

Two Sermons on Conversion from Deut. 5:28,29

1612

Richard Rogers

1551-1618

From his:

Certain Sermons directly tending to bring any bad person to true conversion, to stablish and settle all such as are converted in faith and repentance and to lead them forward that are so settled in the Christian life in order to bring forth the fruit of both

pp. 63-84

Brought to you by

Reformed Books Online

ReformedBooksOnline.com

The Best, Free, Reformed Books and Articles Online, from 1800 to Today

We hope this work helps you to enjoy and glorify God

This work has been made easier to read with updated English, punctuating, formatting and minimal stylistic changes. This work is licensed under the very sharing-friendly [Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/). Please share this work in any godly way, shape, or form desired

Introduction

Richard Rogers (1551-1618), in his continual walking with God was ‘the Enoch of his age,’ according to his esteemed puritan grandson, William Jenkyn.¹ Rogers, the pious Cambridge scholar and early organizing Presbyterian, wrote the first, exceedingly influential English puritan handbook on the spiritual and practical life devoted to God, entitled *Seven Treatises*. In it he encourages Christians to exercise watchfulness, practice meditation, use one’s spiritual armor (Eph. 6), engage in prayer, read scripture and other godly authors, offer thanksgiving and practice fasting. The godly saints that followed in his direction became known as ‘precisionists’, according to the famed anecdote when someone remarked to Rogers: ‘I like you and your company very well, only you are too precise.’ Rogers replied, ‘Oh, sir, I serve a very precise God.’ Rogers’ legacy followed him. Two of his sons became puritan ministers: Daniel and Ezekiel. Three more of his step-sons from his second wife also became puritan ministers: Samuel, John and Nathaniel.¹ Rogers today is best known for his *magnum opus* *Commentary on the Book of Judges* [Buy](#) which has been published in facsimile form by the Banner of Truth. For a further short biography of Rogers and a spiritually savory review of his commentary on Judges, see Beeke and Pederson’s, *Meet the Puritans*.¹

One note is relevant regarding the authorship of the two sermons on Dt. 5:28-29. They are taken from his *Certain Sermons*, which are said in the title to include sermons from both Rogers and Samuel Wright. Little is known about Wright. He matriculated from Magdalen College, Cambridge with a Bachelor of Divinity in 1593 and became president of Sidney College, Cambridge after 1599. The time of his death is uncertain, probably being between 1609 and 1612. According to *Athenae Cantabrigienses: 1586-1609*, the sermons of Wright were appended to those in Rogers’ book with a preface by

¹ Joel Beeke and Joel Pederson, *Meet the Puritans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006) pp. 505-8

Rogers and separate pagination. Wright's sermons included seven on Matt 13:19-23, eight on Ps. 1:1-4, three on John 14:1-4 and three upon Luke 13:22-24. In light of this, it is clear that all the sermons in *Certain Sermons* (London, 1612), and hence the two below on Deut. 5:28-29 are those of Rogers. The appendix containing the sermons of Wright are missing from the available surviving copy of *Certain Sermons*.

The contents and order of the 19 sermons in *Certain Sermons* is: three sermons on Acts 16:24, two on Matt 24:12-13, two on Matt 13:46, two on Isaiah 55:1-2, two on Deut. 5:29, two on Matt 11:20, two on Acts 9:31, and two on Phil. 4:4.

The two very experientially rich sermons below on conversion from Deut. 5:28-29 lay the entrance to God's kingdom sweetly low: to any that thirst for it. Rogers, with a discerning and soft hand, reproves worldly minded persons who do not desire the best things (even their own salvation), shows that the way to be saved is to thirst for it (for those that desire what God offers), and assures those that do thirst that God will surely make good his end of the deal. It is in thirsting that the Christian continues in this life to receive the best spiritual graces from God for everything that he or she needs. May we feed upon Christ (Jn. 6:51) in these words from long ago, and receive help on our way to heaven!

The First Sermon on Deut. 5:28-29

Deut. 5:28-29

“Then the Lord heard the voice of your words,
when you spoke unto me: and the Lord said unto me,
I have heard the voice of the words of this people,
which they have spoken unto you:
they have well said all that they have spoken.

Oh that there were such a heart in them to fear me,
and to keep all my commandments always;
that it might go well with them,
and with their children forever.”

