

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

dare not study the *Scripture* so much, nor meddle with such *high matters* as *their salvation*, nor be *so godly*, nor meditate on the *world to come*, lest it should drive them out of their wits. O miserable men ! As if it were *possible* for you to be *more dangerously mad*, then you are already ! (Unless by growing unto greater wickedness !) Do you lay out your wit, and strength, and time, in feeding a corruptible body for the grave, and spend your lives in running after your own shadows, while your *everlasting life* is forgotten or neglected ! Do you sell your Saviour with *Judas* for a little money ; and change your part in God and Glory, for the brutish pleasures of sin for a season ? And are you afraid of altering this course of life, and turning to God, lest it should *make you mad* ? Lord, what a besetting thing is sin ! What a cunning cheater is the Devil ! What a deluded distracted sort of people are the ungodly ? Will you run from God, from Christ, from Grace, from mercy, from Scripture, from the godly, and from Heaven it self for fear of *being mad* ? Why what *greater madness* can you fear then this ? What *worse* is humane nature capable of ? Unless it be the addition of a further measure of the same, and unless it be to hold on in that way, and persecute the contrary with such like aggravations of your madness, I know not of any worse that you should fear. Will you run to Hell to prove your selves to be in your wits ? Again I say, the Lord bless us from such a kind of wit. Nay Hell it self hath no such distractedness as yours : The difference between the *One thing needful*, and your *many things*, is *there better*, though too late understood ! Is *Loving God* the way to be *mad* ? and *loving the world* and *fleshy pleasures* the way to be *wise* ? Is conversing with God in humble prayer, and believing his love, and loving him, and delighting in him, and speaking of his name, and word, and works unto his praise, and hoping to live with him for ever, I say, is *this* (which is the work of a Believer) a liker course to make men mad, then serving the Devil, and drudging in the world, and living under the curse of God, and in continual danger of damnation ? What men are they, that dare entertain such horrid and unreasonable suggestions ?

I confess we are not unacquainted with the sadness and melancholy that some persons have contracted by Religious employments ; and perhaps one of a thousand may lose their wits : But I

must tell you, all these following points, that will shew you that Religion is not to be blamed for it, nor avoided.

1. It is ordinarily persons of the *weaker sex*, or of *very weak brains* and *very strong passions*, that are *naturally inclined* to it, and are not able to bear any long and serious thoughts, about matters of that moment, which are apt to make the deepest impressions : But persons that naturally are of sound and calme dispositions, are seldom troubled with any such affects.

2. It is usually the case of persons that *mistake the nature of Religion*, though not in the *main*, yet in some particulars of great concernment : That study not sufficiently the Love of God declared to us in our Redeemer, but feed their griefs and troubles only by the thoughts of their own infirmities ; and that consider not that the chief part of Religion doth consist in Love, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, and in Thanksgiving and delightful praising our Creator. So that it is not long of Religion if men will leave out the *chief parts of Religion*, and make themselves a Religion of so much only as may breed their trouble.

3. And I must further tell you, that as I have had opportunity of knowing the state of as many troubled disordered minds, as any one of you whoever he be ; so I must needs bear witness, that I have met with *many* that have been *distracted* by *worldly cares*, or *sorrows*, or *discontents*, for one that ever I knew distracted with the cares about the matter of their salvation. And yet though it be *worldly care* and *sorrow* that most commonly bringeth *death* and *madness*, you will not therefore give over your Callings, and resolve that you will meddle no more with meat, or drink, or cloathes, or houses, or lands, or friends, or children : Nay it were well if you would be brought to *moderation*, and taken off your *inordinate desires*.

4. And yet in the conclusion I must tell you, that, though I know that the loss of a mans understanding is a very grievous affliction, and such as I hope God will never lay upon me, yet I had a thousand times rather go distracted to *Bedlam* with the excessive care about my salvation, then be one of you that *cast away the care of your salvation* for fear of being distracted, and will go among the *infernal Bedlams* into hell for fear of being mad. The height of your *carnal wisdom* is more deplorable then their *distraktion*. For God will condemn no man.

man because he is *distracted*, nor so much as *blame him* for it; (unless as it is the fruit of sin,) no more then he will condemn or blame an *Idiot* or a *beast*, because they have no use of reason: If *David* had been as he feigned himself to be, *1 Sam. 21. 13, 14.* it would not have cast him out of Gods favour, so far as *one sin* did, much less so far as the *ungodly* are. A man may go to *Heaven* from *such a madness*. But you that have *Reason* for the world, but none for God; that are wise to do evil, that have wit to destroy your selves and serve the flesh, but none to look after your recovery and salvation, its you that shall have the stripes, the many, the great, the endless stripes. You that have so much wit as that you glory in it, and think your selves wiser then the rest of the world, and yet have not wit to know, and love, and serve your maker: nor to value and seek first the *One thing necessary*, it is you that will prove the miserable fools.

