

The Portion of the Wicked

A Sermon by Jonathan Edwards

Romans ii. 8, 9.

But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.

It is the drift of the apostle in the three first chapters of this epistle, to show that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin, and therefore cannot be justified by works of law, but only by faith in Christ. In the first chapter he had shown that the Gentiles were under sin: in this he shows that the Jews also are under sin, and that however severe they were in their censures upon the Gentiles, yet they themselves did the same things; for which the apostle very much blames them: "Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same things." And he warns them not to go on in such a way, by forewarning them of the misery to which they will expose themselves by it, and by giving them to understand, that instead of their misery being less than that of the Gentiles, it would be the greater, for God's distinguishing goodness to them above the Gentiles. The Jews thought that they should be exempted from future wrath, because God had chosen them to be his peculiar people. But the apostle informs them that there should be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man; not only to the Gentiles, but to every soul; and to the Jews first and chiefly, when they did evil, because their sins were more aggravated.

In the text we find,

1. A description of wicked men; in which may be observed those qualifications of wicked men which have the nature of a cause, and those which have the nature of an effect.

Those qualifications of wicked men here mentioned that have the nature of a cause, are their being *contentious*, and *not obeying the truth*, but *obeying unrighteousness*. By their being contentious, is meant their being contentious against the truth, their quarrelling with the gospel, their finding fault with its declarations and offers. Unbelievers find many things

in the ways of God at which they stumble, and by which they are offended. They are always quarrelling and finding fault with one thing or another, whereby they are kept from believing the truth and yielding to it. Christ is to them a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence. They do not obey the truth, that is, they do not yield to it, they do not receive it with faith. That yielding to the truth and embracing it, which there is in saving faith, is called *obeying*, in Scripture. Rom. vi. 17. "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Heb. v. 9. "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Rom. i. 5. "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name." But they obey unrighteousness instead of yielding to the gospel, they are under the power and dominion of sin, and are slaves to their lusts and corruptions. It is in those qualifications of wicked men that their wickedness radically consists; their unbelief and opposition to the truth, and their slavish subjection to lust, are the foundation of all wickedness. Those qualifications of wicked men, which have the nature of an effect, are their doing evil. This is the least of their opposition against the gospel, and of their slavish subjection to their lusts; that they do evil. Those wicked principles are the foundation, and their wicked practice is the superstructure; those were the root, and this is the fruit.

2. The punishment of wicked men, in which may be also noticed the cause and the effect. Those things mentioned in their punishment that have the nature of a cause, are *indignation* and *wrath*; *i.e.* the indignation and wrath of God. It is the anger of God that will render wicked men miserable; they will be the subjects of divine wrath, and hence will arise their whole punishment. Those things in their punishment that have the nature of an effect, are *tribulation* and *anguish*. Indignation and wrath in God, will work extreme sorrow, trouble, and anguish of heart, in them.

Doctrine

Indignation, wrath, misery, and anguish of soul, are the portion that God has allotted to wicked men.

Every one of mankind must have the portion that belongs to him. God allots to each one his portion; and the portion of the wicked is nothing but wrath, and distress, and anguish of soul. Though they may enjoy a few empty and vain pleasures and delights, for a few days while they stay in this world, yet that which is allotted to them by the Possessor and Governor of all things to be their portion, is only indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. This is not the portion that wicked men choose; the portion that they choose is worldly happiness, yet it is the portion that God carves out for them; it is the portion that they in effect choose for themselves. For they choose those things that naturally and necessarily lead to it, and those that they are plainly told, times without number, will issue in it. Prov. viii. 36. "But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death." But whether they choose it or not, this will and must be the portion to all eternity of all who live and die wicked men. Indignation and wrath shall pursue them as long as they live in this world, shall drive them out of the world, and shall follow them into another world; and their wrath and misery shall abide upon them throughout eternity.

The method that I shall take in treating this subject, is to describe the wrath and misery of which wicked men shall be the subjects, both here and hereafter, in the successive parts and periods of it, according to the order of time.

I. I shall describe the wrath that often pursues wicked men in this life. Indignation and wrath often begin with them here.

1. God oftentimes in wrath leaves them to themselves. They are left in their sins, and left to undo themselves, and work out their own ruin; he lets them alone in sin. Hos. iv. 17. "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone." He often leaves them to go great lengths in sin, and does not afford them that restraining grace that he does to others. He leaves them to their own blindness, so that they always remain ignorant of God and Christ, and of the things that belong to their peace. They are sometimes left to hardness of heart, to be stupid and senseless, so that nothing will ever thoroughly awaken them. They are left to their own hearts' lusts, to continue in some wicked practices all their days. Some are left to their covetousness, some to drunkenness, some to uncleanness, some to a proud, contentious, and envious spirit, and some to a spirit of finding fault and quarrelling with God. God leaves them to their folly, to act exceedingly foolishly, to delay and put off the concerns of their

souls from time to time, never to think the present time the best, but always to keep it at a distance, and foolishly to continue flattering themselves with hopes of long life, and to put far away the evil day, and to bless themselves in their hearts, and say. "I shall have peace, though I add drunkenness to thirst." Some are so left that they are miserably hardened and senseless, when others all around them are awakened, and greatly concerned, and inquire what they shall do to be saved.

Sometimes God leaves men to a fatal backsliding for a mis-improvement of the strivings of his Spirit. They are let alone, to backslide perpetually. Dreadful is the life and condition of those who are thus left of God. We have instances of the misery of such in God's holy word, particularly of Saul and Judas. Such are, sometimes, very much left to the power of Satan to tempt them, to hurry them on in wicked courses, and exceedingly to aggravate their own guilt and misery.

2. Indignation and wrath are sometimes exercised towards them in this world, by their being cursed in all that concerns them. They have this curse of God following them in everything. They are cursed in all their enjoyments. If they are in prosperity, it is cursed to them; if they possess riches, if they have honour, if they enjoy pleasure, there is the curse of God that attends it. Psalm xcii. 7. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they may be destroyed forever.

There is a curse of God that attends their ordinary food: every morsel of bread which they eat, and every drop of water which they drink. Psalm lxi. 22. "Let their table become a snare before them; and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap." They are cursed in all their employments, in whatsoever they put their hands to; when they go into the field to labour, or are at work at their respective trades. Deut. xxviii. 16. "Cursed shall thou be in the city, and cursed shall thou be in the field." The curse of God remains in the houses where they dwell, and brimstone is scattered in their habitations. Job xviii. 15. The curse of God attends them in the afflictions which they meet with, whereas the afflictions that good men meet with, are fatherly corrections, and are sent in mercy. The afflictions which wicked men meet with are in wrath, and come from God as an enemy, and are the foretaste of their everlasting punishment. The curse of God attends them also in their spiritual enjoyments and opportunities, and it would have been better for them not to have been born in a land of light. Their having the Bible and the Sabbath is only to aggravate

their guilt and misery. The word of God when preached to them is a savour of death unto death. Better would it be for them, if Christ had never come into the world, if there had never been any offer of a Saviour. Life itself is a curse to them; they live only to fill up the measure of their sins. What they seek in all the enjoyments, and employments, and concerns of life, is their own happiness; but they never obtain it; they never obtain any true comfort, all the comforts which they have are worthless and unsatisfying. If they lived a hundred years with never so much of the world in their possession, their life is all filled up with vanity. All that they have is vanity of vanities, they find no true rest for their souls, they do but feed on the east wind, they have no real contentment.

