

## The Attributes of God

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From Watson's *Body of Divinity*

### The Omnipresence of God

God is **infinite**. All created beings are finite. The Greek word for "infinite" signifies "without bounds or limits." *God is not confined to any **place***. He is infinite, and so is present in all places at once. His center is everywhere. "In no place is God's Being either confined or excluded," Augustine. "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain you." The Turks build their temples open at the top, to show that God cannot be confined to them—but is in all places by his presence. God's essence is not limited either to the regions above, or to the terrestrial globe—but is everywhere. As philosophers say of the soul, "the soul is in every part of the body," in the eye, heart, foot; so we may say of God, his essence is everywhere; his circuit is in heaven, and in earth, and sea, and he is in all places of his circuit at once. "This is to be infinite." God, who bounds everything else, is himself without bounds. He sets bounds to the sea, "Hitherto shall you come, and no further!" He sets bounds to the angels; they, like the cherubim, move and stand at his appointment, but he is infinite, without bounds. He who can span the heavens, and weigh the earth in scales, must needs be infinite!

Vorstius maintains that God is in all places at once—but not in regard of his essence; but by his virtue and influence: as the body of the sun is in heaven, it only sends forth its beams and influences to the earth; or as a king, who is in all places of his kingdom *authoritatively*, by his power and authority—but he is personally on his throne.

God, who is infinite, is in all places at once, not only by his *influence*—but by his *essence*; for, if his essence fills all places, then he must needs be there in person. Jer 23:34. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?"

But does not God say that heaven is his throne?

It is also said, that a humble heart is his throne. The humble heart is his throne, in regard to his *gracious* presence; and heaven is his throne, in regard to his *glorious* presence; and yet neither of these thrones will hold him, for the heaven of heavens cannot contain him.

But if God is infinite in all places—he is in *impure* places, and mingles with impurity.

Though God is in all places, in the *heart of a sinner* by his inspection, and in *hell* by his justice—yet he does not mingle with the impurity, or receive the least tincture of evil. "The divine nature does not intermix with created matter, nor is contaminated by its impurities," Augustine. No more than the sun shining on a dunghill is defiled, or its beauty spotted; or than Christ going among sinners was defiled, whose Godhead was a sufficient antidote against infection.

God must needs be infinite in all places at once, not only in regard to the simplicity and purity of his nature—but in regard to his power, which being so glorious, who can set bounds to him, or prescribe him a circuit to walk in? It is as if the drop should limit the ocean, or a candle set bounds to the sun.

**Use one: If God is infinite, present in all places at once, then it is certain he governs all things in his own person,** and needs no proxies or deputies to help him to carry on his government. He is in all places in an instant, and manages all affairs both in the earth and heaven. A king cannot be in all places of his kingdom in his own person, therefore he is forced to govern by deputies and viceregents, and they often pervert justice. But God, being infinite, needs no deputies, he is present in all places, he sees all with his own eyes, and hears all with his own ears; he is everywhere in his own person, therefore is fit to be the judge of the world; he will do everyone right.

**Use two: If God is infinite by his omnipresence, then see the greatness and immenseness of the divine majesty!** What a great God do we serve! "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the glory, and the majesty, and you are exalted as head above all." Well may the Scripture display the greatness of his glory, who is infinite in all places. He transcends our weak conceptions; how can our finite understanding comprehend him who is infinite? He is infinitely above all our praises. "Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise." Oh what a poor nothing is man, when we think of God's infiniteness! As the stars disappear at the rising of the sun, oh, how does a man shrink into nothing, when infinite majesty shines forth in its glory! "The *nations* are as a drop in the bucket, or the small dust of the balance!" On what a little of that drop are we individuals! The heathen thought they had sufficiently praised Jupiter when they called him *great Jupiter*. Of what immense majesty is God, who fills all places at once!

**Use three: If God is infinite, filling heaven and earth, see what a full portion the saints have. They have him who is infinite for their portion!** His fullness is an infinite fullness; and he is infinitely sweet, as well as infinitely full. If a cup is filled with wine, there is a sweet fullness—but still it is finite; but God is a sweet fullness, and it is infinite. He is infinitely full of beauty and of love. His riches are called *unsearchable*, because they are infinite, Eph 3:8. Stretch your thoughts as

much as you can, there is that in God which exceeds; it is an infinite fullness. He is said to do abundantly for us, above all that we can ask. "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us," Ephesians 3:20. What can an ambitious person ask? He can ask crowns and kingdoms, millions of worlds; but God can give more than we can ask, nay, more than we can *imagine*, because he is infinite!

We can imagine—what if all the dust were turned to silver—what if every flower were a ruby—what if every sand in the sea a diamond; yet God can give more than we can imagine, because he is infinite. **Oh how rich are they who have the infinite God for their portion!** Well might David say, "Surely I have a delightful inheritance!" Psalm 16:6.

We may go with the bee from flower to flower—but we shall never have full satisfaction until we come to the infinite God! Jacob said: "I have enough!" In the Hebrew it is, "I have all!" because he had the infinite God for his portion! Gen 33:11. God being an infinite fullness, there is no fear of lack for any of the heirs of heaven. Though there are millions of saints and angels, who have a share in God's riches—yet he has enough for them all, because he is infinite! Though a thousand men behold the sun—there is light enough for them all. Put ever so many buckets into the sea—there is water enough to fill them. Though an innumerable company of saints and angels are to be filled out of God's fullness—yet God, being infinite, has enough to satisfy them. God has land enough to give to all his heirs. There can be no lack, in that which is infinite.

**Use four: If God is infinite, he fills all places, and is everywhere present.**

This is dreadful to the wicked. God is their enemy, and they cannot escape him, nor flee from him, for he is everywhere present! They are never out of his eye, nor out of his reach. "Your hand shall find out all your enemies." What caves or thickets can men hide in—that God cannot find them? Go where they will, he is present. "Where shall I flee from your presence?" If a man owes a debt to another he may make his escape, and flee into another land, where the creditor cannot find him. "But where shall I flee from *your* presence?" God is infinite, he is in all places; so that he will find out his enemies and punish them!

But is it not said that "Cain *went out* from the presence of the Lord?" Gen 4:16.

The meaning is, he went out from the church of God, where the visible signs of God's presence were, and where God in a special manner manifested his sweet presence to his people; but Cain could not go out of God's sight; for God being infinite is everywhere present. Sinners can escape from neither an accusing conscience, nor from a revenging God!

**Use five: If God is everywhere present, then for a Christian to walk with God is not impossible.** God is not only in heaven—but he is in earth too.

Heaven is his throne, there he sits; the earth is his footstool, there he stands. He

is everywhere present, therefore we may come to walk with God. "Enoch walked with God." If God was confined to heaven, a trembling soul might think, "How can I converse with God, how can I walk with him who lives above the upper region?" But God is not confined to heaven; he is omnipresent; he is *above* us—yet he is *about* us, he is *near* to us. "He is not far from each one of us." Acts 17:27. He is not far from the assembly of the saints, "God has taken His place in the divine assembly," Psalm 82:1. He is present with us, God is in everyone of us; so that here on earth we may walk with God.

In heaven the saints *rest* with him, on earth they *walk* with him. To walk with God is to walk by faith. We are said to "draw near to God," Heb 10:22, and to see him, Heb 11:27, "As seeing him who is invisible," and to have fellowship with him. 1 John 1:3, "Our fellowship is with the Father." Thus we may take a turn with him every day by faith. It is slighting God not to walk with him. If a king was in our presence, it would be slighting him to neglect him, and play with the pet. There is no walk in the world so sweet as to walk with God. "They shall walk in the light of your countenance." "Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord." It is like walking among beds of spices, which send forth a fragrant perfume.

**Use six: If God is infinite in his glorious essence, learn to admire—where you cannot fathom.** The angels wear a veil, they cover their faces, as adoring this infinite majesty. Isa 6:6. Elijah wrapped himself in a mantle when God's glory passed by. Admire—where you cannot fathom. "Can you by searching find out God?" Here on earth, we see some beams of his glory, we see him in the looking-glass of the creation; we see him in his picture—his image shines in the saints. But who can search out all his essential glory? What angel can measure these pyramids? "Can you by searching find out God?" He is infinite. We can no more search out his infinite perfections, than a man upon the top of the highest mountain can take a star in his hand! Oh, have God-admiring thoughts! Adore where you cannot fathom!

There are many mysteries in nature which we cannot fathom; why the sea should be higher than the earth—yet not drown it; why the Nile should overflow in summer, when, by the course of nature, the waters are lowest. "As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things." Ecclesiastes 11:5. If these things perplex us, how may the infinite mystery of the Deity transcend our most raised intellectuals! Ask the geometrician, if he can, with a ruler, measure the heavens. Just so—we are unable are we to measure the infinite perfections of God. In heaven we shall see God *clearly*—but not *fully*, for he is infinite. He will communicate himself to us, according to the capacity of our vessel—but not the immenseness of his nature. Adore then where you cannot fathom!

If God is infinite in all places, let us not limit him. "They limited the Holy One of Israel." *It is limiting God to confine him within the narrow compass of our reason.* Reason thinks God must go such a way to work, or the business will never be

effected. This is to limit God to our reason; whereas he is infinite, and his ways are past finding out. In the deliverance of the church, it is limiting God, either to set him a time, or prescribe him a method for deliverance. God will deliver Zion—but he will be left to his own liberty; he will not be tied to a place, to a time, or to an instrument, which were to limit him, and then he should not be infinite. God will go his own way, he will confound human reason, he will work by improbabilities, he will save in such a way as we think would destroy. Now he acts like himself, like an infinite wonder-working God. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" Romans 11:33.

### The KNOWLEDGE of God

"The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." Glorious things are spoken of God; he transcends our thoughts, and the praises of angels. *God's glory lies chiefly in his **attributes**, which are the several beams by which the divine nature shines forth.* Among other of his orient excellencies, this is not the least—"the Lord is a God of knowledge;" or as the Hebrew word is, "A God of knowledges." He has a full idea and cognisance of all things; the world is to him a transparent body. He makes a heart-anatomy. "I am he who searches the thoughts and the heart." The clouds are no canopy, the night is no curtain—to draw between us and his sight. "Even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are both alike to you."

There is not a **word** we whisper but God hears it. "There is not a word in my tongue—but lo, O Lord, you know it altogether." There is not the most subtle **thought** that comes into our mind—but God perceives it. "I know their thoughts." Thoughts speak as loud in God's ears—as words do in ours. All our **actions**, though ever so subtly contrived, and secretly conducted, are visible to the eye of Omniscience. "I know their works." Achan hid the Babylonish garment in the earth—but God brought it to light. Minerva was drawn in such curious colors, and so lively pencilled, that whichever way one turned, Minerva's eyes were upon him. Just so, whichever way we turn ourselves, God's eye is upon us!

"*Him who is perfect in knowledge.*" God knows whatever is knowable; he knows future contingencies. He foretold Israel's coming out of Babylon, and the virgin's conceiving. By this the Lord proves the truth of his Godhead, against idol gods. "Tell us the coming events, then we will know that you are gods." The perfection of God's knowledge is primary. He is the original, the pattern, and prototype of all knowledge; others borrow their knowledge of him; the angels light their lamps at this glorious sun.

God's knowledge is **pure**. It is not contaminated with the object. Though God knows sin—yet it is to hate and punish it. No evil can mix or incorporate with his knowledge, any more than the sun can be defiled with the vapors which arise

from the earth. God's knowledge is facile; it is without any difficulty. We study and search for knowledge. Prov 2:2. "If you seek for her as for silver." The lamp of God's knowledge is so infinitely bright, that all things are intelligible to him.

God's knowledge is **infallible**; there is no mistake in His knowledge. Human knowledge is subject to error. A physician may mistake the treatment of a disease; but God's knowledge is unerring. He can neither deceive, nor be deceived. He cannot deceive--because he is truth; nor be deceived—because He has infinite wisdom.

God's knowledge is **instantaneous**. Our knowledge is successive, one thing after another. We argue from the effect to the cause. God knows things past, present, and to come—at once; they are all before him in one entire prospect.