My purpose, beloved, is to show what the things are which I intend (God willing) to deliver to you at this time to the end that you may the better hear them and not wander uncertainly, as ye must needs do if ye know not what is intended to be taught to you. But yet so I will do it in a way as to show that the Holy Ghost purposes the same also in the words which I shall speak of. The thing which I propound to teach is this: That whereas the greatest part of people among us do think that if they can say ‘Lord, Lord,’ they shall enter into the kingdom of heaven (as our Savior gives us to understand, Mt. 7:21), whereas they think also that if they can utter good words of the Scripture, and as professors of the Gospel that they serve God as well as the best, and that God will bless them accordingly and their posterity, they may know that this is nothing. For God requires another and greater matter: that there be a true change, both of heart and life, and a constant holding out in both unto the end. To this purpose I intend to speak that

which I mean to say of the words which I have read unto you. And the same meaning had the Lord in speaking the words Himself.

In order to show the occasion that moved Him to utter them, Moses repeated the words before the text. When the people of Israel had heard the Lord on mount Sinai delivering his law to them out of the midst of the fire in clouds and darkness and were afraid to hear God speak unto them any further, they (even all the chief of the tribes and elders) desired Moses to go near to the Lord and hear all that He should say to him, and they said they would hear it again at his mouth and do it:

‘Then the Lord heard the voice of their words when they spoke to Moses, and the Lord said to Moses, I have heard the words of this people which they have spoke unto you. They have said well, all that they have spoken. Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they did fear Me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might go well with them and their children forever.’

Thus you see also how the Lord in this text speaks the same of the people to Moses which I am to deliver unto you. This being done, I will now show in what manner I mean to handle the text and what order to follow therein, and then proceed to the particulars.

This text divides itself most fitly into three parts. The first is: a mixed speech which the Lord utters to Moses, commending somewhat and disliking somewhat of the people’s answer in these words: ‘This people has said well, but their heart is not suitable unto their words.’ The second thing is: what the Lord wishes to them, and that is such a heart as might suit with their words, from which only (and from no other heart) this fear of God and obedience to his will (which He liked of) could come, in these words: ‘Oh that there were such a heart in them to fear Me, and to keep all my commandments always.’ The third is: the fruit of such a heart and life, and that is prosperity and welfare to them and to their children forever.

Now to begin with the first, this mixed speech of the Lord (which I so call because it commends somewhat in the peoples answer and dislikes somewhat in them: it allows their words but condemns their heart) teaches us clearly that men may possibly utter

good words and yet themselves be without grace. Their words may be good but their hearts not, so that while they commend religion, the preaching of the Gospel and the profession thereof, yet for all that, they may be unprofitable in their lives and not sound and upright in their hearts, without which their speech helps them nothing. And if it be said that it is not sufficient for the proof of this doctrine that is here said in the text (for possibly it may be gathered amiss), let it be proved by two or three witnesses (that there may be no exception brought against it), as that for example in the 50th Psalm, verse 16, where you may find this: 'Unto the wicked,' said God, 'what have you to do to take my word in your mouth and hate to be reformed?' What needs there any explanation of these words? The Lord vehemently reproves them for speaking of his word, as though they bare great affection to it when in the mean while they would not be subject to it nor be directed by it. To the which may be added what our Savior says: 'This people draw near to Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me; in vain do such worship Me.' (Mt. 15:29) And the prophet Ezekiel agrees most fitly with them both when he says, 'Son of man, this people talk of you by the walls and doors of their houses and say one to another, Come (I pray you) and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord. And they hear your words, but they will not do them.' (Eze. 33:30) By all this it is manifest that to have good words in our mouths without the uprightness of the heart does not commend us to God.

And yet let not this be thought of anyone to be spoken by me as though I made light of good speech or thought it of little worth, which [good speech] I acknowledge to be an excellent gift of God (as Paul spoke of it in the people of Corinth) and I do bewail that the lack of it is so great (especially in so long continuance of the Gospel being preached). Yea I say more, that we are commanded of God to take unto us words (Hos. 14:2) to express our requests, confession of sins, thanksgiving, and our covenants of amendment of life, and we are to be examples to others in our communication as well as in our conversation (1 Tim. 4:12). Woe to them that endeavor not after it! But to rest in it, as if that were sufficient: it is nothing. And to stay our hope upon it as if we thought

it a testimony of our happiness: it is no better than a bruised reed. This therefore, or any other such gifts of God, are seemly ornaments in them that have them, for in most parts of the land you shall not find good words and godly speech common, I need not say in Wales or Ireland, but not either in many places in England, but it is despised rather and laughed to scorn and rotten and filthy communication is entertained with great applause instead of it. But yet (as I have said) good speech alone of itself, without other gifts of God, is not currant, nor that in which a man may have contentment.

