

## 204 *Signs of a Dying or decaying Christian.*

if we live in it, to walk after it, being strengthened with its might in the inward man, to a full understanding the deep things of God: Labour therefore, praying over this, to retain in your hearts an high value of its company. *Amen.*

### CHAP. XIX.

*Treating of Spiritual Ignorance of our everlasting condition; and five Scriptures tending to reduction from carnal security; and three special Causes of such a damning Decay.*

### SIGN. XXIX.

**W**Hen you are so Ignorant of your Spiritual standing, that you know not whether you grow or decay.

This is not only a Sign of great Decay, but a prediction of a speedy fall, or total throwing off those holy badges by which a Christian is known from other men, such being of a *Laodicean* spirit, neither hot nor cold, yet say they are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; Being in a besotted, careless state, not minding when they do well or ill; when Professors come to this pass, they grow useless and fit for nothing but to be laid aside; for were such hot, that is, zealous, active, and lively they were fit for encouragement; and were they cold, that is, quite dead, they were to be plucked up by the roots, and cast into the fire: now this sort of Peoples ignorance is a very high crime, it being premised, that their ignorance of their standing, growing or declining in

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heavenly things, doth not come upon them for want of Gospel means, allowed on Gods part in order to their being fruitful; but that under sufficient allowance in order to their growth, they prove empty, dry, and huskish; yea and such, that were otherwise in the days of their first Espousal: but length of time in Gospel-standing, for want of due care to observe Gospel-ends, they have by little and little entertained Spiritual slumber, and so lose their stomach to, and relish of the true use and powerful end.

Means from God to them hath been so long continued, and so by long custom in his service, come as his people come, sit before him as his people do, and hear his word day by day, but do it not, or live not like it, having a form of Godlyness; but denying the power thereof, viz. The spiritual end designed by God in giving the form, being not lifted up to, provokes God to complain against such of old, *The Oxe knoweth his owner, and the Ass his Masters crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider; though I have nourished and brought them up, yet they understand not that I taught Ephraim to go, taking him by the arm; but he knew not that I had healed him, though strangers devoured his strength, yet he knew it not, and though gray hairs were here and there upon him, yet he knew not.* Hof. 7. 9. Nay some were grown to that pass in spiritual slumbers, that even under judgments they knew not how it was with them. *Isa. 42. 25. He hath poured upon Jacob the fury of his anger, and strength of battle; and it hath set them on fire round about, yet he knew it not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.* By all this we may see, that some were so ignorant of their spiritual standing under plentiful means, that they knew not whether they grew or decayed, though it is apparent, the decay was great, they knew not how it



it went with them : At such a loss may Professors be in their heaven-born-state, that while they are objects of pity and sorrow of heart to growing Christians, that behold their decay ; yet all makes not for their awakening, but still they think it well with them, and that they have need of nothing, though blind and naked.

Now the Causes why persons under Gospel means, grow to this senseless pass in their spiritual estate ; may be these three.

First, Carnal security in an evil time.

Secondly, Contentment with out-side Christianity.

Thirdly, Not being conversant about things to come.

First, Carnal security of hereafter Glory ; which consists in a kind of confidence of Glory to come, without certain care of being in that way through which Glory is promised, It is such a state as promisseth safety to it self, and yet lives a careless life ; when the children of *Dan* went to seek them an inheritance, they come to *Laish*, and found the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless after the manner of the *Zidonians*, quiet and secure ; this proves such an advantage to them, that they take their City, burn it with fire, and upon the ruins thereof, build themselves an Inheritance. *Judges* 7. 1. Clearly noting, how dangerous a state some manner of security is ; when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. *1 Thes.* 5. 3. It seems in that good mans time, there was some that had high thoughts of hereafter Glory, yet should meet with disappointment, and their expectations come to nothing, though they might cry, as in *Jeremiahs* time, Peace, peace, yet peace there was none ;

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like the old world in *Noah's* time; *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* in *Lots* time; *They eat, they drank, they builded, they planted until the day that Noah entred into the Ark*; and *Lot* left *Sodom*, being under such kind of security, as no awakening word would warn them, till at last *Deſtruction* ruins them. We have the like inſtance from *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſpeaking of the laſt days, *I ſay to you, many ſhall come from the Eaſt, and Weſt, and ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the Children of the Kingdom ſhall be caſt out into utter darkneſs.* May we not tremble to read this text, with ſelf reflection, that from the Eaſt and Weſt, ſuch as in all probability never had the Tythe of that means we have had, neither heard nor ſeen what we have heard and ſeen; yet to their meaſure had walked ſo like what they had heard, and what they had ſeen, that they ſhall be counted worthy by the Lord to ſit with *Abraham* and *Iſaac*, in the Kingdom, and the Children of the Kingdom caſt out; namely, Such as had his Name and Ordinances among them, making viſible ſhow of his Religion, and promiſed themſelves lack of nothing, becauſe they would cry Lord, Lord, and were great nominal Chriſtians, pleaſing themſelves in giving Chriſt good words, and think none ſhall be ſaved ſo ſoon as they, they being beſet with ſuch ſalvation privileges. *Mat. 7. 22, 23.* *Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and caſt out Devils? Then will I ſay, Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you; Let none therefore truſt in lying words, which cannot profit, ſaying, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord; the Temple of the Lord are theſe, that ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; then will I cauſe you to dwell ſafely.* *Jer. 7. beginning.*



But alas how few lay to heart, the great good Salvation, and deliverance from the great hurt Damnation, eyeing with all trembling the road way in which God will both give the one, and with-hold the other; surely, surely, this carnal security, the souls damning sin, would never so possess persons, rocking them asleep, did they but withall diligence consider, that security of all kinds about hereafter Glory, without these marks of hearty designing, and actual endeavouring the new creatures life, in the measure called for, as attainable, and to be attained in the Scripture of truth, nothing being more evident, then that such make it their whole business, to be conversant about those soul-searching texts that speak out salvation by Christ Jesus, upon no less terms, then hearty designing, with actual endeavouring to live like Christ Jesus, in Scripture conformity to his will; I shall beg of God there may be by them that read this, these five following Scriptures duely weighed, which with the help of his grace, may serve as a deliverance, or tend to the rousing up of the soul from this damning sin of carnal security.

The first is, *Rom. 8 10. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life, or alive, because of, or unto righteousness. 2 Cor. 5 17. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are past away, behold all things are become new. Gal. 5. 24. And they that are Christs, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. 1 John 2. 6. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked. Chap. 3. 3. And ever man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* Doth not these great Scriptures with one mouth, tell you the high road way to hereafter Glory, and prohibit any man from daring to promise

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self the same upon any other terms, or in any other way; wherefore my brethren, seeing that ye, or if you look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, withone spot and blameless. 2 Pet. 3. 14.