Whatever outward pleasures they may have, their souls are starving. They have no true peace of conscience, they have nothing of the favour of God. Whatever they do, they live in vain, and to no purpose; they are useless in the creation of God, they do not answer the end of their being. They live without God, and have not the presence of God, nor any communion with him. But on the contrary, all that they have and all that they do, does but contribute to their own misery, and render their future and everlasting state the more dreadful. The best of wicked men live but miserable and wretched lives, with all their prosperity; their lives are most undesirable, and whatever they have, the wrath of God abides upon them.

3. After a time they must die. Eccles. ix. 3. "This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." Death is a far different thing when it befalls wicked men, from what it is when it befalls good men; to the wicked it is in execution of the curse of the law, and of the wrath of God. When a wicked man dies, God cuts him off in wrath, he is taken away as by a tempest of wrath, he is driven away in his wickedness. Prov. xiv. 32. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death." Job xviii. 18. "He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world." Job xxvii. 21. "The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, and as a storm, hurleth him out of his place." Though wicked men, while they live, may live in worldly prosperity, yet they cannot live here always, but they must die. The place that knoweth him shall know him no more; and the eye that hath seen him shall see him no more in the land of the living.

Their bounds are unchangeably set, and when they are come to those bounds they must go, and must leave all their worldly good things. If they have lived in outward glory their glory shall not descend after them; they get nothing while they live that they can carry away. Eccles. v. 15. "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand." He must leave all his substance unto others. If they are at ease and quietness, death will put an end to their quietness, will spoil all their carnal mirth, and will strip them of all their glory. As they came naked into the world, so naked must they return, and go as they came. If they have laid up much goods for many years, if they have laid in stores, as they hope, for great comfort and pleasure, death will cut them off from all. Luke xii. 16, &c. "And he spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? and he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided." If they have many designs and projects in their breasts for promoting their outward prosperity and worldly advantage, when death comes, it cuts all off at one blow. Psalm cxlvi. 4. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." And so whatever diligence they have had in seeking their salvation, death will disappoint all such diligence, it will not wait for them to accomplish their designs and fulfil their schemes. If they have pleased, and pampered, and adorned their bodies, death will spoil all their pleasure and their glory; it will change their countenances to a pale and ghastly aspect. Instead of their gay apparel and beautiful ornaments, they shall have only a winding-sheet; their house must be the dark and silent grave; and that body which they deified, shall turn to loathsome rottenness, shall be eaten of worms, and turn to dust. Some wicked men die in youth, wrath pursues them, and soon overtakes them; they are not suffered to live out half their days. Job xxxvi. 14. "They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean." Psalm lv. 23. "But thou, O God, shall bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." They are sometimes overtaken in the very midst of their sin and vanity; and death puts a sudden end to all their youthful pleasures. They are often stopped in the midst of a career in

sin, and then if their hearts cleave ever so fast to those things, they must be rent from them; they have no other good but outward good; but then they must eternally forsake it, they must close their eyes for ever on all that has been dear and pleasant to them here.

4. Wicked men are oftentimes the subjects of much tribulation and anguish of heart on their death-beds. Sometimes the pains of body are very extreme and dreadful; and what they endure in those agonies and struggles for life, after they are past speaking, and when body and soul are rending asunder, none can know. Hezekiah had an awful sense of it; he compares it to a lion's breaking all his bones. Isa. xxxviii. 12, 13. "Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off as a weaver my life; he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me." But this is but little to what is sometimes undergone by wicked men in their souls when they are on their death-beds. Death appears sometimes with an exceedingly terrible aspect to them; when it comes and stares them in the face, they cannot bear to behold it. It is always so, if wicked men have notice of the approach of death, and have reason and conscience in exercise, and are not either stupid or distracted. When this king of terrors comes to show himself to them, and they are called forth to meet him, O how do they dread the conflict! But meet him they must: "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it." Death comes to them with all his dreadful armour, and his sting not taken away; and it is enough to fill their souls with torment that cannot be expressed.

It is an awful thing for a person to be lying on a sick bed, to be given over by physicians, to have friends stand weeping round the bed as expecting to part with him; and in such circumstances as those, to have no hope, to be without an interest in Christ, and to have the guilt of his sins lying on his soul, to be going out of the world without his peace being made with God, to stand before his holy judgment-seat in all his sins, without any thing to plead, or answer. To see the only opportunity to prepare for eternity coming immediately to an end, after which there shall be no more time of probation, but his case will be unalterably fixed, and there never will be another offer of a Saviour; for the soul to come just to the very edge of the boundless gulf of eternity, and insensibly to launch forth into it, without

any God or Saviour to take care of it; to be brought to the edge of the precipice, and to see himself falling down into the lake of fire and brimstone, and to feel that he has no power to stop himself: who can tell the shrinkings and misgivings of heart in such a case? How does he endeavour to hang back, but yet he must go on; it is in vain to wish for further opportunity! O how happy does he think those that stand about him, who may yet live, may have their lives continued longer, when he must go immediately into an endless eternity! How does he wish it might be with him as with those who have a longer time to prepare for their trial! but it must not be so. Death, sent on purpose to summon him, will give him no release nor respite: he must go before the holy judgment-seat of God as he is, to have his everlasting state determined according to his works. To such persons, how differently do things appear from what they did in the time of health, and when they looked at death as at a distance! How differently does sin look to them now; those sins which they used to make light of! How dreadful is it now to look back and consider how they have spent their time, how foolish they have been, how they have gratified and indulged their lusts, and lived in ways of wickedness; how careless they have been, and how they have neglected their opportunities and advantages, how they have refused to hearken to counsel, and have not repented in spite of all the warnings that were given! Prov. v. 11,12,13. "And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!"

How differently does the world appear to them now! They used to set much by it, and have their hearts taken up with it; but what does it avail them now? how insignificant are all their riches! Prov. xi. 4. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." What different thoughts have they now of God, and of his wrath! They used to make light of the wrath of God, but how terrible does it now appear! How does their heart shrink at the thoughts of appearing before such a God!

How different are their thoughts of time! Now time appears precious; and O what would they not give for a little more time! Some have in such circumstances been brought to cry out, O, a thousand worlds for an hour, for a *moment*! And how differently does eternity now appear! now it is awful indeed. Some have been brought on a death-bed to cry out, O that word Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! What a dismal gulf does it appear to them, when they

come to the very brink! They often at such times cry for mercy, and cry in vain. God called, and they would not hear. "They set at nought his counsels, and would none of his reproofs. Now also he laughs at their calamity, and mocks when their fear cometh." They beseech others to pray for them, they send for ministers, but all often fails them. They draw nearer and nearer to death, and eternity comes more and more immediately in view. And who can express their horror, when they feel themselves clasped in the cold arms of death, when their breath fails more and more, and their eyes begin to be fixed and grow dim! That which is then felt by them, cannot be told nor conceived. Some wicked men have much of the horror and despair of hell in their last sickness. Eccles. v. 17. "All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness."

