

~Other Speakers A-F: Samuel Davies:

## Poor and Contrite Spirits—the Objects of the Divine Favor

by Samuel Davies

"To this man will I look—even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word." Isaiah 66:2

As we consist of physical bodies—as well as immortal souls; and are endowed with corporeal senses—as well as rational powers; God, who has wisely adapted our religion to our state, requires bodily as well as spiritual worship; and commands us not only to exercise the inward powers of our minds in proper acts of devotion—but also to express our inward devotion by suitable external actions, and to attend upon him in the sensible outward ordinances which he has appointed.

Thus it is under the gospel; but it was more remarkably so under the law, which, compared with the pure and spiritual worship of the gospel, was a system of carnal ordinances, and required a great deal of external pomp and grandeur, and bodily services. Thus a costly and magnificent structure was erected, by divine direction, in the wilderness, called the tabernacle, because built in the form of a tent, and movable from place to place. And afterwards a most stately temple was built by Solomon, with immense cost, where the divine worship should be stately celebrated, and where all the males of Israel should solemnly meet for that purpose three times in a year. These externals were not intended to exclude the internal worship of the heart—but to express and assist it. And these ceremonials were not to be put into the place of morals—but observed as helps to the practice of them, and to prefigure the great Messiah. Even under the Mosaic dispensation, God had the greatest regard to holiness of heart and a holy life—and the strictest observer of ceremonies could not be accepted without them.

But it is natural to degenerate mankind to invert the order of things, to place a part, the easiest and lowest part of religion—for the whole of it; to rest in the externals of religion as sufficient, without regarding the heart; and to depend upon pharisaical strictness in ceremonial observances, as an excuse for neglecting the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith.

This was the unhappy error of the Jews in Isaiah's time; and this the Lord would correct in the first verses of this chapter. The Jews gloried in their having the house of God among them, and were ever trusting in vain words: "Do not trust in deceptive words and say—This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!" Jer. 7:4. They filled his altars with costly sacrifices; and in these they trusted to make atonement for sin, and secure the divine favor.

As to their sacrifices, God lets them know, that while they had no regard to their morals—but chose their own ways, and their souls delighted in their abominations, while they presented them in a formal manner without the fire of divine love—that their sacrifices were so far from procuring his acceptance, that they were odious to him! He abhors their most expensive offerings—as abominable and profane! "But whoever sacrifices a bull—is like one who kills a man; and whoever offers a lamb—is like one who breaks a dog's neck; and whoever makes a grain offering—is like one who presents pig's blood; and whoever burns memorial incense—is like one who worships an idol. They have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their abominations!" Isaiah 66:3

To remove this superstitious confidence in the temple, the Lord informs them that he had no need of it; that, as large and magnificent as it was, it was not fit to contain him; and that, in consecrating it to him, they should not proudly think that they had given him anything to which he had no prior right. "Thus says the Lord: Heaven is my throne—where I reign conspicuous in the visible majesty and grandeur of a God; and though the earth is not adorned with such illustrious displays of my immediate presence, though it does not shine in all the glory of my royal palace on high—yet it is a little province in my immense empire, and subject to my authority; it is my footstool. If, then, heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; if the whole creation is my kingdom—where is the house that you build unto me? where is your temple which appears so stately in your eyes? It is vanished, it is sunk into nothing. Is it able to contain that infinite Being to whom the whole earth is but an humble footstool, and the vast heaven but a throne? Can you vainly imagine that my presence can be confined to you in the narrow bounds of a temple, when the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain me? Where is the place of my rest? Can you provide a place for my repose, as though I were weary? Or can my presence be restrained to one place, incapable of acting beyond the prescribed limits? No! Only infinite space

can equal my being and perfections; only infinite space is a sufficient sphere for my operations! Can you imagine you can bribe my favor, and give me something I had no right to before—by all the stately buildings you can rear to my name? Is not the universe mine? For all these things has my hand made out of nothing, and all these things have been or still exist by the support of my all-preserving hand; and what right can be more valid and inalienable than that founded upon creation? Your silver and gold are mine; and mine are the cattle upon a thousand hills! And therefore, you but give me what is my own! says the Lord."