Secondly, A second Cause of persons being senseless, is, Contentment with out-side Christianity; that is, frequent in the performance of those Services that relate to the worship of God, but the thing designed by God to be reached after and obtained, is not pursued. It is evident both from Scripture and Experience, that persons have been and are frequent in hearing Sermons, in Prayer, in Reading, in Fasting, and such like performances, yet they remain very carnal and unmortified. Now Gods gracious End in giving such spiritual priviledges to persons, being by him designed to beget them to his spiritual likeness, and his End not brought about, must needs argue such, not, or little further then out-side performances, contenting themselves with their Services so done, that leaves three parts of four yet to do; for what pleasure can God take in those, that after long standing under the opportunities of getting both inward and outward excellency, in that that makes Christianity honourable, while they still remain as fruitless as the Fig Tree, having a great show at distance, and nothing but leaves at hand: Doth not Jesus Christ in so many words except against such, as not rightly qualified for his Kingdom. *Mat. 5. 20. But I say to you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:* Their righteousness will not do, and yet they are known to be a People much in prayer, Fasting and giving Alms, which are in themselves good things, and yet they



not accepted of God, but for all this his Woes goeth out against them? May it not be feared, that hundreds in our days, content themselves with scarce going thus far in outward acts, yet retain a strong opinion that all shall be well with them hereafter; as though such confidence of being saved, as they that act it are content with, should content God; but let not such deceive themselves: and they may find that confidence about hereafter safety, not being acted by penitent subjects, whose hearts can witness a through change, will return to themselves back again, charged with presumption, notwithstanding all their outward performances: And it is most sure, as hath been premised in the last *Sign*, that the holy Spirit bears not witness with such spirits, that they are Gods Children, and that because while they remain thus content with out-side Christianity, Reformation reacheth not the heart; and then is a wanting that awful reverence of God and of Christ within, that commands without, the tongue so to talk, the eyes so to look, the hands so to act, the feet so to walk in the likeness of God, as to be truly deemed his workmanship; *Ye are our Epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to the Epistle of Christ.* But we shall leave this to consideration, and so pass to the third and last Head.

Thirdly, Persons are so senseless of their spiritual estate, by not being conversant about things to come: Now things to come are reduceable in special to these four heads; Death, Judgment, Salvation, Damnation: all which are matters (not of show) but of certainty, and may be called the four last things, which every man ought to make his four first things, that he furnisheth his heart withall, because indeed they are Religions great cause, and bounds; Heavens

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great Argument to call us to duty, our great Argument to submit to Heavens call. And as these hath more or less force upon the heart, they may be more or less read in the life; the worst of men whose consciences are not seared, will be found under some awakenings, by but reflecting here, now and then, so forceable are they, where in the lowest sense but believed; Now that persons, not being conversant about these mighty matters, prepares way to spiritual senselessness, is very evident; and therefore when God complains of his peoples unequal walking, he either affliges it to their negligence here, as the cause they so walk, or seeks to possess them with remembrance here, as a most quickning remedy. *Deut. 8. 5. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his Son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee; and the reason of this is given by God himself as an argument most strong. verse 26. I fed thee with Manna in the Wilderness, which thy Fathers knew not, that I might humble thee, and prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; (mark that) at thy latter end. Chap 32. 15. But Jesurun waxed fat, and kicked, then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation: you see here Israel, set not a value on making God his safety, but waxed wanton, and forgot who had formed him; now the most reduceable means we find urged is, verse 29. thus, O that they were wise, that they understood this, and would consider their latter end: God bemoaneth them with desire they would look before them, intimating that would they but look upon hereafter, they would live after another rate here; pertinent to this is, that *Prov, 5. 11, 12, 13. And thou mourn at last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed; and thou say, now have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and obeyed not the voice of**



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*my teachers, nor incline my ear to them, that instructed me; because there is Wrath, beware lest he take thee away with the stroke, and then a great ransom cannot deliver thee. Job 36. 18. Doth not all these Scriptures show the miserable state of such, as are not conversant about things to come; and how impossible it is to be reformed while they remain strangers to these great considerations. Now on the contrary, what more contributes to a spiritual growth, then hourly Communion about these mighty matters? No considerations being of a more mortifying force then Grave considerations. 2 Cor. 5. 10. For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad: knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord, we perswade men. This holy Apostle no sooner treats of Judgment, as his Doctrine, but to awaken and perswade from its terror, is his Application: also Jesus Christ to deter men from evil, and to compose them to good, gives such awakening Items as these, If thy right offend part with it, rather then be cast into Hell-fire; where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched: Three times together doth he in that 9th. Chapter of Mark, labour to rivet upon the hearers what misery is to come, and by the worm and fires being, notes certainty and by the worms gnawing, and fires burning, notes its its misery; and by the worms not dying, and the fires not being quenched, notes its eternity. Who would not cry at this? Cry out with David; Oh God my flesh trembleth because of thee, for I am afraid of thy Judgments: Christ Jesus his three-fold repetition seems plainly to show us what great aptness there is in every body to loose the Spiritual force of such mighty matters; they being the proper object only of a live-*

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ly faith, that looks at things to come, with such estimation as procures an inward trembling before God, to take one step aside from God.

But alas, alas, How many be there that stop the mouth of conscience all they can from speaking of this State to come, and will not endure to hear of the Grave, or Judgment, Salvation, or Damnation, though such as will not endure the bitter of these things here, cannot enjoy the best of them hereafter? It is living now in a holy awe of them here, that will make us live above the fear of them hereafter: content not your selves then for a thousand Worlds, at any distance from daily communion with the things to come; talk with them face to face, as a man talks with his friend, and go aside often from all other business, into your closet, or garden, field or wilderness, nay, into any solitary place on purpose to talk with the Grave, how shortly you must put off your cloaths (or outward garments) & never more put them on, saying with *Job*, *My foundation is in the dust; if I wait, the grave is my house, I have made my bed in darkness; and said to corruption thou art my Father, and to the Worm thou art my Mother, and my Sister.* *Job* 17. 13, 14. Consider what you read, and so pass to the 30th. Sign of dying to Godlyness; and the Lord give his blessing, *Amen.*



## CHAP. XXX.

*Shewing the miserable, estate of such as after longer acquaintance with Christ, are less in love to him; with six Causes of this Decay.*

## SIGN. XXX.

**W***Hen increase of time in Christs acquaintance, worketh decrease of Affection to Christs Company.*

Is this the case of any, or rather is it not the case of many, that began well, and promised fair for holding on well, as though all the world with its allurements should not hinder them from ending well, that in their early or first love were so pleasantly affected with Christs acquaintance, that their meat and their drink was to be with him at his feet hearing his word; and if he walked in the Garden they must be there, if in the Mount of Olives they must be there, if in a solitary place they must be with him, in no condition disliked with his company, content with him in fulness, and in scarcity, content with him in favours, and in frowns, still happy while leaning on Jesus's breast, some leaving father and mother to come to him, others leaving house and land to come to him, their trade of Tent-making, fishing, nay having found such a pearl, sell all to buy this field; and what shall we have, or how be filled with enjoyment of thee? *We have forsaken all to follow thee.* Mat. 19. 27. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss; for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,  
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for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, &c. *Phil.* 3. 7, 8, 9. Now I go away to him that sent me, and because I tell you these things, sorrow hath filled your hearts: They were so dearly affected with Christs company, they could not bear to hear of his personal withdrawing, though he tells them it is best for them, they should be for a little time without him, yet at this, sorrow fills their heart. *John* 16. By this giving any to understand, that they could joyfully cry with *David*, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And whom have I on earth in comparison of thee?*

Tell me Christians, you that can experience the new birth, and know full well how it was with you in the days of your espousal, were you not then ravished with Christs love? Even sick of love, filled with content to be about him, wondring every day at this grace, counting no pains much, no cost enough to serve such a lover, *under the shadow of whose wings, you took sweet delight*; but how is it now; *You did run well, did any hinder you, that you should not still obey the truth? Or with the righteous hold on your way; and having clean hands grow stronger and stronger.* *Job* 17. 9.

Is any of these forementioned decays come upon you, what mind have you to assembling, are you indifferent or no? Tell the truth, search your hearts, and speak your hearts: Do you love to hear Sermons now or no? Is it, or is it not like the *morning dew to you*? Are you weary or no in your purest worship? Is your delight still to be with God in closet services? Have you good will and great longings to be often at Christs Table, through faith eating with him and drinking with him, of his body which is meat indeed, and of his



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his blood which is drink indeed? What mind have you to prayer? Do ye with delight pour forth your souls before him at all times, as your refuge? What is your delight to reading the holy Scriptures? Are they your meditation day and night? Can ye say, *I had fainted for thy Salvation had I not hoped in thy word?* Search into your state, and let your condition be what it will, pass right judgment upon it, whether ye die more or less, or grow more or less; to have true knowledge of your state, is the way to better it, if decayed, this may remedy it, if growing this may encrease it; Oh then stand not still in a conceit, it is well or ill with you, but be at a certainty, how it is with you, examine your selves, prove your selves, know you not that Christ Jesus is in you except ye be reprobates. 1 Cor. 13. 5.