God's knowledge is **retentive**; he never loses any of his knowledge; he *remembers* as well as *understands*. Many things elapse out of our minds—but God's knowledge is eternalized. Things transacted a thousand years ago, are as fresh to him as if they were done but the last minute. Thus he is perfect in knowledge.

But is it not said, "I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. Then I will know."

It could not be that God was ignorant; because there is mention made of a cry; but the Lord speaks there *after the manner of a judge*, who will first examine the cause before he passes the sentence. When he is upon a work of justice he is not in a hurry, as if he did not care where he hits; but he goes straight against offenders. "He lays judgement to the line, and righteousness to the plummet."

Hos 13:12, "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hid." ("The guilt of Ephraim is stored up, his sins are kept on record." *NIV translation*.)

Not that his sin is hid from God—but his sin is hid; that is—*the sins of Ephraim have been collected and stored away for punishment*. That this is the meaning, is clear by the foregoing words, his iniquity is *collected*. As the clerk of the court binds up the indictments of malefactors in a bundle, and at the trial brings out the indictments and reads them in court; so God binds up men's sins in a bundle, and, at the day of judgment, this bundle shall be opened, and all their sins brought to light before men and angels!

God is **infinite** in knowledge. He cannot but be so; for he who gives being to things, must needs have a clear inspection of them. "He who planted the ear, shall he not hear? He who formed the eye, shall he not see?" He who makes a watch or engine, knows all the workmanship in it. God, who made the heart, knows all its movements. He is full of eyes, like Ezekiel's wheels, and, as Austin says, *Totus oculus*, "All eye." It ought to be so; for he is the "Judge of all the

world." There are so many causes to be brought before him, and so many people to be tried, that he must have a perfect knowledge, or he could not do justice. A human judge cannot proceed without a jury, the jury must search the cause, and give in the verdict; but God can judge without a jury. He knows all things in and of himself, and needs no witnesses to inform him. A human judge judges only matters of *fact*—but God judges the *heart*. He not only judges wicked *actions*—but wicked *designs*. He sees the treason of the heart, and punishes it.

**Use one:** Is God infinite in knowledge? Is he light, and in him is there no darkness? **Then how unlike are they to God who are darkness, and in whom is no light, who are destitute of knowledge, such as the heathen who never heard of God!** And are there not many among us, who are no better than *baptized heathen*? who need to seek the first principles of the oracles of God. It is sad, that after the *sun of the gospel* has shined so long in our horizon, that the veil should still be upon their heart. Such as are enveloped in ignorance cannot give God a reasonable service. Rom 12:2. **Ignorance is the nurse of impiety.** The schoolmen say, "Every sin is founded upon ignorance". Jer 9:3, "They proceed from one evil to another, and they do not take Me into account." Where ignorance reigns in the understanding, lust rages in the affections. Prov 19:2, "That the mind be without knowledge, it is not good." Such have neither faith nor fear: no faith; for knowledge carries the torch before faith. "Those who know your name shall put their trust in you." A man can no more believe without knowledge, than the eye can see without light. He can have no fear of God; for how can they fear him whom they do not know? The covering of Haman's face was a sad presage of death. When people's minds are covered with ignorance, it is a covering of the face, which is a fatal forerunner of destruction. "The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's feeding-trough, but Israel does not know; My people do not understand." Isaiah 1:3

**Use two: If God is a God of infinite knowledge, then see the folly of hypocrisy.** "Hypocrites do not actually *do* good, they merely make a *show* of it," Melancthon. They carry it fair with men—but care not how bad their hearts are; they live in secret sin. "They say—How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" Psalm 73:11. "What does God know? Can He judge through thick darkness?" Job 22:13 "God has forgotten, he hides his face, he will never see it." But, "His understanding is infinite!" He has a window to look into men's hearts! He has a key to open up the heart; he beholds all the sinful workings of men's spirits, as in a glass bee-hive we can see the bees working in their combs. Matt 6:6, "Your Father who sees in secret." God sees in secret. As a merchant enters debts in his book, so God has his debt-book, in which he enters every sin. Jeroboam's wife disguised herself, so that the prophet would not know her; but he discerned her. "When Ahijah heard her footsteps at the door, he called out—Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why are you pretending to be someone else? I have bad news for you!" 1 Kings 14:6. The hypocrite thinks to disguise and juggle with God—but God will unmask him. "God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing." "For they have done outrageous things in Israel; they have

committed adultery with their neighbors' wives and in my name have spoken lies, which I did not tell them to do. **I know it and am a witness to it**—declares the Lord." Jeremiah 29:23

Ay—but the hypocrite hopes he shall color over his sin, and make it look very good. Absalom masks over his treason with the pretense of a religious vow. Judas cloaks his envy at Christ, and his covetousness, with the pretense of "charity to the poor." Jehu makes religion a cloak for his selfish design. But God sees through these fig-leaves! You may see a jade under his gilt trappings. "My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes. Jeremiah 16:17. **He who has an eye to see—will find a hand to punish!**

**Use three: Is God so infinite in knowledge? Then we should always feel as under his omniscient eye.** "We ought to live as if always in full view of God," Seneca. Let us place David's prospect before our eye, "I have set the Lord always before me." Seneca counseled Lucilius, that whatever he was doing, he should imagine some of the Roman nobles stood before him, and then he would do nothing dishonorable. The consideration of God's omniscience would be preventive of much sin. The eye of *man* will restrain from sin; and will not *God's* eyes much more? "Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, *before my very eyes?*" the king roared." Esther 7:8. Will we sin when our Judge looks on? Would men speak so vainly, if they considered God overheard them?

Latimer took heed to every word in his examination, when he heard the pen go behind the hangings. Just so, what care would people have of their words, if they remembered that God heard, and his pen was writing everything down in heaven? Would people commit immorality, if they believed God was a spectator of their wickedness, and would make them do penance in hell for it? Would they defraud in their dealings, and use false weights, if they knew God saw them, and for making their weights lighter would make their damnation heavier?

Viewing ourselves as under the eye of God's omniscience, would cause reverence in the worship of God. God sees the frame and demeanor of our hearts, when we come before him. How would this call in our straggling thoughts? How would it animate and invigorate duty? It would make us put *fire* to the incense. We must worship God with the utmost zeal and intenseness of spirit. To think that *God is in this place* would add *wings* to prayer, and *oil* to the flame of our devotion!

**Use four: Is God's knowledge infinite? Study sincerity, be what you seem.** "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7. Men judge the heart by the actions. God judges the actions by the heart. If the heart is sincere, God will see the *faith* and bear with the *falling*. Asa had his blemishes—but his heart was right with God. God saw his *sincerity*, and pardoned his *infirmity*. Sincerity in

a Christian is like chastity in a wife, which excuses many failings. Sincerity makes our duties acceptable, like musk among linen, which perfumes it. As Jehu said to Jehonadab, "Is your heart right with me? And he said, It is. If it is—give me your hand; and he took him up into the chariot." Just so, if God sees that our heart is right, that we love him, and aim at his glory—he says, "Give me your prayers and tears; now you shall come up with me into the chariot of glory!" Sincerity makes our services to be golden, and God will not cast away the gold, though it may lack some weight. Is God omniscient, and his eye chiefly upon the heart? Wear the *belt of truth* about you, and never leave it off.

**Use five: Is God a God of infinite knowledge? Then there is comfort,** (1.) To the saints in particular. (2.) To the church in general.

**(1.) Comfort to SAINTS in particular.** In case of private devotion. Christian, you set hours apart for God, your thoughts run upon him as your treasure; God takes notice of every good thought. "He had a book of remembrance written for those who thought upon his name." You enter into your closet, and pray to your Father in secret; he hears every sigh and groan! "My groaning is not hidden from you." You water the seed of your prayer with tears—God bottles every tear! "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book!" Psalm 56:8. When the secrets of all hearts shall be opened, God will make an honorable mention of the zeal and devotion of his people, and he himself will be the herald of their praises. "Then shall every man have praise of God."

The infiniteness of God's knowledge is a comfort, in the case of saints who have not a clear knowledge of themselves. They find so much corruption, that they judge they have no grace. "If it is so--why am I thus? If I have grace, why is my heart in so dead and earthly a frame?" Oh remember, God is of infinite knowledge—he can spy grace where you cannot; he can see grace hidden under corruption, as the stars may be hidden behind a cloud. God can see that holiness in you, which you can not discern in yourself. He can spy *the flower of grace* in you, though overtopped with weeds. "Because there is some good thing in him." God sees some good thing in His people--when they can see no good in themselves; and though they judge themselves harshly, He will forgive their sins and infirmities!

It is comfort in respect of personal injuries. It is the saints' lot to suffer. The *head* being crowned with thorns, the *feet* must not tread upon roses. If saints find a real purgatory, it is in this life; but this is their comfort—that God sees the wrong which is done to them; the pupil of his eye is touched, and is he not sensible of it? Paul was scourged by cruel hands. "Thrice was I beaten with rods;" as if you should see a slave whip the king's son! God beholds it. "I know their sorrows." The wicked make wounds in the backs of the saints, and then pour in vinegar; but God writes down their cruelty. Believers are a part of Christ's mystical body; and for every drop of a saint's blood spilt—God puts a drop of wrath in his vial!

**(2.) Comfort to the CHURCH of God in general.** If God is a God of knowledge, he sees all the plots of the enemies against Zion, and can make them abortive. The wicked are treacherous, having borrowed their skill from the old serpent! They dig deep, to hide their counsels from God—but he sees them, and can easily counterwork them. The dragon is described with *seven heads*—to show how he plots against the church; but God is described with *seven eyes*—to show that he sees all the plots and stratagems of the enemies; and when they deal treacherously, he can easily confound them. "Come," says Pharaoh, "let us deal wisely." But he never more played the fool, than when he thought to deal wisely. "During the last watch of the night the Lord *looked* down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army, and threw it into confusion." Exodus 14:24. How may this, like sap in the vine, comfort the church of God in her earthly state! The Lord has an eye in all the councils and machinations of the enemy; he sees them in their efforts, and can blow them up in their own mine!

### The ETERNITY of God

The next attribute is, "God is eternal." "From everlasting to everlasting, you are God."

There are three kinds of beings:

1. Such beings as had a *beginning*—and shall have an *end*. Such as all animate creatures—the animals, birds, fish—which at death are destroyed and return to dust. Their being ends with their life.
2. Such beings as had a *beginning*—but shall have *no end*. Such as angels and the souls of men, which are eternal once they are brought into existence—they abide forever.
3. Such as is *without beginning*—and *without ending*. This is proper only to God. He is *from everlasting—to everlasting*. This is God's title, a jewel of his crown. He is called "the King eternal." *Jehovah* is a word that properly sets forth God's eternity. It is a word so dreadful, that the Jews trembled to name or read it; and used *Adonai*, 'Lord,' in its place. *Jehovah* contains in it time past, present, and to come. "I am the Alpha and the Omega—says the Lord God—who **is**, and who **was**, and who **is to come**, the Almighty." Revelation 1:8. This verse illustrates the word *Jehovah*; (who *is*) he subsists of himself, having a pure and independent being; (who *was*) God alone, was before time; there is no searching into the records of eternity; (who *is to come*).

"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever!" Psalm 45:6. The doubling of the word ratifies the certainty of it, as the doubling of Pharaoh's dream. His *kingdom* has no end; his *crown* has no successors.

I shall prove that God alone could be eternal—without *beginning*. *Angels* could not be eternal; they are but creatures, and though spirits—they were created. Therefore their beginning may be known; their antiquity may be searched into. If you ask, *when were they created?* Some think before the world was; but not so: for what was before time was eternal. The first origin of angels reaches back no further, than the beginning of the world. It is thought by the learned, that the angels were made on the day on which the heavens were made. "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Jerome, Gregory, and venerable Bede understand it, that when God laid the foundation-stone of the world, the angels being then created, sang anthems of joy and praise.

