

A  
HEAVENLY  
CORDIAL

BY  
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## A Heavenly Cordial

**Thirteen divine maxims** or conclusions, in respect of **the great plague of London**—which may be as so many supports, comforts, and refreshing springs—both to the visited and preserved people of God in this present day. For all those servants of the Lord that have had the plague (and are recovered) or who now have it; also for those who have escaped it, though their relations and friends have been either visited, or swept away by it.

By Thomas Brooks, Minister of the Gospel in London, 1665.

### **I. The first divine maxim is this—When the pestilence is among a people—it is the Lord alone who sends it.**

[2 Sam. 24:15](#), "So the Lord sent a plague on Israel from that morning until the end of the time designated, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died." [Num. 16:46](#), "Wrath has come out from the Lord; the plague has started." [Num. 14:12](#), "I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them." [Deut. 28:21](#), "The Lord will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess." [Ezek. 14:19, 21](#), "Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out my wrath upon it through bloodshed, killing its men and their animals. For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments--sword and famine and wild beasts and plague--to kill its men and their animals!" [Amos 4:10](#), "I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt." Hence the plague is called, God's arrow, [Psalm 91:5](#); and when God shoots those arrows into kingdoms, cities, towns, families, [Psalm 38:2](#), none can pull them out but God himself.

The plague is more immediately from God than any other sickness or disease, for it is the immediate stroke of God. [[Deut. 32:89](#). Hippocrates calls it the Divine disease, because it comes more immediately from God than other diseases do.] The scribe is more properly said to write than the pen, and he who makes and keeps the clock is more properly said to make it go and strike than the wheels and poises that hang upon it; and every workman is more properly said to effect his work, rather than the tools which he uses as instruments. Just so, the Lord Almighty, who is the chief agent and mover in all things and in all actions, may more fitly and properly be said to effect and bring to pass all judgments, yes, all things which are done in the earth, than any inferior or subordinate causes; seeing they are but his tools and instruments, which he rules or guides according to his own will, power, and providence.

I know some physicians ascribe it to the heat of the air, and sometimes to the dryness of the air, and sometimes to the corruption of the air, and sometimes to the corruption of men's blood, and sometimes to Satan, and sometimes to the malignancy of the planets—but certainly those are "physicians of no value" who cannot look above second causes to the First Cause, that cannot look to the "wheel within the wheel," [Ezek. 1](#). The plague is a hidden thing, a secret thing; it is a sickness, a disease, that more immediately comes from God than any other sickness or disease does. [Exod. 9:3-4](#), "The hand of the Lord will bring a terrible plague on your livestock in the field--on your horses and donkeys and camels and on your cattle and sheep and goats. But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die." That terrible plague is the extraordinary, immediate power and work of God, without the intervening of any second cause or human operation. This open plague, this plague without-doors, that principally fell upon the cattle, was from the immediate hand of God.

It is God alone who singles out the nation, the city, the town, the parish, the family, the person—that he will strike with the plague; for all second causes are ordered by the First Cause, as every instrument is ruled or overruled by the will and hand of him who holds it. When a man goes with his axe to cut down trees in the wood, there is an equal aptness in the axe to cut down one tree as well as another, an oak tree as well as an ash tree, etc.—but it is still ruled by the will of him who wields it. Just so, it is here—the deadly pestilence has an equal aptness to cut down one man as well as another, the rich as well as the poor, the honorable as well as the base, the strong as well as the weak, the prince as well as the peasant, the emperor as well as the street-sweeper, but it is still overruled by the Lord himself, who gives it a commission to cut off such and such, in this kingdom and that kingdom, in this city and that city, in this town and that town, in this family and that family—and to spare, save, and pass by all the rest.

In [Rev. 6](#) you shall read of four horses, when the four seals were opened, (1.) a white horse, (2.) a red horse, (3.) a black horse, (4.) a pale horse. After Christ had ridden upon the white horse, propagating the gospel, then follows the red horse, a type of war; then the black horse, a hieroglyphic of famine; and then the pale horse, the emblem of pestilence. Now all these horses, these plagues, were of Christ's sending. From those words, [Judges 3:20](#), "I have a message from God unto you, O king," said Ehud; lo, his dagger was God's message; from whence one well observes, that not only the vocal admonitions but the real judgments of God are his errands and instructions to the world, [Isaiah 26:8-10](#).

It was a mad principle among the Manichees, who referred all the judgments, calamities, and miseries that came upon them to the devil for their author. But the scripture plainly states, "When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?" [Amos 3:6](#).

Now in that it is the Lord alone who sends the pestilence among a people, how should this comfort us and quiet us! how should this cool us and calm us! how should this satisfy us and silence us before the Lord, and cause us to lay our hands upon our mouths, as David did, [Psalm 39:9](#), and as Aaron did, [Lev. 10:1-3](#), and as Eli did, [1 Sam. 3:18](#), and as the church did, [Lam. 3:26-29](#).

The cup of trembling which is this day offered to the children of God, is often very bitter at the second hand, or as it appears in second causes; and yet it is sweet at the first hand, yes, it is very sweet as it is reached to them by a hand from heaven; and therefore they may well say, as their head and husband has done before them, "Shall we not drink of the cup that our Father has given us to drink of?" etc., [John 18:11](#).

## **II. The second divine maxim is this—The pestilence and all other judgments of God are limited as to PLACES.**

Hence it comes to pass that God shoots his arrows of pestilence into one city, and not into another city; into one town, and not into another town; into one family, and not into another family; into one kingdom and country, and not into another country, [Exod. 8:20-23](#), and [9:22-26](#); [2 Sam. 24:15](#). Turn to all these scriptures and ponder upon them.

## **III. The third divine maxim is this—All the judgments of God are limited, not only to places—but also to PEOPLE.**

And therefore such and such people must fall, when such and such people must escape; and such and such people must be infected, when such and such people are preserved. Hence it is that one is taken in the bed, and the other left; one smitten at the table or in the house, and all the rest preserved in perfect health, etc. God has

numbered so many to the *sword*, and so many to the *famine*, and so many to the *pestilence*, so many to this *disease*, and so many to that *affliction*, [2 Sam. 24:15-16](#); [Ezek. 11:5-7](#), [5:12](#), and [6:11-12](#); [Exod. 12:13](#); [Psalm 91:3-9](#); [Isaiah 65:12](#); [Jer. 15:2](#); [Ezek. 33:27](#). Turn to all those scriptures and ponder upon them. God marks out those people that he intends to shoot the arrow of pestilence among. God never shoots at random; he never draws his bow at a venture—but he singles out the people that he purposes to hit, and his arrows fly swiftly and suddenly—yet they hit none but those who God has set up as a mark to shoot at! "O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target?" [Job 7:20](#).

**IV. The fourth divine maxim is this—No man knows divine love or hatred, by outward dispensations.** [Eccles. 9:1-2](#); [Luke 13:4, 16](#); [Lam. 4:6](#); [Dan. 9:12](#); [Psalm 73:12-22](#).

In times of great judgments God often spares those whom his soul hates and abhors, [Isaiah 1:5](#); [Hosea 4:14, 17](#). God often preserves wicked men from great judgments, that they may fall by greater judgments; as you may see in Sodom and her sisters, which were preserved from the slaughter of the four kings, that God might rain down hell out of heaven upon them. And so Sennacherib escapes the stroke of the destroying angel, that he might fall by the sword of his own sons, [Isaiah 37:37-38](#). And as in times of great judgments, God often spares those sinners that his soul hates—so in times of great judgments God often takes away those whom his soul dearly loves! In all the considerable plagues that have been in this nation, how many precious Christians have fallen by the sword, and by the hand of the destroying angel, when many thousands of Balaks and Balaams, I mean the worst of men, have escaped the sword, the plague, etc.! And is there anything more obvious this day than this? Surely not!

**V. The fifth divine maxim is this—The Lord sometimes takes away his dearest people by some one judgment, so that he may by that means deliver them from many judgments;** and sometimes he takes away his people by one great judgment, so that they may escape many other greater judgments that he intends to bring upon the earth.