Come dear friends and let us walk on to *Emmans*, and talk together by the way, of all things that have happened of late, namely, since we did believe; have ye a hankering after new things, would you now be gadding up and down, after divers and strange Doctrines? How is your heart affected with, or Afflicted to hear of others Misdoings? Doth horror take hold of you; because any leave Christs law? Doth your souls weep in secret places for others pride? Are you astonished to hear that such a one is turned again to his farm, another to his merchandize? One gone back to Egypt again, another willing to stay in the Wilderness, and many most unwilling if it prove costly, either to pass over Jordan, or by Jericho, though it be Gods great road way to Canaan: Remember how it was once with you, enquire how it is with you now; when you meet one another, is your talk heavenly or earthly? What do ye favour most? What design seek ye most to carry on? In all company who are ye for,

for, the world that is, or the world to come? Do ye ask one another when you meet, what trade goeth forward with you most? Are ye telling meekly and frequently each other, what God hath done for your souls? What yearnings of heart is in you after these solemn assemblies? Do you count it worthy your time to be often there? Do you go and pray, and pray before you go, that you may dutifully meet God, and he profitably meet you? Doth Christs eye constrain you to come thither or the Churches eye? When you are hindred, what is your fear? How is your care? Can you be well content to be lightly absent, if the Church will be content with your absence? Doth the Decay in Christs House, or in your house trouble you most? Can you quietly bear Decay in Christs Spiritual House, while you keep from Decay in your temporal House? Can you see afflictions pierce the sides of some bitterly, and you not weep with them? Was it thus with you once, were not others sorrows your tears? Did you not delight to mourn with the mourner, and rejoyce with the singer? Are you now less able then formerly to withstand temptations? Will a small offence make you so impatient as to commit great sin? Is Satan almost at every little turn too hard for you? Are you baffled quickly now with every little blow? Are you so dry and barren of the Spirits waterings, that now every touch takes you? How is it with you when troubles are upon you? Are you more or less then you were wont to be in prayer? Whether is your care now most to know afflictions cause or cure? What way tends the strivings of your heart most, when Gods stroak is upon you? Would you part with the Rod upon any terms, or undergo it longer, to have it sanctified the surer? Doth affliction mend you or make you worse?

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How are you when the Rod is gone? Can you truly say with *David*, *Before I was afflicted I went astray*, and as truly say, *But now I have learned to keep thy word*? What are your thoughts of *Egypt*, the Land you were redeemed from? Would you go thither again? Is your old sin, or sins in any measure pleasant to you again? Are you taken with the thoughts of your basest Lovers, whose paths led you to the gates of Hell? Doth the great work of Mortification go forward or backward? Doth sin get head or loose head in you? Are you not indeed wholly ignorant as to your spiritual estate, whether you grow or decay.

But last of all, and most of all? Doth encrease of time in Christs acquaintance, work decrease of affection to Christs company? Ah Lord God is it come to this, have you suffered so many things in vain! What? Love Christ Jesus less! whom you can never love enough, and once thought so? Doth long acquaintance with such a Friend, procure desires of his absence? God forbid: Would you not walk with him now, and talk with him now? yea take sweet counsel together, as you were wont to do? Do you favour the things of the earth so much, and the things of Heaven so little, that now your Lords company is burthensome? Can you not go with him, run with him, Fast with him, Pray with him, weep with him, yea and bleed with him? Hath he not done all this for you? *He was made sin for us, that knew no sin; wounded for our transgressions; pierced for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.* 2 Cor. 5. 21. Isa. 53. 5. But I shall proceed briefly to six Causes of this great Decay.

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First, Forgetfulness of that perishing condition Christ found us in at first acquaintance: *And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy own blood; I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, live; then washed I thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood, and anointed thee with oyl.* Zech. 16. 6, 9, compared with Chap. 36. 11. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe your selves in your own sight, for your iniquities and abominations. Here by comparing our estate with Israels estate, we may read our danger with Israels danger, who being apt to forget the condition God found them in, and redeemed them from, are charged to remember *their own evil ways*: This Remembrance was that, that wrought such high admiration in St. Paul. 1 Tim. 1. 12, 13. *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, that he counted me faithful, putting me into the Ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.* Clearly noting, that Pauls remembrance of Christs goodness to him in misery, encreased his esteem of Christs mercy.

Secondly, A second Cause may be this; Actual withdrawing from that wonted familiarity we use to have with Christ; once if it were well with us, he must know it, and be praised for it; if it were evil with us, he must be told of it; and at the least absence, you could cry with the Spouse, *Tell me O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest and causest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside, from the flocks of thy companions.* Cant. 1. 17. Thus in a holy friendly intimacy claims his company; if now such discover strangeness to him in being strangers to his



his Fold; in a word, at every Christians service, now seldome, though once often; thus neglecting the means of encrease, must needs cause decrease.

Thirdly, The third Cause may be this; Deep declinings to heart acquaintance; The watch now over the heart is not so strict as once; it was so tender in times past, that every comer in and goer out, must be under strict examination, who they were for, whether or no they went Christ Jesus's errand; but now the door of the heart is set open too too often, at hours too unseasonable, for reasons too slender, to the entertaining many a strange face that never was wont to come there, since the King of Glory had taken his possession; for this *Jeremiah* complains against *Jerusalem*. *How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? They kept not their heart with all diligence, knowing that out of it are the issues of life; But trusting it too much were deceived and turned aside thereby.*

Fourthly, A fourth Cause may be this, Decaying in love to Christs Children; once your chief delight was with the Saints, and especially those that excelled in virtue; now daily decaying in your love to them, and acquaintance with them: This Christ Jesus maketh an unerring reason, *He that loveth his Brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. 1 John 2. 10. If any man say, I love God, and hates his Brother, he is a lyer; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? Chap. 4. 20.* Plainly asserting, the impossibility of loving the greater, if we love not the lesser; so that to what degree there is decay in one, there is the same in the other.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, The fifth Cause may be this; Encrease of affection to perishing things; At your first acquaintance with Christ, the world and its offers was contemned by you, now it is esteemed; you had once a holy carelessness for the things of this life, now an unholy carefulness for them; they you sat at Jesus's feet, hearing his word, but now, cumbered with much serving; *Love not the world nor the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: Meaning whosoever loves the world at such a rate as to be more thoughtful after its vanities then Heavens excellencies; For the love of Money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* 1 Tim. 6. 10.

Lastly, A sixth Cause may be this; The withdrawings of the holy Spirit, that was once pleased, and did then visit you often; but now is grieved, and visits you seldom; that once helped you much against temptations, laying for dead the deeds of the body, now lets you alone to be beaten and baffled with every evil motion, and this as the effect of the Spirit's withdrawing, whose work where ever it is, being to greaten the esteem of Jesus Christ, and foil temptations of every kind, if not discouraged, grieved and hindred, for fear of which are those high Christian Precepts given, not to vex it, quench it, or grieve it; and that because, as our natural body without life is void of action, so without the holy Spirit is a Christian man dry and barren, at best but like the Fig-tree, something only in shew, yet cursed by Jesus Christ for want of fruit: When the Apostle Jude comes to speak of some, that in the last days should  
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turn Mockers walking after their own ungodly lusts, mark how they are characterized out; *These be they who separate themselves, sensual, Having not the Spirit; Jude reckons them among the Sodomites for filthiness, calls them Raging Waves, Wandering Stars, Murmurers, Complainers, worse then natural Bruit-beasts; and the sum of all, As being destitute of the Spirit. In the midst of all Davids languishing for fear of so high a loss, is not this one of his most bitter cries? Cast me not away from thy presence; and Take not thy holy Spirit from me. Psal. 51. 11.*

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## CHAP. XXXI.

