alway serve him with this reserve, though it be not alwayes explicite and discerned by them, [*Provided that it may go well with me in the world, and I may have some competent proportion of honour, profit or pleasure, and Religion may not expose me to be undone :*] If God will not take them on these terms, (as most certainly he never will) he must go look him other servants : and so he will ; and make them know at last unto their sorrow, that he needed not their service, but it was they that needed him, and the benefits of his service.

I thought meet (though I have done it oft before) to give you this difference between the *Hypocrite* and the *sincere* : And now it is my earnest request unto you all, that you will presently call your souls to an account, and know which of these two courses you have taken ; and which of these two is your own condition.

If nature had made you such strangers to your selves, as that you were *unable* to answer such a question, I would never trouble you with it : but I suppose by faithful enquiry, you may know this much of your selves, if you are but willing. You know *where it is* that you have dwelt, and *what it is* that you have been doing in the world, and you can review the *actions* of your lives, though they have been of smaller consequence. Why then may you not quickly know if you will, so great a thing, as *what hath been the very End and Business for which you have lived in the world till now* ? Have you been running so long, and know not yet *what is the prize* that you have run for ? Have you forgot the errand that you have been so long going on ? Have you been busie all your daies till now, and know not *about what or why* ? Certainly this is a thing that *may be known*, if you are *willing and diligent* to know it : It is for one of these two that you have lived ; for the *world*, or for *God* : To please your *flesh*, or to please *God* and be *saved* : Either to make provision for *Earth* or *Heaven* : Which of these is it ? Deal plainly with your selves, for your salvation is deeply concerned in the account.

Perhaps you will say, that *It was for both* : for as you have a soul and a body, so you must look to both : Yea, but so as one that knoweth, that *One thing is Needful* : As your *body* is but the *prison*, the *case*, the *servant* of your souls ; so it must be provided for and used but as a *servant*, and maintained only in a *fitness* for its *work* : But the question is, Which of them hath had the

the preeminence? Which hath had the life of your affections and endeavours? Which of them was your *end*? and about which hath been the chief business that you have most carefully and diligently carried on? This is the great question.

You cannot have *two masters*, though you may have many *instruments* and *fellow-servants*: You cannot acceptably serve God, if you serve *Mammon*: Every wicked man may do something in Religion, and every good man may do something that is contrary to Religion: A carnal man may do something for God, and for his soul; and a spiritual man ought to do something subordinately for his body, and too often, alas, doth something for it inordinately: But which bears the sway? and which is first sought? and which comes behind, and hath but the *leavings* of the other?

Be not deceived: God is not mocked: Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap: If you sow to the flesh, of the flesh you shall reap corruption: but if you sow to the spirit, of the spirit you shall reap everlasting life: Gal. 6. 7, 8. Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world (for themselves): for if any man love the world, (with his chiefest Love) the Love of the Father is not in him, 1 John 2. 15. Is it not a wonder that any reasonable man can be such a stranger to himself, as not to know what he lives for, and what hath had his heart, and what hath been the principal business of his life? Some *by-matters* you may easily forget or over-look: but can you do so by your *end*, which hath been your chiefest care and business?

If indeed you no more know your own minds, nor what you have all this while been doing in the world, ask those that you have conversed with; and judge by the effects and signs: Others can tell what you have most seriously talked of: They may conjecture by their observation, what you have most carefully sought, and resolutely adhered to. Whether it be God or the flesh; this world or Heaven? The *One thing Needful*, or the many troubling trifles in your way: It is like that *wise* and godly observers can help you to discern it; though *sensualists* will but deceive you.

A mans Love, at least his chiefest Love, cannot be hid, but will appear in his behaviour: If you Love God above the world, you will seek him and his Glory before the world: and if you do so, it may partly be discerned, if you have conversed with discerning men:

men : Heaven and earth are not *so like* , nor the way to each of them *so like* , but it may partly be discerned which way men are going, and what they drive at in their daily course.