The reason is that the heart of man is deceitful (Jer. 17:9) and goes not always with the tongue, and therefore when we hear the one (2 Cor. 11:14), we may well doubt of the other. The devil can change himself into an angel of light and therefore can easily persuade us that every good word or deed coming from us is enough to salvation, especially men being ready to think every little [word or deed] to be sufficient to serve God withal. Whereas, we ought to search diligently, try our ways and the whole course of our hearts and lives, pull down the old ruins of both and set up the contrary instead thereof in both. And [we ought to do this] all little enough to make a due proof unto us that we are partakers of the promise of eternal life. Which, to be necessary to assure us of the same and no less, that saying of the prophet Micah does lively show where he brings in the wicked speaking thus when they sought how to be acceptable to God that they might please Him:

‘Wherewith shall we come before the Lord and bow ourselves before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression? Even the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?’ (Mic. 6:6)

But the prophet answered far otherwise than they looked for, saying: ‘He has showed to you (O man) what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: surely to do justice, and to love mercy, and to humble yourself, and to walk with God.’ Whereby he shows that man cannot direct himself in the great matters of pleasing God and seeking his favor, but God must guide him therein to the end that he may have peace, and consequently that

good words are not sufficient to rest in for welfare and happiness without better furniture of grace and goodness. And to go a step further, if good speech (as commendation of the Word, praising of God and communication of his works and will) be not to be rested in, in what case are they who have almost no good speech, but rather, that which comes from them is profane, foolish, corrupt and such as over-thwarts and crosses goodness?

But here a question arises about the people mentioned in the text, for if their answer were good, why was it not allowed? Meant they not as they spoke? I say, yes; but that freed them only from hypocrisy, but was no argument of their sincerity. For there is a middle sin between them both, and that may be called halting or not upright. And it may clearly be discerned by that which is spoken of the Israelites in the Psalm, who made a covenant there with God (Ps. 78:35) and had not to do with men, and though they broke and went from it, they could not be charged with hypocrisy. But yet they dealt treacherously with the Lord, in that they were not careful to keep and perform it. The words are these in effect: when He slew them, they sought Him. Yea, they returned and sought God early, but they flattered Him with their mouth and dissembled with Him in their tongue, for their heart was not upright with Him, neither were they faithful in his covenant.

Now from this which has been said in the answer to the question, a good point is to be observed, namely: that we take great heed when we covenant with God about amendment [of our life] either in general or to forsake any particular sin in our life (though we do it in secret, no man knowing thereof). I say great heed is to be taken that we do not afterwards wax remiss and cold in going about to perform the same. For then God will count it but flattering and deceiving of Him, which He will not put up with at our hands. Why? Men will not bear such indignity at one another's hands.

I speak this seeing that many never suspect any danger to be coming toward them by any breach of covenant to God if they cannot be challenged for hypocrisy before men. Which indeed, is the grosser of the two? It is the sin of most people to utter great words before men of their godliness when yet they deny the power thereof. But yet the other is

also odious to God, when men so slightly regard the promise of obedience which they have in their good mood made to Him, as though it were not to be looked after.

Such are all they who, having in their trouble, sick bed or at their receiving of the sacrament, professed seriously to turn to the Lord, have yet started aside afterwards like a broken bow (Ps. 78:57). I have myself sometimes had good hope of people when I, visiting them in the likelihood of their death, have heard their frank and free promise made to God of forsaking their former ill life. But when I have seen so slight fruit to follow in many of them, they returning after their recovery to their wicked course, as the dog to his vomit (2 Pet. 2:22), tempting God thereby in a fearful manner (which was Pharaoh's sin), my good hope has been much cooled. And this I have learned to be so true by long experience that I dare not rest upon such covenants. And yet, God forbid, but that many covenanting the same in like occasions should look conscionably to perform their covenant afterward (though too many fall from them) according to that which is said by David in the Psalm: 'I have sworn and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.' (Ps. 119:106) Thus much of the mixed speech of God in the first part of the text.

Now it follows what the Lord wished to the people in the second part, and that is: First, such a heart as that they might fear Him. For their answer was disliked although their words were good, because they proceeded not from such a heart. But this speech of the Lord (in this manner uttered) raises a doubt in the hearer: What He should mean by wishing such a heart, as though the fear of God could not grow in any heart and likewise come from it? And, if it be so, what heart is that which He wishes unto them? To the which may be answered, that the fear of God and obedience to his commandments does not come from every heart, neither does such fruit grow in every garden; it must be such a heart indeed as cannot be matched, neither has any fellow or companion.

But what manner of heart is that? You will say that you do not understand what He means. I answer therefore further, that by such a heart, He means in one word, a heart converted to God. More particularly: a heart broken with sorrow for sin and the fear of

damnation, yet quieted again and eased by believing the remission of sin and sanctified also to newness of life. Even such a heart is fit to breed the fear of God, and in such a heart it can dwell, and in no other. And that is called by our Savior a good heart, which only (and no other) can bring forth good things. For so He says, 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth good things,' (Lk. 6:46) and contrariwise. So that, if the heart be good (that is, truly turned to God), then it is fitted for that which God here wished to his people, that is, to fear him and keep his commandments, and naught else.