*Setting forth the great aptness in persons, to form to themselves a Devotion, and from thence, promise themselves life and freedom while they live under sins Dominion; with six evident marks of a right conviction of sin, and conversion from sin, with the Causes assigned of Declension in after time from continual hating of sin.*

## SIGN XXXI.

**W***Hen great sins seem smaller, and small sins seem none at all.*

It is one of the first work of Gods holy Spirit upon a Convert, to set before him the sinfulness of sin, and the wrath dew to him for the same, till a sight of this sin is dead, in the acts and effects of it upon transgressors; for while the Prince of darkness rules sin, though it lives and grows, is under a vail, blindness  
having

having covered the understanding of the sinner, so that it becomes habitual, and the habit of it takes away the feeling of conscience towards it, so that the Scripture ranks such under this mark, as dead in sins and trespasses; being past feeling, fear to offend, or care to please their Creator; and yet at the same time under some kind of awakenings; now and then have some apprehensions of Death and Judgment to come, and in the outward skirts of it, have a kind of belief that there is a Heaven and Hell for reward and punishment; and at the same time form to themselves some kind of devotion, as best pleaseth, and costeth least from hence, promising to themselves life and freedom hereafter from that wrath that is to come; though at the same time live under the dominion of such sins as is most grateful to them; and because of some good meaning or formal prayer and confession, which they now and then put up to God in the words of Christs people, while barren of the Spirit of Christs people; yet herewith take content, while they use *Dauids* words of confession, conclude themselves under *Dauids* Spirit of contrition. All this while Satan that he may hold them the more firm, from right conviction of sin, and right conversion from sin, doth allow them to excell in some common acts of Justice to the second Table of Gods Law; and from hence they conclude their state safe, though they can Swear, be Drunk, Lie, Cheat, live in Covetousness, envying, Malice, Fride, Back-biting, Whispering Surmising, &c. and that because they now and then do these things, yet are they good Church-men and do ask God every night forgiveness; and are told in Scripture, that they are to pray for pardon of sin, and that he which believeth that Jesus is the Son of God shall be saved, and that Christ died for sinners, and they are sure

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they



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they are sinners, and no where exempted, that they know of from his mercy; for Jesus came into the world on purpose to seek and save what was lost.

May it not be feared thousands thus content themselves with onely outside reformation, remembring that *David*, *Peter*, and others in Scripture sinned, and the best of men living, have their failings; and its but the same with them, and they do heartily beg forgiveness of God, though its true they cannot leave their sins, yet can say God be merciful to me a sinner.

Now it will be needful here to shew the distinction between sinner and sinner: Some spots though really spots, yet are not the spots of Gods enemies; its one thing to sin under a Covenant of grace (through infirmity) and another thing to sin out of the Covenant (through impenitence) one with his will, the other against his will; one seeks the sin; the other, the sin seeks him; the one most careful of Gods eye, the other, if at all, onely careful of mans eye; the one goes a mourner to the grave, that ever he sinned against such love and grace as the Gospel hath made known; the other, never mourns for sin, but as provoked at the feeling of the punishment; the one is more afraid of the Hell in sin, then the Hell after sin; the other the contrary; the one thirsts after the spirit of justification, the other wisheth, but its like a wanton Beggar, for the advantage of justification; the one cares not what becomes of him here, so he may live with God hereafter; the other cries, who will shew us any good here? The one hath respect to every command of God; the other picks and chuses, believes as his rulers believe, or such a Bishop or Learned man, or great Landlord believes, and what is most in fashion, that most pleases him; his Religi-

on lieth in avoiding the Cross, and running with the Stream. The one thinks nothing too costly for Christ, the other thinks that Religion best that costeth least. In a word, one loves the Lord Jesus in all his Offices as King, Priest, and Prophet, to rule him as well as save him; the other would be contented to love, as a Jesus to save, but will not endure him as a King to rule.

Having premised this about sin in the General, we shall now speak of it under this Sign, as it respects such as once thought small sins great, now think great sins small, look at small ones as if they were none at all. This certainly, is a sign of Decay in Godliness; the least Sign against him, being great enough without the mercy of God, (if persisted in) to weigh us down to Hell, cannot therefore in it self be little; but its very possible for a Christian that once had a Conscience so tender, that every little touch did greatly grieve; yet may in process of time come to such a state of love or liking to sin, that he can now easily swallow down that for which he went mourning all the day long. Till the Commandment came to the Apostle *Paul*, he was alive in his own estimation, and did verily think, he did God good service, in making havock and spoil in the Church of God, being zealously mad against all that called on the name of Jesus, and yet at the same time was in Gods account a Blasphemer, Persecutor, as himself, in the account he gives of himself, after his conversion, did acknowledge himself; for when once the Commandment came, and sin appeared exceeding sinful, and the Wrath of God appeared as the reward of it, he then lay low in his own eyes; the chief of sinners and least of Saints. Often saith the Prophet have I heard of thee, by the hearing of the Ear, which is the case of thousands in *England*; and his fear they are taught



taught by the precept of men. But now saith the Prophet, *Mine Eyes have seen thee, and therefore do I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes.* I have seen thee in thy greatness as a sin hating God; and in thy goodness as a sin pardoning God. Therefore do I abhor my self. Now woe is me, I see now I am a man of unclean lips; this is the effects of the holy Spirits work, leading the sinner to behold the hands, and side of Jesus, pierced with the Nails and Spear. Now sin appears sinful, and Hell following after where damned Worms shall never die: This made David to walk heavily, and cry out upon his awakening, *Have mercy upon me O God, according to the multitudes of thy tender mercies, blot out all mine Iniquities, and me from all my sin.* It is very possible for Christians to loose this first heat, relish, and savour of the new Birth-beginning, that once was as a Jewel of great price. And this ordinarily comes to pass through negligence to maintain the first Life-principle they sucked from the Grace of God at its first entertainment. And did not then (let me ask experience) our hearts burn within us, in these six particulars.

1. Did we not see then our selves the greatest of sinners? Did we not think Hell little enough for our punishment, the Ground too good to bear us to walk on, and the Air too good to allow us to breath in, and every bit of Bread much more then we deserve? Did not Scales fall as it were from our eyes? Were not our opinion of our selves, changed from wealth to woe? We that a few days before, preached peace to our Souls, and thought our state as good as any in our Neighbourhood, though we knew not how to weep, that had made our Lord to weep. Yet now where ever we came, wept bitterly, and all our talk was of our undone estate out of Christ; never well but

but when we were breathing out our grief, that ever we grieved God. Was it not but the other day, that one *Saul* was going to *Damascus* with Commission, wheresoever he found any of the Disciples of *Jesus*, he must bring them bound to *Jerusalem*; and did he not hold the Raiment of these that stoned *Stephen*; and zealous for the Law of the Fathers, and as touching its righteousness blameless. But now his eyes being opened, he seeth himself a blasphemer, a persecutor, and sets his hope onely on *Jesus Christ* that came into the world to save sinners. 1 Tim. 1. 15.