And thus good Josiah was slain in battle—yet because he lived not to see the woeful miseries of succeeding times, he is said to go to his grave in peace, [2 Chron. 34:27-28](#). Turn to it. Enoch lived long in a little time, and God took him to heaven before he brought a sweeping flood upon the world—but he foreseeing the flood, named his son Methuselah, that is to say, "he dies," and the dart or flood comes, and so it fell out; for no sooner was his head laid—but in came the flood. And so Augustine was taken out of the world before Hippo was taken by the Vandals. And so Pareus was taken to his better country before Heidelberg and the Palatinate was delivered into the power of the enemies. After Luther was laid in his grave, then troubles, wars, desolations, and confusions came in upon Germany like a flood.

"The righteous are taken away from the evil to come," [Isaiah 57:1](#); and their death is a sad presage of sore and signal calamities which are hastening upon the world. Of late many precious servants of Christ have fallen asleep—but who knows what a day of wrath is coming? When a man cuts down his chief timber trees, it is an argument that he intends to part with his land; and how many tall cedars in this our Lebanon has God lately cut down in the midst of us! Therefore we have eminent cause to be importunate with God, that he would neither part with this nation, nor depart from this nation. When some fatal judgment hovers like a flying fiery scroll over a nation, God many times gathers many of his choice servants unto himself, that he may preserve them from the evil to come.

**VI. The sixth divine maxim is this—None of God's *judgments* upon his people ever make any change or alteration of God's *affections* towards his people.**

However harsh his hand may be against them—yet his love, his heart, his favor, his affections in Jesus—are still one and the same to them, [Isaiah 54:7-10](#), and [49:14-16](#); [Psalm 89:31-34](#); [Jer. 31:34-37](#), compared; [Mal. 3:6](#); [John 13:3](#); [James 1:17](#). Ponder seriously upon all those scriptures. Just so, when God sent the plague upon David's people, and that for David's sin too—yet how sweetly, how lovingly, how tenderly, how compassionately, how indulgently, does the Lord behave towards David himself! [2 Sam. 24:11-13](#), [18-19](#), and [25](#) compared. And some learned men are of opinion that Lazarus died of the plague; and yet the text tells us that he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. Aecolampadius and many other worthies also died of it.

When Munster lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did, and how he felt himself? he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, "These are God's gems and jewels with which he decks his best friends; and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world!" God's dear love to his people is not founded upon anything good in his people, nor upon anything good which is done by his people—but only upon his own free grace and goodness! "The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt." [Deuteronomy 7:7-8](#)

The heathens thought that their gods and goddesses loved certain trees for some lovely good that was in them: as Jupiter, the oak, for endurance; Neptune, the cedar, for stature; Apollo, the laurel, for greenness; Venus, the poplar, for whiteness; Pallas, the vine, for fruitfulness. But what could move the God of gods and the Lord of lords to love us, who are poor, worthless, fruitless fruit-trees, twice dead, and plucked up by the roots, [Jude 12](#); [Ezek. 16](#). This question is best resolved in these words, "He loves us because he loves us!" The root of his love to us lies in himself, and by his communicative goodness the fruit is ours. God's love to his people is a lasting love, yes, an everlasting love, [Jer. 31:35-37](#); it is a love which never decays nor waxes cold. It is like the stone asbestos, of which Solinus writes, that being once hot, it can never be cooled again. "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." [Jeremiah 31:3](#)

**VII. The seventh divine maxim is this—Many times when the poor people of God cannot carry it with God for the preservation of a whole land or nation—yet they shall then be sure to have the honor and the happiness to be so potent and so prevalent with God, as to prevail with him for their own personal preservation and protection. [Jer. 15:1](#); [Ezek. 14:14-21](#), compared. Just so, [Ezek. 9:4, 6](#).**

**VIII. The eighth divine maxim is this—Sword, famine, and pestilence can only reach our outward man—they only reach our bodies and our temporal concerns; they cannot reach our souls, nor our spiritual nor our eternal concerns.** No outward judgments can separate us from the favor of God, or the light of his countenance, or our communion with him, or our spiritual enjoyments of him, or the joys of the Spirit, or the teachings of the Spirit, or the leadings of the Spirit, or the pledge of the Spirit, or the witness of the Spirit, or the seekings of the Spirit, or the quickenings of the Spirit, or the peace which passes understanding, or our secret trade with heaven.

**IX. The ninth divine maxim is this—There are no people upon the earth that in times of common calamity stand upon such fair grounds for their preservation and protection, as the people of God do.** And this I shall make evident by an induction of ten particulars—

**[1.] First, They are the only people in all the world who are under divine promises of protection and preservation.** [Exod. 15:26](#); [Job 5:20-21](#); [Isaiah 4:5-6, 8:13-14, 26:20-21, 31:5](#), and [32:1-2](#); [Psalm 91](#) throughout. Turn to those sweet promises, and remember that there are no men on earth that can or may lay their hands on these precious promises, and say, "these promises are mine!" —but only the godly man. Those promises are God's bonds, which the godly man may put in suit, and urge God with, and plead hard in prayer, which no other men may. [Men often eat their words—but God will never eat his. "Has he spoken, and shall it not come to pass?" [Josh. 23:14](#); [Ezek. 12:25](#), and [24:14](#).] The promises of God are a Christian's Magna Charta, his chief evidences that he has to show for his preservation, for his protection, for his salvation. Divine promises are God's deed of gift; they are the only assurance which the saints have to show for their right and title to Christ, to heaven, and to all the glory and happiness of the eternal world.

Oh how highly do men prize their charters and privileges and how carefully do they keep and lay up the deeds and assurances of their lands! Oh how should saints then treasure up those precious promises, which are to them instead of all deeds and assurances for their preservation, protection, maintenance, deliverance, comfort, and everlasting happiness! The **promises** are a mine of rich treasures; they are a garden full of the choicest and sweetest flowers of paradise; in them are wrapped up all celestial contentments and enjoyments; and therefore study them more than ever, and prize them more than ever, and improve them more than ever. "He has given us his very great and precious promises." [2 Peter 1:4](#)

**[2.] Secondly, If you consider their near and dear relations to God.** They are his servants, his friends, his children, his members, his spouse, etc. By all which it is evident that they stand upon the advantage-ground, for preservation and protection, above all others in the world.

**[3.] Thirdly, If you consider that high value and esteem and price that the Lord puts upon them.** He esteems them as the apple of his eye, [Zech. 2:8](#); he accounts them as his jewels, [Mal. 3:17](#); he prizes them as his portion, [Deut. 32:9](#)—yes, as his pleasant portion, [Jer. 12:10](#); he accounts them his crown, yes, his crown of glory, and his royal diadem: [Isaiah 62:3](#), "You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God." Yes, he prizes *one saint* above all the world, [Heb. 11:38](#). By all which it is most evident that they stand upon the advantage-ground, as to their preservation and protection, above all other people in the world; for God accounts all the world besides, to be but as dirt, as dust, as chaff, as thorns and briers—who are only fit to be cast into the fire to be consumed and destroyed. When pearls grew common at Rome, they began to be slighted—but saints are such pearls of great price, that God will never slight them.

**[4.] Fourthly, If you consider that they are the only people in the world who are in covenant with God.** [Psalm 89:30-34](#); [Jer. 32:38-40](#); [Ezek. 20:37](#); [Deut. 29:12](#); [Jer. 31:31-34](#); [Heb. 8:6-12](#). Some do derive the word *berith*, which signifies the *covenant*, from a root which signifies to "purify," to "separate," and to "select;" and truly, when the Lord makes a covenant with any, he does separate them from others, he honors them above all others, and he looks on them and owns them for his peculiar people, and delights in them as the chosen and choicest of all others! "The whole world lies in wickedness," [1 John 5:19](#). By this also it is evident that the people of God stand upon the advantage-ground, for their preservation and protection, above all others in the world.