If you had not had a natural capacity of understanding, you had had no sin: But now you have no cloak for your sin, when you have the worldly wisdom which is foolishness with God, and have a sinning, self-destroying wit, and are *wilfully void* of the wisdom that should save you, (*1 Cor. 1. 25. & 3. 19 Jer. 8. 9.*) when you have not a *necessitated*, but a *voluntary* distraction: and *this is your condemnation, that Light is come into the world, and you have loved darkness rather then Light, because your deeds were evil,* John 3. 19.

If you think this wilfull and senseless neglect of the *One thing needfull* is not a sufficient evidence to prove that miserable *distracted* which I charge upon you, will you but believe your Maker, and let the word of God be Judge between us, and mark what language it giveth to such as I now describe *2 Thess. 3. 2. Jer. 4. 22. Eccles. 7. 25. 2 Pet. 2. 12. Psalm 92. 6. & 94. 8. Jer. 10. 8. 14. Deut. 32. 6. Psalm 73. 3. 22. 2 Sam. 14. 10.* In these places your course hath no better titles, than *unreasonable, foolish, brutish, sottish, &c.* even from the God of Wisdom himself, who is the fittest to give you the character that you deserve. When you have truly considered of your way, if indeed you find that you have dealt like wise men, hold on and say so at the last, when you have eaten the fruit of your doing, and have seen the End.

S. Furthermore Consider, that what ever else you have been

doing in the world, if the *one thing necessary* be yet undone, *you have lost and abused all the mercies that God hath bestowed on you*: Many a thousand precious mercies have been given you: And to what use, but to help you to everlasting mercy, and to prevent your everlasting misery! This is the End, and this is the Life and excellency of all your mercies: For all *present mercies* have the Nature of a Means to a further End: And the Goodness and nature of the Means consisteth in its fitness to promote the End. And therefore you have lost all the Mercies that you have received, if you are never the nearer your End for them; and if they have not promoted the Love of God, and your salvation. You have had health, and strength, and time, and peace, and liberty, and some of you also wealth and honour in the world. But you have lost them all, if your salvation be not furthered by them. Many a preservation you have had, when others have been cut off before your faces, and many a deliverance from dangers known or unknown, and much of the fruit of that Patience of God, which hath till now attended you in your sin: Many a Sermon you have heard, and many a warning you have had, and you have been planted in Gods Vineyard, and daily watered with the Ordinances of grace: But all these are *lost* if the *One thing necessary* hath been neglected: Nothing in this world doth you *good indeed*, any further then it promoteth your *Everlasting good*. And do you think that you have dealt *kindly* or *justly* with God, to deal so contemptuously with all his mercies, as to cast them away, and tread them under foot? When you *want* but food, or rayment, or liberty or health, you value them and pray for them; and when you *have them*, what do you with them, but throw them as in the channel, and sacrifice them to your lusts and enemies: When Death looketh you in the face, you begin to know the worth of *Time*, and then O what would you not give for a little more, and that God would try you a few years longer: And when you have *Time*, what do you with it, but serve the Devil, and cast it away for nothing, and spend it in preparing for everlasting sorrows? How can you for shame cry to God for Mercy in your next distress, when you have contemptuously thrown away the Mercies of twenty, or thirty, or forty years already: If your own children should ask you for meat or drink, and when they have it should throw it to the dogs;

dogs; or ask you for money, and cast it into the dirt, and do thus an hundred and an hundred times over, would you go on to give it them because they cry for it?

O Sirs, that you could but use your Reason in the matters for which it was given you by your Maker! Either time and mercy is worth something, or nothing: If it be worth nothing, never beg for it, and never be sad when it is taken from you. Why make you such a stir for that which is nothing worth? (I mean your corporal mercies, for spiritual mercies you can be too well content to be without) But if they be *worth any thing*, why do you cast them away, and make no better use of them? What good do you with them? or what good do they do you? Believe it, sinners, God doth not despise his mercies as you do. He will not alway give you meat, and drink, and health, and strength, and life, to play with, and do nothing with. He will teach you better to value them before he hath done with you. Not that he thinks them too good for you; but he would have them be *better* to you then you will let them be. He would have every bit you eat, to be used to strengthen you in your walk to heaven, and every hour of your time to help you towards eternal happiness, and every present mercy to further your everlasting mercy; that so by the improvement, their value may be advanced, and they may be mercies indeed to you. Be ruled by God, and you shall receive more in one mercy, then you do now in a thousand. But if you will *do nothing* with them, blame him not if he take them from you, and leave you destitute of what you knew not how to use.