But Secondly, Did not we then go often to God by prayer for yet a clearer sense of our sin still being; Jealous it was not enough? Did we not then cry Oh! I am not wounded enough in my Spirit, for wounding my Saviours Spirit? Were we not then ready to heighten, rather then lessen our sores? Methinks I hear you still crying out with your Espousal, Cry wo is me that ever I should offend such a Lord, such love, such a matchless love. I can never do enough for him, nor suffer enough for him; had I a thousand lives they were all too little to lay down at his feet? How early with God were we in Closet-prayer, early at the Sermon, early at visiting the Imprisoned. Now Spirit, Person, Purse, and all I am and have, is at the Lords Service. Now I feel such a weight upon my shoulders for my sins that nothing but the blood of Christ can hold me from sinking into Hell.

But Thirdly, Did we not then abhor our sin, or what we had done, and all occasions leading thereunto? Did not we then say with *David*, my sin is ever before me? Were not our black deeds in all company, and in all conditions most before our eies, following us as a hungry Wolf follows its prey? Were we not then as weary of our sin as of a long fit of sickness?



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Did we not lothe the thoughts of that that had *Dalilah*? Were it not now our sickness, and so in its own Colours beset with the black threatnings of Gods great Plagues.

But Fourthly, Did we not then retain in our memory, a deep sense of the Plagues due, for our sin lothing our selves. Woe is me that ever I should be such a vile wretch, such a Beast before the Lord; I now abhor my self in dust and ashes, at the very thought and remembrance of my sin; I do now see and wonder at that mercy of God that kept me out of Hell: Oh! It is Hell I do deserve for my hainous crimes, as none knows more of me, then I do of my self; so none can think worse of me, then I think of my self, admiring the mercy of God, and give my testimony, that surely none but a God could have born with me thus long. Oh! That ever I should spend my precious time, substance, and strength to serve such filthy lusts; I now see it is better for me to be a *door-keeper in the house of God, then to dwell in the tents of the wicked.*

But Fifthly, Did we not then see so much of sin, self, and wrath, that we covenanted for ever to live a Mourner for what before we had done; that as we had made it our trade, and had got the very habit of sin. So now we should get the habit of sorrow; not as too many sorrowful, onely while convictions are strong; but clothed with the state of sorrow, from month to month, and year to year, passing of the time of our whole Pilgrimage in trembling and fear, like *Ezekiels* mourners that God had pardoned. *Chap. 7. verse 16. But they that escape of them shall escape; yet to remain on the Mountains like Doves on the valleys, all of them mourning in the state, as well as at, every one for his own iniquity.*

Lastly,

Lastly, Did we not then covenant for ever to be thankful to God for our pardon? Did we not then think it little enough to be upon our knees praising this God to Eternity, that had saved us, and shewed us such mercy, when we were polluted to the lothing of our persons; and that at such a time God should look upon us with such pittie? Did not this sense work us up to forget our sorrow, for joy that so goodly a man-child was born, the Lord of life formed in us. What Trouble, Pain, Loss, or Cross, had a voice to press the spirits to complain like this to praise, the joy of believing, being a transcendent joy. *1 Pet.* 1. 8.

*Object.* But what is the Causes this frame is not now? Why! What is the matter that great sins seem small, and small none at all? Answer, These three appear to be Causes. 1. Ignorance how much God hates Sin. 2. Ignorance what Christ Jesus underwent for Sin. 3. Ignorance of the woeful effects of Sin.

First, Ignorance how much God hates Sin. This appears to every intelligible person, that will but consult Gods Method from the beginning of time, his glorious attribute of justice was still bent against sin; the first glorious price of his workmanship, whom he placed in the Garden of delight, who was undoubtedly Gods delight; for he beheld every thing that he had made good, much more man the Master-piece of all the rest; for in the Image of God made he him; Yet now for sin must be driven out of Paradise; the ground cursed for his sake, and in sorrow must he eat his bread; and from thence forward be a dying man, till he die, *Moses* the man of God, (with whom God the great Lord Almighty, talketh face to face,) and the very type of Jesus Christ: Yet must never have one



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prayer answered, when a sin had but come in the way; though in other cases so prevalent, that with prayer he holds Gods hands. Yet now O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; I pray thee let me go over to see Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon; but the Lord was wrath with me for your sakes, and would not hear me. And the Lord said to me, let it suffice thee, speak no more of this matter. Deut. 3. 24, 25, 26. Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate. Jer. 44. 4. For this cause God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie, that they all might be damned. 2 Thes. 2. 11, 12.

But Secondly, Ignorance what Christ underwent for sin. Oh the bitter agony that it made him sweat as it were great drops of blood, trickling down his blessed Cheeks; his soul was exceeding sorrowfull, even unto death; his hair pulled off, his visage marr'd more then any mans, his face spit in, his hands and feet nailed to a Tree, a spear thrust through his side; and in the 33<sup>d</sup> year of his age, the prime age of a man, his precious life must be taken away, his blood shed a man of sorrows, and clothed with griefs all for sin, though he knew no sin, neither was guile ever found in his mouth; he paid dear for what we did, he must die that we may live; be cursed that we may be blessed. Can we look upon this blessed Jesus, drinking this bitter cup, and think any sin small that laid such a weight on the Lord of Life.

Thirdly, Ignorance of the woeful effects of sin. What brought the flood? Was it not sin? What brought Fire and Brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Was it not sin? What brought all the ten Plagues upon Egypt? Was it not sin? What brings the mighty to the dust, but this Monster sin, Sicknesses,

nesses, Diseases, Sword, Plague, Fire, Famine. Amos 4. at large will tell us. What was the matter with London 1665. that more then sixty thousand of its inhabitants are carried captive to the Grave, while every street is filled with evening cries, bring out your dead, bring out your dead; in the morning walking well about streets, at night laid in the grave for worms to feed on; when we beheld in 1666. a Fire as from Heaven devour our dwellings, and consume that in a few hours, that many years cannot repair; while he that was rich yesterday, was a beggar to day, and not close with the Prophet, *The joy of our heart is ceased, our dance is turned into mourning; the crown is fallen from off our head, woe unto us that we have sinned*, Lam. 5. 15, 16, This is the Monster, who can then look upon London, and think any sin small.

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CHAP. XXXII.

*Shewing the great aptness in Christians to be less affected with praises for a Tribe of mercies coming, and more afflicted to murmuring for a tithe of mercies going; with four Causes of this Decay.*

SIGN. XXXII.

**W**hen your Tongue is frequent in complaining for lesser miseries, and silent in praising for greater mercies.

Oh! How apt are Christians to fall under this Decay, quickly apprehensive of that which goeth against the grain; the string of the heart easily wound upon its



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its utmost height, yea beyond godly bounds in sorrow; *give me Children or else I die*; a ready accountant to complain what we want, and would have, or have in point of misery, and would be rid of; but at the same time so out of our account under a Christian consideration, that we think not of going into Gods sanctuary, and weighing our present state in his balance; whether so much misery on the left hand is not overpoised with treble its mercies on the right hand; a tribe of mercies coming, less seen in their worth to raise the heart and tongue after a thankful frame, then a Tithe of mercies going; perhaps weep more for the removal of one Son, then the possession of ten Sons; big with trouble for a lesser loss, and yet at same time lean in thankfulness for greater gain. Good David was once out here, *Is the young man Absalom safe?* Now was *Absalom* in the height of rebellion, aiming at no less then the Crown, yet now *Joab*, *Abishai*, and *Ittai* whom I have made Captains over thousands to fight my Battels; when ye overcome, deal gently for my sake with the young man, even *Absalom*. The Battel is fought, the Mercy is obtained; for the victory goeth on *Dauids* side; Messengers hasten with the tidings, every one ambitious who shall run first, and fastest. And the King sits in the gate waiting for their Message, and behold *Ahimaaz* the Son of *Zadock*, cometh and said, *all is well*, falling down upon his face before the King, saying, *Blessed be the Lord thy God which hath delivered the men, which did lift up their hand against my Lord the King*. Here is joyful tidings of a conquest calling for triumphant thankfulness. But at what height is *Dauids* Tongue now in tune, *Is the young man Absalom safe?* That appeared more set upon his heart, then the Victory; for no sooner hath *Cushi* another messenger reported

*Ab-*

*Absaloms* death; but the victory is forgotten, and *Dauids* greatest cause of joy at the mercy turned into greater sorrow, at the lesser misery; for the King was much moved, and went up to the Chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went thus, he said, *O my Son Absalom, my Son, my Son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee O Absalom, my Son, my Son,* 2 Sam. 18. 5. 21, 29, 32, 33. Is not this too too common among professors wherever we come, the place filled with complaining of want, or loss; our Tongue nimble at reporting our lesser miseries, while dumb at praising for greater mercies, our hands often lifted up in prayer for what we want; but seldom lifted up in praise for what we have.