II. I shall describe the wrath that attends wicked men hereafter.

1. The soul, when it is separated from the body, shall be cast down into hell. There is without doubt a particular judgment by which every man is to be tried at death, beside the general judgment: for the soul, as soon as it departs from the body, appears before God to be judged. Eccl. xii. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it:" that is, to be judged and disposed of by him. Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." But this particular judgment is probably no such solemn transaction as that which will be at the Day of Judgment; the soul must appear before God, but not in the manner that men shall appear at the end of the world. The souls of wicked men shall not go to heaven to appear before God, neither shall Christ descend from heaven for the soul to appear before him; neither is it to be supposed, that the soul shall be carried to any place where there is some special symbol of the divine presence, in order to be judged. But as God is everywhere present, so the soul shall be made immediately sensible of his presence. Souls in a separate state shall be sensible of the presence of God and of his operations in another manner than we now are. All separate spirits may be said to be before God: the saints are in his glorious presence, and the wicked in hell are in his dreadful presence; they are said to be tormented in the presence of the Lamb. Rev. xiv. 10. "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." So the soul of a wicked man, at its departure from the body, will be made immediately sensible that it is

before an infinitely holy and dreadful God and his own final Judge; and will then see how terrible a God he is, he will see how holy a God he is, how infinitely he hates sin; he will be sensible of the greatness of God's anger against sin, and how dreadful is his displeasure. Then will he be sensible of the dreadful majesty and power of God, and how fearful a thing it is to fall into his hands. Then the soul shall come naked with all its guilt, and in all its filthiness, a vile, loathsome, abominable creature, an enemy to God, a rebel against him, with the guilt of all its rebellion and disregard of God's commands, and contempt of his authority, and slight of the glorious gospel, before God as its Judge. This will fill the soul with horror and amazement.

It is not to be supposed that this judgment will be attended with any voice or any such outward transactions as the judgment at the end of the world; but God shall manifest himself in his strict justice inwardly, to the immediate view of the soul, and to the sense and apprehension of the conscience. This particular judgment probably will not hinder, but that the soul shall be cast into hell immediately when it goes from the body; as soon as ever the soul departs from the body, the soul shall know what its state and condition are to be to all eternity. As long as there is life, there is hope. The man, while he lived, though his case was exceedingly dreadful, yet had some hope; when he lay dying, there was a possibility of salvation. But when once the union between soul and body is broken, then that moment the case becomes desperate, and there remains no hope, no possibility. On their death-beds, perhaps, they had some hope that God would pity them and hear their cries, or that he would hear the prayers of their pious friends for them; they were ready to lay hold on something which they had at some time met with, some religious affection or some change in their external conduct, and to flatter themselves that they were then converted; they were able to indulge some degree of hope from the moral lives that they had lived, that God would have respect to them and save them; but as soon as ever the soul parts from the body, from that moment the case will be absolutely determined, there will then be an end for ever to all hope, to every thing that men hang upon in this life; the soul then shall know certainly that it is to be miserable to all eternity, without any remedy. It shall see that God is its enemy; it shall see its Judge clothed in his wrath and vengeance. Then its misery will begin, it will that moment be swallowed up in despair; the great gulf will be fixed between it and happiness, the door of mercy will be for ever shut up, the irrevocable sentence will be

passed. Then shall the wicked know what is before them. Before, the soul was in distress for fear how it would be; but now, all its fears shall come upon it; it shall come upon it as a mighty flood, and there will be no escaping. The soul was full of amazement before through fear; but now, who can conceive the amazement that fills it that moment when all hope is cut off, and it knows that there never will be any difference!

When a good man dies, his soul is conducted by holy angels to heaven. Luke xvi. 22. "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried." So we may well suppose that when a wicked man dies, his soul is seized by wicked angels; that they are round his bed ready to seize the miserable soul as soon as it is parted from the body. And with what fierceness and fury do those cruel spirits fly upon their prey; and the soul shall be left in their hands. There shall be no good angels to guard and defend it. God will take no merciful care of it, there is nothing to help it against those cruel spirits that shall lay hold of it to carry it to hell, there to torment it for ever. God will leave it wholly in their hands, and will give it up to their possession, when it comes to die; and it shall be carried down into hell, to the abode of devils and damned spirits. If the fear of hell on a death-bed sometimes fills the wicked with amazement, how will they be overwhelmed when they feel its torments, when they shall find them not only as great but far greater than their fears! They shall find them far beyond what they could conceive of before they felt them; for none know the power of God's anger, but they that experience it. Psal. xc. 11. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath."

Departed spirits of wicked men are doubtless carried to some particular place in the universe, which God has prepared to be the receptacle of his wicked, rebellious, and miserable subjects; a place where God's avenging justice shall be glorified; a place built to be the prison, where devils and wicked men are reserved till the Day of Judgment.

2. Here the souls of wicked men shall suffer extreme and amazing misery in a separate state, until the resurrection. This misery is not indeed their full punishment; nor is the happiness of the saints before the day of judgment their full happiness. It is with the souls of wicked men as it is with devils. Though the devils suffer extreme torment now, yet they do not suffer their complete punishment; and therefore it is said, that they are cast down to hell, and bound in chains. 2 Pet. ii. 4. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them

down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.” Jude 6. “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” They are reserved in the state they are in; and for what are they reserved, but for a greater degree of punishment? and therefore they are said to tremble for fear. James ii. 19. “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble.” Hence when Christ was on earth, the devils were greatly afraid that Christ was come to torment them. Matt. viii. 29. “And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” Mark v. 7. “And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.”

But yet they are there in extreme and inconceivable misery; they are there deprived of all good, they have no rest nor comfort, and they are subject to the wrath of God; God there executes wrath on them without mercy, and they are swallowed up in wrath. Luke xvi. 24. “And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me; and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” Here we are told that, when the rich man died, he lift up his eyes being in torment, and he tells Abraham that he is tormented in a flame; and it seems that the flame was not only about him, but in him; he therefore asks for a drop of water to cool his tongue. This doubtless is to represent to us that they are full of the wrath of God as it were with fire, and they shall there be tormented in the midst of devils and damned spirits; and they shall have inexpressible torment from their own consciences. God’s wrath is the fire that never shall be quenched, and conscience is the worm that never dies. How much do men suffer from horror of conscience sometimes in this world, but how much more in hell! What bitter and tormenting reflections will they have concerning the folly they have been guilty of in their lives, in so neglecting their souls, when they had such an opportunity for repentance; that they went on so foolishly to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, to add to the record of their sins from day to day, to make their misery yet greater and greater; how they have kindled the fires of hell for themselves, and spent their lives in gathering the fuel! They will not be able to help revolving such thoughts in their minds; and how tormenting will they be! And those who go to hell, never can escape thence; there they remain imprisoned till the

day of judgment, and their torments remain continually. Those wicked men who died many years ago, their souls went to hell, and there they are still; those who went to hell in former ages of the world, have been in hell ever since, all the while suffering torment. They have nothing else to spend their time in there, but to suffer torment, they are kept in being for no other purpose; and though they have many companions in hell, yet they are no comfort to them, for there is no friend, no love, no pity, no quietness, no prospect, no hope.