It is proper to God only to be eternal, without beginning. He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. No creature can write itself *Alpha*, that is only a flower of the crown of heaven. Exod 3:14. "I am who I am," that is, "I am the one who always is. I am he who exists *from*, and *to* eternity!" "The Lord will reign forever and ever!" Exodus 15:18. "The Lord is King forever and ever!" Psalm 10:16.

**Use one: Here is thunder and lightning to the WICKED.** "Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever!" Revelation 15:7. God is eternal, therefore the torments of the wicked are eternal! God lives forever; and as long as God lives, he will be punishing the damned! This should be as the handwriting upon the wall, which should have this effect— "and his face turned pale with fear. Such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him." Daniel 5:6. The sinner takes liberty to sin; he breaks God's laws, like a wild beast that breaks over the hedge, and leaps into forbidden pasture; he sins with greediness, as if he thought he could not sin fast enough. "They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed." Ephesians 4:19. But remember, one of God's names is *Eternal*, and as long as God is eternal he has time enough to reckon with all his enemies. To make sinners tremble, let them think of these three things: the torments of the damned are without intermission, without mixture, and eternal.

**(1.) Without intermission.** Their pains shall be acute and sharp, and no relaxation; the fire shall not be slackened or abated. "They have no rest day nor night;" like one who has his joints stretched continually on the rack, and has no ease. The wrath of God is compared to a *stream* of brimstone. Isa 30:33. Why to a stream? Because a stream runs without intermission; so God's wrath runs like a stream, and pours out without intermission. In the pains of this present life, there is some abatement and intermission; the fever abates; after a fit of the stone, the patient has some ease; but the pains of hell are intense and violent. The damned soul never says, "I am now more at ease."

**(2.) Without mixture.** Hell is a place of pure justice. In this life, God in anger remembers mercy, he mixes compassion with suffering. Asher's shoe was of iron—but his foot was dipped in oil. Affliction is the iron shoe—but mercy is mixed with it; the foot is dipped in oil. But the torments of the damned have no mixture. "They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out *without mixture*." No mixture of mercy.

How is the cup of wrath said to be *mixed*? "For the Lord holds a cup in his hand; it is full of foaming wine *mixed* with spices. He pours the wine out in judgment, and all the wicked must drink it, draining it to the dregs!" Psalm 75:8. Yet in the Revelation it is said to be *without mixture*. It is mixed, that is, it is full of all the ingredients that may make it bitter; the worm, the fire, the curse of God, all these are bitter ingredients. It is a mixed cup—yet it is without mixture; there shall be nothing to afford the least comfort, no mixture of mercy, and so without mixture. In the *sacrifice of jealousy*, Numb 5:15, no oil was put to it; so, in the torments of the damned, there is no oil of mercy to abate their sufferings.

**(3.) Without cessation, eternal. The pleasures of sin are but for a season—but the torments of the wicked are forever!** Sinners have a short feast—but a long reckoning! Origen erroneously thought, that after a thousand years, the damned would be released out of their misery; but the worm, the fire, the prison—are all eternal. "The smoke of their torment rises forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night." Revelation 14:11. "The torments of hell keep on punishing, they never end," Prosper. *Eternity* is a sea without bottom and banks. After millions of years, there is not one minute in eternity spent; and the damned must be ever burning—but never consumed, always dying—but never dead. "They shall seek death—but shall not find it."

The fire of hell is such, as multitudes of tears will not quench it; and length of time will not finish it! The vial of God's wrath will be always dropping upon the sinner! As long as God is eternal, he lives to be avenged upon the wicked. Oh eternity! eternity! who can fathom it? Mariners have their plummets to measure the depths of the sea; but what line or plummet shall we use to fathom the depth of eternity? The breath of the Lord kindles the infernal lake, Isa 30:33; where shall we have buckets to quench *that* fire?

Oh eternity! If all the body of the earth and sea were turned to sand, and all the air up to the starry heaven were nothing but sand, and *a little bird* should come every thousand years, and fetch away in her bill but the tenth part of a grain of all that heap of sand; what numberless years would be spent before that vast heap of sand would be fetched away! Yet, if at the end of all that time, the sinner might come out of hell, there would be some *hope*. But that word "Forever" breaks the heart. "The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever." What a terror is this to the wicked--enough to put them into a cold sweat, to think, as long as God is eternal, he lives forever to be avenged upon them!

Here the question may be asked—**Why should sin that is committed in a short time, be punished eternally?**

We must hold with Augustine, "that God's judgments on the wicked, may be *secret*—but never *unjust*." The reason why sin committed in a short time is eternally punished, is, because every sin is committed against an infinite essence, which nothing less than eternity of punishment can satisfy. Why is treason punished with death—but because it is against the king's person, which is sacred; much more that offence which is against God's crown and dignity is of a heinous and infinite nature, and cannot be satisfied with less than eternal punishment.

**Use two: Of comfort to the GODLY.** God is eternal, therefore he lives forever to reward the godly. "To those who seek for glory and honor, eternal life." The people of God are now in a suffering condition. "Bonds and afflictions await me." The wicked are clad in purple, and fare deliciously, while the godly suffer. The *goats* climb upon high mountains, while Christ's *sheep* are in the valley of slaughter. But here is the comfort—God is eternal, and he has appointed eternal recompenses for the saints. In heaven are fresh delights, and sweetness without excess. That which is the crown and zenith of heaven's happiness, is—that it is "eternal." Were there but the least suspicion that this glory must cease, it would much eclipse, yes, embitter it; but it is eternal. "An eternal weight of glory."

What angel can span eternity? The saints shall bathe themselves in the *rivers* of divine pleasure; and these rivers can never be dried up. "At your right hand are pleasures for evermore." This is the highest strain in the apostle's rhetoric, "Forever with the Lord!" In heaven, there is peace without trouble, ease without pain, glory without end; "forever with the Lord!"

Let this comfort the saints in all their troubles; their sufferings are but short—but their reward is eternal! Eternity makes heaven to be heaven! Eternity is the diamond in the ring! Oh blessed *day*, which shall have *no night!* The *sunlight of glory* shall rise upon the soul, and never set! Oh blessed *spring*, that shall have no autumn, or fall of the leaf. The Roman emperors have three crowns set upon their heads—the first of iron, the second of silver, the third of gold; so the Lord sets three crowns on his children—grace, comfort, and glory. The saints' crown is eternal, "You shall receive a crown of glory which never fades away!" The wicked have a never-dying worm; and the godly a never-fading crown! Oh how should this be a spur to virtue! How willing should we be to work for God! Though we have nothing here on earth, God has time enough to reward his people. The crown of eternity shall be set upon their head!

**Use three: Of exhortation.** *Study* eternity. Our thoughts should chiefly run upon eternity. We all wish for something that may delight our mind. If we could have lived, as Augustine says, from the infancy of the world to the world's old age, what is this—compared to eternity? What is time, measured with eternity? As the

earth is but a small point, compared to the heavens. Just so, **time** is scarcely a moment—compared to eternity! And then, what is this poor life which crumbles away so fast? *Oh, think of eternity!*

Brethren, we are every day *traveling to eternity*; and whether we wake or sleep—we are going our journey. Some of us are upon the *borders* of eternity. Oh study the shortness of life—and length of eternity!

More particularly think of *God's* eternity and the *soul's* eternity. Think of **God's** eternity. He is the *Ancient of Days*, who was before all time. There is a figurative description of God, "As I kept watching, thrones were set in place, and *the Ancient of Days* took His seat. His *clothing* was white like snow, and the *hair* of His head like whitest wool. His throne was flaming fire; its wheels were blazing fire. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from His presence. Thousands upon thousands served Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was convened, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:9-10. His clothing was white like snow, which signifies his majesty. His hair, like the pure wool, signifies his holiness. His title, *the Ancient of Days*, signifies his eternity.

The thought of God's eternity should make us have high adoring thoughts of God. We are apt to have low, irreverent thoughts of him. "You thought I was such an one as yourself," weak and mortal. But if we would think of God's eternity, when all our power ceases—he is King eternal, his crown flourishes forever, he can make us happy or miserable forever—this would make us have adoring thoughts of God. "The twenty-four elders *fall down* before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne." Revelation 4:10. The saints *fall down*, to signify by that humble posture, that they are not worthy to sit in God's presence. They fall down and they worship him who lives forever and ever; they do as it were, kiss his feet. They cast their crowns before the throne, they lay all their honor at his feet; thus they show humble adoration to the eternal essence. Study God's eternity, it will make us adore him—where we cannot fathom him.

Think of the **soul's** eternity. As God is eternal, so he has made *us* eternal. We are never-dying creatures; we are shortly entering upon our eternal state—either of eternal happiness or eternal misery. Have serious thoughts of this. Say, "O my soul, which of these two eternities is like to be your portion? I must shortly depart hence, and where then shall I go—to which of these eternities, either of glory or misery shall I go?" The serious meditation on the eternal state we are to pass into, would work strongly with us.

**(1.) Thoughts of eternal torments, are a good antidote against sin.** Sin tempts with its pleasure; but when we think of eternity, it may cool the intemperate heat of lust. Shall I, for the pleasure of sin for a season—endure eternal pain? Sin, like those locusts, Rev 9:7, seems to have on its head a crown like gold—but it has in it a tail like a scorpion, verse 10, and a sting in its tail; and

this sting can never be plucked out. Shall I venture eternal wrath? Is sin committed so sweet—as lying in hell forever is bitter? This thought would make us flee from sin, as Moses fled from the serpent!

**(2.) The serious thoughts of eternal happiness would very much take us off from worldly things.** What are these sublunary things, compared to eternity! They are quickly gone. They greet us—and then take their farewell. But I am to enter upon an *everlasting* estate; I hope to live with him who is eternal. What then, is the present fleeting world to me? To those who stand upon the top of the Alps—the great cities below are small things in their eyes. Just so, to him who has his thoughts fixed on his eternal state after this life—all these earthly things seem as nothing in his eye. What is the glory of this world? How poor and contemptible, compared with an eternal weight of glory!

**(3.) The serious thoughts of an eternal state, either of happiness or misery, should have a powerful influence upon whatever we take in hand.** Every work we do promotes either a *blessed* eternity, or a *cursed* eternity. Every *good* action sets us a step nearer to an eternity of happiness. Every *bad* action sets us a step nearer to an eternity of misery. Oh what influence should the thoughts of eternity have upon our pious duties! It should make us do them with all our might. Duty well performed, lifts a Christian higher towards heaven, and sets a Christian a step nearer to a blessed eternity!

### The IMMUTABILITY of God

The next attribute is God's **unchangeableness**.

"I am the Lord, and **I do not change**." Malachi 3:6

God is unchangeable in his **nature**, and in his **decree**.

#### **I. God is unchangeable in his NATURE.**

1. There is no eclipse of his **brightness**.

2. No end put to his **being**.

**[1] There is no eclipse of his brightness.** His essence shines with a fixed luster. "Who does not *change* like shifting shadows," James 1:17. "You remain the same, and your years will never end," Psalm 102:27. All *created* things are full of vicissitudes. Princes and emperors are subject to change. Sesostris, an Egyptian prince, having subdued many *kings* in war, made them draw his chariot, like horses, as if he intended them to eat grass, as God did King Nebuchadnezzar. The crown has many successors. *Kingdoms* have their eclipses and convulsions. What has become of the glory of Athens? The pomp of

Troy? [Now corn grows, where the great city of Troy once stood]. Though kingdoms have a *head of gold*, they have *feet of clay*.

The *heavens* change. "They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." Psalm 102:26-27. The heavens are the most ancient records, where God has written his glory with a sunbeam—yet these shall change. Though I do not think they shall be destroyed as to their substance—yet they shall be changed as to their qualities; they shall melt with fervent heat, and so be more refined and purified. 2 Peter 3:12. Thus the heavens shall be changed—but not *he* who dwells in heaven. "I am the Lord, and **I do not change.**"

The best *saints* have their eclipses and changes. Look upon a Christian in his spiritual estate, and he is full of variation. Though the *seed of grace* does not *die*—yet its beauty and activity often *wither*. A Christian has his *aguish fits* in piety. Sometimes his faith is at a high tide—and sometimes low ebb; sometimes his love flames—and at another time is like fire in the embers, and he has lost his first love. How strong was David's grace at one time! "God is my rock, in him will I trust." At another time he says, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." What Christian can say he does not find a change in his *graces*; that the bow of his faith never unbends, the strings of his violin never slacken? Surely we shall never meet with such Christians until we meet them in heaven! But God is without any shadow of change.