How many signal mercies from evening till morning, and from morning till evening are scarce taken notice of; meat to eat, and an appetite to it, Cloaths to cover us, fire to warm us, a bed to rest us; and yet so brutish, as not to see these mercies in their worth, till we see them in their want; how many nights under the shade of death, are we delivered from the fith of Death, and yet never the more thankful or fruitful next morning? a state of bodily health and strength for years together, and less concerned in its enjoyment, with care for a state of thankfulness, then if all were more debt, and merit, then clemency and mercy.

The Fowls of the Air, the Beasts of the field, the Fish of the Sea, must surrender up their breath to continue our breath, they uncloathed, that we may be cloathed; the tender Calf fetch'd from the stall; the young Lamb taken from the flock; the Turtle-Dove stript of its life, for a pampered, wanton, unthankful, unfruitful People. But what will be the end of all? *Who shall live when God doth this?* Namely



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ly, Calls to an account, brings in the bill of Indict-  
ment.

*Imprimis*, For the abuse of Plenty, in the year of  
Plenty. *Item*, For Idleness. *Item*, For Wanton-  
ness. *Item*, For turning Riches into Pride. *Item*,  
For praying seldom, except under some sensitive loss.  
*Item*, For sitting down to feed upon Gods Creatures,  
and resting upon your Beds as do the Bruits. *Item*,  
For murmuring under Adversity. *Item*, For Dull-  
sightedness at what you abound with. *Item*, For  
Envy at your Brothers wellfare. *Item*, For using  
your Tongue to carry Tales. *Item*, For taking up a  
report against your Neighbour. *Item*, For every  
omission of Good. *Item*, For every commission of  
Evil. *Item*, For your grand sin of unthankfulness,  
&c.

Ah Christians! What shall we plead in the great  
day of account, when this, and a thousand times  
more shall rise up in Judgment against us; for spending  
more of our Tongue and Time, in complaining of  
lesser miseries, then in praising for greater Mercies.

But what may be the Causes of this Decay? First,  
Counting without God. Secondly, Ignorance that  
the pulse of sense, beats higher then the pulse of faith.  
Thirdly, Ignorance that the state of a Christian on  
earth, is to be a thankful state. Fourthly, A not  
retaining in the heart, the due reward of past  
sins.

First, Counting without God. That is, when we  
measure our condition with what we would have it  
be, not asking counsel at the hand of God, is this or  
that condition best for me? Good *Agur* knew the  
deceitfulness of his own heart, and therefore durst  
not make any choice without God. *Two things have*  
*I desired of thee, deny me them not before I die, give me*  
*neither*

neither Poverty nor Riches, feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord, or lest I be poor, and Steal, and take the name of my God in vain. PRO. 30. 8, 9. If the young Child may have its will, it will crave a knife, and therewith wound it self; Eat to Gluttony, Drink unto surfetting. Cry out against applying the plaster, or searching the Sore. How apt have we been to complain of that condition, that when once we had but gone into the sanctuary to see it, have then found it mercy, ending in thankfulness. The little Boy, while little, is very unwilling to learn his book, and will venter upon Correction for a Play-day: but when riper years are gone over his head, repines with repentance at the past-time so mispent. Oh! Its good to let God alone, to walk in his own Method, and take what he sends whether it be Physick or Cordial.

But Secondly, A second Cause is this, we know it not, but the Pulse of Sense beats higher then the Pulse of Faith; that is, we measure our condition by seeing, and not by believing. Abraham's sense, could not see the Son of the promise; but his faith could take the knife to slay the Lad for a sacrifice unto God. Sense would not let Israel go to Canaan through the Wilderness; but God saw that way the nearest, therefore faithful Moses chuses that way. Sense made Rachel cry, give me Children, or else I die. While Faith led old Eli, while made childless to cry, It is the Lord let him do what seemeth him good. Sense makes us angry at the Rod, though a Prison at the same time, is better then a Pallace. Sense led Israel to be angry at God, and murmur when they wanted bread and water, and dislike their Travel through so great and terrible a Wilderness, wherein were fiery Ser-



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Serpents and Scorpions, and Drought ; but had Faith been predominant, it would have represented to them the goodness of that way, because of the signal ends that was to ensue ; out of a Rock of flint gusheth forth Water, and from Heaven is Mannah, Angels food rained, and the Red-Sea divided, and *Pharaoh* and his host drowned ; and above all *Israel* humbled, and their hearts proved, that God might do them good at their latter end, so that in a word, Faith measures that condition the most thankful condition, be it never so thornie, unpleasant and bitter to sense, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better Resurrection. *Heb.* 11. 35.

But Thirdly, A cause why we are more frequent in complaining of lesser miseries, then praising for greater mercies, is ignorance that the state of a Christian here on Earth, is to be a thankful state, that is, *in every thing to give thanks.* 1 *Thes.* 5. 18. This to sense in its Latitude, seems a hard Lesson. What ? To thank God for Afflictions, for Poverty, for Sickness, for loss of Husband, Wife, Child, House, Land, what to have all in one bottom, and to sink at once into the bottom of the Sea, and yet thank God seems *Egyptian* bondage, and worse ; but the Text is universal, *in every thing give thanks* ; and the reason is as universal for every condition ( on this side Hell is mercy, and therefore calls for thankfulness ) *Moses* coming to *Pharaoh* with request that *Israel* might be enlarged, was mercy, though it tended at first to the enlargement of their bonds, yet it was in order to their freedom upon the most noble terms ; had we never trouble here, we should never so long for rest hereafter. Good *Joshua* and *Caleb* still thought he best of Gods way with them, and *Job* when House,

and

and Substance, and Cattle, and Servants, and Children, and all was gone, sends in thankfulness, *Naked came I out of my Mothers Womb, and naked shall I return, the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and B L E S S E D be the name of the Lord.*

Fourthly, A fourth Cause of this Decay may be this, not retaining in the heart the due reward of past sins; that is, forgetting that anguish which under our first convictions we were bowed down with; when we felt the weight of our sins in their black and horrid aggravations, having past upon our selves the sentence of Death; and this followed by the Law of Life: crying out *Oh wretched sinner that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this Death, or dead body?* Were we not then as it were tied to a dead man, and compelled to draw him, and the stench of him up and down with us wheresoever we went, being beset with *Ezekiels* roul, Lamentations, and mourning, and woe? Could we not then truly say with *David*, my sin is ever before me, and Hell coming after; and if in this Christless condition I die, I shall be damned to all Eternity. Did not this burden felt for sin, and feared for wrath, keep down the Spirit of complaining more for smaller miseries? And how would we then have been affected with thankfulness for the tythe of those mercies we now overlook? Its evident by Gods expostulation with *Israel* in *Ezekiels* time. *Chap. 16.* That this Symptom was upon them in a high degree, so that the Prophet for their reducing begins at the root, *Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations; she hath forgotten her Father was an Amorite, and Mother an Hittite, and in the day she was born, she was cast out into the open field, to the lothing of her person, and when no eye pittied her, then said*