But I will urge you no further to the tryal : I will take it for granted that your Consciences are telling many of you, that you have been troubled about many things, while the *One thing Necessary hath been neglected* : And if indeed this be your case, suffer me to tell the guilty plainly, what it is that they have done.

1. Whatever you have been doing in the world, *you have lost your Time*, if you have not been seeking the *One thing necessary*. If you have been gathering riches, or growing up in honour as the rush groweth in the mire, (*Job 8. 11.*) or filling your purses or your barnes, or pleasing your fantasies and flesh ; you have but fooled away your time, and done just nothing, and much worse : *Nothing* is done, if the *One thing Necessary* be undone. Believe it, *Time* is a precious thing, and ought not to have been thus cast away. When you come to the end of it, the worst and proudest of you shall confess it is precious. Then O for one year more ! O for a few daies or hours more, to make sure of this *One thing*, which you should have spent your lives in making sure of. Will you *then* think thus, and yet can you *now* afford to cast away twenty or thirty years upon *Nothing* ? If *Time* be worth *Nothing*, your *Lives* are worth *Nothing* : And why should a man desire to *Live* for *Nothing* ? You *Love* your *lives* too much, and yet will you so contemptuously cast them away ? He hath *lost his life*, who hath lost the *End of his life*. The loss of an hundred pound in money is not (to your selves) so great a loss, as the loss of a dayes or hours time. What then is the loss of so many years ? Did you ever well consider of this ? If you live a thousand years, it is all lost, if you have not spent it in making sure of the *One thing Necessary*. For is not that lost, and worse a thousand times then lost, that is spent in *crossing* the *End* that it is given for ? and which is no comfort, but terrour in the review, and which leaveth no fruit, but grief and disappointment ? Let me tell you, if you hold on thus unto the end, you will wish and wish a thousand times, either that you had never had an hours time, or else that you had had hearts, to have better perceived the worth and use of it, then to cast it away as you have done upon nothing. It is but *One thing* that is worth your *Time* and *Lives*.

2. Whatsoever else you have been doing, *you have lost all your Labour with your Time*, if this *One thing Needful* have been neglected. No doubt you have been *busy* since you came into the world; but to little purpose. You might as well have been idle, as so laboriously doing nothing. No doubt many a journey you have rode and gone, and many a hard daies labour you have taken, and sharpened perhaps with care and grief: But you have lost it all, if it were an hundred times more, if it have not been laid out upon the *One thing necessary*.

And is it not a pittiful thing that men of reason, should vex themselves, and toil their bodies, and suffer hunger, and thirst, and weariness, and make such a stir and pudder in the world, and all for *nothing*, and in a *vain shew*? How many mornings have you risen to your labour, and how many dayes and years have you spent in it, and now it is all lost? How many thoughts and fears, and cares, have possessed and pestered your minds, and now they are all lost? Some of you have followed your trades, and some your husbandry, and some have run up and down after recreations: some of you have been scraping riches, and some contriving to keep up their reputation, and some to satisfy their appetites, and live in pleasure and contentment to the flesh; and now look back upon all that you have done and gotten, and tell your selves whether all this be not lost, yea alas much worse then lost: If you be not ready to pass this conclusion at the very heart, it is because your hearts are yet blinded and hardened in sin; but God will soon bring that to your hearts, that shall convince you of it. If God have made use of any worldly sensual person of you, for publick good, of Church or state, as men do of thorns for hedging to their lands, or of bryars to stop a gap, or of fire-wood to warm their family; yet as to any *durable benefit to your selves*, I may well say that all your *Labour is lost*.

And this is not all; but the pains also that you have taken in your *formal hypocritical Religion*, your hearing, reading, receiving Sacraments, and pretended prayer, all the thoughts that ever you had of death, and judgement, and the life to come, and all that you have done with reservations and by halves for your own salvation, this also is all lost: Except as a *less measure of misery* may go for *gain*. If you miss of the *One thing necessary*, you do but lose your labour, whatever else you seem to gain.