These are such majestic strains of language, as are worthy a God. Thus it befits him to advance himself above the whole creation, and to assert his absolute property in, and independency of—the universe. Had he only turned to us the bright side of his throne, which dazzles us with insufferable splendor; had he only displayed his majesty unalloyed with grace and condescension in such language as this—it would have overwhelmed us, and cast us into the most abject despondency, as the outcasts of his providence, and beneath his notice. We might fear he would overlook us with majestic disdain, or careless neglect, like the little things that are called 'great' by mortals, or as the busy emmets of our species are apt to do. We would be ready, in hopeless anxiety, to say, "Is all this earth which to us appears so vast, and which is parceled into 'a thousand mighty kingdoms', as we call them, is it all but the humble foot-stool of God? hardly worthy to bear his feet? What then—am I? An atom of an atom-world; a trifling individual of a trifling race! Can I expect take he will take any notice of such an insignificant thing as I? The vast affairs of heaven and earth lie under his command, and he is employed in the concerns of the wide universe—and can he find leisure to concern himself with me, and my little interests? Will a king, deliberating upon the concerns of nations, interest himself in favor of the worm that crawls at his footstool? If the magnificent temple of Solomon was unworthy of the divine inhabitant, will he admit me into his presence, and give me an audience with him? How can I expect it? It seems daring and presumptuous to hope for such condescension. And shall I then despair of the gracious regard of my Maker."

No! desponding creature! vile and unworthy as you are—hear the voice of divine condescension, as well as of majesty: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word!" Though God dwells not in temples made with hands, though he pours contempt upon princes, and scorns them in all their haughty glory and affected majesty—yet there are people whom his gracious eye will regard! The high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, and dwells in the high and holy place, he will look down through all the shining ranks of angels upon-whom? Not on the proud, the haughty and presumptuous—but upon him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at his Word. To this man will he look from the throne of his majesty, however low, however base he may be! This man is an object that can, as it were, attract God's eyes from all the glories of the heavenly world, so as to regard a humble, self-abasing worm! This man can never be lost or overlooked among the multitudes of creatures—but the eyes of the Lord will discover him in the greatest crowd, his eyes will graciously fix upon this man, this particular man, though there were but one such in the compass of the creation, or though he were banished into the remotest corner of the universe, like a diamond in a heap of rubbish, or at the bottom of the ocean!

Do you hear this, you who are poor and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at his Word? You who, above all others, are most apt to fear that you shall be disregarded by him; because you, of all others, are most deeply sensible how unworthy you are of his gracious notice. God, the great, the glorious, the awesome God, looks down upon you with eyes of love, and by so much the more affectionately, by how much the lower you are in your own esteem! Does not your heart spring within you at the sound! Are you not lost in pleasing wonder and gratitude, and crying out, "Can it be? Can it be? Is it indeed possible? Is it true?" Yes! You have his own word for it, and do you not think it too good news to be true—but believe, and rejoice, and give glory to his name; and fear not what men or devils can do unto you!

This, my brethren, is a matter of universal concern. It is the interest of each of us to know whether we are thus graciously regarded by that God, on whom our very being and all our happiness entirely depend. And how shall we know this? In no other way than by discovering whether we have the characters of that happy man to whom he condescends to look. These are not pompous and high characters, they are not formed by earthly riches, learning, nobility, and power: "But to this man will I look," says the Lord, "even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my Word." Let us inquire into the import of each of the characters.

I. It is the POOR man to whom the Majesty of heaven condescends to look. This does not principally refer to those who are financially poor in this world; for, though it is common that "the poor of this world are chosen to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom;" James 2:5; yet this is not a universal rule; for many, alas! Who are poor in this world—are not rich towards God, nor rich in good works—and therefore shall famish through eternity in remediless need and wretchedness!

But the poor here signifies such as Christ characterizes more fully by the poor in spirit; Matthew 5:3. And this

character implies the following ingredients:

1. The poor man, to whom Jehovah looks—is deeply sensible of his own insufficiency, and that nothing but the enjoyment of God can make him happy. The poor man feels that he is not self-sufficient—but a dependent upon God. He is sensible of the weakness and poverty of his nature, and that he was not endowed with a sufficient stock of riches in his creation—to support him through the endless duration for which he was formed, or even for a single day. The feeble vine does not more closely adhere to the elm—than he does to his God. He is not more sensible of the insufficiency of his body to exist without air, or without food and water—than his soul can survive—without his God, and the enjoyment of his love. In short, he is reduced into his proper place in the system of the universe: low and mean in comparison with superior beings of the angelic order, and especially in comparison with the great Parent and support of nature.