I to her live; her extremity of misery, was my opportunity of mercy; thus her renown went forth among the nations; for she was beautiful through my comeliness which I put upon her; but now *Jesurun* waxeth fat, and kicked, and lightly esteemed the rock of her Salvation, and as the inlet to all her sin. *verse 22.* She hath not kept in remembrance the days of her youth, when she was naked and bare and polluted in her blood the Malefactor. Now sentence is pronounced, and die he must for his transgression, though once a Palace could not contain him, he swell'd so big with pride; Oh! Now any Cottage, yea corner of a House top, yea a Dungeon will be wellcome, let him but dwell there with a pardon, thus he lies low under the sense of a temporal death deserved, and shall not we with self-aborrancy, lie much lower, under the sense of an eternal Death deserved; When in my greatest miseries temporal, for which I droop and complain with the worm-wood and the Gall; then calling to remembrance, why am I not in Hell, makes that Tongue but now complaining, turned into Thanksgiving; *It is of the Lords mercies I am not consumed, Praise ye the Lord, Amen, Amen.* Consider what you read, and so pass to the 33d. Sign of dying to Godliness.

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CHAP. XXXIII.

*demonstrating what a precious Jewel Time is, how to be redeemed, proving it Gods work to give the space, a Christians work to make the use. Shewing also what a dreadful loss, the loss of time is, with the Causes of this Decay, and Remedies for Recovery.*

SIGN. XXXIII.

**W**hen your sense of the great worth of time is so small, that you are turned *Prodigal.*

It is essential, That every man should consider, that as God hath given him an excellent Nature, Wisdom and understanding to make his choice, having made him Lord over all Creatures, and a little lower then the Angels; he hath also appointed him a work and service, great enough to imploy those abilities; and hath also designed him to a state of life eternal, after this life is ended; unto which state he can onely arrive, by that work and service. And that nothing may be wanting on Gods part, to the accomplishing his great design, he hath and doth, give every man time in this World, a time so precious, that on it depends ETERNITY. Time, in the space of Gods, in the use of it Ours; for we must remember that we have a great work to do, many enemies to conquer, many evils to prevent, many dangers to run through, many difficulties to be mastered, and it may be, many Children or Friends to provide for,

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and



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and many diseases to cure, and which is most of  
to be found in all doing it so, that we may not  
back in the accounts of Eternity. Now to have such  
a Jewel as Time is, it being of more weight and worth  
than all the World; because that cannot either pay  
valuable price for its lengthening, or recall it when  
past and gone; for any therefore to be Prodigal of  
such a Treasure, must needs argue deep Decay to the  
power of Godliness: but it may be very necessary  
we explain this great word TIME; it may be con-  
sidered under a double acceptation, with respect both  
to the space of it, and use of it: it is certain that  
Time in the space of it, is Gods gift. *Job 7. 1. Is  
there not an appointed time to man upon Earth?* That  
is, for space given of God to this noble end, that  
man should imploy or use this Time to the best advan-  
tage; so that it is as certain, Time in the use or abuse  
is ours. *Eccle. 3. 1. To every thing there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under the Sun;* that is, a  
Time with respect to the use or abuse; God lends  
the space of Time, appoints meet work to take up  
that space of Time lent. Lets hear the Conclusion  
(saith the Preacher) of the whole matter; Fear  
God and keep his Commandments, this is the whole  
Duty of Man: for God will bring every work, that  
is use or abuse of Time, into Judgment, for Salvation  
or Damnation goeth upon this great hinge of Time.  
And what was lent from God as *Jerusalems* greatest  
mercy, proved through themselves, their greatest  
Woe? For they had the space of Time remaining  
when the use of Time was gone, they had neglected  
their Market, abused their Season. When God call-  
ed for Fasting and Weeping, they called for Feasting  
and Rejoycing; like the old World, while fourty years  
space of Time in the Arks preparation, gave them  
daily

daily summons to make ready, and get into the Ark; yet they slept away their time in Eating, Drinking, buying, Selling, Marrying, giving in Marriage; and take no care to make up their accounts, before their time was gone; we have a doleful passage to this purpose, and Oh that it may serve as a Land-mark for all Professors. *Luke 19. 41, 42, 44.* When Jesus Christ was come near *Jerusalem* in his Travels, as soon as he set his eyes upon the City, he falls aweeping at the lamentable misery they had, (not through the want of time, but through the misuse or abuse of time) brought upon themselves, which is evident from his own words, saying, *If thou hadst known even thou, at least in this thy day, (thy day of space from God given) the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.* God is not bound to wait always, for thou must be laid even with the ground, because thou knewest not the **TIME** of thy visitation; Oh! How doth this bespeak Professors to value their time, even all time, youth, health, strength, Time of Affliction, Time of the Gospel, that when they come to end Time here, may not through the abuse, fall into the entrance of everlasting woe, as a reward hereafter.

*Object. 1.* But some may Object, if so dreadful a consequence attend the loss of Time; Doth not this exclude the grace of God, for it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

*Ans.* Its truth, its of God to shew mercy, and he hath prescribed his time as well as his way. *Wisdom cryeth without, she uttereth her voice in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates in the City, saying, How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and Scorners delight in Scorning, and set at*



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nought all my counsel, and will none of my reproof;  
(for this abuse of Time) when your destruction com-  
eth as a Whirle-wind, when distress and anguish befalls  
you; then though ye call, I will not answer, ye shall  
seek me early, but shall not find me; for that ye hated  
knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.  
Pro. 1. 21. &c.

Object. 2. When may time be said to be redeemed?

Answer, When duty and time goeth hand in  
hand together. God hath ordained mans Time on  
earth, for no other end, but that every space of it  
should be filled up with the work of it. God puts  
them together in two great respects, First, To give  
assistance. Secondly, To give acceptance. And  
herein lyeth mans chief Wisdom, that he know his  
Time, and while it lasteth, to make the best earnings  
of it; for it is swifter then an Eagle in the Heavens  
hastning on its way, never at a stand; and when past,  
can never be recalled again. And because no man  
may plead vacancy of space in some periods of his  
Life, God hath provided employment for every con-  
dition, whether young or old, bond or free, sick or  
in health, still Eternity waits upon us; and we are  
daily going forward or backward in those accounts;  
and as one day is gone over our heads, we are still  
a day the neerer to its borders. The sick Man may  
possibly recover; but if once DEAD all hope is  
gone. Hence comes those dreadful Lamentations;  
Woe is me! he is Dead, he is Dead. The whole  
world cannot purchase yesterday again. That Sodom  
and Gomorrha that 24 hours ago flourished, next day  
lies in Ashes: Belshazzar the King, was but now  
drinking Wine in Excess, and praising the Gods of Gold  
and Silver, in the same hour, a little Time makes a  
great change, look again, and he is Trembling, the points  
of

of his Loyns are loosed, and his knees smite one against another: A KING yesterday, WORMS-MEAT this day. What therefore more precious then Time: Oh the glorious and the woefull effects of Time! In six days a world is made by the hands of the Almighty; in fourty days its drown'd by the same power, How many in one night have been stript of all? Less then three days laid London in Ashes. A little little time, rightly IMPROVED centers in eternal blessedness, while a like Time ABUSED centers in eternal burning; how precious therefore is Time. But Abraham said, Son remember thou hadst thy Time of good things, and Lazarus his Time of evil things; now he is Comforted, and now thou art Tormented: How doth this bespeak that Christian dying to Godliness, that hath so little sense of Times worth, that he is turned Prodigal.