**[5.] Fifthly, If you consider the common deportment of God towards his people in former times of calamities and great judgments.** Did he not provide an ark for righteous Noah, so that Noah was safer in his ark of three stories high than Nimrod and his crew were in their grand tower of Babel? And did he not provide a Zoar for righteous Lot? Hesiod speaks of thirty thousand demi-gods that were keepers of men. But what are so many thousand of gods, compared to that one God who neither slumbers nor sleeps—but day and night keeps his people as his jewels, as the apple of his eye; that keeps them in his pavilion, as a prince keeps his favorite, [Psalm 121:3-5](#); [Isaiah 27:3](#); [Psalm 31:20](#). Princes have their retiring rooms and withdrawing chambers, which are sacred places; and so has God his—and there he shelters the favorites of heaven. God's gracious providence is his golden cabinet, where his children are as safe as if they were in heaven. See [Isaiah 49:2](#), and [26:20-21](#); [Jer. 36:26](#); [Psalm 83:3](#): "They have consulted against your hidden ones,"—hidden under the hollow of your hand, and under the shadow of your wing, and therefore safe from dangers in the midst of dangers, [Jer. 39:16-18](#). How wonderfully did he preserve the three *children*, or rather the three courageous *champions*, from burning in the midst of the flames! [Dan. 3](#); and Daniel from being devoured in the lion's den! chapter 6. And so God's mourning ones were his marked ones, and his saved and preserved ones, when the destroying angel slew old and young, etc., [Ezek. 9:4, 6](#).

Holy Beza and his family were four different times visited with the plague—and yet as often preserved as they were visited; and this godly man was very much refreshed and comforted, under that and other sore afflictions which befell him, by Psalm 91, which made him the more highly to prize it, and the more dearly to hug it all his days, as he himself witnesses in his writings on this psalm.

There is a dialogue between a heathen and a Jew, after the Jews' return from captivity—all nations round about them being enemies to them. The heathen asked the Jew how he and his countrymen could hope for any safety, "because everyone of you is a silly sheep, compassed about with fifty wolves." "Yes—but," says the Jew, "we are kept by such a shepherd as can kill all those wolves when he pleases!" Now by all this, also, it is evident that the people of God stand upon the advantage-ground, as to their preservation and protection, above all other people in the world.

**[6.] Sixthly, If you consider the life-guard of the saints, the ministry of the blessed angels, who always attend them.** [[Gen. 32:1-2](#); [Dan. 6:21-22](#); [Acts 12:11, 15](#), and [27:23](#); [2 Kings 6:14-17](#); [Acts 5:18](#).] [Psalm 91:11](#), "For he shall give his angels charge over you in all your ways." ver. 12, "They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." [Psalm 34:7](#), "The angels of the Lord encamp round about those who fear him, and deliver them." [Mat. 18:10](#), "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." [Heb. 1:14](#), "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" [The heathens had some blind notions concerning the angels and their ministry, as may be seen in the writings of Plato and Plutarch. Hesiod the Greek poet could say that there were thirty thousand of them here on earth, keepers of mortal men, and observers of their works.]

The world may deprive us of many outward comforts—but they can never deprive us of the ministry of the angels. When the servants of God are hated by all men, persecuted by men, and forsaken by men—yet they are then visited and attended by angels. Princes have their guards—but what poor, what weak, what contemptible guards are theirs, compared to those legions of angels which daily guard the saints! When men can clip the wings of angels, and imprison or pinion these heavenly soldiers, then, and not until then, shall they be able to have their wills upon the poor people of God! Oh the honor, the dignity, the safety and security of the saints, in a life-guard so full of state and strength! Well may we say, Come and taste and see

how gracious the Lord is in affording his children so glorious an attendance! Now by this argument as well as the rest, it is evident that the people of God stand upon the advantage-ground of their outward preservation and protection above all other people in the world.

**[7.] Seventhly, If you consider that they are the only people who keep up the name and glory of God in the world.** [Deut. 4:6-9](#); [John 4:23-24](#). They are the only people who worship God in spirit and in truth; and from such worshipers it is that God has the incomes of his glory. The holy hearts, the holy lives, the holy examples, the holy ways, the holy walkings, and the holy worship that is performed by the saints, are the springs from whence all divine honor rises to the Lord in this world.

The people of God are the only people in the world, who have chosen him for their God, and who have given themselves up to his service, and thus they honor his **goodness**, [Deut. 26:17-18](#); [Psalm 116:16](#); [Psalm 22:30](#).

The people of God are the only people in the world who, in the times of their fears, doubts, darkneses, distresses, straits, trials, dangers, etc.—consult with God as their great Counselor, as their only Counselor; and thus they honor his admirable **wisdom** and infinite knowledge, [Gen. 24:12](#); [Psalm 48:14](#).

The people of God are the only people in the world who make God their refuge, their strong tower, their shelter, their hiding-place, in stormy and tempestuous days; and thus they honor the **power**, all-sufficiency, sovereignty, and authority of God, [Psalm 46:1, 7, 11](#); [Proverbs 18:10](#); [Psalm 32:7, 119:114](#), and [20:7](#). Wicked men trust in their chariots and horses, and armies and navies, and revenues and carnal policies, and sinful shifts, devices, and plans; when the poor people of God do not dare to trust in their swords nor in their bows, nor in their wealth, nor in their wit, nor in their friends, nor in any arm of flesh, as carnal refuges—but in the Lord alone: [Isaiah 26:3-4](#), "For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

The people of God are the only people in the world who give God the supremacy in their hearts, who set up God and Christ above themselves and above all their duties, services, privileges, graces, comforts, communions, spiritual enjoyments, and worldly contentments; and thus they honor all the excellencies and perfections of God at once, [Psalm 73:25-26](#); [Phil. 3:6-9](#); [Rev. 4:10-11](#).

And do you think that God will not have a special care of such who are the only promoters of his honor and glory in this world? Doubtless he will! Now by this argument, it is further evident that the people of God stand upon the advantage-ground, as to their outward preservation and protection, above all other people in the world.

**[8.] Eighthly, If you do but seriously consider what a mighty interest the people of God have in the grand favorite of heaven—namely, the Lord Jesus**, who lies in the bosom of the Father, and who is so near and dear unto him, and so potent and prevalent with him, that he can do what he pleases with the Father, and have what he will of the Father, [John 1:18](#); [Heb. 7:25](#); [1 John 2:1-2](#). Now look, what interest the *wife* has in the husband, the *child* in the father, the *members* in the head, the *subject* in his prince, the *servant* in his master, the *branches* in the root, the *building* in the foundation—that the believer has in Christ, and much more! Christ is not like the bramble, which receives good but yields none—but he is like the fig-tree, the vine, the olive tree. All who are interested in him, are the better for him; they "all receive of his fullness grace for grace," [John 1:16](#); [Col. 1:19](#). Now, doubtless, all that interest that Jesus Christ has in God the Father, he will improve to the utmost for their good, who have an interest in him. Now, by this argument, it is also evident that the people of God do stand upon the advantage-ground, above all others in the world, as to their outward preservation and protection.



**[9.] Ninthly, If you consider God's tender and fatherly care of his people, and his singular indulgence towards them,** of which you may read much in the blessed Scripture. Among the many choice scriptures which might be produced, take these as a taste: [Psalm 103:13-14](#), "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust." There is an ocean of love and pity in the father's heart towards his children—but it is but a drop, compared to that which is in God. Bernard hit the mark, when he said, "No father is like our Father! God is all heart!" Let God carry it how he pleases towards us—yet we must still acknowledge that he is a tender Father, and say with Augustine, "Lord, you are a Father both when you stroke and when you strike! You strike that we may not perish, and you stroke that we may not faint!"