He feels himself to be, what he really is—a poor, impotent, dependent creature, who can neither live, nor move, nor exist without God. He is sensible that his sufficiency is from God, 2 Corinthians 3:5, and that all the springs of his happiness are in him. This sense of his dependence upon God—is attended with a sense of the inability of all earthly enjoyments to make him happy, and fill the vast capacities of his soul, which were formed for the enjoyment of an infinite good. He has a relish for the blessings of this life—but it is attended with a sense of their insufficiency, and does not exclude a stronger relish for the superior pleasures of true religion. He is not a precise hermit, or a sour ascetic, on the one hand; and, on the other, he is not a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. If he enjoys no great share of the comforts of this life, he does not labor, nor so much as wish for them as his supreme happiness: he is well assured that they can never answer this end, even in their greatest affluence.

It is for God, it is for the living God—that his soul most eagerly thirsts! In the greatest extremity, he is sensible that the enjoyment of God's love is more necessary to his felicity, than the possession of all earthly blessings. Nay, he is sensible that if he is miserable in the absence of these, the principal cause is the absence of his God. Oh! if he were blessed with the perfect enjoyment of God, he could say, with Habakkuk: "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty; even though universal famine would strip me of all my earthly blessings—yet I will rejoice in the LORD, as my complete happiness! I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!" Hab. 3:17, 18.

If he enjoys an affluence of earthly blessings, he still retains a sense of his need of the enjoyment of God. To be discontented and dissatisfied is the common fate of the rich, as well as the poor; they are still craving, craving an unknown something to complete their bliss. The soul, being formed for the enjoyment of the Supreme Good, secretly languishes and pines away in the midst of other enjoyments, without knowing its cure. It is the enjoyment of God alone—which can satisfy its unbounded desires! But, alas! it has no relish for him, no thirst after him; it is still crying, "More, more of the delights of the world!" like a man in a burning fever, who calls for cold water, which will but inflame his disease, and occasion a more painful return of thirst.

But the poor in spirit know where their cure lies. They do not ask with uncertainty, "Who will show us any sort of good?" But their petitions center in this as the grand constituent of their happiness, "LORD, lift up the light of your countenance upon us!" and this puts more gladness into their hearts, than the abundance of corn and wine; Psalm 4:6, 7.

This was the language of the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!" Psalm 73:25, 26. And as this disposition extends to all earthly things, so it does to all created enjoyments whatever, even to those of the heavenly world! The poor man is sensible that he could not be happy even there—without the enjoyment of God. His language is, "Whom have I in heaven but you? It is beholding your face in righteousness, and awaking in your likeness, that alone can satisfy me!" Psalm 17:15.

2. This spiritual poverty implies deep humility and self-abasement. The poor man on whom the God of heaven condescends to look—is lowly in his own apprehensions; he accounts himself as not a being of mighty importance. He has no high esteem of his own good qualities—but is little in his own eyes. He is not apt to give himself the preference to others—but is ready to give way to them as his superiors. He has a generous sagacity to behold their good qualities, and commendable blindness towards their imperfections. But he is not quick to discern his own excellencies, nor sparing to his own frailties. Instead of being dazzled with the splendor of his own endowments or acquisitions, he is apt to overlook them with a noble neglect, and is sensible of his weakness and defects.

And as to his own gracious qualities, they appear small, exceeding small to him! When he considers how much they fall short of what they should be, they as it were vanish and shrink into nothing! How cold does his love appear to him in its greatest fervor! How feeble his faith in its greatest confidence! How superficial his repentance in its greatest depth! How proud his lowest humility! And as for the good actions he has performed, alas! how few, how poorly done, how short of his duty do they appear! After he has done all, he counts himself 'an unprofitable servant!' After he has done all, he is more apt to adopt the language of the publican than the pharisee, "God be merciful to me—a sinner!"

In his highest attainments he is not apt to admire himself; so far is he from it, that it is much more natural to him to fall into the opposite extreme, and to account himself as the least, yes, less than the least of all other saints upon the face of the earth! And if he contends for any preference, it is for the lowest place in the list of Christians.

This disposition was remarkably exemplified in the apostle Paul, who probably had made greater advancements in holiness than any other saint that was ever received to heaven from this guilty world.