A great stir you make in seeking for preferment, or dominion over others, or about your lands, your honours or your delights; so great that your neighbours can scarce live quietly by you; and the Kingdom cannot be quiet for some of you, nor your own consciences be quiet *within you* for the desperate work that you engage them in, which they know must be heard of another day: And when all is done, you will find you have been but hunting of a feather: You would see this now if God would open your eyes by grace: but if you miss of so seasonable an information, you will see it too late in the land of darkness: When death hath opened your eyes, and your impenitent souls do suddenly awake in another world, you will understand that you made all this stir but in your sleep: As busily and seriously as you acted the parts of Lords and Ladies, of Gentlemen, Tradesmen, or Husbandmen in the world, if you did not *seriously* and *first* do the work of *true Believers for the world to come*, you will then find too late that your labour is lost, and all was acted but as in a *dream*.

Do you believe this now, or do you not? If you do, will you yet go on? If you do not believe it, *shew me now* what you have gotten by all the stir that you have made in the world, that will follow you one step further then the grave, and that you can say shall be *your own* to morrow? If you were to die this hour, will it be any lasting comfort to you, that you have laboured to be Rich or Honourable, or that you have attained it? or that you had your glut of sensual delights, and a merry life as to the fleshly pleasure as long as it would last? Will you dye the *more* comfortably for any of this? or *much the less*? That yet you are alive, is the great mercy of God, and not to be ascribed to any of these: And when you cease to live, then these will be your greif and torment.

Beloved Hearers, I have no desire the Lord knows to discompose your minds, or to disquiet you with any molesting unnecessary scruples; nor causelessly to dishonour either you or your employments: But I must needs say, that it is a dolefull case, that men in their wits, should spend a life of precious time, and also a great deal of care and labour, in doing Nothing, and much worse then Nothing, when they have a work of everlasting consequence to do, and they know that the Devils chiefest hopes do consist in the success of *these diversions*!

I must seriously profess to you, that I am constrained by the word and teachings of God, and by undeniable reason it self, to look upon all the labour of your lives, the highest, and the busiest, but as the picking of straws, or playing with a feather, or riding upon a staff or a hobby-horse, or such like actions as children, fools or mad men use, as long as you mind not, and seek not after the *One thing necessary*. What ever they may be to others, they are no *wiser or better to your selves*: This is my judgement; yea, this is the judgement of the Spirit of God: *Phil. 3. 8.* If *Paul* was not mistaken, your gain it self is to be accounted *Loss*, and all but *dung* in comparison of the *knowing and winning of Christ*, that you might be found in him, and have his righteousness: Think not the name of *dung* too base, when God himself hath written it here upon your highest endowments and honours, by his Spirit. And indeed what will they all do more then *dung* to procure you the favour of God, or the pardon of your sins? If you offer him gold, will it do any more then if you offered him so much dirt? Is not the prayer of a beggar heard as soon as of a Lord or Gentleman? If they would do any thing to buy you peace of Conscience, or everlasting life, or if they would but keep you alive on earth, I should not marvel at your course: But when they will do none of this, but make your way to Heaven more difficult, yea, your salvation a thing impossible while you thus live after the flesh (*Rom. 8. 13.*) how then can any easier sentence be past upon your choice? Be you the Greatest or the Wisest in your own esteem, or in the esteem of others of your mind, *I believe, yea, I am sure*, that you are all this while but laboriously idle, and honourably debasing your selves, and delightfully tormenting your selves, and wisely befooling your selves, and thriftily undoing your selves for ever. I have reason to say that your rising and honourable and voluptuous employments, are not only like childrens playing in the sand, and making them houses with sticks and stones: but so much more pitifull, as the reason which you abuse exceedeth theirs. And could you all attain to be Lords and Ladies, I should look upon you but as a King or Queen upon a Chess-board, as to any felicity that it bringeth to your selves; whatsoever use the overruling providence of God may make of you for his Churches! *The wise Merchant is he that seeking pearls doth find this One*

of greatest price, and selleth all that he hath and buyeth it; even all the worldly treasures which you so highly value: *Mat. 13: 45, 46.* There is more true Riches in this *One pearl* than in a thousand loads of sand or dirt. If you will load your selves with mire and clay conceiting it to be your treasure, your backs will be broken before you will have enough to make you rich.