Pity is as essential to God as light is to the sun, or as heat is to the fire. Hence he is called *the Father* by an eminency, as if there were no father compared to him, none like him, nor any besides him, as indeed there is not originally and properly, [James 1:27](#). Just so, [Exod. 19:4](#), "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself!" It is an elegant expression to set forth God's admirable care over his people. The eagle fears no bird from above to hurt her young, only the arrow from beneath; therefore she carries them up on her wings.

"For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance. In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. (The eagle carries her young ones upon her wings—not in her talons, for fear of hurting them—openly, safely, choicely, charily, speedily; and so did God his Israel, of whom he was exceeding choice and watchful.) The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him. He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields. He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag, with curds and milk from herd and flock and with fattened lambs and goats, with choice rams of Bashan and the finest kernels of wheat. You drank the foaming blood of the grape." [Deuteronomy 32:9-14](#).

**The care that God exercises towards his people is—**

**(1.) An EXTENSIVE care.** A care which reaches, which extends itself to all the saints, whether rich or poor, high or low, bond or free, etc., [2 Chron. 16:9](#); [Zech. 1:10-11](#).

**(2.) It is an EARNEST care.** God cares for each of his people, as if he had but one to care for, [Zech. 1:14](#).

**(3.) It is a PLEASANT and DELIGHTFUL care, [Isaiah 31:6](#); and not a wearying, tearing, tormenting care.** It is such a pleasant care as an indulgent father exercises towards a son, an only son, a son who lovingly serves him, [Mal. 3:17](#).

**(4.) It is an EFFECTUAL care, a prosperous care, a successful care, a flourishing care.** Men many times rise early and go to bed late, and take a great deal of care at home and abroad, and all to no purpose—but the care of God is always successful, [Deut. 11:12](#).

**(5.) It is a SINGULAR care, a SPECIAL care.** God cares more for them than he does for all the world besides. The *father's* care over the child is a special care, and the *husband's* care over the wife is a special care, and the *head's* care over the members of its body, is a special care. Just so, is the *Lord's* care over his people a

special care. God's general care extends to the whole creation—but his special care centers in his saints! [Zeph. 3:16-20](#); [Psalm 36:6](#); [Isaiah 40:31](#).

**(6.) It is a very TENDER care.** [Isaiah 40:11](#), "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those who are with young." [Zeph. 2:8](#), "He who touches you touches the apple of his eye," or the "little man" that is in the eye, or the black of the eye, which is the tenderest piece of the tenderest part—to express the inexpressible tenderness of God's care and love towards his people.

**(7.) It is an abiding care, a LASTING care; and not a transient care, a momentary care.** [Psalm 125:1-2](#), "Those who trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed—but abides forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even forever." Jerusalem was surrounded with many great high mountains, which were a great safeguard to it against all winds and storms. Such a shelter, such a safeguard, yes, and a better, will God be to mystical mount Zion, the church, [Zech. 2:5](#), against all winds and storms of affliction or persecution: [Psalm 121:3-4](#), "He who keeps you will not slumber: behold, he who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." He repeats the promise, and sets it forth with a "behold," that it may stick the closer, and warm our hearts the better. The phrase is taken from watchmen, who stand on the walls in time of war to discover the approaching enemies, and accordingly give warning. Now though they may be careless, treacherous, or sleepy—yet the Lord will be so far from sleeping, that he will not so much as slumber, no, he will not so much as fetch one wink of sleep.

It has been a tradition that lions sleep not—yet to think or say that they sleep not at all were absurd; indeed, their eyelids being too little to cover their great eyes, they do sleep with their eyes somewhat open and shining, which has occasioned some to think that they sleep not at all. But sure I am that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who is the keeper of Israel, does neither slumber nor sleep. He never shuts his eyes—but has them always open upon his people for good; he winks not so much as the twinkling of an eye; he always stands sentinel for his people's safety: [Isaiah 27:2-3](#), "In that day-- "Sing about a fruitful vineyard: I, the Lord, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it," that is, constantly, continually, without intermission. And this constant care of God over his people was signified by those two types, the pillar of fire and the pillar of a cloud, which never left Israel until they were in the possession of the land of Canaan, which was a type of heaven, [Exod. 13:21-22](#).

**(8.) And lastly, It is an ACTIVE care.** A care that puts the Lord upon preserving his people, and protecting of his people, and making provision for his people, and standing by his people, and pleading the cause of his people, and clearing the innocency of his people.

God is above his people and beneath them, [Deut. 33:26-27](#); he is under them and over them, [Cant. 2:6](#); he is before them and behind them, [Exod. 33:1-2](#); [Isaiah 52:12](#), and [58:8](#). God is in the front of his people, and God is in the rear of his people, he is on the right hand of his people and he is on the left hand of his people, [Psalm 16:8](#), [121:5](#), and [118:15-16](#); [Exod. 14:22](#). God made the waters as a wall on their right hand and on their left. God is round about his people, [Psalm 34:7](#), and [125:1-2](#); and in the midst of his people, [Zech. 2:5](#); [Psalm 46:5](#); "God is in the midst of her," [Isaiah 12:6](#). Oh how safe are those who are under such a glorious care!

God is above his people and beneath them, he is under them and over them, he is before them and behind them, he is in the front and in the rear, he is round about them and in the midst of them. Now what does all this speak out—but that the care of God toward his people is an active care? If the philosopher Plato could say, being

in danger of shipwreck in a light, starry night, "Surely I shall not perish, there are so many eyes of providence over me," oh, then, what may the saints say! Now by this argument it is evident that the people of God stand upon the advantage-ground, as to their outward preservation and protection, above all other people in the world.

**[10.] Tenthly, and lastly, If you do but consider God's great anger and deep displeasure against those who afflict, oppose, or oppress his people.**

God sent his people into **Babylon**, and their enemies added to all their sorrows and sufferings—but will God put this up at their hands? No! [Zech. 1:15](#), "I am very angry with the nations that feel secure. I was only a little angry, but they added to the calamity." "I am very angry," or, as the Hebrew properly signifies such anger as causes foaming and frothing, as the tumultuous water tossed with the wind, [Eccles. 6:17](#), and [Zech. 1:7](#), boiling or foaming anger. The word signifies a fervor, a fierceness or vehemency of anger.] "I am in such an angry heat, as causes fuming and foaming." I am boiling hot, and even ready to draw upon them, and to cut them off from the land of the living. For the original word here used has great affinity with another word that signifies "to cut down and to destroy," [2 Kings 6:6](#), and imports a higher degree of displeasure, a greater height of heat than either anger or wrath, as may be seen in that signal gradation, [Deut. 29:28](#), "The Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation." The last of these three is the word in the text, and notes a higher degree of anger than the two former.

Just so, [Mal. 1:4](#), "**Edom** may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the Lord Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the Lord." The Edomites were very great enemies to the Israelites; they stood looking on, laughing and rejoicing at Israel's destruction. God saw this, and it greatly displeased him, he being highly sensible of the least indignity done to his people; and therefore he is resolved to pay them back in their own coin, [Obadiah 8th](#) to [19th](#) verse. The very name and memory of the Edomites have long since been extinct and blotted out from under heaven; they were a people of his wrath, [Isaiah 10:6](#); and of his curse, [Isaiah 34:5](#). [See [Deut. 25:17-19](#); [1 Sam. 15](#); [1 Chron. 4:42-43](#); and compare them together.]

Just so, **Amalek** was a bitter enemy to God's Israel—but God utterly blots out his remembrance from under heaven; and laying his hand upon his throne, he swears that he would have war with Amalek forever, [Exod. 17:14-16](#); [Nahum 1:2](#), "God is jealous, and the Lord revenges; the Lord revenges, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserves wrath for his enemies." The people of God ought to rest satisfied and assured that God sees and smiles, and looks and laughs—at all the counsels and combinations of wicked men against his Son and against his saints, [Psalm 2:2](#); and when they have done their worst, the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and Christ shall reign in the midst of his enemies, [Proverbs 19:21](#).