Nay your sin is *greater* then merely to *cast away your mercies*: You do not only *lose* them, but turn them all into a *curse*, and *undo* your *souls* with that which is given for the *sustentation* of your *bodies*: While you know no better use of mercies, then to please your senses, and accommodate the flesh, and forget the *One thing needful*, which is the End of all, you turn them all into sin, and fight against God by them, and strengthen his enemy and your own, and block up your way to Heaven by them, and treasure up wrath for the dreadful day, when your wealth shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire, *Jam. 5. 1, 2, 3. Rom. 2. 5.* You contemptuously cast that bread to dogs, which he giveth you to supply your own necessities: You treacherously carry over his provision to the enemy. Consider this,

this, you that say *you hope to be saved, because God is merciful* : You have found indeed that *God is merciful*, by large experience : But if you do not learn, and quickly learn to make a *better use* of his mercies, *abused mercy* will prove your everlasting misery : O what a reckoning will you have ? What a load to press you down to Hell ? Unless you would have used them better, it had been easier for you, if these temporal mercies had been denied you : Can that man look to be *saved by mercy*, that would not be intreated to *consent* that *mercy should save him* in the day of salvation ? in the accepted time ? but served the Devil with those very mercies that would have saved him ? God sendeth you his mercies to kill your sins, and sanctifie you, and engage you to himself ; and if you will feed your sins with them, and make them your idols, and forsake God for them, and be false to him, to your Covenant, and your duty, and neglect that *One thing* for which he gave them to you, you do not only lose them, but turn them to a curse. And, alas, poor sinners, what will you have to fly to, to trust in, or to comfort you, when mercy abused hath not only forsaken you, but falls upon you as a mountain, and feedeth your aggravated endless misery ?

6. Moreover, whilst you neglect the *One thing necessary*, you neglect Christ himself, and reject the saving benefit of his blood-shed, and refuse the healing work of his Spirit, and the precious benefits which he hath offered you in the Gospel. And how can you escape if you neglect so great salvation ? *Heb. 2. 3.* How will you be saved, when you refuse the only Saviour ? There is indeed enough in Christ to heal and save the humbled soul, that thirsteth for his righteousness and salvation, and valueth and seeketh him as a Saviour : and if you would thus come to him, you might have life, *John 5. 40.* But whilst you give your selves to please the flesh, and follow the world, and look so little after Christ, or after the ends and benefits of his sufferings and grace, Christ is as no Christ to you ; and Grace is as no Grace to you ; and the Gospel is as no Gospel to you ; and you will be never the more saved, then if there had no Saviour ever come into the world, or there had never Grace been given to the world, or there had never been promise made, or Gospel preached to the world : For Christ will not save them that continue to neglect him, and set light by all the mercy that he offereth, and the salvation which he hath purchased, and do not esteem and use him as

a Saviour, and cannot find enough in God and Glory, to take off their hearts from the pleasures and idols of the flesh. If Christ *would have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and you would not* (Matth. 23. 37.) you will be as far from being saved by him, as if you had never heard of his name.

And yet that is not all : If you prevent it not by true Conversion, you will wish a thousand and a thousand times, that this were all : But there is *worse then this* : For Christ will not leave a man of you as he finds you : If you are so far in love with worldly wealth and fleshly pleasure, that you can taste no sweetness in his Grace, and see no desirable glory in his Kingdom, he will make you taste the bitterness of his wrath, and feel the weight of his severest justice. The most *compassionate Saviour* is the most *dreadful Judge*, to those that will not be saved by his grace. It will be easier for *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* in the day of Judgement, then for those that were the obstinate refusers of his Gospel, *Matth. 6. 11, 12. He that despised Moses Law dyed without mercy, under two or three witnesses ; of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, that hath trodden under foot the son of God ?* Heb. 10. 28, 29. See therefore that ye refuse not him that speaketh : For if they escaped not that refused him that spake on earth, how much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven ? Heb. 12. 23.

7. As long as you neglect the *One thing Needful*, whatever good conceits of your selves you have entertained, and whatever hopes, or peace, or comfort, you have built upon those conceits, they are all but meer delusions and irrational, like the laughter of a mad man, that is no comfort to the standers by ; who know that it is but the fruit of his distemper, and maketh him an object of more compassion. What wisdom is it to look high and carry it gallantly in the world, when you know not but vengeance may overtake you the next hour ? Alas man, thou hast to do with God : Though thou see him not, it is he that upholds thee, and observeth thee, and looketh for Love and Duty from thee, and *will be Glorified by thee*, or thou shalt dearly answer it : God will not be neglected and abused at so cheap a rate as sottish Infidels imagine. *He despiseth thee, if thou despise him, 1 Sam. 2. 30. and thou despisest him, if thou despise his Messengers, and Word, and Wayes, Luke 10. 16. 1 Thes. 4. 8. And if God despise thee, what*