3. The separate souls of the wicked, besides the present misery that they suffer, shall be in amazing fear of their more full punishment at the Day of Judgment. Though their punishment in their separate state be exceedingly dreadful, and far more than they can bear, though it be so great as to sink and crush them, yet this is not all; they are reserved for a much greater and more dreadful punishment at the day of judgment; their torment will then be vastly augmented, and continue in that augmentation to all eternity. Their punishment will be so much greater then, that their misery in this separate state is but as an imprisonment before an execution; they, as well as the devils, are bound in chains of darkness Jude i. 6. "to the judgment of the great day." Separate spirits are called "spirits in prison." 1 Pet. iii. 19. "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." And if the imprisonment be so dreadful, how dreadful indeed will be the execution! When we are under any great pain of body at any time, how do we dread the least addition to it! its continuance is greatly dreaded, much more its increase. How much more will those separate spirits that suffer the torments of hell, dread that augmentation and completing of their torment which there will be at the day of judgment, when what they feel already, is vastly more than they can support themselves; when they shall be as it were begging for one drop of water to cool their tongues, when they would give ten thousand worlds for the least abatement of their misery! How sinking will it be to think that instead of that the day is coming when God shall come forth out of heaven to sentence them to a far more dreadful degree of misery, and to continue them under it for ever! What experience they have of the dreadfulness of God's wrath convinces them fully how terrible a thing his wrath is; they will therefore be exceedingly afraid of that full wrath which he will execute at the Day of Judgment; they will have no hope of escaping it, they will know assuredly that it will come. The fear of this makes the devils, those mighty, proud, and stubborn spirits, to tremble: they believe what is threatened, and therefore tremble. If this fear overcomes them, how much

more will it overwhelm the souls of wicked men! All hell trembles at the thoughts of the Day of Judgment.

4. When the Day of Judgment comes they shall rise to the resurrection of damnation.' When that day comes, all mankind that have died from off the face of the earth shall arise; not only the righteous, but also the wicked. Dan. xii. 2. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Rev. xx. 13. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged, every man according to his works." The damned in hell know not the time when the day of judgment will be, but when the time comes it will be made known, and it will be the most dreadful news that ever was told in that world of misery. It is always a doleful time in hell; the world of darkness is always full of shrieks and doleful cries; but when the news is heard, that the day appointed for the judgment is come, hell will be filled with louder shrieks and more dreadful cries than ever before. When Christ comes in the clouds of heaven to judgment, the news of it will fill both earth and hell with mourning and bitter crying. We read that all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him, and so shall all the inhabitants of hell; and then must the souls of the wicked come up to be united to their bodies, and stand before the Judge. They shall not come willingly, but shall be dragged forth as a malefactor is dragged out of his dungeon to execution. They were unwilling when they died to leave the earth to go to hell; but now they will be much more unwilling to come out of hell to go to the last judgment. It will be no deliverance to them, it will only be a coming forth to their execution. They will hang back, but must come; the devils and damned spirits must come up together. The last trumpet will then be heard, this will be the most terrible sound to wicked men and devils that ever was heard; and not only the wicked, that shall then be found dwelling on the earth, shall hear it, but also those that are in their graves. John v. 28, 29. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation;" and then must the souls of the wicked enter their bodies again, which will be prepared only to be organs of torment and misery. It will be a dreadful sight to them when they come to their bodies again, those bodies which were formerly used by them as the organs and instruments of sin and wickedness, and whose

appetites and lusts they indulged and gratified. The parting of soul and body was dreadful to them when they died, but their meeting again at the resurrection will be more dreadful. They shall receive their bodies loathsome and hideous, agreeably to that shame and everlasting contempt to which they shall arise. As the bodies of the saints shall arise more glorious than when on earth, and shall be like unto Christ's glorious body, so we may well suppose that the bodies of the wicked will arise proportionally more deformed and hideous. Oftentimes in this world a polluted soul is hid in a fine and comely body, but it will not be so then when things shall appear as they are; the form and aspect of the body shall be answerable to the hellish deformity of the soul. Thus shall they rise out of their graves, and shall lift up their eyes, and see the Son of God in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels with him. Then shall they see their Judge in his awful majesty, which will be the most amazing sight to them that ever they saw, and will still add new horrors. That awful and terrible majesty in which he will appear, and the manifestation of his infinite holiness, will pierce their souls. They shall come forth out of their graves all trembling and astonished; fearfulness shall surprise them.

5. Then must they appear before their Judge to give up their account. They will find no mountains or rocks to fall upon them, that can cover them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb; Many of them will see others at that time, who were formerly their acquaintance, who shall appear with glorious bodies, and with joyful countenances and songs of praise, and mounting up as with wings to meet the Lord in the air, while they are left behind. Many shall see their former neighbours and acquaintance, their companions, their brothers, and their wives taken and they left. They shall be summoned to go and appear before the judgment-seat; and go they must, however unwilling; they must stand at Christ's left hand, in the midst of devils and wicked men. This shall again add still further amazement, and will cause their horror still to be in a further degree than ever. With what horror will that company come together! and then shall they be called to their account; then shall be brought to light the hidden things of darkness; then shall all the wickedness of their hearts be made known; then shall be declared the actual wickedness they have been guilty of; then shall appear their secret sins that they have kept hid from the eye of the world; then shall be manifested in their true light those sins that they used to plead for, and to excuse and justify. And then shall all their sins be set forth in all their dreadful aggravations,

all their filthiness will be brought to light to their everlasting shame and contempt. Then it shall appear how heinous many of those things were, that they in their lifetime made light of; then will it appear how dreadful their guilt is in thus ill-treating so glorious and blessed a Saviour. And all the world shall see it, and many shall rise up in judgment against them and condemn them; their companions whom they tempted to wickedness, others whom they have hardened in sin by their example, shall rise up against many of them; and the heathen that have had no advantages in comparison of them, and many of whom have yet lived better lives than they, shall rise up against them; and they shall be called to a special account; the Judge will reckon with them, they shall be speechless, they shall be struck dumb, their own consciences bearing testimony against them, and shall cry aloud against them, for they shall then see how great and terrible a God he is, against whom they have sinned. Then shall they stand at the left hand, while they see others whom they knew on earth sitting at the right hand of Christ in glory, shining forth as the sun, accepted of Christ, and sitting with him to judge and condemn them.

6. Then the sentence of condemnation shall be pronounced by the Judge upon them. Matt. xxv. 41. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This sentence will be pronounced with awful majesty; and there shall be great indignation, and dreadful wrath shall then appear in the Judge, and in his voice, with which he shall pronounce the sentence; and what a horror and amazement will these words strike into the hearts of the wicked, on whom they shall be pronounced! Every word and syllable shall be like the most amazing thunder to them, and shall pierce their souls like the fiercest lightning. The Judge will bid them depart from him; he will drive them from his presence, as exceedingly abominable to him, and he shall give them the epithet *accursed*; they shall be an accursed company, and he will not only bid them depart from his presence, but into everlasting fire, to dwell there as their only fit habitation. And what shows the dreadfulness of the fire, is, that it is prepared for the devil and his angels: they shall lie for ever in the same fire in which the devils, those grand enemies of God, shall be tormented. When this sentence shall be pronounced, there shall be in the vast company at the left hand, tremblings, and mourning, and crying, and gnashing of teeth, in a new manner, beyond all that ever was before. If the devils, those proud and lofty spirits, tremble many ages beforehand at the bare thoughts of this sentence, how will they tremble when it comes to

be pronounced! And how, alas! will wicked men tremble! Their anguish will be aggravated by hearing that blessed sentence pronounced on those who shall be at the right hand: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

7. Then the sentence shall be executed. When the Judge bids them depart, they must go; however loth, yet they must go. Immediately upon the finishing of the judgment and the pronouncing of the sentence, will come the end of the world. The frame of this world shall be dissolved. The pronouncing of that sentence will probably be followed with amazing thunders, that shall rend the heavens, and shake the earth out of its place. 2 Peter iii. 10. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." Then shall the sea and the waves roar, and the rocks shall be thrown down, and the mountains shall rend asunder, and there shall be one universal wreck of this great world. Then shall the heavens be dissolved, and then the earth shall be set on fire. As God in wrath once destroyed the world by a flood of water, so now shall he cause it to be all drowned in a deluge of fire; and the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; 2 Pet. iii. 10.; and that great company of devils and wicked men must then enter into those everlasting burnings to which they are sentenced.