And that the stone cut out of the mountains without hands shall bring down the golden image with a vengeance, and make it like the chaff of the summer-floor: [Dan. 2:35](#). Some write of lions, that as they are mindful of courtesies received—so they will be sure to revenge injuries done to them; they will prey on those who would make a prey of them. When Juba, king of the Moors, marched through the desert of Africa, a young man of his company wounded a lion—but the year following, when Juba returned, the lion again meets the army, and from among them all singles out the man who hurt him, and tears him in pieces, allowing the rest to pass by in peace and safety. And thus the Lord Jesus, who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, [Rev. 5:5](#), is always ready to revenge the cause of his people, and to take vengeance on all who have wounded his people or made a prey of his people, as you may clearly and fully see in [Ezek. 25](#) and [35](#). Now by this argument, as well as by

all the rest, it is evident that the people of God stand upon the advantage-ground, as to their outward preservation and protection, above all other people in the world.

**QUESTION.** But, if this be so, how comes it to pass that in this time of great mortality, many of the precious people of the Lord have been taken away as well as others, the raging pestilence having carried many pious souls out of this world, of whom the world was not worthy? [Heb. 11:38](#). The saint as well as the sinner has fallen by the hand of the destroying angel. In this day we have seen that word made good in [Eccles. 9:2](#), "That all things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean, to him who sacrifices and to him who sacrifices not; as is the good, so is the sinner, and he who swears as he who fears an oath."

To this question I shall give these eight short **ANSWERS**—

**(1.) First,** God has smitten some godly men of all persuasions, that none might be proud, secure, or censorious, and that all might take the alarm and prepare to meet their God, and that all may keep humble and tremble, because of his righteous judgments. [Psalm 119:120](#), "My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments."

**(2.) Secondly,** The number of those who feared the Lord, who have been taken away by the pestilence are but few, very few, if compared with the many thousands of others who never knew what it was to set up God as the main object of their fear, and who never knew experimentally what a changed nature, a sanctified frame of heart, an interest in Christ, or a title to heaven, meant. Oh, that we had not cause to fear that *hell has had a very large harvest within these few last months!*

**(3.) Thirdly,** Sometimes God's own people sin with others, and therefore they smart with others when God takes the rod into his own hand. Thus Moses and Aaron sinned with others, and therefore their carcasses fell in the wilderness as well as others, [Num. 20](#). This may sometimes be the reason why some godly men fall in a common calamity—but I dare not say that it is always the reason why some godly men fall in a common calamity. I believe there are several choice Christians that have been swept away in this day of the Lord's wrath, who have not sinned with the wicked, though they have fallen with the wicked. Many have fallen by this dispensation who yet have kept their garments pure and clean, and are now walking with Christ in white, [Rev. 3:4](#). I do not think that those saints that have died by the plague were greater sinners than those who have escaped the plague; yes, I have several reasons to persuade me that several of those precious servants of the Lord that have died of the plague, had more grace in their hearts, and less sin in their lives, than many other saints that have been pitied and spared in this day of the Lord's anger, etc.

**(4.) Fourthly,** No godly man dies in any common calamity until his hour-glass is run out, and his work done, and he prepared and fitted for the eternal world: [Job 14:5](#), "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with you; you have appointed his bounds that he cannot pass," [Job 5:26](#); [Rev. 11:6-7](#); [Acts 13:25, 36](#). God has set every man both his time and his task. In this scripture, as in a mirror, you may see the true reason why some likely to live long die soon, even while their bones are "full of marrow, and their breasts are full of milk;" and others who are more weak and infirm live long, yes, very long. The reason is, because God has set bounds to every man's life, to a very day, ay, to a very hour! Verse 14, "All the days of my appointed time of warfare will I wait until my change comes," that is, until my death. Job calls death a "change." Death is not an annihilation or extinction—but a mutation.

[1.] It is the last change that we shall meet with until the resurrection.

[2.] It is a lasting, yes, an everlasting change. It puts everyone into an eternal condition of happiness or misery.

[3.] It is a universal change—1. In respect of people; all must meet with it: "it is appointed for all men once to die," [Heb. 9:27](#). 2. In respect of the whole man, body and soul. Death lodges the body in the grave, and puts the soul into heaven or hell.

[4.] It is a different change according to the quality of the person changed. It is terrible to a sinner: for,

First, It will put an everlasting end to all his temporal mercies, comforts, contentments, and enjoyments, [Job 1:21](#). Saladin, a Turkish emperor, the first of that nation that conquered Jerusalem, lying at the point of death, after many glorious victories, commanded that a white sheet should be borne before him to his grave upon the point of a spear, with this proclamation, "These are the rich spoils which Saladin carries away with him; of all his triumphs and victories, of all the riches and realms that he had, now nothing at all is left him but this sheet."

Secondly, It will put an everlasting end to all his hopes. Now he shall never hope for mercy more, nor never hope for pardon more, nor never hope for heaven more.

Thirdly, It will put an everlasting end to all the means of grace. Now he shall never more hear sermons, nor ever more read the word, nor ever more enjoy the prayers of the people of God, nor ever more taste any of the dainties of God's store, etc.

Fourthly, It will put an everlasting end to the patience, forbearance, and long-suffering of God, [Romans 2:4-5](#).

Fifthly, It will put an everlasting end to all the pleasures of sin. Now the sinner shall never more have one merry day. In hell there is no singing—but howling; no music—but madness; no sporting—but sighing; no dancing—but wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth for evermore, etc.

Sixthly, It will put an everlasting end to all gracious reprieves. The sinner in his lifetime has had many a reprieve, from many executions of wrath and judgment. Oh! but now he shall never have one reprieve more.

Seventhly, It will put a full period to all the strivings of the Holy Spirit. Now the Spirit shall never more strive with the sinner, [1 Sam. 6:3](#); nor will Christ ever more knock at the sinner's door, at the sinner's heart, etc.

Eighthly, and lastly, It will put an everlasting end to all gracious examples. Now the sinner shall never cast his eye upon one gracious example more. The sinner in his lifetime has had many gracious examples before his eyes, which it may be at times have had an awakening, convincing, silencing, and restraining power in them. Oh! but now he shall never more have his eye upon one pious example. All hell will not afford one good example.

In a word, now the sinner shall find by woeful experience that death will be an inlet to three dreadful things: 1. To judgment, [Heb. 9:27](#); 2. To an irreversible sentence of condemnation, [Mat. 25:41](#); 3. To endless, ceaseless, and remediless sufferings.

Not many years since, in the town of Yarmouth, there was a young man, who, being very weak and near to the grave, and under the apprehensions of the wrath of God, and supposing that he was presently going down to the pit, to hell, he cried out, "Oh, that God would spare me but two days! Oh, that God would spare me but two days! Oh, that God would spare me but two days!" This poor creature trembled at

the very thoughts of wrath to come. Oh who can dwell with everlasting burnings! who can dwell with a devouring fire! [Isaiah 33:14](#).

As death is terrible to the sinner, so it is desirable, comfortable, and joyful to a child of God: [Cant. 8:14](#); [Luke 2:27-32](#); [2 Cor. 5:1-8](#); [Phil. 1:23](#); [Rev. 22:20](#). "I desire death," says Melancthon, "that I may enjoy the desirable sight of Christ." "When will that blessed hour come? when shall I be dissolved? when shall I be with Christ?" said holy Mr. Bolton when he lay on his dying-bed. Mr. Jewel was offended at one who prayed for him to live—when he was on his dying bed. One whom I knew well, a little before his death, after a sharp conflict, cried out three times, "Victory! victory! victory!" He breathed out his soul and his doxology together, "Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ," and so conquered Satan in his last encounter. The dying words of my young Lord Harrington were these: "O my God, when shall I be with you?" "Shall I ever die?" says Austin. "Lord, if ever—why not now?"