O Sirs, with what eyes, with what hearts do you use to read such passages of Christ that speak so plainly to you, as if he named you, and so piercingly as one would think should make you feel, *Luke 12. 19, 20, 21.* *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry: But God said to him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; and then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? so is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.*] Would you have Christ speak plainer to to you: or closer apply it, that you may perceive he speaks to you? You have lost all the Labour of your lives; but thats not all.

3. But furthermore consider, that if the *One thing needfull* have been neglected, whatever else you have been doing, or whatever you have got, (unless as preparatory to this) you have not only *lost your labour*, but you have all this while been busily undoing your selves, and labouring for your own perdition.

If it were but the loss of your *Time* and *Labour*, you would then die but as *brutes*, and be as if you had never been: and to those that have brutified themselves, this will seem more tolerable, then to live in *holiness to God*: But alas, you have done much worse then this; You have not only been digging your own graves, but barring up against your selves the doors of heaven, and kindling the unquenchable fire to torment you; *Mar. 9. 44.*

I beseech you give me a considerate hearing, you ambitious Gentlemen, you covetous worldlings, and you that serve your lusts and pleasures! Do you think you had been doing the the work of wisemen, if you had all this while been burning your own fingers, or cutting your own flesh, or setting your own or your neighbours houses on fire? What would you have us call that man that would live in such employments as

these; and yet would be accounted wise or honourable? Do I need to tell thee, as *Nathan* did *David*, that [*Thou art the man* ?] Do I need in so plain a case to tell you, that you have been doing worse, (I speak not rashly) a thousand times worse, against your souls, then this would have been which is supposed to be only against your bodies! Alas self-destroyers, what do you mean? Did God send you hither on no better an errand than to kindle and blow the fire of his wrath, and fall into it when you have kindled it? Have you no better work in the world to do, then to prepare your selves a place in hell? and with a great deal of care, and cost, and stir, to labour for damnation, as if you were afraid of losing it?

I know you will say, [*God forbid, we hope better, we intend no such thing*] But alas the question is not, *What you intend*, but *what you are doing*? Not whether it be your desire that everlasting death should be the wages of sin, but whether it be the Law and unchangeable will of God? *Rom. 6. 23.* If you seek not first Gods Kingdom and his righteousness, and look not after the One thing needful, with your chiefest Estimation, Resolution, and Endeavours, as sure as Christ is true, this will prove your case at last, though now you wink, and wilfully go on, and will not believe it: As sure as the Gospel is true, this is true. There are but two Ends, Heaven and Hell; and if you miss the former, you fall into the latter. *If you live after the flesh, you shall die*, whatever you imagine: and you must mortifie the deeds of the flesh by the spirit, if you will live, *Rom. 8. 13.* If you see a man cutting his own throat, and you ask him, [*What are you doing man! will you kill your self?*] and he answereth you, *No, God forbid; I have no such meaning; I will hope better*. Would you think that this would save his life? or that his hopes and meanings would prove him ever the wiser man? I tell you from the Word of God, it is one of the plainest truths that is there contained, that if you value not, choose not, and seek not the One thing Needful above all other things whatsoever, you are all this while but sowing the seeds of endless misery, whose fruit you must reap in outer darkness, where will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, *Mat. 13. 42, 50.* You are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgement of God, who will give to every man according to his works, *Rom. 2. 5, 6.* You are sowing in pleasure to the flesh, in eating, and drinking, and mirth,

mirth, and honour : but you shall reap in corruption, lamentation and woe. *Gal. 6. 7, 8. For wee to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep : Wee to you that are rich (and have no better, but want the everlasting riches), for you have received your consolation : Wee to you that are full, (and yet are empty of Christ and grace) for you shall hunger, Luke 6. 24, 25.* These are the words of Christ himself ; and therefore true if Christ be true.