8. In this condition they shall remain throughout the never-ending ages of eternity. Their punishment shall be then complete, and it shall remain in this completion for ever. Now shall all that come upon them which they so long trembled for fear of, while their souls were in a separate state. They will dwell in a fire that never shall be quenched, and here they must wear out eternity. Here they must wear out one thousand years after another, and that without end. There is no reckoning up the millions of years or millions of ages; all arithmetic here fails, no rules of multiplication can reach the amount, for there is no end. They shall have nothing to do to pass away their eternity, but to conflict with those torments; this will be their work for ever and ever; God shall have no other use or employment for them; this is the way that they must answer the end of their being. And they never shall have any rest, nor any atonement, but their torments will hold up to their height, and shall never grow any easier by their being accustomed to them. Time will seem

long to them, every moment shall seem long to them, but they shall never have done with the ages of their torment.

Application

1. Hence what need have we to take care that our foundation for eternity be sure! They who build on a false foundation, are not secure from this misery. They who build up a refuge of lies, will find that their refuge must fail them; their wall that they have daubed with untempered mortar will fall. The more dreadful the misery is, the more need have we to see that we are safe from it; it will be dreadful indeed to be disappointed in such a case. To please ourselves with dreams and vain imaginations of our being the children of God, and of going to heaven, and at last to awake in hell, to see our refuge swept away, and our hope eternally gone, and to find ourselves swallowed up in flames, and to see an endless duration of it before us; how dreadful will this be!

There will be many that will be thus disappointed. Many shall come to the door and shall find it shut, who expected to find it open; and shall knock, but Christ will tell them that he knows them not, and he will bid them depart, and it will be in vain for them to tell Christ what affections they have had, and how religious they were, and how well they were accounted of on earth. They shall have no other answer but, "Depart from me, I know you not, ye that work iniquity." Let us all consider this, and give all diligence, to see that we build sure, if by any means we may at last be found in Christ. Let us see to it that we are indeed well secured from this dreadful misery. What will it avail us to please ourselves with a notion of being converted, and being beloved of God, and what will it avail us to have the good opinion of our neighbours for a few days, if we must at last be cast into hell, and appear at the day of judgment at the left hand, and have our eternal portion with unbelievers? A false hope cannot profit us, it is a thousand times worse than none. And who are more miserable than those who think that God has pardoned their sins, and who expect to have a portion with the righteous hereafter, but are all the while going headlong down into this dreadful misery? What case can be more awful than the case of those who are thus led blindfold to the slaughter; promising themselves a happiness that is never like to come, but on the contrary are sinking into endless tribulation and anguish!

Let everyone therefore, who entertains hope of his own state, see to it, that he be well built; and let him not rest in past attainment, but reach forth towards those things that are before with all his might.

II. Hence we derive an argument for the awakening of ungodly men. This indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, is the portion allotted to you if you continue in your present condition. Thou art the man spoken of; it is to thee that all this misery is assigned by the threatening of God's holy word; it is on thee that this wrath of God abides; thou art now in a state of condemnation to this misery. John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." It is not already executed upon you, but you are already condemned to it; you are not merely exposed to condemnation, but you are under the actual sentence of condemnation. This is the portion that is already allotted to you by the law, and you are under the law and not under grace. This misery is the misery into which you are every day in danger of dropping, you are not safe from it one hour. How soon it may come upon you, you know not; you hang over it by a thread, that is continually growing more and more feeble. This dreadful misery in all its successive parts belongs to you, and is your due. Your friends and your neighbours, and all around you, if they knew what your condition was, might well lift up a loud and bitter cry over you, whenever they behold you, and say, Here is an unhappy being condemned to be given up eternally into the hands of devils to be tormented by them; here is a miserable man who is in danger every day of being swallowed up in the bottomless gulf of woe and misery. Here is a wretched undone creature condemned to lie down for ever in unquenchable fire, and to dwell in everlasting burnings; and he has no interest in a Saviour, he has nothing to defend him, he has nothing wherewith to appease the wrath of an offended God. Here consider two things.

1. You have no reason to question whether those future miseries and torments which are threatened in God's word are realities. Do not flatter yourself with thinking that it may not be so. Say not, How do I know that there is any such misery to be inflicted in another world; how do I know but all is a fable, and that when I come to die there will be an end of me, and that it will be with me as it is with the beasts. Do not say, How do I know but that all those things are only bugbears of man's inventing; how do I know that the Scriptures, that threaten those things, are the word of God; or if he has threatened those things, it may be it

is only to frighten men to keep them to their duty, it may be he never intends to do as he threatens.

I say that there is no ground for any such suspicion, neither is there any reason for it; for that there should be no future punishment is not only contrary to Scripture, but reason. It is a most unreasonable thing to suppose that there should be no future punishment, to suppose that God, who had made man a rational creature, able to know his duty, and sensible that he is deserving punishment when he does it not; should let man alone, and let him live as he will, and never punish him for his sins, and never make any difference between the good and the bad; that he should make the world of mankind and then let it alone, and let men live all their days in wickedness, in adultery, murder, robbery, and persecution, and the like, and suffer them to live in prosperity, and never punish them; that he should suffer them to prosper in the world far beyond many good men, and never punish them hereafter. How unreasonable is it to suppose, that he who made the world, should leave things in such confusion, and never take any care of the government of his creatures, and that he should never judge his reasonable creatures! Reason teaches that there is a God, and reason teaches that if there be, he must be a wise and just God, and that he must take care to order things wisely and justly among his creatures; and therefore it is unreasonable to suppose that man dies like a beast, and that there is no future punishment. And if there be a future punishment, it is unreasonable to suppose that God has not somewhere or other given men warning of it, and revealed to them what kind of punishment they must expect. Will a wise lawgiver keep his subjects in ignorance as to what punishment they must expect for breaking his laws? And if God has revealed it, where is it to be found but in the Scripture; what revelation have we of a future state if it is not there revealed?

Where does God tell mankind what kind of rewards and punishments they must expect, if not here? and it is abundantly manifest by innumerable evidences, that these threatening are the threatenings of God, that this awful book is his revelation. And since God has threatened, there is no room to question whether he will fulfil; for he hath said it, yea, he hath sworn it, that he will repay the wicked to his face according to threatenings, and that he will glorify himself in their destruction, and that this heaven and earth shall pass away. How foolish then is the thought that God may only threaten such punishment to frighten

men, and that he never intends to execute it! For as surely as God is God, he will do as he has said; he will destroy the mountains of iniquity as he has threatened, and there shall be no escaping. How vain are the thoughts of those who flatter themselves that God will not fulfil his threatenings, and that he only frightens and deceives men in them; as though God could in no other way govern the world than by making use of fallacious tricks and deceits to delude his subjects! Those that entertain such thoughts, however they may harden themselves by them for the present, will cherish them but a little while; their experience will soon convince them that God is a God of truth, and that his threatenings are no delusions. They will be convinced that he is a God who will by no means clear the guilty, and that his threatenings are substantial, and not mere shadows, when it will be too late to escape them. Deut. xxix. 18, 19, 20, 21. "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law." Psal. 1. 21. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

2. There is no reason to suspect that possibly ministers set forth this matter beyond what it really is, that possibly it is not so dreadful and terrible as is pretended, and that ministers strain the description of it beyond just bounds. Some may be ready to think so, because it seems to them incredible that there should be so dreadful a misery to any creature; but there is no reason for any such thoughts as these, if we consider,

First. How great a punishment the sins of wicked men deserve. The Scripture teaches us that any one sin deserves eternal death: Rom. vi. 23. "For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." And that it deserves the eternal curse of God. Deut. xxvii. 26. "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them:

and all the people shall say, Amen.” Gal. iii. 10. “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Which things imply that the least sin deserves total and eternal destruction. Eternal death, in the least degree of it, amounts to such a degree of misery as is the perfect destruction of the creature, the loss of all good, and perfect misery; and so does being accursed of God imply it. To be cursed of God, is to be devoted to perfect and ultimate destruction. The Scripture teaches that wicked men shall be punished to their full desert, that they shall pay all the debt.