When Modestus, the emperor's lieutenant, threatened to kill Basil, he answered, "If that is all, I fear not; yes, your master cannot more pleasure me than in sending of me unto my heavenly Father, to whom I now live, and to whom I desire to hasten." Mr. Dereing, a little before his death, being raised up in his bed, and seeing the sun shine, was desired to speak his mind; upon which he said, "There is but one sun that gives light to the whole world—but one righteousness, one communion of saints. As concerning death, I feel such joy of spirit, that if I should have pardon of life on the one side, and sentence of death on the other, I had rather choose a thousand times to die than to live." So Mr. John Holland, lying at the point of death, said, "What brightness do I see?" and being told it was the sunshine; "No," says he "my Savior shines. Now farewell world, welcome heaven; the day-star from on high has visited me. Preach at my funeral. God deals comfortably and lovingly with man: I feel his mercy! I see his majesty! whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God he knows—but I see things which are unutterable."

Mr. Knox found so much comfort from the Scriptures upon his death-bed, that he would have risen and have gone into the pulpit to tell others what he had felt in his soul. And by that information which I have had from some good hands, several precious Christians who have lately died of the plague, have gone to heaven under as high a spirit of joy, of comfort, of assurance, and of a holy triumph—as any of the last-mentioned worthies, or as any other that ever I heard of or read of: the remembrance of which has been, and still is, a singular cordial to all their relations and friends who yet survive them.

But as I was saying, no godly man falls in any common calamity until his glass be run and his work done; so I say of all those dear servants of the Lord that have fallen by the pestilence in the midst of us, their hour was come, and their course was finished, [John 7:30](#), and [8:19-20](#); [2 Tim. 4:6-7](#). Had God had any further doing-work, or suffering-work, or bearing-work, or witnessing-work for them in this world, it was not all the angels in heaven, nor all the malignant diseases in the world, which could ever have cut them off from "the land of the living."

When Lazarus was dead, his two sisters, Martha and Mary, came to Christ with tears in their eyes and sad complaints in their mouths: [John 11:21-32](#), "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died," said Martha: and "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died," said Mary. And is not this the common language of many this day, when such and such precious Christians have fallen by the pestilence? Oh! if such a physician had been here, they would not have died; or if they had been received treatment, they would not have died; or if they had taken such a potion they would not have died; or if they had ate but of such or such foods they would not have died; or if they had not lived in such a foggy air they would not have died; or if they had not been shut up in such close, narrow, nasty rooms and

places they would not have died; or had they been but so wise and happy as to have applied such or such a remedy, they might have been alive to this day!

These people have not considering with Job that "the days of man are determined, and his bounds appointed, which he cannot pass," [Job 14:5](#). The time and place, and every circumstance of his death, is decreed from all eternity. That one man dies in the field, another in his bed, one at sea, another on the shore, one of a stroke in the head, another of a goiter in the neck, one of a tumor in the throat, another of a cough and consumption of the lungs. That so many thousands dies of obstructions, inflammations, dropsies, gouts, pestilence—it is foreordained in heaven. The hand of the Lord is in all, and he it is that, having brought us into the world at his pleasure, will take us hence at his appointment. The Jews have a saying that "God has four keys on his own belt: 1. The key of the clouds; 2. The key of the womb; 3. The key of the heart; and 4. The key of death, the key of the grave.

**(5.) Fifthly**, God sometimes takes away his dearest children in the common calamity—in judgment to wicked men. Because the hand of the Lord has touched some of his dearest servants in this sore visitation, how do the wicked insult, rejoice, and triumph! They say, "Aha! so would we have it!" How do wicked men rejoice in the sufferings and death of the people of God. How do many wicked men bless themselves because they have escaped the hand of the destroying angel, when such and such have fallen by it! Oh, how proud, how obdurate, how impudent, are many grown, because they have escaped the present judgment, when many others that have been a thousand times better than themselves have been sent to their graves! [Eccles. 8:11](#). The Alcoran says, God created the angels from light, and the devils from the flame. Certainly God's children are of the light—but Satan's children are furious, wrathful children; they are children of the flame. Oh, in what a flame now are many wicked men against the people of God—since the hand of the destroying angel has not yet reached them—since the destroying angel first drew his sword in the midst of us! as if they were spared on purpose to oppress, persecute, and scatter the people of God more than ever. Oh, that all such would be but so favorable to their own souls, as seriously to ponder upon [Ezek. 25](#) and [35](#)! [Obad. 8-19](#); [Nahum 1:9-15](#). [The scales of the leviathan, as Luther makes the comparison, stick close together; and so do wicked men in their counsels, plots, and projects against the people of God.]

Felix, earl of Wurtemberg, one of the captains of Charles the Fifth, burning in rage and anger against the people of God, he swore, in the presence of many at supper, that "before he died he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans;" but God soon cooled his courage, for that very night he was choked and strangled in his own blood. Paul prays that he might be delivered from "unreasonable and wicked men," [2 Thes. 3:2](#). The word is absurd men, such as put themselves upon ways of opposition against all reason and common sense; yes, such who in their rage and bitterness of spirit make no bones of breaking all the laws both of God and men, so they may but have their wills and lusts satisfied in afflicting, scattering, and tormenting of the people of God. "Absurd" men, with Judas, kiss Christ, and betray him. They kiss the head and stab the body; or, as one wittily expresses it, they kiss the mouth and tread upon the toes. Let the reader apply it as he pleases.

**(6.) Sixthly**, God sometimes takes away some of his dearest children in the common calamity—that he may deliver them from greater calamities which are coming upon the world. The Jews have a saying that, "When godly men die it is an ill sign to the world." Ambrose would weep bitterly when he heard of any godly minister's death. It is dark night when the lights are put out, and when the curtains are drawn, and the windows close shut! Ah, England, England! if this is not your present case, I know nothing! The clouds gather more and more, and every day they look blacker and blacker, and bloodier and bloodier! Happy are those souls who are now in heaven, and blessed are those souls who are now waiting for the redemption of Israel.

**(7.) Seventhly**, Notwithstanding any outward promises that the Lord has made concerning the protection and preservation of his children—yet he still reserves a liberty to himself to chastise his children with what rod he pleases, [Psalm 89:30-34](#); [Heb. 12:6-9](#); [Rev. 3:19](#). Notwithstanding all the gracious engagements which are upon the Lord to his people—yet he reserves a freedom to himself to make use of the very lives of his people in such ways as may make best for the bringing about of his own ends, and as may make most for the advance of his own glory; and hence it comes to pass that God delights so to act towards his dearest people, as that sinners and saints shall be forced to say that "his judgments are unsearchable," and that his "ways are past finding out," [Romans 11:33](#). "And that his way is in the sea, and that his paths are in the great waters, and that his footsteps are not known," [Psalm 77:19](#).

If you take a straight stick and put it into the water, it will seem crooked. Why? Because we look upon it through two mediums, air and water. There lies the visual illusion; thence it is that we cannot discern aright. Thus all the proceedings of God in his righteous judgments, which in themselves are just, righteous, and straight, without the least deceptiveness, seem to us strange and crooked. That the wicked should prosper, and the righteous be afflicted; that godly men should be in bonds, when bad men walk in freedom; that the Israelites should make the bricks, and the Egyptians dwell in the houses; that some of the best of Christians should fall by the pestilence, when many of the worst of sinners have their lives for a prey—these are some of those mysterious providences that many times make some of the best of Christians to stagger in their judgments. And why so—but because they look upon God's proceedings through a double medium, of flesh and spirit; and hence it comes to pass that all things seem to run contrary, and that God's most just and righteous proceedings are not so clearly and fully discerned as otherwise they might be.

The wheels in a watch or in a clock move contrary one to another—some one way, some another—yet all show the skill and intent of the workman—to show the time, or to make the clock to strike. Just so, in this world, divine providences seem to run cross to divine promises; the wicked are spared, and the righteous are taken away—yet, in the conclusion, all issues in the will, purpose, and glory of God.