I shall leave this to consideration, as to the worth of Time, and shall enquire into the Causes of the abuse of Time, and conclude all with a few directions how to redeem Time. Now the Causes may be assigned to these three. 1. Ignorance of times swiftness. 2. Ignorance of Times preciousness. 3. Non-consideration that the use or abuse of Time will certainly terminate in Heaven or Hell.

First, Ignorance of Times swiftness. It hath a continual motion, neither staying nor standing; its an useful Proverb, Time and Tide stayeth for none, Time is represented with Wings in a flying posture, because it is still journeying ere we are aware; Youth is come and gone, also old age hath taken possession, and Time will quickly carry us to the brink of Eternity. It well becomes Christians wherever they go to carry their hour-glass, as it were with them, and still remember how they have spent the past three quarters



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already gone; for God will certainly take account of our Time, and we cannot keep from using or abusing it; Travellers count the Miles they have yet to go, before they can be at their Inn, and they count their hours, still remembring, Night cometh when none can work; and from hence quicken themselves to Diligence. The Spirit of God seems to intimate the improvement of our time from a double Obligation. 1 Cor. 7. 29, 31. Swift and short; it passeth away swiftly, therefore improve it withall your might. And it is short, carry that in your eye also; and therefore whether you weep or rejoyce, buy or sell, *pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*

Secondly, Ignorance of Times preciousness; That may be a Cause why we are Prodigal of it. Time is of more worth then a World; for on the well improving it, depends our Eternal Welfare, and then the World cannot hinder. On the contrary, Time abused will bring us into an Eternal Woe, from which the World cannot redeem us. Time is precious upon a fourfold consideration. 1. Because it is a very short Time. 2. Because we have a great deal of work to do in that short time. 3. Because we have many Enemies to overcome in that short time. 4. Because we can never recall the loss of it. Lastly, Because we shall shortly find Heaven or Hell depends upon it. Oh Christians! Is not time precious, being clothed with so many weighty Circumstances.

Thirdly, Ignorance that the use or abuse of Time will certainly terminate in Heaven or Hell. While we are in this World we are Gods Stewards, and its required of Stewards that they be found faithful; and that appeareth best in the improvement of their time, which is a Talent, that must not be hid in a Napkin; Were this thought always before our eyes, (as the  
Rope

Rope is about the swift messengers Neck, which tells him, except he post on his way with utmost speed, he shall pay his life at the end of his Journey, as the fruit of his negligence ) we should tremble in the way, at the remembrance of the end ; did we sensibly feel that truth ? Namely, HELL will be their end, that while they have Time, abuse Time. Ignorance here, makes so many turn *Busy-bodies, Tattlers, Back-biters, Whisperers*, going about from House to House, Idling away their precious Time, *meddling with things they ought not* ; little considering that all their ways and goings are seen and recorded in the book of Gods remembrance ; and for which they must certainly give an account one day to him that is ready to judge *both quick and dead*. But I shall close all with a few directions how to redeem time to Gods glory, and our own true comfort.

First, That you may redeem Time. Keep down wandring thoughts after Vanity, for they will be busie, and offering themselves, and service at all times, and being entertained, will carry you Captive to the mispending precious Time. Its a fixed thought set on God, *Heaven and Hell* that leads out the heart as well as Head, to be always busie, or learning to make Religion our business ; thoughts of Vanity nourisheth Idleness, while thoughts of Eternity delivereth from it. God took up a complaint against *Israel* on this account. *Jer. 4. 14. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee.* Vain thoughts were not onely offered, but entertained ; if in good earnest we would redeem our Time, we must keep down wandring thoughts.

Secondly, That you may redeem Time. Keep under immoderate cares for or about the things of this Life ; *be full of care for nothing, saith the holy Scrip-*



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ture, that is, let not your head and heart, be overloaded with greatest care, for the smallest matters; *Labour not (most) for that meat that perisheth; but for that which endureth to everlasting Life.* A much cumbered mind, hath cost many a Christian, many Tears to recover their ground again; Its though common, an absolute evil to be over-busie about the things of this Life; always, raking and scraping, after God hath lent a competency of Food and Raiment, not to be content; to give now more room and time, for more noble imployment, hath to experience, left many to a woeful conclusion. I pray God this Caution may be blessed to my self, and all that reads it; that we may learn of God to know what our frail Vessel will hold, to the delivering us from that woeful sin of stupidity, that I am much afraid is upon many in our day. *Luke 21. 34, 35.* Methinks the glance of mine eye now beholds many Professors, that God hath blessed with a large portion of this Worlds good; so busie to add house to house, and field to field (as if Heaven were entailed upon it, or they never to leave it) that they cannot without burden spare now and then one hour for the soul. I beg humbly, leave to ask such this one question; Whether or no did you ever consider *Agurs* rule, *Pro. 30.* for your imitation, he was afraid of Poverty, (and so I believe are you) least it should tempt him to put forth his hand to steal; but he was as much afraid of Plenty, (and so I fear are not you) least he should be full and say, who is the Lord; I query hence, whether it is not as much a Christians Duty and his Wisdom, to be afraid of Riches, as of Poverty.

But

But Thirdly, That you may redeem Time. Avoid unnecessary meetings or visitings, and unprofitable discourse; how much precious Time hath been spilt here. Woeful experience can best speak. Gadding about without pondering the path of the Feet, hath been an in-let to a Tribe of evils. To go without a call, is as great an evil, as to with-hold when there is a call. Its the Glory of Christianity to do all by *weight and measure.*

A Fool poureth out Foolishness, while the heart of the wise doth study to answer; to be slow to speak, and that our speech be always gracious; is as truly a Law of Christ, as not to Steal, Kill, or commit Adultery. We think not of this when we meet without Call, and talk without Measure; that is, Gad abroad (upon at most Tithe of Mint and Annis) and neglect at whom Justice and Mercy: its not onely our duty to fill up every space of our Time with imployment, but with imployment most Noble; that our choice for the use of Time be with judgment, still the lesser to give way to the greater.

But Fourthly, That you may redeem Time. Do not over indulge or pamper the body; spare *exceedings at meals*; to add a Meal to them that have none: not as our Vulgar call it, at a good time feast your poor Neighbours onely, but do this in the serious or habit of doing; abate something daily, to relieve some poor family daily. In like-manner, spare time from your Bed to give the more to your knees. Abridge an hour every night at least, from bodily sleep, to make you the more apt or ready for your eternal rest. Think how many hours is fit under your circumstances of labour, to give the body and spirits rest from business, and severely require the rest for  
devoti-



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devotion. Thus much for my Body, and thus much for my Soul: this will make you early with God on his day; and at midnight to prevent the night-watches with meditation on him.

Lastly, Redeem Time not onely for duties of Devotion, but also to be in the SPIRIT of those Duties, it is not sufficient to spend Time in prayer or meditation, if the Spirit of the work be absent. Dead Drink, when your Wine hath lost its Spirit, or Salt his Savour, hath but a dead acceptance with us, and less with God. The very Duties commanded, were by God abhorred; when the Spirit of those Duties was wanting; to be at Prayer, at Reading, at Hearing, at Meditation, at Fasting, at the Lords-Table without being in the same Spirit that the holy men of God was, when in these services will be as useless as was theirs. *Isa. 58. 1, 2, 3. They sought God daily, and delighted to know his ways, asking for the ordinances of Justice, and took pleasure in approaching to God, saying, wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not, and afflicted our Soul, and thou takest no knowledge; They took time for the Duties, but redeemed not time for the spiritual ends of these Duties, rested in the service, for the service sake, and there proposed their reward, not doing all for their Lords sake, in obedience to him. Oh therefore be entreated to redeem Time to frame your selves, as well for the preparation to be in the Spirit of the Duty, as to redeem Time for the Duty it self. I leave all to consideration, and pass to the 34th. Sign of dying to Godliness.*