honour is it to thee to be *stout-hearted* and *high* in thy own conceit, and to live applauded by thy self and others? Think of your selves as well as you will, God counteth you worse then the basest brutes, as long as you make your selves so, by neglecting the *One thing* for which you have your reason. When you swagger it out in the world, you do but gingle your fetters, and glory in your shame, *Phil. 3. 18, 19.* While fools admire you, God abhorreth you; he *laugheth you to scorn*, and *bath you in derision*, as he expresseth himself after the manner of men, *Prov. 1. 26. 27, 28. Psalm 2. 4.* When you are proud of your riches, or honour with such as your selves, you are but proud of the bonds of your captivity, *2 Tim. 2. 26.* Though you live as carelessly and merrily, and laugh as heartily, and sport your selves as fearlessly as if all were safe, and nothing ailed you, yet your mirth is but your madness, *Eccles. 7. 4, 6. and 2. 2.* and God *seeth that your day* (a woful day) *is coming*, *Psalm 37. 13.* and you know not but you may the next hour be tormented in hell, that this hour are so pleasant and confident on earth. And is this a desirable or rational kind of mirth? Did you but now foresee the end; did you see what you *must see*, or *feel* a little of what you *must feel*, you would presently be far from mirth or laughter; it would spoil your sport, and turn your tune to doleful lamentations. O short unsatisfactory pleasure! O endless, easeless woe, how quickly wilt thou surprize them that little dream of such a change! You say Religion is a Melancholy thing, but verily your condition is so much worse then melancholy, that it may make a man melancholy to think of men in so sad a case. If any thing in the world will make a man melancholy, methinks it should be to stand in your unhapy state, and thence to look into eternity! and to think of your enmity to heaven, and that you have no part in Christ, no title to his Kingdom, and to think what haste you are making to your infernal home, and how fast the wheels of night and day do hurry your unprepared souls to Judgement, and that your judgement *lingreth not*, and your damnation *sumbreth not*, as the Holy Ghost speaketh, *2 Pet. 2. 3.* Whether you sleep or wake, be sure it *sleepeth not*. In a word, to neglect the *One thing needful*, is to neglect Heaven it self and your salvation: to neglect Heaven is to lose it: and lose Heaven and lose all. And what comfort can the fore-thoughts of life everlasting afford a soul in a state of sin, that is passing to everlasting misery? And what

what comfort can *any thing* in *this transitory life*, afford that man that hath no matter of comfort in the *life to come*, yea that must there live in endless sorrows ! O let me not *taste* of that frantick and unreasonablen mirth, that tendeth to such heaviness, and driveth away those wise recovering thoughts that are necessary to prevent it ! For the Lords sake, and for your souls sake, all you that neglect the *One thing needful*, will you but search the Scripture, and soberly consider whether all this be not certain truth : and if it be, how it should affect you, and what a change in reason it should make upon you ! I have done with this *Use* : If you have taken a survey of your own hearts and lives, will you next for the exercising of your compassion look a little further.

Use 2.

IF *One thing be Needful*, and the neglect of this be so unreasonable, so unmanly, and so dangerous, as we have seen it proved, then what an object of compassion and lamentation is the distracted world ? Look upon this text of Scripture, and look also upon the course of the earth, and consider of the disagreement, and whether it be not still as before the flood, that all the imaginations of mans heart are evil continually : *Gen. 6 5.* were it but possible for a man to see the affections and motions of all the world at once, as God seeth them, what a pittiful sight would it be ? What a stir do they make, alas poor souls, for they know not what ? while they forget, or slight, or hate the *One thing necessary*. What a heap of gadding ants should we see, that do nothing but gather sticks and straw ? Look among persons of every rank, in Citie and Countrey, and look into the families about you, and see what trade it is that they are most busily driving on, whether it be for Heaven or earth ? and whether you can discern by their care and labours that they understand what is the *One thing necessary* ? They are as busie as bees, but not for honey, but in spinning such a spiders web, as the bee-some of death will presently sweep down, *Job 8. 14.* They labour hard ; but for what ? for the food that perisheth, and not for that which will endure to everlasting life. *John 6. 27.* They are diligent seekers ; but for what ? Not first for God, his King-