**(8.) Eighthly** and lastly, God has taken several of his own dear children away by the pestilence, to wipe off that reproach which atheists and wicked men are apt to cast upon the Lord, as if he were partial, and his ways not equal, [Ezek. 18:25, 29](#). God, to stop the mouth of iniquity, the mouth of blasphemy, has taken away several of his dear servants by the raging pestilence, when the wicked walk on every side, yes, when hell seems to be broken loose, and men turned into incarnate devils; and all because they have not been plagued as other men, nor visited as God has visited some of his dearest children, [Psalm 73:5](#); [2 Pet. 2:9](#); [Job 24:12](#); [Psalm 50:21](#).

Sometimes God's manner is to begin with his own people: 1 Pet. 4:17, "Judgment must begin at the house of God;" and the Lord commands his destroying angel to begin at the sanctuary, [Ezek. 9:6](#). Sometimes when God intends to bring a common and general destruction upon the enemies, oppressors, haters, and persecutors of his people, he is accustomed first to scourge his own people, until the blood comes. "I took the cup at the Lord's hands"—he means the cup of God's fury, [Jer. 25:17](#)—"and made all the nations to drink"—that is, prophesied that they should certainly drink of it—"unto whom the Lord has sent me." But who were to drink first of this cup? Mark, he tells us, ver. 18, "Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof." These were to begin in this cup to Egypt and the Philistines, to Edom, and Moab, and the Ammonites, as he shows in the verses following. Now all these were bitter and implacable enemies to the Israel of God. Ah, sinners, sinners! do not insult over the poor people of God because here and there the hand of the Lord has touched them; and God has given the cup into their hands; for if God is God, the cup must go round, and he will make good that word, [Isaiah 51:17, 22-23](#), "Awake, awake! Rise up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk



from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes men stagger. This is what your Sovereign Lord says, your God, who defends his people: "See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger; from that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again. I will put it into the hands of your tormentors, who said to you, 'Fall prostrate that we may walk over you.' And you made your back like the ground, like a street to be walked over."

And that word, [Jer. 49:12](#), "If those who do not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, why should you go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, but must drink it!" I have not spared my own dear people, says God, who might have expected this favor at my hands before any people under heaven, upon the account of my relation to them, my affections for them, and my covenant with them all; and do you think that I will spare you? No! You must drink it! That is, you shall certainly drink of this cup of my wrath; and you shall signally and visibly drink of this cup of my wrath.

"But this is what the Lord says: "Yes, captives will be taken from warriors, and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save. I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh; they will be drunk on their own blood, as with wine. Then all mankind will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." [Isaiah 49:25-26](#). Oh, that those men would lay these scriptures to heart, who rejoice and glory in the sufferings of the poor people of God, and because some of them have fallen by the hand of the destroying angel, considering that the design of God herein is to stop the mouth of iniquity, and that none may say that he is either partial or fond! Such men who have been eye-witnesses of God's impartial dealing with his own people in this day of his wrath should rather be humble—than proud; they should rather be silent than raving against the people of the Lord; they should rather tremble than rejoice—for if God deals thus with his green trees, how will he deal with the dry? When God cuts down his best timber, will he not either grub up or burn up the old stumps? Surely he will, [Luke 23:31](#). "If judgment begins at the house of God, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?" [1 Pet. 4:17-18](#). If God deals thus with his best friends, how will he deal with his enemies? If God deal thus with his dearest children, the the servants and slaves have cause to tremble. And thus much for the reasons why some of God's dearest children have fallen by the pestilence in this day of the Lord's anger.

**X. The tenth divine maxim is this—That such saints as do fall by the sword or by the pestilence, they receive no loss, no wrong, no injury, by these sad dispensations.** They gain much—but they lose nothing; for by these sad providences they are but hastened to heaven, to their Father's house, to their eternal homes, and to those blessed mansions which Christ has prepared for them! [John 14:1-4](#).

Elijah went to heaven in a fiery chariot, [2 Kings 11:12](#); and many thousand of the martyrs went to heaven in fiery chariots, and in bloody chariots; and doubtless many worthies in this day are gone to heaven in a *pestilential* chariot. Heaven is a place of so much pleasure and delight, that they are blissfully happy, who can get there any way at all. There is laid up in heaven "an incorruptible crown," a "crown of life," a "crown of righteousness," a "crown of immortality," a "crown of glory," [1 Cor. 9:25](#); [2 Tim. 4:8](#); [James 1:12](#); [1 Pet. 5:4](#); [Rev. 2:10](#); and who would not go through hardship to come to these crowns? **Neither Christ nor heaven can be hyperbolised.** The good things of heaven are so **many** that they exceed number, and so **great** that they exceed measure, and so **precious** that they are above all estimation! What will that life be, or rather what will not that life be—since all good either is in such a life? Here is light which place cannot comprehend, voices and music which time cannot ravish away, fragrances which are never dissipated, a feast

which is never consumed, a blessing which eternity bestows—but eternity shall never see at an end! Who would not wade through a Red Sea to come to this heavenly Canaan? What are all the silks of Persia, and all the spices of Egypt, and all the gold of Ophir, and all the treasures of both Indies; yes, what is the glory of ten thousand worlds, compared to that glory which those saints are now enjoying, who have died by the pestilence in the midst of us?

When Cyneas, the ambassador of Pyrrhus, after his return from Rome, was asked by his master what he thought of the city and state, he answered that "it seemed to him to be a state of none but great statesmen, and a commonwealth of kings." Such is heaven—no other than a commonwealth of kings. Every saint in that kingdom is *co-heir* with Christ, and has a *robe* of honor, and a *scepter* of power, and a *throne* of majesty, and a *crown* of glory, [Romans 8:17](#). Now what does that Christian lose, who dies of the pestilence, and by that means is brought to the fruition of all this glory? "Death," says Mr. Brightman, "which was before the devil's sergeant to drag us to hell, is now the Lord's gentleman-usher to conduct us to heaven."

In the ceremonial law ([Lev. 25](#)) there was a year they accounted the year of *jubilee*, and this was with the poor Jews a very delightful and acceptable year, because every man who had lost or sold his lands, upon the blowing of a trumpet, returned, and had possession of his estate again; and so he was recovered out of all those miseries and extremities in which he lived before. Now our whole life in this world is made up of troubles and trials, of calamities and miseries, of crosses and losses, of reproaches and disgraces—but death is the Christian's jubilee; it wipes away all tears from his eyes, it turns his miseries into mercies, his crosses into crowns, and his earthly hell into a glorious heaven. Though death, though the pestilence be to the wicked as the rod in Moses' hand that was turned into a serpent—yet to the godly, death, the pestilence, is like to the wand in Elijah's hand, a means to waft them over into a glorious eternity. The heathen gods held death to be man's *summum bonum*, his *chief good*. Solomon upon his throne extolled his coffin above his crown. Death is a fall that came in by a fall.

For a saint to die is for a saint to be no more unhappy. By death the saints come to a fixed and invariable eternity. Death is but an entrance into life. That is not death but life—which joins the dying man to Christ; and that is not life but death, which separates the living man from Christ. Death will blow the *bud of grace* into the *flower of glory*. Death is a saint's quiet rest. "All fearful disasters," says Gregory, "which rob the saints of life, do but serve as a rough wind to blow them suddenly into their desired haven—I mean heaven." "It matters not," says Austin, "whether a burning fever or flash of lightning, or whether a stone in the bladder, or a thunder-stone in your head—sends you out of this miserable world; for God minds not the immediate occasion of your coming to him—but the condition and posture that your soul is in when it comes before him."

The great thing that God will look at is, whether you are a sheep or a goat, a sinner or a saint, a friend or an enemy, a son or a slave, a believer or an infidel; whether you are growing on the crab-stock of old Adam, or are engrafted into Christ; whether you are clothed with the righteousness of his Son, or whether you stand before him in the ragged righteousness of your own duties.

## **XI. The eleventh divine maxim is this—Though a godly man should die of the plague—yet he shall be certainly delivered from the evil of the plague.**

The harshest rod which God lays upon his own people is from a principle of love. Though he be angry with his people's sins—yet he loves their people, [Rev. 3:19](#); [Proverbs 3:11-12](#); [Heb. 12:5-9](#).