3. He who is poor in spirit, has also a humbling sense of his own sinfulness. His memory is quick to recollect his past sins, and he is very sharp-sighted to discover the remaining corruptions of his heart, and the imperfections of his best duties. He is not quick to excuse them—but views them impartially in all their deformity and aggravations. He sincerely doubts whether there is a saint upon earth so exceeding corrupt as himself! And though he may be convinced that the Lord has begun a work of grace in him, and consequently, that he is in a better state than such as are under the prevailing dominion of sin—yet he really questions whether there is such a depraved creature in the world—as he sees himself to be. He is apt to count himself the chief of sinners, and more indebted to free grace—than any others.

He is intimately acquainted with himself; but he sees only the outside of others, and hence he concludes himself so much worse than others; hence he loathes himself in his own sight for all his abominations. Ezekiel 36:31.

Self-abasement is pleasing to him. His humility is not forced; he does not think it a great thing for him to sink thus low. He plainly sees himself to be a vile, sinful, exceeding sinful creature, and therefore is sure that it is no condescension—but the most reasonable thing in the world—for him to think lowly of himself, and to humble and abase himself.

It is unnatural for one who esteems himself a being of great importance, to stoop; but it is easy, and appears no self-denial for a poor lowly creature to do so, who looks upon himself, and feels himself, to be such.

4. That man who is poor in spirit—is deeply sensible of his own unworthiness. He sees that in himself he deserves no favor from God for all the good he has ever done—but that he may after all, justly reject him. He makes no proud boasts of his good heart, or good life—but falls in the dust before God, and casts all his dependence upon his free grace!

5. That man who is poor in spirit—is sensible of his need of the influences of divine grace to sanctify him, and enrich him with the graces of the Spirit. He is sensible of the lack of holiness; this necessarily flows from his sense of his corruption, and the imperfection of all his graces. Holiness is the one thing needful with him, which he desires and longs for above all others; and he is deeply sensible that he cannot work it in his own heart by his own strength. He feels that without Christ he can do nothing, and that it is God who must work in him both to will and to do. Hence like a poor man that cannot exist upon his stock, he depends entirely upon the grace of God to work all his works in him, and to enable him to work out his salvation with fear and trembling.

6. He is deeply sensible of the absolute necessity of the righteousness of Christ for his justification. He does not think himself rich in good works to bribe his judge, and procure acquittance, but, like a poor criminal who, having nothing to purchase a pardon, nothing to plead in his own defense—casts himself upon the mercy of the court, he places his whole dependence upon the free grace of God through Jesus Christ. He pleads Christ's righteousness only, and trusts in it alone. The rich scorn to be obliged; but the poor, who cannot exist of themselves, will cheerfully receive it.

7. And lastly, the man that is poor in spirit is an importunate beggar at the throne of grace. He lives upon charity; he lives upon the bounties of heaven; and, as these are not to be obtained without begging, he is frequently lifting up his cries to the Father of all his mercies for them. He attends upon the ordinances of God, as Bartimeus by the way-side, to ask the charity of passengers. Prayer is the natural language of spiritual



poverty. "The poor," says Solomon, "uses entreaties," Proverbs 18:23; whereas those who are rich in their own conceit, can live without prayer, or content themselves with the formal, careless performance of it.

This is the habitual character of that poor man to whom the Majesty of heaven grants the looks of his love. At times indeed he has but little sense of these things; but then he is uneasy, and he labors to re-obtain it, and sometimes is actually blessed with it. And is there no such poor man or woman in this assembly? I hope there is. Where are you, poor creatures? Stand forth, and receive the blessings of your Redeemer! "Blessed are the poor in spirit—for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven!" He who has his throne in the height of heaven, and to whom this vast earth is but a footstool—looks upon you with eyes of love!

This spiritual poverty is greater riches than all the treasures of the universe! Be not ashamed, therefore, to own yourselves poor men, if such you are. May God thus impoverish us all; may he strip us of all our imaginary grandeur and riches, and reduce us to poor beggars at his door! But it is time to consider the other character of the happy man upon whom the Lord of heaven will graciously look; and that is,

**II. Contrition of spirit.** To this man will I look that is of a contrite spirit. The word contrite signifies one that is beaten or bruised with hard blows, or with a heavy object. And it belongs to the mourning penitent whose heart is broken and wounded for sin. Sin is an intolerable burden that crushes and bruises him, and he feels himself pained and sore under it. His old stony heart, which could not be impressed—but rather repelled the blow, is taken away; and now he has a new heart of flesh, easily bruised and wounded. His heart is not always hard and senseless, light and trifling; but it has tender sensations; he is easily susceptible of sorrow for sin, is humbled under a sense of his imperfections, and is really pained and distressed because he can serve his God no better—but daily sins against him.