Now for proof that it must be thus: the scripture is clear and plentiful. First, that the heart must be wounded for sin and broken with sorrow and fear till it be sick again, is proved by the words of our Savior, where He says: 'The whole have no need of the Physician, but the sick.' (Lk. 5:31) And they in the Acts were pricked in conscience for their woeful estate before they came to Peter to ask how they might be healed, but then they came to him and the other apostles (though they had railed on them before) and said, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' (Acts 2:37) As if they should have said: 'In this our distress and despairing in ourselves, what help can you minister unto us or ease unto our souls?' This contrition and sorrow is one of the three things which help to make the evil heart good. And yet this, without the other two things, is nothing to this purpose, but fit only to raise up flashes and fears of hell to the tormenting of the conscience and the holding of it in slavery and bondage, for which cause, it is called of the apostle: 'the spirit of bondage.' (Rom. 8:15) But this [contrition and sorrow], being rightly used, makes a most direct way to the renewing and changing of the heart, that it may be good.

To proceed therefore, the second thing required to make the heart good, is faith unfeigned: that the afflicted mind may see and believe its sins to be pardoned, to the easing and quieting of itself, which then stands in need of, and most earnestly desires pardon. The Lord has given a free grant of pardon unto such as are thus prepared for it, by earnest desiring it. In the forementioned place, the Lord says, 'I am a physician for the sick,' (Lk. 5:31) and in another place, 'I will give the water of life unto such as thirst,' (Jn. 7:37) which, the sick and troubled conscience hearing, counts it the happiest and most

welcome tidings that could be brought unto it. And so by due and advised considering of the pardon, the person lays hold of it, though weakly and by little and little, the Lord enabling the party. And so he believes that it is as effectually offered to him as to any of God's children that have already embraced it. And this mightily works both to ease and quiet, and also to quicken [enliven] him who was before so cast down and troubled.

And thus to pass to the third thing requisite to the reforming and rectifying of the heart that the true fear of God may proceed from thence, the party being thus persuaded of the love of God, the free remission of sin and what unlooked for contentment he has thereby, breaks forth into the praise of God with admiring his kindness, and says, 'What thanks shall I give unto the Lord for his unspeakable mercy unto me? What shall I offer unto the Lord for this his great goodness?' And so he, being constrained by the love of God so shed into his heart, is persuaded and enabled in good sort to go about the duty which God requires: endeavoring and purposing to walk before Him in uprightness and innocency forever after. And this desire of his (not being frothy and rash, stirred up more of painful fear, as in many wicked ones it is, but proceeding from faith, which works by love, and from the certainty of the favor of God assured to him by the Holy Ghost) is not a sudden passion in him (which is hot and fervent for the present only), but (coming from so good a foundation and ground) sanctifies him effectually by working a dislike of evil (because it is evil) and a hearty and unfeigned love of all goodness.

This grace being thus wrought in him, is the third thing required to the changing of the heart and turning of it unto God. And this must go with faith, as we are taught in the Epistle to the Corinthians, where it says, 'Seeing we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and grow up to full holiness in the fear of God.' (2 Cor. 7:1) With this agrees that of St. John, that if we have the hope, which is the daughter of faith, we 'purge ourselves from sin' (1 John 3:3) as it comes to our sight.

Thus I have showed what graces of God must necessarily be planted in the heart that it may bring forth this fruit (I mean the fear of God) and so that it may become such

a heart as God here wishes the people, when He says, 'Oh that there were such a heart in them.' Now, that the Christian reader may not be deceived in judging whether he has such an heart or not, I will add some caveats about these three properties which make the heart good, that he, examining and observing them, may see whether he have them or not.

And to begin, let him know, that about the first of them, which is a prick or wound of conscience, and fear of God's displeasure for the same, I give these two caveats or watch words: The one is this, (1) that if God press our consciences with the powerful preaching of his Word and accuse and arrest us thereby, that we in no way resist that work of grace, but submit ourselves thereto, seeing He uses it to do so to them whom He will save; the other is, (2) that being arrested thus by Him in any way, we despair not. In both of these we might likely easily offend, if we should not take this warning and watchword.