Secondly. There is no reason to think that ministers describe the misery of the wicked beyond what it is, because the Scripture teaches us that this is one end of ungodly” men, to show the dreadfulness and power of God’s wrath. Rom. ix. 22. “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.” It is often spoken of as part of the glory of God, that he is a terrible and dreadful God. Psal. lxxviii. 35. “O God, thou art terrible and dreadful.” lxvi. 3. “How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee:” and that herein one part of the glory of God is represented as consisting, that it is so dreadful a thing to injure and offend God. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion, the wrath of a man is sometimes dreadful, but the future punishment of ungodly men is to show what the wrath of God is; it is to show to the whole universe the glory of God’s power. 2 Thess. i. 9. “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” And therefore the punishment which we have described is not at all incredible, and there is no reason to think that it has been in the least described beyond what it really is.

Thirdly. The Scripture teaches that the wrath of God on wicked men is dreadful beyond all that we can conceive. Psal. xc. 11. “Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.” As it is but little that we know of God, as we know and can conceive of but little of his power and his greatness, so it is but a little that we know or can conceive of the dreadfulness of his wrath; and therefore there is no reason to suppose that we set it forth beyond what it is. We have rather reason to suppose that after we have said our utmost and thought our utmost, all that we have said or thought is but a faint shadow of the reality.

We are taught that the reward of the saints is beyond all that can be spoken or conceived of. Eph. iii. 20. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." 1 Cor. ii. 9. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And so we may rationally suppose that the punishment of the wicked will also be inconceivably dreadful.

Fourthly. There is no reason to think that we set forth the misery of hell beyond the reality, because the Scripture teaches us that the wrath of God is according to his fear. Psal. xc. 11. This passage asserts that the wrath of God is according to his awful attributes; his greatness and his might, his holiness and power. The majesty of God is exceedingly great and awful, but according to his awfulness, so is his wrath; this is the meaning of the words; and therefore we must conclude that the wrath of God is indeed beyond all expression and signification terrible. How great and awful indeed is his majesty, who has made heaven and earth, and in what majesty will he come to judge the world at the last day! He will come to take vengeance on ungodly men. The sight of this majesty will strike wicked men with apprehensions and fears of destruction.

Fifthly. The description which I have given of the tribulation and wrath of ungodly men, is not beyond the truth, for it is the very description which the Scriptures give of it. The Scriptures represent that the wicked shall be cast into a furnace of fire; not only a fire, but a furnace. Matt. xiii. 42. "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Rev. xx. 15. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Psal. xxi. 8, 9. "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger; the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them."

If, therefore, I have described this misery beyond the truth, then the Scriptures have done the same. It is evident then, that there is no reason to flatter yourselves with such imaginations. If God be true, you shall find the wrath of God, and your future misery, full as great; and not only so, but much greater; you will find that we know but little, and have said but little about it, and that all our expressions are faint in comparison of the reality.

III. Hence may be derived an argument to convince wicked men of the justice of God in allotting such a portion to them. Wicked men, when they hear it declared how awful the

misery is of which they are in danger, often have their hearts lifted up against God for it; it seems to them very hard for God to deal so with any of his creatures. They cannot see why God should be so very severe with wicked men, for their sin and folly for a little while in this world; and when they consider that he has threatened such punishments, they are ready to entertain blasphemous thoughts against him.

I would therefore endeavour to show you how justly you lie exposed to that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, of which you have heard. Particularly I would show,

1st, How just it would be in God for ever to leave you to yourself: it would be most just in God to refuse to be with you, or help you.

You have embraced and refused to let go those things which God hates; you have refused to forsake your lusts, and to abandon those ways of sin that are abominable to him. When God has commanded you to forsake them, how have you refused, and still have retained them, and been obstinate in it! Neither is your heart yet to this very day diverted from sin; but it is dear to you, you allow it the best place in your heart, you place it on the throne there. Would it be any wonder therefore if God should utterly leave you, seeing you will not leave sin? God has often declared his hatred of iniquity; and is it any wonder, that he is not willing to dwell with that which is so odious to him? Is it not reasonable that God should insist that you should part with your lusts in order to your enjoying his presence; and seeing you have so long refused, how just would it be if God should utterly forsake you? You have retained and harboured God's mortal enemies, sin and Satan; how justly therefore might God stand at a distance! Is God obliged to be present with any who harbour his enemies, and refuse to forsake them? Would God he unjust, if he should leave you utterly to yourself, so long as you will not forsake your idols?

Consider how just it would be in God to let you alone, since you have let God alone. You have not sought God for his presence and help as you ought to have done; you have neglected him; and would it not therefore be just if he should neglect you? How long have many of you lived in neglecting to seek him? how long have you restrained prayer before him? Since therefore you refused so much as to seek the presence and help of God, and did not think them worth praying to him for, how justly might he for ever withhold them, and so leave you wholly to yourself?

You have done what in you lies to drive God away from you, and to cause him wholly to leave you. When God in times past has not let you alone, but has been unwearied in awakening you, have you not resisted the motions and influences of his Spirit; have you not refused to be conducted by him, or to yield to him? Zech. vii. 11. "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear." How justly therefore might God refuse to move or strive anymore! When God has been knocking at your door, you have refused to open to him; how just is it therefore that he should go away, and knock at your door no more! When the Spirit of God has been striving with you, have you not been guilty of grieving the Holy Spirit by giving way to a quarrelling temper, and by yielding yourself a prey to lust? And have not some of you quenched the Spirit, and been guilty of backsliding? and is God obliged, notwithstanding all this, to continue the striving of his Spirit with you, to be resisted and grieved still, as long as you please? On the contrary, would it not be just if his Spirit should everlastingly leave you, and let you alone?

2. How just it would be if you should be cursed in all your concerns in this world. It would be just if God should curse you in everything, and cause everything you enjoy, or are concerned in, to turn to your destruction.