The *angels* were subject to change; they were created holy—but mutable. "The angels which kept not their first estate." Jude 6. These *morning* stars of heaven were *falling* stars. But God's glory shines with a fixed brightness. In God there is nothing which can change, for better or worse. He cannot change for the *better*—because then he would not now be perfect. He cannot change for the *worse*—for then he would cease to be perfect. He is immutably holy, immutably good; there is no shadow of change in him.

But when Christ, who is God, assumed the human nature—was there a change in God?

If the divine nature had been converted into the human, or the human into the divine, there would have been a change—but they were not. The human nature was distinct from the divine nature. Therefore there was no change. A cloud over the sun makes no change in the sun. Just so, though the divine nature is covered with the human nature, it makes no change in the divine nature.

**[2] There is no end put to his being.** "Who alone has immortality." The Godhead cannot die. An infinite essence cannot be changed into finite; and God is infinite. He is eternal, consequently he is not mortal. To be eternal and mortal is a contradiction.

**Use one: See the excellence of the divine nature in its immutability.** This is the glory of the Godhead. Mutableness denotes *weakness*, and is not in God, who is "the *same*, yesterday, and today, and forever." *Men* are fickle and mutable, like Reuben, "unstable as water." Men are changeable in their *principles*. If their faces altered as fast as their opinions—we would not recognize them. Men are changeable in their *resolutions*; just as the wind that blows in the east, presently turns about to the west. They resolve to be virtuous—but quickly give up of their resolutions. Their minds are like a sick man's pulse, which alters every half hour. The apostle Jude compares them to *waves of the sea*, and *wandering stars*. They are not *pillars* in God's temple—but *reeds* shaken by the wind. Others are changeable in their *friendship*. They quickly *love*—and quickly *hate*. Sometimes they will press you to their bosom; later they will excommunicate you out of their favor. They change as the chameleon, into several colors. But God is immutable—he does not change.

**Use two: See the vanity of the creature.** There are changes in everything, but in God. "Lowborn men are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie; if weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath." Psalm 62:9. We look for more from the creature, than God has put in it. The creature has two evils in it—it promises more than we find—and it fails us when we most need it. A man desires to have his corn harvested—but the rain falls; the mariner is for a voyage—but the wind does not blow, or is contrary; one depends upon another for the payment of a promise, and he fails, and is like a foot out of joint. Who can find a fixed stability in the vain creature? It is as if one should build houses on the sand, where the sea comes in and overflows. The creature is true to nothing but deceit—and is constant only in its disappointments. It is no more astonishing to see changes in the creature, than to see the moon dressing itself in a new shape and figure. Expect to meet with changes in everything, but God.

**Use three: Comfort to the godly.**

**(1.) In case of losses.** If an estate, you are almost boiled away to nothing, and if you lose friends by death—there is a double eclipse. But the comfort is—God is unchangeable. I may lose these things—but I cannot lose my God; he never dies. When the fig-tree and olive-tree failed, God did not fail. "I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." Flowers in the garden die—but a man's portion remains. Just so, outward things die and change—but "you are the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

**(2.) In case of sadness of spirit.** God seems to cast off the soul in desertion. "My Beloved had withdrawn himself." Yet, God is unchangeable. He is immutable in his love; he may change his *countenance*—but not his *heart!* "I have loved you with an *everlasting* love." Jer 31:1. Hebrew—a *love of eternity*. If once God's electing love rises upon the soul—it never sets. "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed—says the Lord, who has compassion on

you." Isaiah 54:10. God's love stands firmer than the mountains. His love to Christ is unchangeable; and he will no more cease loving believers, than he will cease loving Christ.

**Use four: Of exhortation.** Get a saving interest in the unchangeable God, then you are as a rock in the sea—immoveable in the midst of all changes.

### **How shall I get a part in the unchangeable God?**

By having a change wrought in you. "But you are washed—but you are sanctified." By this change we are savingly interested in the unchangeable God.

Trust to that God, who alone who is unchangeable. "Cease from man," stop trusting to the *reed*—but trust to the *Rock* of ages. He who is by faith engarrisoned in God, is safe in all changes; he is like a boat that is tied to an immoveable rock. He who trusts in God, trusts in that which cannot fail him; for God is unchangeable. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." *Health* may leave us, *riches, friends* may leave us; "but," says God, "I will never leave you; my *power* shall support you; my *Spirit* shall sanctify you; my *mercy* shall save you! I will never leave you!" Oh trust in this unchangeable God!

God is jealous of two things; of our *love*, and of our *trust*. He is jealous of our **love**, lest we love the creature more than him; therefore he makes it prove bitter. God is jealous of our **trust**, lest we should place more confidence in the creature, than in him, therefore he makes it prove unfaithful. Outward comforts are given us as food along the way—to refresh us, not as crutches to lean on. If we make the creature an idol, what we make our *trust*, God will make our *shame*. Oh trust in the immortal God! Like Noah's dove, we have no footing for our souls, until we get into *the ark of God's unchangeableness*. "Those who trust in the Lord shall be like mount Zion, which cannot be removed."

**II. God is unchangeable in his DECREE.** What he has decreed from eternity is unalterable. "My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." Isaiah 46:10. God's eternal counsel or decree, is immutable. If he changed his decree, it must be from some defect of wisdom or foresight, for that is the reason why men change their purposes; they see something afterwards, which they did not see before. But this cannot be the cause why God should alter his decree, because his knowledge is perfect—he sees all things in one entire prospect before him.

But is not God said to **repent**? This seems to be a change in his decree? "The Lord repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them."

Repentance is attributed to God, *figuratively*. "He is not a man, that he should repent." There may be a change in God's *work*—but not in his *will*. He may will a change—but not change his will. "God may change his sentence—but not his decree." A king may cause sentence to be passed upon a malefactor whom he

intends to save; so God threatened destruction to Nineveh—but the people of Nineveh repenting, God spared them. Here God changed his sentence—but not his decree; it was what had lain in the womb of his purpose from eternity.

But if God's decree be unchangeable, and cannot be reversed, then to what purpose should we use the **means**? Our endeavors towards salvation cannot alter his decree.

The decree of God does not affect my endeavor; for he who decreed my salvation, decreed it in the use of means; and if I neglect the means I reprobate myself. No man argues thus: "God has decreed how long I shall live, therefore I will not use any means to preserve my life, I will not eat and drink." As God has decreed the length of my life, in the use of means—so God has decreed my salvation in the use of the Word and of prayer. As a man who refuses food murders himself—just so, he who refuses to work out his salvation destroys himself. The vessels of mercy are said to be *prepared* unto glory. How are they prepared, but by being sanctified? and that cannot be, but in the use of means. Therefore let not God's decree, take you off from holy endeavors. It is a good saying of Preston, "Have you a heart to pray to God? it is a sign that no decree of wrath has passed against you."

**Use one: If God's decree is eternal and unchangeable, then God does not elect upon our *foreseen* faith, as the Arminians maintain.** "The children being not yet born, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, it was said, Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated." Romans 9:11, 13. We are not elected *for* our holiness—but *to* holiness. Eph 1:1. If we are not *justified* for our faith, much less are we *elected* for our faith. We are said to be justified *through* faith as an instrument—but not *for* faith as a cause; and, if not justified *for* faith, then much less elected *for* faith. God's decree of election, is eternal and unchangeable, and therefore depends not upon foreseen faith. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." They were not elected because they believed—but they believed because they were elected.

**Use two: If God's decree be unchangeable, it gives comfort in two cases.**

**(1.) Concerning God's providence towards his church.** We are ready to quarrel with Providence, if everything does not accord with our desire. Remember God's work goes on, and nothing happens, but what he has decreed from eternity.

**(2.) God has decreed troubles for the church's good.** The *troubles* of God's church, are like the angel's troubling the water, which made way for *healing* his people. God has decreed troubles in the church. "His fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem." The wheels in a watch move contrary to one another—but they all carry on the motion of the watch. Just so, the wheels of Providence often move contrary to our desires—but still they carry on God's unchangeable decree.

"Many shall be made white." God lets the *waters of affliction* be poured on his people—to make them white. Therefore, do not murmur at God's dealings! His work goes on, nothing happens, but what he has wisely decreed from eternity. Everything shall promote God's design, and fulfill his decree.

**Use three: Comfort to the GODLY in regard of their salvation.** "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal—The Lord knows those who are his." God's counsel of election is unchangeable. Once elected, forever elected. "I will not blot his name out of the book of life." The book of God's decree has no errata in it, no blottings out. Once justified, never unjustified. "Repentance shall be hid from my eyes." Hos 13:14. God never repents of his electing love. "He loved them to the end." Therefore, if you are a believer, comfort yourself with this—the immutability of God's decree.

**Use four: To conclude with a word to the WICKED, who march furiously against God and his people—let them know that God's decree is unchangeable.** God will not alter it, nor can they break it! While they resist God's will, they fulfill it. There is a two-fold will of God—the will of God's *precept*, and the will of his *decree*. While the wicked resist the will of God's precept, they fulfill the will of his permissive decree. Judas betrays Christ, Pilate condemns him, the soldiers crucify him; while they resist the will of God's precepts, they fulfill the will of his permissive decree. "For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, assembled together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place." Acts 4:27-28.

God commands one thing, they do the contrary. While they disobey his command, they fulfill his permissive decree. If a man sets up two nets, one of silk, the other of iron, the silken net may be broken, not the iron one. Just so, while men break the silken net of God's command, they are taken in the iron net of his decree; while they sit backward to God's precepts, they row forward to his decrees. God decrees to *permit* their sin, and then to *punish* them for their sin permitted.

### The WISDOM of God

The next attribute is God's wisdom, which is one of the brightest beams of the Godhead. "He is wise in heart." The heart is the seat of wisdom. Among the Hebrews, the heart is put for wisdom. "Men of understanding," Job 34:34. The Hebrew is "Men of heart." God is wise in heart, that is, he is most wise.

God **alone** is wise—he solely and wholly possesses all wisdom; therefore he is called, "the only wise God." All the treasures of wisdom are locked up in him, and no creature can have any wisdom but as God is pleased to give it out of his treasury.

God is **perfectly** wise; there is no defect in his wisdom. Men may be wise in some things—but in other things they show imprudence and weakness. But God is the exemplar and pattern of wisdom, and the pattern must be perfect. "As your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 5:48. God's wisdom appears in two things:

I. His infinite intelligence.

II. His exact working.

**I. His infinite INTELLIGENCE.** He knows the most profound secrets. "Our Lord is great, vast in power; **His understanding is infinite.**" Psalm 147:5. "There is a God in heaven who *reveals secrets*, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what *will happen in the future.*" Daniel 2:28. He knows the thoughts, which are the most intricate subtle things. "I know full well what you are thinking." Job 21:27. "The Lord knows the thoughts of man." Psalm 94:11. Let sin be contrived ever so secretly, God will pull off all masks and disguises, and make a heart-anatomy. He knows all future contingencies; all things are before him in one clear prospect.

**II. His exact and meticulous WORKING.** He is wise in heart; his wisdom lies in his **works**. These works of God are bound up in three great volumes, where we may read his wisdom.