Yea more then this, let me have leave to tell you, (for why should I not tell you of your greatest folly, and that which is necessary for you to know ?) As long as you neglect the *One thing necessary*, you are acting the part of the *most deadly enemies* against your selves. No enemy that you have in all the world, could do that against you, as you do against your selves. You abhorre the Devil ; and I blame you not ; for his malice and enmity deserveth it : But you do much worse against your selves then the Devil himself could ever do. To tempt you to sin is not so much as to *Consent to it and commit it*. He can but entice you, and not constrain you : It is you that are the neglecters of your Maker and Redeemer, and the wilful rejecters of your own felicity : Satan doth bad enough against you by temptation ; but you do worse by yielding and sinning ; much worse then all the Devils in hell could do against you. For God hath not given all of them so much power over you, as he hath given you over your selves.

Lord, what a distracted case is the ungodly world in ! They hate any man else that they do but imagine is their enemy ! Though he do but diminish their worldly wealth or honour, they cannot forgive him : If a man give one of them a box on the ear, he cannot bear it : And as for the Devil, who is the common enemy, they spit at his name, and (think they) bless themselves from him : And yet these same men do spend all their care, and time, and labour, in doing *more* against themselves, then all their enemies could do in earth or hell : and are *worse then Devils to themselves* ; and yet they never fall out with themselves for it ; but can forgive themselves as easily as if they did themselves no harm.

This is true, too true Sirs, as harsh as it seemeth to your ears ; And if it displease you to hear of it, bethink your selves what it is to do it ; and how God and all wise men must judge of you
that

that have no more mercy on your selves : Certainly it is much worse to do it, then to tell you what you do. *God* tells men of their sin, and *God* doth nothing but what is good ; but it is *themselves only* that commit it : I beseech you do but understand what you are doing, as long as the *One thing necessary* is neglected by you.

4. Consider also, that whatsoever else you have been doing in the world, if you have not done the *One thing needful*, you have unman'd your selves, and lived below your Reason, and in plain *English*, you have lived as besides your wits.

I give you no harder language then *God* himself hath frequently given you in his Word, and then you will shortly give your selves, if you repent not ; yea and sooner if you do repent. If you have (in this) the use of your Reason, you must needs know what you have your Reason for : And I beseech you tell me for what you have it, if not to serve and please your Maker, and prepare for your everlasting state ? Is it only that you may know how to plow and sow, and follow your trades and pleasure in the world, and satisfy your flesh a little while, and then die as the beasts that perish ? None of you, I suppose, will say so, that calls himself a Christian : If *God* had made you for no higher things then beasts, he would have given you no higher faculties and endowments. As they be not made to enjoy *God*, so they have no knowledge of him : he sendeth not his Word to them, and calleth them not to learn the knowledge of his will : But you know, or may know, that there is a *God*, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him ; and are capable of Loving him, intending him, and serving him, and therefore of enjoying him : Beasts are not ruled by the hopes and fears of a life after this : For their nature and end do not require it. But men must be thus ruled, or else there can be no sufficient ruling of them, in an ordinary way : Which shews that the Nature of man is capable of the things which are the matter of their hopes and fears.

Verily Sirs, I think, as to any good that cometh by it, there is very little difference between having Reason, and having none, if we had nothing to do with it, but cunningly to lay up our food, and make provision for this corruptible flesh, and had not another life to mind. It were no such great difference, in my opinion, as it commonly goes for, whether we were men or dogs.

if it were only for the matters of this transitory life. For though I may not deny but yet *man* were the nobler creature, yet alas the difference would be but graduall and small, as an Ape or Dog excells a Swine : And as to his Happinefs, it is doubtful whether Man would not have the worst of it. For as brutes have not mans knowledge, so they have not his toil and trouble of mind, his care, and fear, and griefs, and disappointments : Nor have they so terrible fore-thoughts of death through all their lives, as man must have, much less such fears of what would follow after death.