Both are very necessary. For, as we are ready to run to extremities in all other things rather than to keep a mean (that which is commendable between both), so do we easily incline thereto in these respects: for either men are sly and subtle to shun all sorrow and check of conscience for sin, or, if they can no longer, they are ready to despair. In the first they may fitly be compared to them who are taken with sickness and yet will bear it out too long, as though they would drive it away by ill entertaining it rather than to betake themselves to their chamber or to fall into the physician's hands. Even so will they wind out of God's hands, I say, rather than being held under fear and grief. In the last they are like to him, who, being apprehended upon stealing some twelve-penny matter, fails, without any examining, to confess that he has stolen a horse, and so brings himself into peril of his life. So these men, if they once be checked in their conscience justly (whereby they ought to accuse themselves and bewail their sin with hope of pardon), fail to remember many other of their faults and so cast off all hope of forgiveness, so they despair. For as men are very hardly brought to yield to any wounding of their conscience (be it never so just), so if they must be thus brought, commonly they have no stay but go

too far. Herein they are constrained to cry out that they are damned, and so lie long in woe and torment, where they need not. These two things therefore regard the first point, namely, the prick of conscience.

About the second, which is faith, these two caveats are to be marked: The one, (1) be sure that a man seeking faith (for no other shall find it) believe not too hastily and rashly, that is, without warrant of the Scripture and Word of God; the other, (2) that having warrant, he refuse not to believe, neither reason against it, but apply it to himself and resist doubting. Both are alike necessary: the first for the bold and such as feel their sin to be no great burden to their conscience, and yet of all others are most ready to affirm that they believe in Jesus Christ, whom He Himself flatly denies, saying, 'I came not to call the righteous,' (that is, such as feel as little burden of their sin as if they were righteous) 'but sinners' (who feel the burden of their sin as a debtor does his debt) 'unto repentance.'

The second caveat is as necessary for the afflicted conscience, who, though he have a right to the promise by Christ's free grant, yet through weakness and lack of experience, is held from believing and clasping about it, and all because he does not duly consider his liberty and the warrant that he has from Christ for his so doing. Wherein (although I deny not but that God's providence rules), yet the party offends, for he does not embrace that which is freely given him by God by the means thereof; he cannot praise and be thankful to God for it.

About the third point that is necessarily required to make the heart good, which is sanctification, these two watch words are to be received: (1) that he of whom we speak do love goodness and loathe evil, not in some one or few instances (lest he deceive himself about it), but in all cases; nor in private respects,² but because it is evil and hated of God; (2) that these two things, namely, to loathe and love, be constantly settled in him for continuance.

² [That is, for personal reasons]

The reason of both is manifest. In the former case: if one sin should be loathed and another loved, some disliked and shamed and others delighted in and embraced, what could be more ridiculous and further off from the nature of true repentance? For the offence to men and the dishonor which might arise to God thereby in some few evil actions could not be satisfied nor answered by many good actions. This is a thing worthy to be noted, seeing as many take liberty against their conscience to do what they desire to do and yet desire to be counted as repentant persons as well as the best. This be said of the first of these two caveats.

For the second: if a man should be very forward in abhorring sin at the first, but afterward should grow slothful and careless and make no conscience of wicked desires, and break out into looseness of heart, this were enough to blemish his sanctification howsoever sound it might have seemed, if not to bewray it to have been mere hypocrisy. This of the two might be thought most likely.

Thus I have said that which I thought meet of this matter, to help him that desires to attain such a heart which brings forth the fear of God, even that which God requires. And seeing thus much is necessary (and no less) to get such a heart (namely, to have it broken, healed again by faith and mortified) and seeing so great heed is to be taken that all these be wrought in the heart aright and indeed, all may see: good reason why God wishes such a heart to be in all those who would be accepted of Him, what a rich jewel and treasure such a heart is, and (by necessary consequence) how ill it will go with all such as be without it.

The Second Sermon upon the Same Text

Deut. 5:28-29

“Then the Lord heard the voice of your words,
when you spoke unto me: and the Lord said unto me,
I have heard the voice of the words of this people,
which they have spoken unto you:
they have well said all that they have spoken.

Oh that there were such a heart in them to fear me,
and to keep all my commandments always;
that it might go well with them,
and with their children forever.”

I showed last of all what a jewel such a good heart is and in what a woeful and dangerous estate they are in who are without it. They, rather, are the more heavy that it is not regarded. This is too common, as most people are foolish and weigh nothing thoroughly if it agree not with their appetite. Yet, to speak as the truth is: whatsoever wit, eloquence, or learning be in any, whatsoever nobility, birth, or dignity, whatsoever manhood and stomach, wealth, or beauty, they are all as nothing without this heart (which I have mentioned) to make a man happy or to commend him to God. Nay, I say more: whatsoever show of religion be in any, as that he could speak out of the Scripture plentifully, if he could allege all authorities out of the Word of God and of [the Church] fathers, yea, if he could possibly speak with the tongues of angels and had not this, even such a heart as God wishes to be in them that shall please Him, it were nothing. For such

a one should be but as St. Paul speaks in the like case of love (a fruit of this heart), 'as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.' (1 Cor. 13:1)