**[1] The work of CREATION.** The creation is both a monument of God's power, and a looking-glass in which we may see his wisdom. None but a wise God could so meticulously contrive the world. Behold the earth decked with variety of *flowers*, which are both for beauty and fragrance. Behold the heaven bespangled with *lights*. We may see the glorious wisdom of God blazing in the sun, twinkling in the stars. His wisdom is seen in marshaling and *ordering everything in its proper place and sphere*. If the sun had been set lower, it would have burnt us; if higher, it would not have warmed us with its beams. God's wisdom is seen in appointing the *seasons* of the year. "You have made summer and winter." If it had been all summer, the heat would have scorched us; if all winter, the cold would have killed us. The wisdom of God is seen in *chequering the dark and the light*. If it had been all night, there would have been no labor; if all day, there would have been no rest. Wisdom is seen in *mixing the elements*, as the earth with the sea. If it had been all sea, we would have lacked bread; if it had been all earth, we would have lacked water. The wisdom of God is seen in *preparing and ripening the fruits* of the earth, in the wind and frost which prepare the fruits, and in the sun and rain which ripen the fruits. God's wisdom is seen in setting bounds to the *sea*, and so wisely contriving it, that though the sea is higher than many parts of the earth—yet it should not overflow the earth. We may cry out with the Psalmist, "O Lord, how manifold are your works! in wisdom have you made them all." There is nothing to be seen in this world, but *miracles of God's wisdom*.

God's wisdom is seen in ordering *social* things, that one shall have need of another. The poor need the rich man's money, and the rich need the poor man's labor. God makes one trade depend upon another—that one may be helpful to another, and that mutual love may be preserved.

## **[2] The second work wherein God's wisdom shines forth is the work of REDEMPTION.**

**(1.) Redemption is the masterpiece of divine wisdom.** God has contrived a way for happiness for sinful man—and yet uphold his justice! We may cry out with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" This has astonished men and angels. If God had left *us* to find out a way of salvation when we were lost—we could neither have had a head to devise, nor a heart to desire—what God's infinite wisdom had planned for us.

*Mercy* had a mind to save sinners, and was loath that the justice of God should be wronged. "It is a pity," says *Mercy*, "that such a noble creature as man should be eternally undone; and yet God's justice must not be a loser. What way then shall be found out? Angels cannot satisfy for the wrong done to God's justice; nor is it fit that one nature should sin—and another nature suffer. What then? Shall man be forever lost?" Now, while *Mercy* was thus debating with itself, what to do for the recovery of fallen man, the *Wisdom* of God stepped in—and thus the oracle spoke: "Let God become man; let the Second Person in the Trinity become incarnate, and suffer; and so for fitness he shall be man, and for ability he shall be God! Thus justice may be satisfied, and man saved!" O the depth of the riches of the wisdom of God—thus to make *justice* and *mercy* to kiss each other! Great is this mystery, "God manifest in the flesh." What wisdom was this—that Christ should be made sin—yet know no sin; that God should condemn the sin—yet save the sinner! Here was wisdom—to find out the way of salvation.

**(2.) The means by which salvation is applied—sets forth God's wisdom—**that salvation should be by faith, not by works. Faith is a humble grace—it gives all to Christ; it is an adorer of free grace. And free grace being advanced here, God has his glory; and it is his highest wisdom to exalt his own glory.

**(3.) The way of working faith—declares God's wisdom.** It is wrought by the word preached. "Faith comes by hearing." What is the *weak breath of a man*—to convert a soul? It is like whispering in the ears of a dead man. This is foolishness in the eye of the world; but the Lord loves to show his wisdom by that which seems folly. "He has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." Why so? "So that no one can ever boast in the presence of God."

If God were to convert by the ministry of *angels*—then we would be ready to glory in angels, and give that honor to them which is due to God; but when God works by weak tools, makes use of men who are of like passions with ourselves, and by them converts, then the power is plainly seen to be of God. "But we have

this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us!" Herein is God's wisdom seen, that no flesh may glory in his Presence.

**[3] The wisdom of God wonderfully appears in the works of his PROVIDENCE.** Every providence has a *mercy* or a *wonder* enrap't up in it. The wisdom of God, in his works of providence, appears:

**(1.) By effecting great things—by small contemptible means.** He cured the stung Israelites, by a brazen serpent. If some sovereign antidote had been used, if the balm of Gilead had been brought, there would have been some likelihood of a cure; but what was there in a brazen serpent? It was a mere *model*—and not a *real* serpent; and it was not physically applied to him who was wounded; he was only to *look* upon it; yet this wrought a cure! The less probability in the *instrument*—the more is God's wisdom seen!

**(2.) The wisdom of God is seen in doing his work, by that which to the eye of flesh seems quite contrary.** God intended to advance Joseph, and to make all his brethren's sheaves bow to his sheaf. Now, what way does he take? First **Joseph** is thrown into the pit; then sold into Egypt; then after that put in prison. But by his imprisonment God made way for his advancement. For God to save in an *ordinary* way—would not so much display his wisdom. But when he goes *strangely* to work, and saves in that very way in which we think he will *destroy*—his wisdom shines forth in a most conspicuous manner!

God would make **Israel** victorious, and what way does he take? He *lessens* Gideon's army. "The people that are with you are too many." He reduces the army of thirty-two thousand, to three hundred; and by taking away the *means* of victory, makes Israel victorious.

God had a design to bring his people out of **Egypt**, and a strange course he takes to effect it! He stirred up the hearts of the Egyptians to hate them. "He turned their heart to hate his people." The more they hated and oppressed Israel, the more God plagued the Egyptians, and the more glad they were to let Israel go. The Egyptians were urgent that they might send them out of the land in haste.

God had a mind to save **Jonah** when he was cast into the sea—so he let the fish swallow him up, and so brought him to the shore.

God would save **Paul**, and all who were in the ship with him—but the ship must be wrecked, so that they could all come safely to land upon the broken pieces of the ship. Acts 27:74.

In reference to the **church**, God often goes by *contrary* means, and makes the enemy do his work. God can make a straight stroke, with a crooked stick. He has

often made his church *grow* and *flourish* by *persecution*. "The showers of blood have made her more fruitful," says Julian. Exod 1:10. "Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous." But the way the Egyptians took to suppress them, made them multiply. Verse 12. "But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites." Just like the soil—the more it is *harrowed*, the better crop it bears. The apostles were scattered by persecution, and their scattering was like the scattering of seed. They went up and down, and preached the gospel, and brought daily converts. Paul was put in prison, and his chains were the means of spreading the gospel. "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has actually resulted in the advancement of the gospel." Philippians 1:12.

**(3.) The wisdom of God is seen in making the most desperate evils, to work to the good of his children.** As several poisonous ingredients, wisely tempered by the skill of the apothecary, make a sovereign medicine—so God makes the most deadly afflictions work together for the good of his children. He uses severe afflictions to purify them, and prepare them for heaven. "For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory!" 2 Corinthians 4:17. These *hard frosts* hasten the spring flowers of glory! The wise God, by a *divine chemistry*, turns our afflictions into cordials. He makes his people *gainers* by *losses*; and turns their *crosses* into *blessings*.

**(4.) The wisdom of God is seen in this—that the sins of men shall carry on God's work; yet he himself should have no hand in their sin.** The Lord *permits* sin—but does not *approve* it. He has a hand in the *action* in which sin is—but not in the *sin* of the action. As in the crucifying of Christ, so far as it was a natural action, God concurred; if he had not given the Jews life and breath, they could not have done it; but as it was a sinful action, so God abhorred it. A musician plays upon a violin which is out of tune; the musician is the cause of the sound—but the jarring and discord is from the violin itself. Just so, men's *natural* motion is from God—but their *sinful* motion is from themselves. When a man rides on a lame horse, his riding is the cause why the horse goes—but the lameness is from the horse itself. Herein is God's wisdom—that the sins of men carry on his work—yet he has no hand in them!

**(5.) The wisdom of God is seen in helping in desperate cases.** God loves to show his wisdom—when human help and wisdom fail. Exquisite lawyers love to wrestle with difficult law cases, as this more shows their skill. God's wisdom is never at a loss; but when providences are darkest, then the *morning star of deliverance* appears. "He remembered us in our *low* estate." Sometimes God melts away the spirits of his enemies. "The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us." Joshua 2:24. Sometimes he finds them other work to do, and sounds a retreat to them, as he did to Saul when he was pursuing David. "The Philistines are in the land." When

the church seems to be upon destruction, and her peace and liberty ready to be sacrificed, then the deliverance comes.

**(6.) God's wisdom is seen in befooling wise men, and in making their wisdom the means of their overthrow.** Ahithophel had deep understanding. "The counsel Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God;" but he consulted his own shame. "The Lord turned his counsel into foolishness." "God takes the wise in their own craftiness;" that is, when they think to deal wisely, he not only *disappoints* them—but *ensnares* them. The snares they lay for others, catch themselves! "They have fallen into the pit they dug for others. They have been caught in their own trap." God loves to counterplot politicians; he makes use of their own wit to undo them. He hangs Haman up on his own gallows.

**Use one: Adore the wisdom of God.** It is an infinite deep; the angels cannot search into it. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways!" Romans 11:33. As we should *adore* the wisdom of God—so we should *rest* in the wisdom of God. God sees what condition is best for us. Did we believe the wisdom of God, it would keep us from murmuring. **Rest** in God's wisdom.

**(1.) In lack of spiritual comfort.** God is wise; he sometimes sees it good, that we should be without comfort. Perhaps we would be lifted up in pride if we had spiritual enlargements; as Paul, with his revelations. "Especially because of the extraordinary revelations. Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so I would not exalt myself." 2 Corinthians 12:7. It is hard to have the heart low—when comfort is high. God sees *humility* to be better for us than *joy*. It is better to lack comfort, and be humble—than to have it, and be proud!

**(2.) In lack of bodily strength,** rest in God's wisdom. He sees what is best. Perhaps the less health—the more grace. Perhaps the weaker in body—the stronger in faith. "Though our outward man is perishing—yet the inward man is renewed day by day." At Rome there were two laurel trees; when the one withered, the other flourished. When God shakes the *tree* of the body, he is gathering the *fruits* of righteousness. "No *discipline* seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the fruit of peace and righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11. **Sickness is God's lance—to let out the poison of sin.** "The Lord did this to purge away Israel's sin." Isaiah 27:9.

**(3.) In case of God's providences to his church.** When we wonder what God is doing with us, and are ready to kill ourselves with worry—let us rest in God's wisdom. He knows best what he has to do. "Your way went through the sea, and Your path through the great waters, but *Your footprints were unseen.*" Psalms 77:19. **Trust his heart—where you cannot trace his hand.** God is most in his way, when we think he is most out of the way. When we think God's church is, as

it were, in the grave, and there is a tombstone laid upon her, his wisdom can roll away the stone from the sepulcher. "Christ comes leaping over *mountains*." Either his *power* can remove the mountain, or his *wisdom* knows how to leap over it!

**(4.) In case we are low in the world, or have but little oil in our cruse**—let us rest in God's wisdom. He sees that this condition is best for us. Perhaps it is to cure us from pride or worldliness. God knew if your *estate* had not been lost—your *soul* would have been lost. God saw that *riches* would be a snare unto you. "But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains." 1 Timothy 6:9-10. Are you troubled that God has prevented a snare? God will make you rich in faith. What you lack in temporals, shall be made up in spirituals. God will give you more of his love. You are weak in estate—but God will make you strong in assurance. Oh rest in God's wisdom! He will carve the choicest piece for you!

**(5.) In case of the loss of dear friends, a wife, or child, or husband**, let us rest satisfied in God's wisdom. God takes away these, because he would have more of our love; he breaks these crutches, that we may live more upon him by faith. God would have us learn to go without crutches.

**Use two: If God is infinitely wise—let us go to him for wisdom.** Solomon prayed, "So give your servant a *discerning heart* . . . The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this." 1 Kings 3:9-10. Here is encouragement for us; "If any one lacks wisdom, let him *ask* of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids not." Wisdom is in God—as water is in the fountain. That is, his wisdom is *imparted*, but not *impaired*—his stock is not spent by giving it. Go then to God. "Lord, give me wisdom, to know the fallacy of my heart; the subtleties of the old serpent; to walk carefully towards myself; piously towards you, prudently towards others; guide me by your counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

### The JUSTICE of God

The next attribute is God's justice. All God's attributes are in unity, and are the same with his essence. Though he has several attributes whereby he is made known to us—yet he has but one essence. A cedar tree may have several branches—yet it is but one cedar. So there are several attributes of God whereby we conceive of him—but only one entire essence. Well, then, concerning God's justice. "Just and righteous is he." "His justice and great righteousness." God is said to dwell in justice. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne." Psalm 89:14. In God, *power* and *justice* meet. Power holds the scepter, and justice holds the balance.