This character may also agree to the poor anxious soul that is broken with cruel fears of its state. The stout-hearted can venture their eternal all upon uncertainty; and indulge pleasing hopes without anxiously examining their foundation. But he who is of a contrite spirit is tenderly sensible of the importance of the matter, and cannot be easy without some good evidence of safety.

Such shocking suppositions as these frequently startle him, and pierce his very heart; "What if I should be deceived at last? What if after all, I should be banished from that God in whom lies all my happiness?" etc. These are suppositions full of insupportable terror, when they appear but barely possible; and much more when there seems to be reason for them. Such a habitual pious jealousy as this, is a good symptom; and to your pleasing surprise, you doubtful Christians, I may tell you that that the Divine Majesty, who you are afraid disregards you—looks down upon you with pity! Therefore lift up your eyes to him in wonder and joyful confidence. You are not such neglected ones as you imagine. The Majesty of heaven thinks it not beneath him to look down through all the glorious orders of angels, and through interposing worlds, down, down even upon you in the depth of your self-abhorrence! Let us,

**III. Consider the remaining character of the happy man to whom the Lord will look: he who trembles at my Word.** This character implies a tender sense of the great things of the Word, and a heart easily impressed with them as the most important realities. This was remarkably exemplified in tender-hearted Josiah. 2 Chron. 34:19-21, 27.

To one who trembles at the divine Word, the threatenings of it do not appear vain terrors, nor great swelling words of vanity—but the most tremendous realities! Such a one cannot bear up under them—but would tremble, and fall, and die away—if not relieved by some happy promise of deliverance.

He who trembles at the Word of God is not a stupid hearer or reader of it. It reaches and pierces his heart as a sharp two-edged sword; it carries power along with it, and he feels that it is the Word of God, and not of men, even when it is spoken by feeble mortals. Thus he not only trembles at the terror—but at the authority of the Word.

He trembles with filial veneration of the majesty of God speaking in his Word. He considers it as his voice, who spoke all things into being, and whose glory is such that a deep solemnity must seize those that are admitted to hear him speak.

How opposite is this, to the temper of multitudes who regard the Word of God no more than (with horror I express it) the word of a child or a fool! They will have their own way—let God say what he will. They persist in sin—in defiance of his threatenings. They sit as careless and stupid under his Word, as though it were some old, dull, trifling story! It seldom makes any impressions upon their stony hearts. These are the brave, undaunted men of the world, who harden themselves against the fear of futurity. But, unhappy creatures! the

God of heaven disdains to give them a gracious look, while he fixes his eyes upon the man who "is contrite, and who trembles at his Word."

And where is that happy man? Where in this assembly, where is the contrite spirit? Where the man who trembles at the Word? You are all ready to catch at the character—but be not presumptuous on the one hand, nor excessively timorous on the other. Inquire whether this is your prevailing character. If so, then claim it, and rejoice in it, though you have it not in perfection. But if you have it not prevailingly, do not seize it as your own. Though you have been at times distressed with a sense of sin and danger, and the Word strikes a terror to your hearts—yet, unless you are habitually of a tender and a contrite spirit—you are not to claim the character.

But let such of you as are poor and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at the Word of the Lord, enter deeply into the meaning of this expression, that the Lord looks upon you. He does not look on you as a careless spectator, not concerning himself with you, or caring what will become of you—but he looks upon you as a father, a friend, a benefactor: his looks are efficacious for your good.

He looks upon you with acceptance. He is pleased with the sight. He loves to see you laboring towards him. He looks upon you as the objects of his everlasting love, and purchased by the blood of his Son, and he is well pleased with you—for his righteousness' sake. Hence his looking upon him that is poor, etc., is opposed to his hating the wicked and their sacrifices, verse 3. And is he whom you have so grievously offended, he whose wrath you fear above all other things—is he indeed reconciled to you, and does he delight in you? What cause of joy, and praise, and wonder is here!