And therefore, how much is the estate of such a person to be bewailed as have scarcely any whit of all this which I have now named, and are as far from such a heart as the East is from the West? And to come home to ourselves: How are the people of this age bewitched and blindfolded? That when God has thus spoken, and no good words nor shows of godliness shall do them good unless they have such a heart also (as I have described), they can yet walk merry through the day, although they be destitute of it, even as if they ailed nothing, as though no danger were toward them, but as though they had made a league with hell and a covenant with damnation that they might not come near them? If they think this will excuse them, as that they are ignorant of such points and know no such matter, who cannot tell them again that it is preached amongst them and is as a prince's proclamation which all must take knowledge of? If they will fly to another shelter and say that they have other matters to look after, let them likewise take this for their answer: that they already have their reward. Let those other matters be their comfort and stay, but from God they may look for none.

Now let us proceed with the rest of God's words to this people. 'Oh that there were such a heart that they did fear me,' etc. Here you may see to what end such a heart is wished, even to breed God's fear. For God plainly teaches that there cannot be in any the fear of God without it. This let us consider a little of particularly. We all know with what scorn and detestation this speech would be rejected of those that scarcely profess the Gospel, if the gravest divine in the greatest advisedness should utter it, that the fear of God is not in them. All, even the worst, are so strongly persuaded that they fear God. And therefore they will be ready to say it were pity they should live, if they did not so.

And yet behold, without such a heart (as has been spoken of), which also is the hardest thing in the world to attain to, without that, I say, God Himself being witness, the fear of God is not in them, but far from them. For from whence should it come? Is it a sudden passion of the heart that rises and falls? or that with the tide, it ebbs and flows?

Is it not rather a sanctified affection which continues (even as the heart is sanctified) in which it grows? And as there needs to be choice ground, well fitted and prepared, for this precious seed and fruit to be sown and planted in, so the heart has need to be made good ground, in which this rare fruit (I mean, the fear of God) should grow and be nourished.

And that none may marvel that I speak thus, let all further know that this fear of God is such a gift of God as by the which a man is preserved and kept from evil, neither dares he that has that to come near it. Therefore when the Lord spoke of Job and commended him for fearing God, he added this: that he eschewed evil also. This will more lively appear by a similitude or two drawn from common experience for this purpose. Note what force there is in natural fear. The blind and superstitious people in the time of Popery³ were made so afraid of spirits walking that they dared not go through a churchyard in the fearful time of the night, and he that carried a great sum of money dared not pass alone by the woods and mountains. So he that is well seasoned with the fear of God, dares not drink up the draft and commit the sins of the times in the which he lives, but above all things does carefully avoid them. And he that shall live among the common sort of bad people and will not be like unto them, nor dares to taste of their dainties, had need to be well armed and to have his heart well fenced against them.

And seeing that the fear of God is such a grace, and has such force in whomsoever it dwells, I may by this, as a second argument, conclude that the common professors of the Gospel and such as draw near to God with their bodies, having their hearts far from Him, have not his fear in them. They not only they make no question in matters they doubt of to be evil (for they rush and break through them boldly), but also in things which are apparently wicked, they do the same and neither blank nor blush at it when they have done it. The fear of God, however, brings forth most contrary effects, as has been showed.

³ [Less than a hundred years before this was written in England]

Now let us hear of another fruit which comes from such a heart and from the fear of God jointly together: This is a good and godly life, and a keeping of God's commandments. For so the Lord says, 'Oh, that there were such a heart in them, that they did fear Me and keep all my commandments always.' Which to do, what is it else but to lead a godly and Christian life? For as the fear of God proceeds from such a heart as I have spoken of, so a godly life comes from both. For they breed not dumpishness, deadness and melancholy (as the wicked world imagines), but a holy care and desire to please God in all things. Neither take they away delight from a man in doing the duties of this life, but enable and strengthen him rather to do them in good sort.

Such a life goes with the fear of God. And though I mean (as the Lord also does) no perfection by the keeping of his commandments, but an endeavor to keep them (1 Chron. 28:7), nor any other life than is accompanied with infirmities, and that such a one as without a constant watch may break forth sometimes into dangerous offences; yet I mean such a life as endeavors to keep all the commandments of God (in omitting evil and doing good) as well as any one of them in particular, and in the same to persevere and abide, as well as to begin. This grace, we must know, is granted by God to be enjoyed of such as delight in it and have it in great price even in this life, whereby they may shine as lights unto others, which is a rich portion in so wicked a world as this is. Yet, few hasten to be acquainted with it.