## I. What is God's justice?

"Justice is to give everyone his due." God's justice is the rectitude of his nature, whereby he is carried to the doing of that which is righteous and equal. "Shall not he render to every man according to his works?" God is an impartial judge. He judges the cause. Men often judge the person—but not the cause; which is not justice—but malice. "I will go down and see whether they have done according to the cry which is come up unto me." When the Lord is upon a punitive act, he weighs things in the balance; he does not punish rashly. Concerning God's justice, I shall lay down these six positions:

**[1] God cannot but be just.** His holiness is the cause of his justice. Holiness will not allow him to do anything but what is righteous. He can no more be unjust, than he can be unholy.

**[2] God's will is the supreme rule of justice;** it is the standard of equity. His will is *wise* and *good*. God wills nothing but what is *just*; and therefore *it is just, because he wills it*.

**[3] God does justice, *naturally*.** Justice flows from his nature. Men may act unjustly, because they are bribed or forced to. But God will not be *bribed*, because of his justice; he cannot be *forced*, because of his power. He does justice out of love to justice. "You love righteousness."

**[4] Justice is the perfection of the divine nature.** Aristotle says, "Justice comprehends in it all virtues." To say God is just, is to say, he is all that is excellent; all perfections meet in him, as lines in a center. He is not only just—but justice itself.

**[5] God never did, nor can do, the least wrong to his creatures.** God's justice has been wronged—but his justice never did any wrong. God may not act according to the rigor of the law; he abates something of his severity. He might inflict heavier penalties than he does. "You have punished us less than our iniquities deserve." *Our mercies are more than we deserve, and our punishments less.*

**[6] God's justice is such that it is not fit for any man or angel to expostulate with him, or demand a reason of his actions.** God has not only authority on his side—but equity. "I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line." Isa 28:17. It is below him to give an account to us, of his proceedings. Which of these two should prevail—God's justice or man's reason? "Who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it—Why did you make me like this?" Romans 9:20. The plumb line of our reason is too short—to fathom the depth of God's justice. Rom 11:33. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How

unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways!" We are to adore God's justice, where we cannot see the reason of it.

**II. God's justice runs in two channels.** It is seen in two things, the distribution of rewards and punishments.

**[1] In rewarding the virtuous.** "Truly there is a reward for the righteous." The saints shall not serve him for nothing; though they may be losers *for* him, they shall not be losers *by* him. "God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed to his name." He gives a reward, not because we have *deserved* it—but because he has *promised* it.

**[2] He is just in punishing offenders.** He is just. (1.) Because he punishes sinners by a law. "Where there is no law, there is no transgression." But God has given men a law, and they break it, therefore he punishes them justly. (2.) God is just in punishing the wicked, because he never punished them, but upon full proof and evidence. What greater evidence than for a man's own conscience to be witness against him! There is nothing God charges upon a sinner but conscience sets its seal to the truth of it.

**Use one: See here another flower of God's crown—he is just and righteous.** He is the exemplar and pattern of justice.

**How can it be consistent with God's justice, that the wicked should prosper in the world?** "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do the treacherous live at ease?" Jeremiah 12:1. Such as are highest in sin--are often highest in prosperity. This has led many to question God's justice. Diogenes seeing a thief live on affluently, said, "Surely God has cast off the government of the world, and does not care how things go on here below."

(1.) The wicked may be sometimes instruments to do God's work. Though they do not *design* his glory—yet they may *promote* it. Cyrus was instrumental in the building of God's temple in Jerusalem. There is some kind of justice, that they should have a temporal reward. God lets those prosper under whose wing his people are sheltered. *God will not be in any man's debt.* "Who has kindled a fire on my altar for nothing?"

(2.) God lets men go on in sin, and prosper, that he may leave them more inexcusable. "I gave her space to repent of her fornication." God adjourns the sessions, spins out his mercies towards sinners; and if they repent not, his patience will be a witness against them, and his justice will be more cleared in their condemnation. "That you might be justified when you speak, and be clear when you judge."

(3.) God does not always let the wicked prosper in their sin. Some he punishes openly, that his justice may be taken notice of. "The Lord is known by the

judgement which he executes;" that is, his justice is seen by striking men dead in the very act of sin. Thus he struck Zimri and Cozbi in the act of uncleanness.

(4.) If God lets men prosper a while in their sin, his vial of wrath is all this while filling; his sword is all this time sharpening. Though God may forbear with men a while—yet long forbearance is no forgiveness. *The longer God is in taking his blow, the heavier it will be at last! As long as there is eternity, God has time enough to reckon with his enemies!*

God's justice may be as a sleeping lion—but the lion will awake at last, and roar upon the sinner! Do not Nero, and Julian, and Cain, now meet with God's justice?

**But God's own people often suffer great afflictions;** they are injured and persecuted. "This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. For I am afflicted all day long, and punished every morning." Psalm 73:12-14. How can this be consistent with God's justice?

(1.) That is a true rule of Austin, "*God's ways of judgement are sometimes secret—but never unjust!*" The Lord never afflicts his people without a cause; he cannot be unjust towards them. There is some good in the godly, therefore the wicked afflict them; there is some evil in them, therefore God afflicts them. God's own children have their blemishes. "But aren't you also guilty of sins against the Lord your God?" 2 Chronicles 28:10. These spiritual diamonds—have they no *flaws*? Do we not read of the *spots* of God's children? Are not they guilty of much pride, censoriousness, passion, worldliness? Though, by their profession, they should resemble the birds of paradise, to fly above, and feed upon the dew of heaven; yet, as the serpent, they lick the dust. These sins of God's people, do more provoke God than the sins of others. "The Lord saw this and was filled with loathing. He was provoked to anger by his own sons and daughters." Deut 32:19. The sins of others pierce Christ's side; the sins of His people wound his heart. Therefore is not God just in all the afflictions which befall them? "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins." Amos 3:2. I will punish you sooner, surer, sorer, than others.

(2.) The trials and sufferings of the godly, are to refine and purify them. God's furnace is in Zion. Is it any injustice in God to put his gold into the furnace to purify it? Is it any injustice in God, by afflicting his people, to make them partakers of his holiness? What more proclaims God's faithfulness, than to take such a course with them as may make them better? "In faithfulness you have afflicted me."

(3.) What injustice is it in God to inflict a less punishment; in order to prevent a greater punishment? The best of God's children have that in them which is meritorious of hell. Does God do them any wrong, if he uses only the *rod*, where they have deserved the *scorpion*? Is the father unjust, if he only *corrects* his

child, who has deserved to be *disinherited*? If God deals so favorably with his children, he only puts *wormwood* in their cup, whereas he might put *fire* and *brimstone*! They should rather admire his mercy than complain of his injustice.

**How can it stand with God's justice, that all men being equally guilty by nature, he does pass by one and save another? Why does he not deal with all alike?**

"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." "Does the Almighty pervert justice?"

(1.) God is not bound to give an account of his actions to his creatures. If none may question a king, much less God. It is sufficient that God is Lord paramount; he has a sovereign power over his creatures, therefore can do no injustice. "Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor?" God has liberty in his own bosom, to save one, and not another; and his justice is not at all impeached or blemished. If two men owe you money, you may, without any injustice, remit the debt to one, and exact it of the other. If two malefactors are condemned to die, the king may pardon the one and not the other: he is not unjust if he lets one suffer, because he offended the law; nor if he saves the other, because he will make use of his prerogative as he is king.

(2.) Though some are saved and others perish—yet there is no unrighteousness in God; because, whoever perishes, his destruction is of himself. "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." God offers grace—and the sinner refuses it. Is God bound to give grace? If a surgeon comes to heal a man's wound, and he will not be healed—is the surgeon bound to heal him? "I have called—and you refused." "Israel would not submit to me." Psalm 81:11. God is not bound to *force* his mercies upon men. If they willfully oppose the offer of grace, their sin is to be regarded as the cause of their perishing, and not God's justice.

**Use two: See the difference between God and a great part of the world.**

(1.) They are unjust in their courts of law—they pervert justice. "They decree unrighteous decrees." The Hebrew word for a judge's *robe* signifies prevarication, deceit, or injustice, which is more often true of the judge than of the robe. What is a good law without a good judge? *Injustice* lies in two things—either not to punish where there is a fault, or, to punish where there is no fault.

(2.) Men are unjust in their dealings. This is, [1] In using false weights. "The balances of deceit are in his hand." It is sad to have the Bible in one hand, and false weights in the other. Or, [2] In adulterating commodities. "Your wine is *mixed* with water," or when bad grain is mixed with good, and sold for pure grain. I can never believe he is good in the first table of the law—who is not good in the

second. He cannot be godly, who is not just. Though God does not bid you be as omnipotent as he is—yet he bids you be as just as he is.

**Use three: Imitate God in justice.** Let Christ's golden maxim be observed, "in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." Matt 7:12. You would not have them wrong you—neither must you wrong them; rather *suffer* wrong—than *do* wrong. "Why do you not rather *be* wronged?" Oh be exemplary for justice! Let justice be your ornament. "I put on righteousness (namely, justice) as a robe and a diadem." A robe for its graceful beauty; and I put it on, [and I was clothed in righteousness]. A judge puts on his robe, and takes it off again at *night*; but Job did so put on justice, as he did not take it off until *death*. We must not lay off this robe of justice until we lay down our bodies in the grave. If you have anything of God in you, you will be like him. By every *unjust* action, you deny yourselves to be Christians, you stain the glory of your profession. Heathen will rise up in judgement against you. The sun might sooner alter his course, than God could be turned from doing justice.

**Use four: If God is just, there will be a day of judgment.** Now things are out of course; sin is rampant, saints are wronged, they are often defeated in a righteous cause, they can meet with no justice here, justice is turned into wormwood. But there is a day coming, when God will set things right; he will do every man justice; he will crown the righteous, and condemn the wicked. "He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world" If God is a just God, he will take vengeance. God has given men a law to live by, and they break it. There must be a day for the execution of offenders. A law not executed is but like a wooden dagger—for a show. At the last day, God's sword shall be drawn out against offenders; then his justice shall be revealed before all the world. "God will judge the world in righteousness." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" **The wicked shall drink a sea of wrath—but not sip one drop of injustice!** At that day shall all mouths be stopped, and God's justice shall be fully vindicated from all the cavils and clamors of unjust men.

**Use five: Comfort to the true penitent.** As God is a just God, he will pardon him. If man acknowledges his sin—God spares him. "If we confess our sins (that is confess and forsake), he is *just* to forgive us our sins." God is not only *merciful*, but *just*. Why just? Because he has promised to forgive such. "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." Proverbs 28:13. If your heart has been broken *for* and *from* sin—you may not only plead God's *mercy*—but his *justice* for the pardoning of your sin. Show him his promise, and he cannot deny himself.

### The MERCY of God

The next attribute is God's goodness or mercy. *Mercy* is the result and effect—of God's *goodness*. So then this is the next attribute, God's goodness or mercy. The

most learned of the heathens thought they gave their God Jupiter two golden characters when they styled him *good* and *great*. Both these meet in God, *goodness* and *greatness*; *mercy* and *majesty*. God is essentially good *in* himself, and relatively good *to* us. "You *are* good, and *do* good." This relative goodness is nothing else but his mercy, which is an innate propensity in God to pity and support such as are in misery.

## I. Concerning God's mercy, I shall lay down these twelve positions.

**[1] It is the great design of the Scripture to represent God as merciful.** This is a loadstone to draw sinners to him. "I am the Lord, I am the Lord, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness. I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so I do not leave sin unpunished." Exodus 34:6-7. Here are six expressions to set forth God's mercy, and but one to set forth his justice. "God's mercy is far above the heavens." God is represented as a king, with a *rainbow* about his throne. Rev 4:4. The rainbow was an emblem of mercy. The Scripture represents God in *white robes of mercy*—more often than with garments rolled in blood; with his *golden scepter*—more often than his iron rod.