And therefore I may boldly say, that you have thrown away your wits, and laid by your Reason as to the principal use of it, if you have *forgot*, or *have not chiefly sought* the *One thing necessary*. Where were your wits when a lump of flesh was preferred before immortal souls ? and when the trouble and dung of a transitory world, was more esteemed then God and endless Glory ? Where were your wits when you might have had Christ, and Life in him, and his pardoning, healing, sanctifying grace, and you had no mind of him, and were not sensible of your necessity, and past him by with as much neglect, as if you could have been saved without him ? When you might long ago have made sure of *Heaven* ; and now you are *even ready* to drop into *Hell*, and stay but for a Feaver, or Consumption, or some other disease to cut the thred, and turn the key, unless a speedy sound conversion shall yet prevent it. What have you *done* in all your life-time, that should make a wise man judge you *Reasonable* ? Is that your Reason to be *penny wise and pound foolish* ; to be wise to do evil, and to have no knowledge to do good ? *Jerem. 4. 22.* To run up and down for I know not what, and to leave that undone that you were created and redeemed for ? Can you think that it is Reasonable to make such ado for the air of dying mens applause, and to be well thought of, or to live like Gentlemen, or to the contentment of a fleshly mind, when you know that you are just ready to pass out of this world into an endless life of Joy or Torment, (*yea certainly of torment, if you thus hold on*) ? Where all these things will afford you no relief or benefit ; but the memory of your course will be the fuell of your misery : Can that man be wise that damns his soul ? Can he deserve the name of a sober man, that will sell his salvation for so short, so small, so filthy a pleasure as sin affordeth ? Is he worthy the name

or reputation of a wise man, that hath not wit enough to scape eternal fire ? nor wit enough to forbear laying hands upon himself, and doing all this against his own soul ? What think you, is not the case here plain enough ?

Be not offended if I speak yet plainlier to you ; for in a case so lamentable, how can we be too plain or serious ? Suppose you knew a Prince or Lord, that had an itch upon him, which the Physicion offereth speedily and easily to cure ; but he hath so much pleasure in scratching, that he doth not only refuse the cure, lest it deprive him of his delight, but he will give his Kingdom or Lordship to one that will scratch him but a little while, though he be sure to live a beggar after it all his dayes. I put it to your selves, *What name* you would give this man, or what esteem you would have of him : Do you think that *any ungodly worldly person is wiser than this man* ? Alas their case is *so much worse*, that there is *no comparison* : They are *more foolish* then your hearts can now conceive, or then I am able fully to express. You have now the *itch of Pride and Lust* ; and your *throats* must be pleased in your *meats*, and *drinks* ; and you *itch* after *riches*, and *honour*, and *recreations* ; and Christ telleth you by his Word, that these are but your *sick desires*, and that the *pleasing* of them tends to kill you ; and he offereth you for nothing, a safe, and certain, and speedy cure : But you refuse it, and will not hearken to him : You *must be scratcht* whatever it cost you : You must have your *riches*, and *honour*, and *fleshly pleasure*, as the felicity which you cannot part with, though it cost you your salvation. Though God be neglected, and his favour lost, and your souls be lost, and the *One thing needful* cast aside, you must have your carnal imaginations gratified : And is this your wisdom ? The Lord blees us from such a kind of wisdom.

Yet this is not the worst : I will shew you one strain more of the distraction of the ungodly world. If these men do but see *one person* of an *hundred* that are more diligent for *Heaven* then *earth*, to fall into *Melancholy*, or distress of soul ; or suppose it were into some loss of reason ; they presently cry out against *Religion*, and *strictness*, and *preciseness*, and making so much ado to be saved ; and say it is the way to *make men mad* : Hence comes the proverb of the Papists [*Spiritus Calvinianus est spiritus melancholicus*] ; and of the prophane among our selves, that [*A Puritane is a Protestant frightened out of his wits*] : They dare