But how safe and sweet a life it is and how free from many great calamities wherewith the contrary life is filled, another place fitter for it shall declare and testify. Only let this be granted (which cannot be denied), the words of the text so clearly proving it without any straining of them, that it is no godly life in which there is not conscience made of the particular actions of it. Neither is the fear of God there where there is not a faithful endeavor and laboring to keep all his commandments constantly; for so it is in the text ('all my commandments,' and always). But this point I pass over more briefly and press it not at large, seeing in other places I handle it more fully. And thus much of

the second part of the text, namely: what God wishes unto the people; and also of the second effect of a good heart, namely: a good life.

Now follows the third part of the text, in which He sets down the fruit of such a heart and life. That is twofold: one redounding to the parties, in whom they are, the other to their posterity and children. And the blessing annexed is the same to both: prosperity and welfare, both temporal and eternal. For so He says: 'That it might go well with them and their children forever.' The Lord would have us know that all in whom there is such a heart (that they do fear God and endeavor to keep his commandments always), shall prosper and be well-liking in that course. For by saying, 'It shall go well with them,' his meaning is: they shall see God's blessing accompany them in their course of life and they shall confess it to be to their exceedingly good-liking, so that, as in no other way, they could find the like by many degrees.

And yet, this is not to be understood of outward prosperity, peace and welfare in riches, honor and the such-like simply (whereof the godly, for the most part, are void, and this hungry scrambling world will keep them far enough off from them), but conditionally, so far as they be good for God's children. And yet this is no cause of grief to them either, that they should be less wedded to this world, God providing better for them. But God principally means hereby that He will make their life pleasing and comfortable to them with inward peace and gladness of heart, which far surmounts the other. And yet, as He sees it expedient, they shall have sufficiency of the other also.

All men much desire peace even with men. They find malice and contention, with the unquietness that goes with it, to be tedious, troublesome and unwelcome to them. Even outward peace they embrace. And so we are willed by the author to the Hebrews, saying, 'Follow peace with all men,' (Heb. 12:16) so as it goes with holiness,' as if he should say: although it fly from you, yet let it not go, but pursue it till you obtain it. For it is a singular gift of God to live without fear by men, one man being, usually, as the proverb says, 'a wolf,' nay, a devil to another. But if men had as good insight into the worth and price of inward peace (namely to be without fear of God's displeasure and the

burden thereof, and what is the liberty and holy security of his beloved ones), they would much more desire that, yea, although they lacked all which a man may lack having it.

Oh! to be without fear of condemnation, the Judgment Day, and of the day of death! whose sting being plucked out is not fearful to God's people. And contrariwise, to be in that account with the Lord that nothing shall be lacking which is good for them (for so the prophet says, 'The Lord is my shepherd therefore shall I lack nothing,' Ps. 23:1), we may continually wonder that God will be so bountiful to 'love them here to the end' (Jn. 13:1) and afterwards to 'receive them to glory'. (Ps. 73:14) Yet, when I have said what I can of this matter, that we may know by a little what the whole means in some sort, I must leave it raw and imperfect.

But hear in few words what the Scripture speaks to this purpose: 'He that walks uprightly,' says Solomon, 'walks boldly,' (Prov. 10:9) and therefore safely. St. Paul speaking of the like, says, 'He that walks after this rule, peace shall be upon him.' (Gal. 6:16) St. Peter: 'The eyes of the Lord are ever over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil,' and 'Who is he that shall harm you, if you follow that which is good?' (1 Pet. 3:12) For such shall see good days, that is: lead a happy and blessed life.

But while I thus speak, casting down all pomp of the world at the feet of godliness, as it were, methinks somewhat from here is to be answered such as object thus: 'What, is there such gain in godliness? Is it an estate so highly to be magnified? Surely then the wise men of the world are deceived, who count it the greatest bane to their pleasures.' Answer: I say it is a bane to sinful pleasures, with which, what wise man would meddle or have to do with such? But godliness seasons our lawful delights and brings them into their kind so that they become sweet and pleasant without any danger (as roses in a posy, rather than growing upon pricks). Whereas pleasures, not being joined with godliness, are no better than poison. And as godliness makes God's chastisements to be easily born, so it makes prosperity doubly pleasant. Oh! great is the gain of godliness! 'which has the promises of this life and of the life to come!' (1 Tim. 4:8)

Therefore the estate of all such who are strangers to it is much to be lamented and bewailed! much more they who shun and loathe it, as they who are spoken of in Job, who say to the Lord, 'Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of your ways! Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what profit shall we have if we should pray to Him?' (Job 21:14-15) Oh! this woeful progeny! Who can sufficiently lay forth the vengeance that hangs over it! (1 Pet. 4:18) For if God begin judgment amongst his own, what shall the end of them be that obey not the Gospel? as St. Peter speaks. And if the righteous be scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

What is become of the generations of all those who, in their days, went about to jostle godliness to the walls? Who counted it foolishness and contrariwise, and counted it the greatest happiness to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? as Jezebel, the mistress of persecutors; Korah with his company, the rebel against God's faithful ministers; and Haman the proud, a deadly enemy to all that worshipped God truly? Did not these with their companions find that they met with their match? And did they not leave sufficient testimony behind them that their glory was their shame and that their happiness had been to love that which they loathed and pursued in the servants of God, I mean true godliness?