dom and Righteousness; but for that which they might have had as an addition to their blessedness. *Matth. 6. 33.* They are still doing; but what are they doing? even undoing themselves by running away from God, to hunt after the perishing pleasures of the world: Instead of providing for the life to come, they are making provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts, *Rom. 13. 14.* Some of them hear the Word of God; but they choak it presently by the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this life, *Luke 8. 14.* They are careful and troubled about many things, but the *One thing* that should be all to them, is cast by as if it were nothing. Providing for the flesh, and minding the world, is the employment of their lives. They trouble themselves with it, and trouble their families, and nearest relations, and oft-times trouble the whole Towns or places where they live; so that unless we will let them have their bone to themselves, and give them our cloak when they have taken our coat, and say as *Mephibosheth* [*Let him take all*] there is no living quietly by them. A dog at his carrion, or a swine in his trough, is not more greedy then many of these sensualists, that labour of the *Caninus appetitus* to their trash: But to Holiness they have *no appetite*, and are worse then indifferent to the things that are indeed desirable: They have *no covetousness* for the things which they are commanded earnestly to covet, *1 Cor. 12. 31.* They have *so little hunger and thirst after righteousness*, that a very little or none will satisfy them: Here they are pleading alwayes for moderation; and against *too much*, and *too earnest*, and *too long*: And all is *too much* with them that is above *stark naught*, or *dead hypocrisie*: and all is *too earnest* and *too long* that would make *Religion* seem a *business*, or would engage them to seem *serious* in their own *profession*, or put them *past yeast* in the worship of God, and the matters of their salvation. Let but their servants or children neglect their worldly business, (which I confess they should not do) and they shall hear of it with both ears: But if they sin against God, or neglect his Word or Worship, they shall meet with more patience then *Eli's* sons did: A cold reproof is usually the best; and it is well if they be not encouraged in their sin; and if a child or servant that begins to be serious for salvation, be not rebuked, derided, and hindered by them. If on their dayes of labour they over-sleep themselves, they shall be sure to be called up to work, (and good reason); but when do they call them

them up to prayer? When do they urge them to read, or consider, or conferr of the things that concern their everlasting life? The Lords own day, which is appointed to be set apart for matters of this nature, is wasted in idleness or worldly talk. Come at any time into their company, and you may have talk enough, and too much, of news, or of other mens matters, of their worldly business, sports and pleasures: But about God and their salvation, they have so little to say, and that so heartlessly and on the by, as if they were things that belonged not to their care and duty, and no whit concerned them. Talk with them about the renovation of the soul, and the nature of holiness, and the life to come, and you shall find them almost as dumb as a fish, or as dry as a chip, or as erroneous or insensible as those that speak but words by rote, to shew you how little they favour or mind the things of the Spirit. The most understand not matters of this nature, nor much desire or care to understand them: If one would reach them personally, they are too old to be catechized or to learn, though not too old to be ignorant of the matters which they were made for, and are preserved for in the world: They are too wise to learn to be wise, and too good to be taught how to be good; though not too wise to follow the seducements of the Devil and the world, nor too good to be the slaves of Satan, and the despisers and enemies of goodness. If they do any thing which they call a *serving of God*, it is some cold and heartless use of words to make themselves believe that for all their sins they shall be saved; so that God will call that a *serving of their sins* and abomination, which they call a *serving of God*. Some of them will confess that Holiness is good; but they hope God will be merciful to them without it: And some do so hate it, that it is a displeasing irksome thing to them, to hear any serious discourse of holiness, and they detest and deride those as fanatick troublesome Precisians, that diligently seek the *One thing necessary*. So that if the Belief of the most may be judged by their practices, we may confidently say, that they do not practically believe that ever they shall be brought to Judgement, or that there is any Heaven or Hell to be expected; and that their confession of the truth of the holy Scriptures, and their profession of the Articles of the Christian Faith, are no proofs that they heartily take them to be true. Who can be such a stranger to the world, as not to see that this is the case of the greatest part of men? And which is

worst of all, they go on in this course against all that can be said to them, and will give no impartial considerate hearing to the truth which would recover them to their wits, but live as if it would be a felicity to them in Hell, to think that they came thither by wilful resolution, and in despite of the remedy. And is it not a sad prospect to a man that believeth the Word of God, and the life to come, to look upon such a distracted world? O Sirs, if Jesus Christ be wise that condemneth their course and them, then certainly all these men are fools: And if Christ knew what he said, we must needs think that they know not what they do. O what is the matter that reasonable men should have no more use of their reason in things of such importance, then thus to neglect their everlasting state for a thing of naught? Did God make them unreasonable, or give them understandings incapable of things of such high concernment? Or rather, have they not drowned their reason in sensuality, and wilfully poisoned it with malicious avernsness to God and Holiness? What is the matter that the *One thing needful* is no more regarded? Hath God made them believe that they shall dwell here for ever, and never die? No surely, this is so gross a lye, that the Devil himself cannot make them believe it. They know that they must die, as sure as they are alive: And yet they prepare not, but waste their dayes in scraping in this dunghill world, as if they were to go no further. Did God never warn them by a Sermon, or sickness, to prepare for the life which they must live for ever? Yes, many a time; but they would take no warning. Did God never tell them that after this life there is another, where they must live in endless joy or torment? Yes, and they professed that they did believe it: They heard it an hundred times over, till they were weary of hearing it. Did God make them believe that they shall die like beasts that have no further to go, nor any other life to live? No: if they do believe this, it is the Devil and not God that maketh them believe it. What then is the matter that the *One thing needful* is no more regarded? Hath God shut up their souls in desperation, so that it is in vain to seek, or trouble themselves for that of which there is no hope? Oh no! his compassion hath provided them a full remedy: by the death of his Son Redemption is procured, and he hath made them a deed of gift, of Christ, and pardon, and eternal life, and tendred it to them, that upon their acceptance it may be theirs. Many a time hath he offered this
mercy