**[2] God is more inclined to mercy, than wrath.** Mercy is his *darling* attribute, which he most delights in. "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy." Micah 7:18. Mercy pleases him. "It is delightful to the mother," says Chrysostom, "to have her breasts drawn; so it is to God to have the breasts of his mercy drawn." "Fury is not in me," that is, I do not delight in it. Acts of severity are rather *forced* from God; he does not afflict willingly. "For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men." Lamentations 3:33.

The bee naturally gives honey, it stings only when it is provoked. Just so, God does not punish until he can bear no longer. "So that the Lord could bear no longer, because of the evil of your doings." Mercy is God's right hand that he is most used to; inflicting punishment is called his "strange work." He is not used to it. When the Lord would shave off the pride of a nation, he is said to use a *hired* razor, as if he had none of his own. "On that day the Lord will use a *razor hired* from beyond the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria—to shave the head, the hair on the legs, and to remove the beard as well." Isaiah 7:20. "He is *slow* to anger," but "*ready* to forgive."

**[3] There is no condition—but we may spy mercy in it.** When the church was in captivity, she cried out, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." Geographers write of Syracuse in Sicily, that it is so situated that the sun is never out of sight. In all afflictions we may see some *sunshine of mercy*. That *outward* and *inward* troubles do not come together is mercy.

**[4] Mercy sweetens all God's other attributes.** God's holiness without mercy, and his justice without mercy—would be dreadful. When the water was bitter, and Israel could not drink, Moses cast a tree into the waters, and then they were made sweet. How bitter and dreadful were the other attributes of God—did not mercy sweeten them! Mercy sets God's power on work to help us; it makes his justice become our friend.

**[5] God's mercy is one of the most orient pearls of his crown; it makes his Godhead appear amiable and lovely.** When Moses said to God, "I beseech you—show me your *glory*;" the Lord answered him, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before you, and I will show you *mercy*." God's mercy is his glory. His holiness makes him illustrious; his mercy makes him endearing.

**[6] Even the worst people taste God's mercy.** Such as fight against God's mercy, taste of it; the wicked have some *crumbs* from *mercy's table*. "The Lord is good to *all*." Sweet dewdrops are on the *thistle*, as well as on the *rose*. The diocese where mercy visits is very large. Pharaoh's *head* was crowned, though his *heart* was hardened.

**[7] Mercy coming to us in salvation, is sweetest.** It was mercy that God would give Israel rain, and bread to the full, and peace, and victory over their enemies—but it was a greater mercy that God would be their God. To have *health* is a mercy—but to have *Christ* and salvation is a greater mercy. Saving mercy, is like the diamond in the ring, which casts a more sparkling luster.

**[8] One act of mercy engages God to another.** Men argue thus, "I have shown you kindness already, therefore trouble me no more." But, because God has shown saving mercy, he is more ready still to show mercy. His mercy in election makes him justify, adopt, glorify; one act of mercy engages God to more. A parent's love to his child makes him always giving.

**[9] All the mercy in the creature is derived from God, and is but a drop from this ocean.** The mercy and pity a mother has to her child, is from God; he who puts the milk in her breast puts the compassion in her heart. God is called, "The *Father* of mercies," because he begets all the mercies in the world. If God has put any kindness into the creature, how much kindness is in him who is the Father of mercy!

**[10] As God's mercy makes the saints *happy*—so it should make them *humble*.** Mercy is not the fruit of *our* goodness—but the fruit of *God's* goodness. Mercy is a gift which God bestows. They have no cause to be proud, who live upon the alms of God's mercy. "If I am righteous—yet will I not lift up my head." That is, all my righteousness is the effect of God's mercy, therefore I will be humble and will not lift up my head.

**[11] Mercy stays the speedy execution of God's justice.** Sinners continually provoke God, and make "the fury come up in his face." Why is it, that God does not immediately arrest and condemn them? It is not that God *cannot* do it, for he is armed with omnipotence—but it is from his mercy. Mercy gets a reprieve for the sinner—and stops the speedy process of justice. God would, by his goodness, lead sinners to repentance.

**[12] It is dreadful to have mercy as a witness against any one.** It was sad with Haman, when the *queen* herself accused him. So will it be when this *queen of mercy* shall stand up against a person and accuse him! It is only mercy that saves a sinner; how sad then to have mercy become an enemy! If mercy is an accuser, who shall be our advocate? The sinner never escapes hell, when *mercy* draws up the indictment.

I might show you several **kinds** of mercy—as preventing mercy, sparing mercy, supplying mercy, guiding mercy, accepting mercy, healing mercy, quickening mercy, supporting mercy, forgiving mercy, correcting mercy, comforting mercy, delivering mercy, crowning mercy; but I shall speak of,

## **II. The qualifications or PROPERTIES of God's mercy.**

**[1] God's mercy is FREE.** To set up *merit*—is to destroy mercy. We cannot *deserve* mercy, because we are polluted in our blood; nor can we *force* God to show mercy—for then it would not be mercy. We may force God to *punish* us—but not to *love* us. "I will love them *freely*." Every link in the chain of salvation is wrought and interwoven with free grace. Election is free. "He has *chosen* us in him, according to the good pleasure of his will." Justification is free. "Being *justified* freely by his grace." Salvation is free. "According to his mercy he *saved* us." Do not say, "I am *unworthy*, therefore I cannot be saved;" for mercy is *free*. If God would show mercy to such only as are worthy—he would show no mercy at all.

**[2] God's mercy is an overflowing mercy; it is INFINITE.** "Plenteous in mercy." "Rich in mercy." "Multitude of mercies." The vial of wrath *drops*—but the fountain of mercy runs in *streams*. The sun is not so full of light—as God is of mercy. God has *morning* mercies. "His mercies are new every morning." He has *night* mercies. "In the night his song shall be with me." God has mercies *under* heaven, which we taste; and *in* heaven, which we hope for.

**[3] God's mercy is ETERNAL.** "The mercy of the Lord is from eternity to eternity." Psalm 103:17. "His mercy endures forever," is repeated twenty-six times in Psalm 136. The souls of the blessed shall be ever bathing themselves in this sweet and pleasant ocean of God's mercy! God's anger to his children lasts but a while, "but his mercy lasts forever." As long as he is God, he will be showing mercy. As his mercy is *overflowing*, so it is *ever-flowing*.

**Use one: We are to look upon God in PRAYER, not in his judgment robes—but clothed with a rainbow full of mercy and clemency.** Add wings to prayer. When Jesus Christ ascended up to heaven, that which made him go up there with joy was, "I go to my *Father!*" Just so, that which should make our hearts ascend with joy in prayer, is, "We are going to the *Father* of mercy, who sits upon the throne of grace!" Go to prayer with confidence in God's mercy; as a cold person goes to a fire, saying, "it will *warm* me, not *burn* me."

**Use two: BELIEVE in his mercy.** "I will trust in the mercy of God forever." God's mercy is an *open fountain*. Let down the *bucket of faith*—and you may drink of this fountain of salvation. What greater encouragement to believe—than God's mercy? God counts it his glory to be *scattering pardons*; he is desirous that sinners should touch the golden scepter of his mercy, and live. **This willingness in God to show mercy appears two ways:**

(1.) By *entreating* sinners to come and lay hold on his mercy. "Whoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely." Mercy woos sinners, it even kneels down to beg them. It would be strange for a prince to beg a condemned man to accept of pardon. God says, "Poor sinner, allow me to love you, be willing to let me save you."

(2.) By his joyfulness when sinners lay hold on his mercy. What is God the better, whether we receive his mercy or not? What is the *fountain* profited that others drink of it? Yet such is God's goodness, that he rejoices at the salvation of sinners, and is glad when his mercy is accepted! When the prodigal son came home the father was glad, and made a feast to express his joy; so, God rejoices when a poor sinner comes in, and lays hold of his mercy. What an encouragement is here to believe in God! He is a God of pardons. "You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and *full of unfailing love and mercy*." Neh 9:17. Mercy pleases him. "Where is another God like you, who pardons the sins of the survivors among his people? You cannot stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing mercy." Micah 7:18.

Nothing harms us but unbelief. Unbelief stops the current of God's mercy from running. It shuts up God's affections, closes the orifice of Christ's wounds, so that no healing virtue will come out. "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Why do you not believe in God's mercy? Do your *sins* discourage you? God's mercy can pardon great sins, nay, because they are great. "For the sake of your name, O Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is *great*." Psalm 25:11. The sea covers the *rocks* as well as the *sands*. Some who had a hand in crucifying Christ, found mercy. As far as the heavens are above the earth, so far is God's mercy above our sins! What will entice us to believe, if not the *mercy* of God?

**Use three: Take heed of ABUSING the mercy of God.** Do not suck poison, out of the sweet flower of God's mercy. Do not think that because God is merciful, you may go on in sin; this is to make God's mercy your enemy. None might touch the ark but the *priests*, who by their office were more holy. Just so, none may touch the ark of God's mercy, but such as are resolved to be holy. To sin because God's mercy abounds—is the devil's logic! He who sins because of God's mercy—is like one who wounds his head because he has a plaster. He who sins because of God's mercy—shall have judgement without mercy. Mercy *abused*, turns to *fury*. "Let none of those who hear the warnings of this curse consider themselves immune, thinking, 'I am safe, even though I am walking in my own stubborn way.' This would lead to utter ruin! The Lord will not pardon such people. His anger and jealousy will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will come down on them!" Deuteronomy 29:19-20.

Nothing is colder than *lead* when taken out of the mine; and nothing more scalding when it is heated. Nothing is blunter than *iron*—yet nothing is sharper when it is whetted. Just so, nothing is sweeter than mercy—when it is *improved*; yet nothing is fiercer than mercy—when it is *abused*! "The mercy of the Lord is upon those who *fear* him." Mercy is not for those who sin and fear not—but for those who fear and sin not. God's mercy is a *holy* mercy; where it pardons it sanctifies.

### **What shall we do to be savingly interested in God's mercy?**

**(1.) Be sensible of your needs.** See how much you stand in need of pardoning, saving mercy. See yourselves as *orphans*. "In you, the fatherless find mercy." God bestows the *alms of mercy* only on such as are *indigent*. Be emptied of all opinion of self-worthiness. God pours the golden *oil of mercy* into *empty* vessels.

**(2.) Go to God for mercy.** "Have mercy upon me, O God!" "Do not put me off with *common* mercy, which reprobates may have! Give me not only *acorns* but pearls! Give me not only mercy to feed and clothe me—but mercy to *save* me! Give me the cream of your mercies! Lord! let me have *saving* mercy and loving-kindness. Give me such mercy as speaks your electing love to my soul."

"Who *crowns* you with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Oh pray for mercy! God has *treasures* of mercy! Prayer is the key which opens these treasures; and in prayer, *be sure to carry Christ in your arms*, for all the mercy comes through Christ! "So Samuel took a young *lamb* and offered it to the Lord as a whole burnt offering. He pleaded with the Lord to help Israel—and the Lord answered." 1 Samuel 7:9. Carry the *lamb Christ* in your arms, go in his name, present his merits; say, "Lord! here is Christ's blood, which is the price of my pardon! Lord! show me mercy, because Christ has purchased it!" Though God may refuse us when we come for mercy in our *own* name—yet he will not when we come in *Christ's* name. Plead Christ's atonement; this is an argument which God cannot deny.

## **Use four: Such as have found mercy are exhorted to three things—**

**(1.) To be upon Gerizim—the mount of blessing and praising.** They have not only *heard* the King of heaven is merciful—but they have *found* it so! The honeycomb of God's mercy has dropped upon them! When in needs, mercy supplied them; when they were near unto death, mercy raised them from the sick-bed; when covered with guilt, mercy pardoned them. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" Oh, how should the vessels of mercy run over with praise! "I used to scoff at the name of Christ. I hunted down his people, harming them in every way I could. But God had mercy on me." 1 Timothy 1:13. "I am a miracle of mercy! As the sea overflows and breaks down the banks, so the mercy of God broke down the banks of my sin, and mercy sweetly flowed into my soul!"