Even so, the lives of those whom they persecuted is blessed, even as their memory also is. So accordingly shall all they be that follow their steps, as the Lord says here: 'It shall go well with them that fear Me and keep my commandments.' So I conclude this point, marveling at them, who, more than others, think it needs to be more forward this way, and 'therefore speak evil of us because we walk not after the same excess of riot as they do.' (1 Pet. 4:4)

But one thing more is to be marked. To all the prosperity which God's servants shall enjoy in this present life (of which I have said somewhat), this He adds: that it shall also go well with them hereafter, even forever. This saying of his makes up to the full whatsoever might seem to be lacking. For, what can be further desired than that after such a sweet and plentiful partaking of God's benefits (and that in his favor) while we

live here, that yet the best should remain, namely to enjoy 'the fullness of pleasures at God's right hand' (Ps. 16:11) after we go hence, and that 'forever'? yea, and this in the midst of the anguish and torture of the reprobate. For so our Savior says that when the wicked shall be at their wits' end, 'then look up' (says He to his), 'and lift up your heads for your redemption draws near' (Lk. 21:28, meaning that the effects thereof shall then appear). And therefore St. Peter teaches a most singular use of this, that the Lord shall come to judgment in a fearful manner to the wicked, but to the everlasting comfort of his elect (2 Pet. 3:11). This agrees with that which the Lord requires here, saying: seeing these things must be, what manner of persons ought we to be in holy conversation and godliness?

Now it follows to show what the fruit of a godly life is to the children of them that lead it, as I have done already for those who are parents. For such a promise God makes to them (so the Lord speaks here), that it may go well with them and with their children. So that parents, fearing God, do thereby provide well for their children as well as for themselves and derive God's blessings to them abundantly. This promise is confirmed by the Lord in the Second Commandment, where He says that He will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him, and show mercy unto the thousand generations of them that love Him and keep his commandments (Dt. 28:46). This is also further confirmed by the contrary in Deuteronomy, where God speaks thus to the people of Israel: Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and a good heart for the abundance of all things, therefore these curses shall be upon you for signs and wonders (that is, evident signs that He is offended with you) and upon your seed forever.

And if it be so, then it follows that if we love our children, we should endeavor above all things to lead a godly life. This is urged by the Lord at men's hands at entrance into their marriage, that couples should be espoused to Him before they be so one to another. And it may be truly said that they set not by, neither care not for the welfare of their children, who do first regard their own good and welfare of their souls by walking

obediently unto God's commandments themselves. How unnatural a thing it is that any should be the means to bring children into the world in order to send them to hell? And that they should be so pitiless as to cast their poor shiftless progeny upon the curse of God (which is more grievous than if it were upon the sword's point) and that through their sin and wickedness? For, by giving a bad example, they make them like themselves, as much as in them lies. Rather, by a godly care in themselves and a Christian education of their children, they may commonly have the fruit thereof in their children, and (by the blessing of God) they be religious also. So it is a thousand to one, if by the profaneness of themselves, the children become faithful and good Christians. But if the children do faithful and good Christians, it is no thanks to them; they did as much as in them lay to make them prove otherwise.

Whereas many of them will be ready to object that the children will be unruly and disordered howsoever they bring them up in the fear of God and in good instruction, yea, though they be careful also themselves to walk uprightly in their whole course before them, they may be answered that it falls not out oft to be so. But we should trust God for that, and commit the success to Him by doing our duties conscionably towards them. And if it please God that the means shall not always take effect (partly lest we should ascribe the good success to ourselves and so take the glory from Him, and partly for other causes unknown to us), let us leave God's secrets unto Himself. There shall be always cause enough why God does so and cause enough to justify Him, seeing few are so careful about the good education of their children but that they may be justly charged with default in that way.

This be said of the fruit that shall follow the godly life of parents in their children: that they shall prosper and it shall go well with them, as with their parents and in respect of others who live among them. The best of all, though, is hereafter, when they go hence. For they shall be received with their parents into the paradise of God, into a habitation not made with hands, but everlasting. Our Lord Jesus is gone before to prepare a place

for them and all his, to the which He vouches safe to bring us, even speedily. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be ascribed all honor, praise and thanks forevermore.

The End