mercy to them; and many a time hath he urged them to accept it : He hath set before them life and death, and given them their choice, and directed and perswaded them to choose aright : Impossibility of attainment is not their hinderance ; for Mercy beseecheth and importuneth them to accept it, and grace and salvation are brought unto their hands. O wonderful ! What then is left to take off a reasonable creature, from minding and preferring its own everlasting great concernsments ? Is it because they have done their work already, and having made sure of heaven, have time to turn themselves to other matters ? Alas no : the most are far from any such assurance ; and have done but little to procure it. If they were to die this hour, they know not where their souls shall be the next : And if death even now should lay its terrible hands upon them, they have no other comfort then to yield unto necessity, and leave their souls by a short security, to try the passage of their unavoidable change : Unless they are comforted by such presumptuous self-deceit, which the next moment after death will vanish, and never return unto them more. *Job 8. 13, 14. & 11. 20. & 27. 8. Prov. 11. 7.*

This is the case of the miserable world; but they have not hearts to pitty themselves, nor can we make them willing to be delivered, because we cannot make them know their case. If a man fall into a pit, we need not spend all the day to perswade him that he is there, and to be willing to be helpt out of it : But with these fleshly miserable souls, the time that should be spent by themselves and us for their recovery, must be spent to make them believe that they are lost; and when all is done, we leave them lost, and have lost our labour, because we cannot prevail with them to believe it. Drown they will and perish everlastingly, because the time that should be spent in saving them, must be spent in making them know that they are sinking, and after all they will not believe it; and therefore will not lay hold on the hand that is stretched forth to pull them out. The Narrative of the savage people of *Soldania* doth notably represent their state : Those people live naked, and feed upon the carrion-like carkasses of beasts, and hang the stinking guts about their necks for ornaments, and wear hats made of the dung, and carve their skins, and will not change these loathsome customs : Some of them being drawn into our Ships, were carried away for *England* : when they came to *London*, and saw our stately buildings, and cloathing,

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and provisions, they were observed to sigh much, which was thought to have been in compassion of their miserable Countrey, which so much differed from ours: When they had stayed long among us, and got so much acquaintance with our civility, and order, and all that belongs to the life of man, as that they were thought fit to communicate it to their Countrey-men, the next Voyage they were brought back, and set on shoare in their own Countrey, to draw some of the rest to come into the Ships, and see and enjoy what they had done (who had purposely been used as might most content them): But as soon as they were landed, they leapt for joy, and cryed, *Soldania*, and cast away their cloathes, and came again in the sight of our Ships, with dung on their heads, and guts hanging about their necks, triumphing in their sordid nakedness. Just so do worldly sensual men, in the matters of salvation: If against their wills they are carryed into cleaner wayes and company, and the beauty of holiness, and the joyes of heaven are opened to them, they are weary of it all the while; and when we expect they should delight themselves in the felicity that is opened to them, and draw their old acquaintance to it, and be utterly ashamed of their former base and sinful state, they are gone when the next temptation comes, and return with the dog unto their vomit, and with the washed Swine to wallow in the mire, 2 *Pet.* 2. 21, 22. and glory in their filth and shame, and only mind their earthly things, *Phil.* 3. 18.

Use 3.

BY this time you may see your selves that the disease of sinners is in their own hearts, and it is that that must be healed if they will be saved. But what should we do to get into those hearts, to search your sores, and work the cure? I come now to the principal part of my message to you; but will you indeed entertain it, if it prove it self to be from God? How the case standeth with mankind, you have heard in my Text from Christ himself: How *One thing is needful*; and how the busie-idle world is diverted from this *One thing*, by many *needless troublesome things* to their own destruction: If hence I warn you of your danger, and tell you of your duty, and exhort you to take another course
then