You who have been *monuments of God's mercy*—should be *trumpets of praise!* You who have tasted the Lord is gracious, tell others what experiences you have had of God's mercy, that you may encourage them to seek to him, for mercy. "I will tell you what God has done for my soul." "When I found my heart dead, God's Spirit came upon me mightily, and the blowing of that wind made the withering flowers of my grace revive!" Oh tell others of God's goodness, that you may set others blessing him, and that you may make God's praises live when you are dead.

**(2.) To love God.** Mercy should be the attraction of love. "I will love you, O Lord, my strength." The Hebrew word for love signifies, *to love out of the inward affections*. God's *justice* may make us fear him, his *mercy* makes us love him. If God's mercy will not produce love, what will? We are to love God for giving us our *food*, much more for giving us *grace*. We are to love God for *sparing* mercy, much more for *saving* mercy. Surely, that heart is made of marble, which the mercy of God will not dissolve into love. "I would hate my own soul," says Augustine, "if I did not find it loving God."

**(3.) To imitate God in showing mercy.** As God is the Father of mercy, show yourselves to be his children—by being like him. Ambrose says, "The sum and definition of true religion is—Be rich in works of mercy, be helpful to the bodies and souls of others. Scatter your golden seeds; let the lamp of your profession be filled with the *oil of love*. Be merciful in giving and forgiving." "Be merciful—as your heavenly Father is merciful."

## **The TRUTH of God**

The next attribute is God's truth. "A God of truth and without iniquity; just and righteous is he." "For your mercy is great unto the heavens, and your truth unto the clouds." "Plenteous in truth."

**God is the truth.** He is true in a physical sense; true in his being: he has a real subsistence, and gives a being to others. He is true in a moral sense; he is truth without error; truth without deceit. God is *prima veritas*, the pattern and prototype of truth. There is nothing true but what is *in* God—or comes *from* God.

I shall speak of God's truth, as it is taken from his veracity in making good his promises. "There has not failed one word of all his good promise." The promise is God's pledge; God's truth is the seal set to his pledge.

**There are two things to be observed in the promises of God to comfort us.**

**[1] Observe the POWER of God, whereby he is *able* to fulfill the promise.**

God has promised to subdue our corruption. "He will subdue our iniquities." Oh, says a believer, my corruption is so strong, that I am sure I shall never get the mastery of it. Abraham looked at God's power. "Being fully persuaded that what God had promised he was *able* to perform." He believed that God, who could make a world, could make Sarah's dry breasts give suck. It is faith's support—that there is nothing too hard for God. He who could bring water out of a rock, is able to bring to pass his promises.

**[2] Observe the TRUTH of God, in the promises.** God's truth is the seal set to the promise. "In hope of eternal life, which God, *who cannot lie* has promised."

'Eternal life'—there is the *sweetness* of the promise. 'God which cannot lie'—there is the *certainty* of it. Mercy *makes* the promise; truth *fulfills* the promise. God's *providences* are uncertain—but his *promises* are the 'sure mercies of David.' "God is not a man who he should change." The word of a *prince* cannot always be taken—but *God's* promise is inviolable. God's truth is one of the richest jewels of his crown, and he has pawned it in a promise. "Although my house be not so with God—yet he has made with me an *everlasting* covenant, ordered in all things and *sure*." 'Although my house be not so,' that is, though I fail much of that exact purity the Lord requires—yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, that he will pardon, adopt, and glorify me; and this covenant is ordered in all things and sure.

"The elements shall melt with fervent heat;" but God's covenant abides firm and inviolable, being sealed with the *truth* of God. Nay, God has added to his word his *oath*—wherein he pawns his being, life, and righteousness to make good the promise. If as often as we break *our* vows with God, he would break promise with us, it would be very deplorable. But his truth is engaged in his promise, therefore it is like the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be altered. "We are not," says Chrysostom, "to believe our *senses* so much as we are to believe the *promises*." Our senses may fail us—but the promise cannot, being built upon the truth of God. God *will* not deceive the faith of his people; nay, he *cannot*. "God, who cannot lie, has promised." He can as well part with his *Deity*—as his *verity*. God is said to be *abundant in truth*. Exod 34:6. What does that signify? If God has made a promise of mercy to his people, he will be so far from coming *short*

of his word—that he will be *better* than his word. He often does *more* than he has said—but never *less*. He is *abundant* in truth.

**(1.) The Lord may sometimes delay a promise—but he will never *deny* a promise.** He may *delay* a promise. God's promise may lie a good while, as seed under ground—but at last it will spring up into a crop. He promised to deliver Israel from the iron furnace—but this promise was over four hundred years in travail, before it gave birth. Simeon had a promise that he should not depart, "until he had seen the Lord's Christ." But it was a long time coming. But a little before his death—he did see Christ. Though God *delays* the promise—he will never *deny* a promise. Having given his bond—in due time the money will be paid.

**(2.) God may change his promise—but he will not *break* it.** Sometimes God changes a temporal promise, into a spiritual promise. "The Lord shall give that which is *good*." This may not be fulfilled in a *temporal* sense—but a *spiritual* sense. God may let a Christian be cut short in temporals—but he makes it up in spirituals. If he does not increase the basket and the store, he gives increase of faith, and inward peace. Here he *changes* his promise—but he does not *break* it; he gives that which is *better*. If a man promises to pay me in farthings, and he pays me in a better coin, as in gold, he does not break his promise. "I will not allow my faithfulness to *fail*." In the Hebrew it is, "I will not allow my faithfulness to *lie*."

**How does it consist with the truth of God, that he "wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"—and yet some still perish?**

Augustine understands it, not of every *individual* person—but some of all kinds of people shall be saved. As in the ark, God saved all the living creatures; not every *individual* bird or fish was saved, for many perished in the flood; but *all*, that is, *some of every kind* were saved. In this sense, God will have *all* to be saved, that is—some out of each of nations.

It is said, **Christ died for all.** "He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the *world*." How does this consist with God's truth, when some are vessels of wrath? Rom 9:92.

(1.) We must qualify the term **world**. The world is taken either in a limited sense, for the world of the elect; or in a larger sense, for both elect and reprobates. "Christ takes away the sins of the world," that is, the world of the elect.

(2.) We must qualify also Christ's dying for the world. Christ died *sufficiently* for all, not *effectually*. There is the *value* of Christ's blood, and the *virtue* of Christ's blood. Christ's blood has **value** enough to redeem the whole world—but the **virtue** of it is applied only to such as believe. Christ's blood has the value to save

all, but it is not efficacious for all. All are not saved, because some put away salvation from them, "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you *reject* it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13:46. Others *vilify* Christ's blood, counting it an unholy thing.

**Use one: The truth of God, is a great pillar for our faith.** Were he not a God of truth—we could not believe him—our faith would be an empty dream. But he is truth itself, and not a word which he has spoken shall fall to the ground.

The truth of God, is the object of trust. The truth of God is an immovable rock, on which we may venture our salvation. Isa 59:15, "Truth fails," that is—truth on earth fails—but not truth in heaven. God can as well cease to be God, as cease to be true. Has God said, he "will do good to the soul who seeks him," and he will "give rest to the weary." Here is a safe anchor-hold, he will not alter the thing which has gone out of his lips. The truth of the God of heaven is engaged for believers. Can we have better security? The whole earth hangs upon the word of God's power—and shall not our faith hang upon the word of God's truth? Where can we rest our faith, but upon God's faithfulness? There is nothing else we can securely believe in, but the truth of God. To trust in *ourselves* is to build upon quick sands; but the truth of God is a golden pillar for faith to rest upon. God cannot deny himself. "If we believe not—yet he abides faithful; he cannot deny himself." Not to believe God's veracity, is to affront God. "He who believes not, has made God a liar." A person of honor cannot be more affronted or provoked, than when he is not believed, and called a liar. He who denies God's truth, says that God's promise is no better than a forged deed. Can there be a greater affront offered to God?

**Use two: If God is a God of truth, he is true to his THREATENINGS.** The threatenings are a *flying scroll* against sinners. God has threatened, "*Surely* God will crush the heads of his enemies, the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins." Psalm 68:21. He has threatened to judge adulterers. Heb 13:3. To be avenged upon the malicious. Psalm 10:14, "You behold mischief and spite, to requite it with your own hand;" and to "rain fire and brimstone upon the sinner." God is as true to his *threatenings* as to his *promises*. To show his truth, he has executed his threatenings, and let his thunderbolts of judgement fall upon sinners in *this* life. He struck *Herod* in the act of his pride. He has punished blasphemers. Olympius, an Arian bishop, reproached and blasphemed the blessed Trinity, and immediately lightning fell down from the heaven upon him and consumed him. Let us fear the threatening that we may not feel it.

**Use three: Is God a God of truth? Let us be like God in truth.**

**(1.) We must be true in our WORDS.** Pythagoras being asked what made men like God, answered, "When they speak truth." It is the distinction of a man who shall go to heaven, that "He speaks the truth in his heart."

**Truth in our words, is opposed to all LYING.** "Putting away lying, speak everyone truth to his neighbor." Lying is when one speaks that as truth, which he knows to be false. A liar is most opposite to the God of truth. There are, as Augustine says, two sorts of lies. There is an **officious** lie—when a man tells a lie for his profit; as, when a tradesman says his commodity cost him so much, when perhaps it did not cost him half so much. He who will lie in his trade—shall lie in hell. There is a *jesting* lie—when a man tells a lie in sport, to make others merry—and goes laughing to hell. He who tells a lie makes himself like the devil. "The devil is a liar, and the father of lies." John 8:44. He deceived our first parents by a lie. Some are so wicked, that they will not only speak an untruth—but will swear to it; nay, they will wish a curse upon themselves, if that untruth is not true.

I have read of a woman, one Anne Avarie, who in 1575, being in a shop, wished that she might die, if she had not paid for the wares she took, and fell down speechless immediately and died. A liar is not fit to live in a commonwealth. Lying takes away all society and converse with men. How can you converse with a man—when you cannot believe what he says? Lying shuts men out of heaven. "Outside are dogs, and whoever loves and makes a lie."

As it is a great sin to *tell* a lie—so it is a worse sin to *teach* a lie. "The prophet that *teaches* lies." He who teaches error, teaches lies. He spreads the plague; he not only damns himself—but helps to damn others!

**Truth in our words, is opposed to all DECEIT.** The heart and tongue should go together, as the dial goes exactly with the sun. To speak fair to one's face, and not to mean what one speaks, is no better than a lie. "His words were smoother than oil—but war was in his heart." Some have an art to flatter and deceive. Jerome, speaking of the Arians, says, "they pretended friendship, they kissed my hands—but plotted mischief against me." "A man who flatters his neighbor, spreads a net for his feet." Deadly poison can be hidden under sweet honey. Falsehood in friendship, is a lie. Counterfeiting friendship, is worse than counterfeiting money.

**(2.) We must be true in our PROFESSION of religion.** Let *practice* go along with *profession*. "Righteousness and true holiness." Hypocrisy in religion is a lie. The hypocrite is like a face in a mirror, which is the 'show of a face'—but no true face. He makes *show* of holiness—but has no *truth* in it. Ephraim pretended to be that which he was not; and what does God say of him? "Ephraim compasses me about with *lies*." By a lie in our *words*, we deny the truth; by a lie in our *profession*, we disgrace the truth. Not to be to God what we profess to others—is telling a lie; and the Scripture makes it little better than blasphemy. "I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews—and are not."

Oh! I beseech you, labor to be like God. He is a God of truth. He can as well part with his Deity—as his verity. Be like God, be true in your *words*, be true in your

*profession*. God's children are children that will not lie. When God sees "truth in the inward parts," and "lips in which is no deceit," he sees his own image—which draws his heart towards us. *Likeness produces love*.

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