You live here in all the concerns of life as an enemy to God; you have used all your enjoyments and possessions against God, and to his dishonour; would it not therefore be just if God should curse you in them, and turn them all against you, and to your destruction? What temporal blessing has God given you, which you have not used in the service of your lusts, in the service of sin and Satan? If you have been in prosperity, you have made use of it to God's dishonour; when you have waxed fat, you have forgotten the God that made you. How just therefore would it be if God's curse should attend all your enjoyments! Whatsoever employments you have followed, you have not served God in them, but God's enemies; how just therefore would it be if you should be cursed in all your employments! The means of grace that you have enjoyed, you have not made use of as you ought to have done; you have made light of them, and have treated them in a careless disregarding manner; you have been the worse and not the better for them. You have so attended and used sabbaths, and spiritual opportunities, that you have only made them occasions of manifesting your contempt of God and Christ, and divine things, by your careless and

profane manner of attending them; would it not therefore be most just that God's curse should attend your means of grace, and the opportunities which you enjoy for the salvation of your soul? You have improved your time only it neap up provocations and add to your transgressions, in opposition to all the calls and warnings that could be given you; how just therefore would it be if God should turn life itself into a curse to you, and suffer you to live only to fill up the measure of your sins!

You have, contrary to God's counsel, made use of your own enjoyments to the hurt of your soul, and therefore if God should turn them to the hurt and ruin of your soul, he would but deal with you as you have dealt with yourself. God has earnestly counselled you times without number to use your temporal enjoyments for your spiritual good, but you have refused to hearken to him, you have foolishly perverted them to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, you have voluntarily used what God has given you for your spiritual hurt, to increase your guilt and wound your own soul; and therefore if God's curse should attend them, so that they should all turn to the ruin of your soul, you would but be dealt with as you have dealt with yourself.

3. How just would it be in God to cut you off, and put an end to your life!

You have greatly abused the patience and long-suffering of God which have already been exercised towards you. God with wonderful long-suffering has borne with you, when you have gone on in rebellion against him, and refused to turn from your evil ways. He has beheld you going on obstinately in the ways of provocation against him, and yet he has not let loose his wrath against you to destroy you, but has still waited to be gracious. He has suffered you yet to live on his earth, and breathe his air; he has upheld and preserved you, and continued still to feed you, and clothe you, and maintain you, and still to give you a space to repent; but instead of being the better for his patience, you have been the worse, instead of being melted by it, you have been hardened, and it has made you the more presumptuous in sin. Eccles. viii. 11. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." You have been guilty of despising the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, instead of being led to repent by it. You cannot live one day but as God maintains and provides for you; you cannot draw a breath, or live a moment, unless God upholds you; for in his hand your breath is, and he holds your soul in life, and his visitation preserves your

spirit. But what thanks has God had for it; how have you, instead of being turned to God, been only rendered the more fully set and dreadfully hardened in the ways of sin! How just therefore would it be if God's patience should soon be at an end, and he should cease to bear with you any longer!

You have not only abused his past patience, but have also abused his thoughts of future patience. You have flattered yourself that death was not near, and that you should live long in the world, and this has made you abundantly the more bold in sin. Since therefore such has been the use you have made of your expectation of having your life preserved, how just would it be in God to disappoint that expectation, and cut you short of that long life with which you have flattered yourself, and in the thoughts of which you have encouraged yourself in sin against him! How just would it be if your breath should soon be stopped, and that suddenly, when you think not of it, and you should be driven away in your wickedness!

As long as you live in sin you do but cumber the ground, you are wholly unprofitable, and live in vain. He that refuses to live to the glory of God, does not answer the end of his creation, and for what should he live? God made men to serve him; to this end he gave them life; and if there will not devote their lives to this end, how just would it be in God if he should refuse to continue their lives any longer! He has planted you in his vineyard, to bear fruit; and if you bring forth no fruit, why should he continue you any longer? how just would it be in him to cut you down! As long as you live, many of the blessings of God are spent upon you from day to day; you devour the fruits of the earth and consume much of its fatness and sweetness; and all to no purpose, but to keep you alive to sin against God, and spend all in wickedness. The whole creation does as it were groan with you; the sun rises and sets to give you light, the clouds pour down rain upon you, and the earth brings forth her fruits, and labours from year to year to supply you; and you in the meantime do not answer the end of Him who has created all things. How just therefore would it be if God should soon cut you off, and take you away, and deliver the earth from this burden, that the creation may no longer groan with you, and cast you out as an abominable branch! Luke xiii. 7. "Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" John xv. 2 and 6. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. If a man abide not in me, he is

cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

4. How just would it be if you should die in the greatest horror and amazement!

How often have you been exhorted to improve your time, to lay a foundation of peace and comfort on a deathbed; and yet you have refused to hearken! You have been many and many a time reminded that you must die, that it was very uncertain when, and that you did not know how soon, and have been told how mean and insignificant all your earthly enjoyments would then appear, and how unable to afford you any comfort on a death-bed. You have been often told how dreadful it would be to lie on a death-bed in a Christless state, having nothing to comfort you but your worldly enjoyments. You have been often put in mind of the torment and amazement which sinners, who have mispent their precious time, are subject to when arrested by death. You have been told how infinitely you would then need to have God your friend, and to have the testimony of a good conscience, and a well-grounded hope of future blessedness. And how often have you been exhorted to take care to provide against such a day as this, and to lay up treasure in heaven, that you might have something to depend on when you parted from this world, something to hope for when all things here below fail! But remember how regardless you have been, how dull and negligent from time to time, when you have sat under the hearing of such things, and still you obstinately refuse to prepare for death, and take no care to lay a good foundation against that time.

And you have not only been counselled, but you have seen others on their death-beds in fear and distress, or have heard of them, and have not taken warning; yea, some of you have been sick yourselves, and have been afraid that you were on your death-beds, yet God was merciful to you, and restored you, but you did not take warning to prepare for death. How justly therefore might you be the subject of that horror and amazement, of which you have heard, when you come to die!

And not only so, but how industriously have you spent your time in treasuring up matter for tribulation and anguish at that time! You have not only been negligent of laying a foundation for peace and comfort then, but have spent your time continually and unweariedly in laying a foundation for distress and horror. How have you gone on from day to day, heaping up more and more guilt; more and more wounding your own conscience,

still increasing the amount of folly and wickedness for you to reflect upon! How just therefore would it be that tribulation and anguish should then come upon you!

5. How just it is that you should suffer the wrath of God in another world!

Because you have wilfully provoked and stirred up that wrath. If you are not willing to suffer the anger of God, then why did you provoke him to anger? why did you act as though you would contrive to make him angry with you? why did you wilfully disobey God? You know that wilful disobedience tends to provoke him who is disobeyed; it is so in an earthly king, or master, or father.

If you have a servant who is wilfully disobedient, it provokes your anger. And again, if you would not suffer God's wrath, why have you so often cast a slight on God? If any one casts a slight on men, it tends to provoke them: how much more may the Infinite Majesty of heaven be provoked, when he is contemned! You have also robbed God of his property, you have refused to give him that which is his own. It provokes men when they are deprived of their due and they are dealt injuriously by; how much more may God be provoked when you rob him!

You have also slighted the kindness of God to you, and that the greatest love and kindness of which you can conceive. You have been supremely ungrateful, and have only abused that kindness. Nothing provokes men more than to have their kindness slighted and abused; how much more may God be provoked when men requite his infinite mercy only with disobedience and ingratitude! If therefore you go on to provoke God, and to stir up his wrath, how can you expect any other than to suffer his wrath? If then you should indeed suffer the wrath of an offended God, remember it is what you have procured for yourself, it is a fire of your own kindling. You would not accept of deliverance from God's wrath, when it has been offered to you. When God had in mercy sent his only-begotten Son into the world, you refused to admit him. You loved your sins too well to forsake them to come to Christ, and for the sake of your sins you have rejected all the offers of a Saviour, so that you have chosen death rather than life. After you had procured wrath to yourself you clove fast to it, and would not part with it for mercy. *"All they that hate me, love death."*

6. How just would it be that you be delivered up into the hands of the devil and his angels, to be tormented by them hereafter, seeing you have voluntarily given yourself up to serve

them here! You have hearkened to them rather than to God. How just therefore would it be if God leave you to them! You have followed Satan and adhered to his interest in opposition to God, and have subjected yourself to his will in this world, rather than to the will of God; how just therefore would it be if God should give you up to his will hereafter!