Though the pestilence comes as a *judgment* upon wicked men—yet it comes only as a *chastisement* upon the people of God. When the plague comes upon wicked men, it comes upon them by virtue of the first covenant, and as a fruit of the *curse*—but when it comes upon the godly, it comes upon them by virtue of the second covenant—I mean the covenant of grace—and as a fruit of his *love*, [Psalm 89:30-34](#). Hence God is called "The *great* and *awesome* God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands" [Neh. 1:5](#). But why is he called "the *awesome* God," but because as he has covenanted to keep them from the evil of the world, and to purge away their sins, and to save their souls, and to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, [Psalm 119:75](#); John 17; [2 Tim. 4:17-18](#); so he stands bound by his covenant to make use of any terrible dispensations to effect those great and glorious things.

As we sometimes preserve those things in salt that we cannot preserve in sugar—so sometimes God preserves his poor people in the salt of afflictions, in the salt of terrible dispensations, when they would not, when they could not, be preserved in the sugar of mercies, etc. Though the plague should come into a godly family—yet God will deliver that family from the *evil* of the plague: [Psalm 91:10](#), "There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." Beloved, though the plague should come into a godly man's house—yet there shall not be any evil in it to the godly man. When the plague comes into a wicked man's family, it always comes in the quality of a curse, [Lev. 26](#)—but it never comes into a godly man's family in the quality of a curse, for Christ was made a curse for them, [Gal. 3:13](#). It never enters into a godly man's family as a fruit of God's revenging justice or wrath, [Romans 8:18](#); [Jer. 24:5](#); [Isaiah 54:7-10](#); [Jer. 31:3](#), and [33:37](#).

When the plague comes upon the wicked, it comes upon them as a fruit of God's judicial wrath—but when it comes upon the godly, it only comes upon them as a fruit of God's fatherly displeasure. When it comes upon the wicked, it comes upon them as a fruit of God's everlasting wrath; and therefore where it proves fatal, it is but an inlet to eternal torments. But when it comes upon a child of God, it comes upon him but as a fruit of God's momentary wrath, [Isaiah 54:7-10](#). Look! as David gave charge to his soldiers, that they should not kill Absalom, his son—but only restrain his unnatural rebellion, and reduce him to his former obedience; so when God sends the pestilence among his people, he lays a law of restraint upon it that it shall not hurt his people, that it shall not destroy their graces, nor ruin their souls. The full commission that God gives to the pestilence, is to restrain the sins of his people, and to destroy the soul-rebellions of his people.

I have read of a loadstone in Ethiopia which has two corners; with the one it draws the iron to it, with the other it repels the iron from it. Just so—God has two arms, the one of mercy, and the other of judgment; two hands, the one of love, the other of wrath; with the one he draws, with the other he drives; the one strokes, the other strikes. As he has a right hand of favor with which to lead the saints, so he lacks not a left hand of fury with which to dash the wicked in pieces.

**XII. The twelfth divine maxim is this—That God knows how to distinguish his people, and how to difference his people from others, when the pestilence rages in the midst of them**—as he did between the Israelites and the Egyptians, [Exod. 8:21-23](#), [9:22-26](#), and [11:7](#). That saying of the apostle is a great truth: [2 Tim. 2:19](#), "The Lord knows those who are his." The Lord knows all his people by name; he does not only know how many are elected—but he also knows who they are. He knows the very people upon whom he has set his electing love. Though the pestilence does not know a saint from a sinner—yet the Lord knows a saint from a sinner; though the pestilence does not know the righteous from the wicked—yet the Lord knows the righteous from the wicked; though the pestilence does not know him who fears an oath from him who swears—yet the Lord knows him who fears an

oath from him who swears; though the pestilence does not know the clean from the unclean—yet the Lord knows the clean from the unclean; though the pestilence does not know him who sacrifices from him who sacrifices not—yet the Lord knows him who sacrifices from him who sacrifices not; though the pestilence does not know the oppressed from the oppressor—yet the Lord knows the oppressed from the oppressor; though the pestilence does not know the persecuted from the persecutor—yet the Lord knows the persecuted from the persecutor!

[2 Peter 2:9](#), "The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials, and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment." Though the godly man do not know how to deliver himself out of trials, though others do not know how the godly man should be delivered out of trials—yet the Lord knows how to deliver the godly man out of trials; and his time is always the best. The physician turns the hourglass, and resolves the medicine shall work so long; the impatient patient cries out, "Oh, I am in pain! oh, how I am tormented! oh, what would I not give for a little ease! oh, methinks every hour is a year!" But the wise physician, knowing the fittest time, will not allow him to have any rest or comfort, until the medicine has had its proper operation. Just so, many times God's dear children, when they are under sore trials, they cry out, "How long, Lord, how long shall this rod lie upon our backs? how long shall your anger smoke? how long shall the judgment continue?" But God will turn a deaf ear, and make them wait his time, which is always the best time. And therefore though God knows how to deliver the godly out of trials—yet he will take his own time to deliver them out of trials, etc.

**XIII. The thirteenth, and last divine maxim is this—That though the godly are not delivered from the plague—yet they are still delivered by the plague; by it they shall be delivered from all their sins.**

Death is not the death of the man—but the death of his sin. When Samson died, the Philistines died together with him; so when a believer dies, be it the pestilence or any other disease, his sin dies with him. As death came in by sin, so sin goes out by death. As the worm kills the worm that bred it, so death kills sin--which bred it. The Persians had a certain day in the year wherein they killed all serpents and venomous creatures; such a day as that will the day of death be to every believer—all his serpentine and venomous sins will be forever destroyed! When the pestilence has put a period to a Christian's days, then he shall never more be proud, nor passionate anymore, nor unbelieving anymore, nor worldly anymore, nor neglective of duty anymore, nor grieve the Spirit of God anymore, nor wound conscience anymore, nor break peace with God anymore, nor sadden the hearts of the righteous anymore, nor open the mouth of blasphemy anymore.

The death of the body shall quite destroy the body of death; so that as sin was the midwife which brought death into the world, so death shall be the grave which shall bury sin in. When the pestilence takes away a godly man, it takes him away from his sins; and as death, as the pestilence when it kills, rids the believer of all his sins, so it will rid him of all his troubles. Death cures all diseases, the aching head and the unbelieving heart.

In Queen Mary's days, a lame man and a blind man were burned at one stake. The lame man, after he was chained, casting away his crutch, bade the blind man to "be of good comfort, for death would cure us both. It will cure you of your blindness--and me of my lameness!"

The way to glory is by misery. In this world we are all *Benonis*, the sons of sorrow. The way to heaven is by Weeping-cross. Christ's passion-week was before his ascension-day. None pass to paradise but by burning seraphim. We cannot go out of Egypt but through the Red Sea. The children of Israel came to Jerusalem through

the *valley of tears*, and crossed the swift river of Jordan before they came to the sweet waters of Siloam. If a godly man dies of the pestilence, he shall never more be haunted, tempted, and buffeted by Satan; he shall never more see a cloud, a frown, a wrinkle in the face of God. The pestilence shall but bring him into the presence of the King of kings. If the plague proves mortal to a godly man or woman, it shall do that for them which all ordinances could never do, and which all their duties could never do, and which all their graces could never do, and which all their experiences could never do for them, and which all the assistances, influences, and incomes of the Holy Spirit could never do for them, etc. It shall at once free them from all their sins, sorrows, tears, temptations, oppressions, oppositions, vexations, and persecutions. Death will cure the believer of all his bodily diseases and distempers at once.

And thus I have done with these divine maxims and conclusions. May the Lord make them as so many heavenly cordials to the Christian reader!

Reader,

If you are so sincere as to be desirous to know what those special lessons are that you are to learn by that severe rod, the pestilence, that has been so long among us, I must refer you to my treatise on "Closet Prayer," where you will find twenty lessons that we are to learn by the smarting rod.