then you have done, I hope you will confels I do but what is needfull both for you and me, and what you have no reason to contradict. Come then, for the Lords sake, and let us treat practically and successfullly about so great a business; and make something of it before we leave it; and end not till we amend what we find amiss. What course then will you take for the time to come? Will you go on to trouble your selves about *Many things*, and neglect the *One thing needful* as you have done? Dare you harbour such a purpose? Or dare you stifle those thoughts and motions that would tend to better purposes? Or may I not hope that the Light hath shamed your sleepiness and works of darkness, and that you are grieved at the heart for the sinful negligence of heart and life, and resolved now to be new men? For Gods sake Resolve, Sirs. What will you do? Waver not, but Resolve: Its more then a thousand lives that lyeth on your Resolution: I come to you this day as the Minister of the great Pastor of the flock, that spake these words, not only to acquaint you, if you know not, or to remember you if you know, that *One thing is needful*; but also with authority to command you in his name, to Value it, to Love it, to Choose it, to seek it, and labour for it as the *One thing needful*. What say you, will you or will you not? This unspeakable mercy I offer you from the Lord: He is willing to put up at your hands, all that is past, and to lay all your sins on the score of Christ, and freely to forgive you through the vertue of his blood, if you will now at last bethink you better, and come to Christ, and live as men that know what they have to do: If you will but see your former folly, and heartily bewail it, and set your hearts on the *One thing needful*, he will encourage you, and help you, and bid you welcome, and number you with his sons, though you have lived as his enemies. Though you have lived like Swine and Serpents, he will put you into his bosom, if you will but be washed and changed by his grace. Though you have set more by your worldly riches then by his glory, and have set more by the favour of mortal man, then by his favour, and though you have set more by your bellies, and your brutish pleasures, and little toyes, then you have done by everlasting life, he will yet be merciful to you, and put up all these indignities at your hands, and take you into his dearest love, if you will but *Now* become new creatures, and give your hearts to him that made them, and seek that first that is worth the finding, and lose not

the rest of your lives and labour upon unprofitable things. What can you say against this offer? Is it not unconceivable and unspeakable mercy? O what would the damned give for such an offer? O what would you your selves give another day for such an offer, if you now neglect it? What say you then, will you accept of this offer of mercy while it may be had, and close with Grace, while Grace would save you, or will you not? As ever you look for mercy in the hour of your distress, when nothing but mercy can stand your souls in any stead, take mercy now while it may be had: Refuse it not when it is offered you, as you would not be refused by it when Hell and Desperation would devour you. If you slight it because it is *free*, you slight it because it is *great*, and therefore greatly to be valued. Think not hereafter to have it at your beck, if you neglect it now when it seeks for your acceptance. Do not say, I will a little longer keep my sins, and a little longer enjoy my pleasures, for I can have Christs offer at any time before I die. O little dost thou know what a stab such a trifling purpose may give to the very heart of all thy hopes and happiness! and how terribly God may make thee know, how ill he taketh thy unthankfulness and contempt! and how dear one other week of sinful pleasure may cost thy soul? In the name of God I warn you, do not so despise everlasting happiness! Do not so trample on the blood of Christ, if you would be saved by it: Do not abuse the Spirit of Grace, if you would be sanctified by it: Play not any longer with the consuming fire, the wrath of a jealous and Almighty God: Jest not with damnation. Though Grace be now offered you, it will not be at your command: Despise this motion, and you may be out of hearing before the next. What can you expect, if you will slight such mercy, but either that Death should shortly bring you to your reckoning, or that God should leave you to your selves, and give you up to the hardness of your hearts: And if you will needs choose the world, and fleshly pleasure, and God and Glory shall be thus contemptuously past by, you may take your choice, and see what you will get by it: But remember what an offer you had this day, and that heaven was once within your reach, and that it might have been yours for ever if you would.

But because I am loth to leave you so; I will try by some such Arguments as the Reason of man must needs approve, Whether
yet

yet you may not be brought to your selves; and yield to grace that you may be saved. And they shall be the Arguments that lie before you here in the Text.

1. **R**emember, it is *Necessity* that is pleaded with you in my Text. *One thing is Necessary. Necessity*, and your own *Necessity*, is such an Argument, as one would think of it self should turn the scales, and fully resolve you, and put you past any further deliberation or delay. If *Necessity*, your own *Necessity*, and so great *Necessity* to so great an *End*, will not prevail with you, What will? *Necessity* is that *ingens telum* that natural reason taketh to be unrefillible. Men think they may do almost any thing, if they can say *Necessity* commandeth it: *Omnem legem frangit, magnum illud humana imbecillitatis patrocinium*, saith *Seneca*. What is it that *Necessity* seemeth not sufficient to justify with the most? And we will grant the Argument to be undeniable, if it be from absolute *Necessity* indeed, and if men will not dream that it is more *Necessary* to be *Rich*, or *Honourable*, or to *Live*, then to be *Holy*, and to be *Blessed* with God, and to please him that created them. *Ubi necessitas incumbit, non ultra disputandum est, sed celerrimè & fortiter agendum*. Words signifie nothing against *Necessity*: *Reason* is but hindering troublesom folly, when it pleadeth against *Necessity*. *Omni arte, omne ratione efficacior necessitas*. *Curt*. In worldly matters, how quick-sighted, how resolute, how active is *Necessity*? What conquerable difficulties will it not overcome? What labour will it not endure, if it have but the encouragement of *hope*? And yet *this Necessity* is indeed no true *Necessity* at all. For that which is *Necessary* but to my *credit*, or *estate*, or *health*, or *life*, can be no more *Necessary* then is my *credit*, and *estate*, and *health*, and *life* it self. When men do but fancy a *Necessity* where there is none, yet that will carry them through thick and thin. But O Sirs, you have a real undeniable *Necessity* to be *Holy*, and to set your selves to the work of your salvation; such a *Necessity* as is founded in your *Nature*, and laid on you by your *Maker*, and as all the true Reason in the world will confesse to be indispensable *Necessity*.