7. How justly may your bodies be made organs of torment to you hereafter, which you have made organs and instruments of sin in this world! You have given up your bodies a sacrifice to sin and Satan: how justly therefore may God give them up a sacrifice to wrath! You have employed your bodies as servants to your vile and hateful lusts How just therefore would it be for God hereafter to raise your bodies to be organs and instruments of misery; and to fill them as full of torment as they have been filled full of sin!

8. But the greatest objection of wicked men against the justice of the future punishment which God has threatened, is from the greatness of that punishment: that God should inflict upon the finally impenitent, torments so extreme, so amazingly dreadful, to have their bodies cast into a furnace of fire of such immense heat and fierceness, there to lie unconsumed, and yet full of sense and feeling, glowing within and without; and the soul full of yet more dreadful horror and torment; and so to remain without any remedy or rest for ever, and ever, and ever. And, therefore, I would mention several things to you, to show how justly you lie exposed to so dreadful a punishment.

1. This punishment, as dreadful as it is, is not more so than the Being is great and glorious against whom you have sinned. It is true this punishment is dreadful beyond all expression or conception, and so is the greatness and gloriousness of God as much beyond all expression or conception; and yet you have continued to sin against him, yea, you have been bold and presumptuous in your sins, and have multiplied transgressions against him without end. The wrath of God that you have heard of, dreadful as it is, is not more dreadful than that Majesty which you have despised and trampled on is awful. This punishment is indeed enough to fill one with horror barely to think of it; and so it would fill you with at least equal horror to think of sinning so exceedingly against so great and glorious a God, if you conceived of it aright. Jer. ii. 12, 13. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord: for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters; and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water!" God's being so infinitely great and excellent, has not

influenced you not to sin against him, but you have done it boldly, and made nothing of it, thousands of times; and why should this misery, being so infinitely great and dreadful, hinder God from inflicting it on you? 1 Sam. ii. 25. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?"

2. Your nature is not more averse from such misery as you have heard of, than God's nature is averse from such sin as you have been guilty of. The nature of man is very averse from pain and torment, and especially it is exceedingly averse from such dreadful and eternal torment; but yet that does not hinder but that it is just that it should be inflicted, for men do not hate misery more than God hates sin. God is so holy, and is of so pure a nature, that he has an infinite aversion to sin; but yet you have made light of sin, and your sins have been exceedingly multiplied and enhanced.

The consideration of God's hating of it has not at all hindered you from committing it; why, therefore, should the consideration of your hating misery hinder God from bringing it upon you? God represents himself in his word as burdened and wearied with the sins of wicked men: Isa. i. 14. "Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them;" Mal. ii. 17. "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?"

3. You have not cared how much God's honour suffered; and why should God be careful lest your misery be great? You have been told how much these and those things which you have practised, were to the dishonour of God: yet you did not care for that, but went on still multiplying transgressions. The consideration that the more you sinned, the more God was dishonoured, did not in the least restrain you. If it had not been for fear of God's displeasure, you would not have cared though you had dishonoured him ten thousand times as much as you did. As for any respect you had to God, you did not care what became of God's honour, nor of his happiness neither, no, nor of his being. Why then is God obliged to be careful how much you suffer? Why should he be careful of your welfare, or use any caution lest he should lay more on you than you can bear.

4. As great as this wrath is, it is not greater than that love of God which you have slighted and rejected. God, in infinite mercy to lost sinners, has provided a way for them to escape future misery, and to obtain eternal life. For that end he has given his only-begotten Son, a

person infinitely glorious and honourable in himself being equal with God, and infinitely near and dear to God. It was ten thousand times more than if God had given all the angels in heaven, or the whole world, for sinners. Him he gave to be incarnate, to suffer death, to be made a curse for us, and to undergo the dreadful wrath of God in our room, and thus to purchase for us eternal glory. This glorious person has been offered to you times without number, and he has stood and knocked at your door, till his hairs were wet with the dews of the night; but all that he has done has not won upon you; you see no form nor comeliness in him, no beauty that you should desire him. When he has thus offered himself to you as your Saviour, you never freely and heartily accept of him. This love which you have thus abused, is as great as that wrath of which you are in danger. If you would have accepted of it, you might have had the enjoyment of this love instead of enduring this terrible wrath: so that the misery you have heard of is not greater than the love you have despised, and the happiness and glory which you have rejected. How just then would it be in God to execute upon you this dreadful wrath, which is not greater than that love which you have despised! Heb. ii. 3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

5. If you complain of this punishment as being too great, then why has it not been great enough to deter you from sin? As great as it is, you have made nothing of it. When God threatened to inflict it on you, you did not mind his threatenings, but were bold to disobey him, and to do those very things for which he threatened this punishment. Great as this punishment is, it has not been great enough to keep you from living a wilfully wicked life, and going on in ways that you knew were evil. When you have been told that such and such things certainly exposed you to this punishment, you did not abstain on that account, but went on from day to day in a most presumptuous manner, and God's threatening such a punishment was no effectual check upon you. Why therefore do you now complain of this punishment as too great, and quarrel against it, and say that God is unreasonable and cruel to inflict it? In so saying you are condemned out of your own mouth; for if it be so dreadful a punishment, and more than is just, then why was it not great enough at least to restrain you from wilful sinning? Luke xix. 21,. &c. "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man, thou takest up that thou laidest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he said unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant," &c. You complain of this punishment as too great: but yet you have acted as if it was not great enough, and you

have made light of it. If the punishment is too great, why have you gone on to make it still greater? You have gone on from day to day, to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, to add to your punishment, and increase it exceedingly; and yet now you complain of it as too great, as though God could not justly inflict so great a punishment. How absurd and self-contradictory is the conduct of such an one, who complains of God for making his punishment too great, and yet from day to day industriously gathers and heaps up fuel, to make the fire the greater!

6. You have no cause to complain of the punishment being greater than is just; for you have many and many a time provoked God to do his worst. If you should forbid a servant to do a given thing, and threaten that if he did it you would inflict some very dreadful punishment upon him, and he should do it notwithstanding, and you should renew your command, and warn him in the most strict manner possible not to do it, and tell him you would surely punish him if he persisted, and should declare that his punishment should be exceedingly dreadful, and he should wholly disregard you, and should disobey you again, and you should continue to repeat your commands and warnings, still setting out the dreadfulness of the punishment, and he should still, without any regard to you, go on again and again to disobey you to your face, and this immediately on your thus forbidding and threatening him: could you take it any otherwise than as daring you to do your worst? But thus have you done towards God; you have had his commands repeated, and his threatening set before you hundreds of times, and have been most solemnly warned; yet have you notwithstanding gone on in ways which you knew were sinful, and have done the very things which he has forbidden, directly before his face. Job xv. 25, 26. "For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengthened himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler." You have thus bid defiance to the Almighty, even when you saw the sword of his vindictive wrath uplifted, that it might fall upon your head. Will it, therefore, be any wonder if he shall make you know how terrible that wrath is, in your utter destruction?