Again, he looks to you so as to take particular notice of you. He sees all the workings of your hearts towards him. He sees and pities you in your honest, though feeble conflicts with indwelling sin. He observes all your faithful though weak endeavors to serve him. His eyes pierce your very hearts, and the least motion there cannot escape his notice. This indeed might make you tremble, if he looked upon you with the eyes of a judge, for oh, how many abominations must he see in you! But be of good cheer, he looks upon you with the eyes of a friend—and with that love which covers a multitude of sins. He looks upon you with the eyes of compassion in all your calamities. He looks upon you to see that you are not overborne and crushed.

David, who passed through as many hardships and afflictions as any of you, could say from happy experience, "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry!" Psalm 34:15.

Finally, he looks upon you—so as to look after you, as we do after the sick and weak. He looks to you so as to provide for you. He will give you grace and glory, and no good thing will be withheld from you. Psalm 84:11. And are you not safe and happy under the inspection of a father and a friend? Let a little humble courage then animate you amid your many dejections, and confide in that care of which you feel yourself to be so unworthy.

Here it may not be amiss to observe, what must give you no small pleasure, that those very people who, according to the estimate of men, are the most likely to be overlooked—are those whom God graciously regards. The people themselves are apt to cry, "I would be happy—could I believe that the God of heaven thus graciously regards me; but, alas! I feel myself a poor unworthy creature; I am a trembling, broken-hearted thing, beneath the notice of so great a Majesty!"

And are you so indeed? then I may convert your objection into an encouragement. You are the very person upon whom God looks! His eyes are running to and fro through the earth in quest of such as you are; and he will find you out among the innumerable multitude of mankind! Were you surrounded with crowds of kings and nobles, his eyes would pass by them all—to fix upon you! What a glorious artifice, if I may so speak, is this—to catch at and convert the person's discouragement—into a ground of courage! to make that the character of the favorites of heaven—which they themselves look upon as marks of his neglect of them!

"Alas!" says the poor man, "if I was the object of divine notice, he would not allow me to continue thus poor and brokenhearted." But you may reason directly the reverse; he makes you thus poor in spirit, sensible of your sinfulness and imperfections, because that he graciously regards you. He will not allow you to be puffed up with your imaginary goodness, like the rest of the world, because he loves you more than he loves them!

However unaccountable this procedure seems, there is very good reason for it. The poor are the only people who would relish the enjoyment of God, and prize his love; they alone are capable of the happiness of heaven, which consists in the perfection of holiness.

To conclude, let us view the perfection and condescension of God, as illustrated by this subject. Consider, you

poor in spirit, who he is, who stoops to look upon such little things as you! It is he whose throne is in the highest heaven, surrounded with myriads of angels and archangels! It is he whose footstool is the earth, who supports every creature upon it! It is he who is exalted above the blessings and praise of all the celestial armies, and who cannot without condescension behold the things that are done in heaven! It is he who looks down upon such poor worms as you!

And what a stoop is this! It is he who looks upon you in particular, who looks after all the worlds he has made. He manages all the affairs of the universe; he takes care of every individual in his vast family; he provides for all his creatures—and yet he is pleased to specifically regard you. He takes as particular notice of you—as if you were his only creature! What perfection is this! what an infinite reach of thought! what unbounded power!

And what condescension too! Do but consider what a small figure you make in the universe of beings. You are not so much in comparison with the infinite multitude of creatures in the compass of nature, as a grain of sand is—to all the sands upon the sea shore; or as a mote is—to the vast globe of earth. And yet he who has the care of the whole universe, takes particular notice of you—you who are but trifles compared with your fellow-creatures; and who, if you were annihilated, would hardly leave a blank in the creation! Consider this, and wonder at the condescension of God; consider this, and acknowledge your own baseness; you are but nothing, not only compared with God—but you are as nothing in the system of creation!

I shall add but this one natural reflection: If it is so great a happiness to have the great God for our patron—then what is it to be out of his favor? to be disregarded by him? methinks a united tremor may seize this assembly at the very supposition. And is there one such a creature in the universe in this wretched condition? methinks all the creation besides must pity him. Where is the wretched being to be found? must we descend to hell to find him? No, alas! there are many such on this earth! Nay, I must come nearer you still, there are many such in this assembly! All among you are such, who are not poor and contrite in spirit, and do not tremble at the Word of the Lord.

And are you not one of the miserable number, oh man? What! disregarded by the God who made you! not favored with one look of love by the author of all happiness! He looks on you indeed—but it is with eyes of indignation, marking you out for vengeance! And can you be easy in such a case? will you not labor to impoverish yourself, and have your heart broken, that you may become the object of his gracious regard?