Faxis ut libeat quod est necesse.

Make no more words then, but *Resolve* and *Pirre* when it

is a matter that *must* be done. It is pitty and shame that the Amiability of God and Holiness will not prevail with you of themselves : But if you cannot yet perceive them to be *Delectable*, acknowledge them to be *Necessary*. Be ashamed that *pretended Necessity* for the *Body*, should be more powerful with others, then *real Necessity* for *salvation* is with you. Look upon almost all the travel and labour that is under the Sun, and all the diligence that is used here in the world, and consider Whether it be not a thousand fold smaller *Necessity* then I am now pleading with you, that setteth almost all on work ? The Rich will not toil and labour, but will take their ease, because they think they are under no *Necessity* : but the poor will labour, because they *must* : Though the command of God to *Rich* and *poor* should make them equally diligent in their several callings, in obedience to their Creator, yet many thousands that labour all the year in obedience to their own *Necessities*, would soon give it over and take their ease, if they could but be well maintained without it, notwithstanding the commands of God : And the *poor* that reproach the *rich* for *idleness*, would be idle themselves if they were but rich. The Tradesman followeth his trade, and the Husbandman his hard labour all the year : and What reason will they give you, if you ask them why they do it, but this, *We cannot live else : We must do it to maintain our selves and families.* And is not the reason a thousand times stronger for our souls ? May we not better say, [*We must please God, and set our hearts on the life to come, and mind and seek the One thing needful, whatever becomes of other things ; for we cannot live else ; we cannot be saved else.*]

Necessity makes the Traveller trudge from morning till night ; and the Carryer to follow his horses through fair and foul from year to year ; it makes some dig into the bowells of the earth, in mines and cole-pits ; and some to hale Barges ; and some to cut through the terrible Ocean, and venture their lives among the raging waves and storms ; and some even to beg their bread in rags from door to door : And O what will not *Necessity* do that can be done ? And yet how many thousands trifle or do nothing for their souls, as if there were no *Necessity* of being *saved* ; or no *Necessity* of being *Holy* that we may be saved. When alas, all the *Necessity* in the world, is no necessity at all, in comparison of this. You must beg, or starve, or famish, if you do

do not work: But you must burn in Hell, if with fear and diligence you *work not out your own salvation*, Phil. 2. 12. (for all that it is God that worketh in you). You must lie in prison if your debts be not paid: But you will be cast into outer darkness, if by the pardon of your sins, you be not discharged from your debt to God. You may become beggars if you be idle in your Callings: But you will be the prisoners of Hell, and shut out of all the Happiness of the Saints, if you labour not for the food that doth not perish, and strive not to enter in at the strait gate, and give not diligence to make your Calling and Election sure. John 6. 27. Matth. 7. 13. Luke 13. 24. 2 Pet. 1. 10. You must suffer hunger and nakedness, if you have not food and rayment: But you must suffer everlastingly the wrath of God, if you have not the *One thing necessary*. You will be the scorn and laughing-stock of men, if you fall under their contempt and lose your honour: But you will be the enemies of God, and hated by him, if you continue to contemn his grace.

O had you but seen the Life to come, you would say, There is a *Necessity* of attaining it! Had you been one hour in Hell, you would think that there is a *Necessity* of escaping it, and that there is no *Necessity* to this.

What say you to all this? Is it not of *Truth* and *Weight*? Can you *deny it*? Or should you *make light of it*? None but an *Infidel* can *deny it*; and none but a dead-hearted sinner can make light of it. Believe the Word of God, and the *Truth* of it will be past question with you: Consider but that you are *men* that have *immortal souls*; and the *weight* of it will appear inestimable to you; above contempt; above neglect. Believe it Sirs, you may as well see without light, and breath without air, and be supported without earth, or live without food, as be saved without *Holiness*, or happy without the *One thing necessary*. Heb. 12. 14. John 3. 3, 5. Matth. 18. 3. And when this is resolved of by God, and stablished as his standing Law, and he hath told it you so oft and plainly, for any man now to say, [*I will yet hope for better; I hope to be saved on easier terms, without all this ado*] is no better then to set his face against the God of heaven, and instead of believing God, to believe the contradiction of his own ungodly heart; and to hope to be saved whether God will or not; and to give the lie to his Creator, under the pretence of *trust*, and *hope*: It is indeed to *hope for impossibilities*: To be saved