

A Divine Cordial Chapter VIII

Thomas Watson

Thomas Watson was of the group known as Non-conformist. His date of birth is unknown but it is known that he died at Barnston in 1686. He was educated at Emanuel College, Cambridge, and in 1646 was appointed to preach at St Stephen's, Walbrook. He showed strong Presbyterian views during the civil war, with, however, an attachment for the king; because of his share in Love's plot to recall Charles II. He was imprisoned in 1651, but was released and reinstated vicar of St. Stephen's in 1652. He acquired fame as a preacher, but in 1662 was ejected at the Restoration. He continued to exercise his ministry privately. In 1672 after the declaration of indulgence he obtained a licence for Crosby Hall, where he preached for several years, until his retirement to Barnston upon the failure of his health. Watson was a man of learning, and acquired fame by his quaint devotional and expository writings. Of his many works may be mentioned, *The Art of Divine Contentment* (London, 1653); *The Saint's Delight* (1657); *Jerusalem's Glory* (1661); *Divine Cordial* (1663); *The Godly Man's Picture* (1666); *The Holy Eucharist* (1668); *Heaven Taken by Storm* (1669); and *A Body of Practical Divinity; . . . One Hundred Seventy Six Sermons on the Lesser Catechism* (1692).

Exhortations to Those Who Are Called

IF, after searching you find that you are effectually called, I have three exhortations to you.

1. **Admire and adore God's free-grace in calling you** — that God should pass over so many, that He should pass by the wise and noble, and that the lot of free-grace should fall upon you! That He should take you out of a state of vassalage, from grinding the devil's mill, and should set you above the princes of the earth, and call you to inherit the throne of glory! Fall upon your knees, break forth into a thankful triumph of praise; let your hearts be ten-stringed instruments, to sound forth the memorial of God's mercy. None so deep in debt to free grace as you, and none should be so high mounted upon the pinnacle of thanksgiving. Say as the sweet singer; "*1 will extol thee, O God my King, every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever*" (Psalm cxlv. 1, 2). Those who are patterns of mercy should be trumpets of praise. O long to be in heaven, where your thanksgivings shall be purer and shall be raised a note higher.

2. **Pity those who are not yet called.** Sinners in scarlet are not objects of envy, but pity; they are under "*the power of Satan*" (Acts xxvi. 18). They tread every day on the brink of the bottomless pit; and what if death should cast them in! O pity unconverted

sinners. If you pity an ox or an ass going astray, will you not pity a soul going astray from God, who has lost his way and his wits, and is upon the precipice of damnation.

Nay, not only pity sinners, but pray for them. Though they curse, do you pray; you will pray for persons demented; sinners are demented. "*When he came to himself*" (Luke xv. 17). It seems the prodigal before conversion was not himself. Wicked men are going to execution sin is the halter which strangles them, death turns them off the ladder, and hell is their burning place; and will you not pray for them, when you see them in such danger?

3. You who are effectually called, **honour your high calling.** "*I, therefore, beseech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called*" (Ephes. iv. 1). Christians must keep a decorum; they must observe what is comely. This is a seasonable advice, when many who profess to be called of God, yet by their loose and irregular walking, cast a blemish on religion, whereby the ways of God are evil spoken of. It is Salvian's speech, "What do pagans say when they see Christians live scandalously? Surely Christ taught them no better." Will you reproach Christ, and make Him suffer again, by abusing your heavenly calling? It is one of the saddest sights to see a man lift up his hands in prayer, and with those hands oppress; to hear the same tongue praise God at one time, and at another lie and slander; to hear a man in words profess God, and in works deny Him. Oh how unworthy is this! Yours is a holy calling, and will you be unholy? Do not think you may take liberty as others do. The Nazarite that had a vow on him, separated himself to God, and promised abstinence; though others did drink wine, it was not fit for the Nazarite to do it. So, though others are loose and vain, it is not fit for those who are set apart for God by effectual calling. Are not flowers sweeter than weeds? You must be now "*a peculiar people*" (1 Pet. ii. 9); not only peculiar in regard of dignity, but. deportment. Abhor all motions of sin, because it would disparage your high calling.

Question. What is it to walk worthy of our heavenly calling?

Answer. It is to walk regularly, to tread with an even foot, and walk according to the rules and axioms of the Word. A true saint is for canonical obedience, he follows the canon of Scripture. "*As many as walk according to this canon*" (Gal. vi. 16). When we leave men's inventions, and cleave to God's institutions ; when we walk after the Word, as Israel after the pillar of fire; this is walking worthy of our heavenly calling.

To walk worthy of our calling is to walk singularly. "*Noah was upright in his generation*" (Gen. vii. 1). When others walked with the devil, Noah walked with God. We are forbidden to run with the multitude (Exod. xxiii. 2). Though in civil things singularity is not commendable, yet in religion it is good to be singular. Melancthon was the glory of the age he lived in. Athanasius was singularly holy; he appeared for God when the stream of the times ran another way. It is better to be a pattern of holiness, than a partner in wickedness. It is better to go to heaven with a few, than to hell in the crowd. We must walk in an opposite course to the men of the world.

To walk worthy of our calling is to walk cheerfully. *"Rejoice in the Lord evermore"* (Phil. iv. 4). Too much drooping of spirit disparages our high calling, and makes others suspect a godly life to be melancholy. Christ loves to see us rejoicing in Him. Causinus, in his hieroglyphics, speaks of a dove, whose wings being perfumed with sweet ointments, drew the other doves after her. Cheerfulness is a perfume to draw others to godliness. Religion does not banish all joy. As there is a seriousness without sourness, so there is a cheerful liveliness without lightness. When the prodigal was converted *"they began to be merry"* (Luke xv. 24). Who should be cheerful, if not the people of God? They are no sooner born of the Spirit, but they are heirs to a crown. God is their portion, and heaven is their mansion, and shall they not rejoice?

To walk worthy of our calling is to walk wisely. Walking wisely implies three things.

(a) To walk warily. *"The wise man's eyes are in his head"* (Eccles. ii. 14). Others watch for our halting, therefore we had need look to our standing. We must beware, not only of scandals, but of all that is unbecoming, lest thereby we open the mouth of others with a fresh cry against religion. If our piety will not convert men, our prudence may silence them.

(b) To walk courteously. The spirit of the gospel is full of meekness and candour. *"Be courteous"* (1 Pet. iii. 8). Take heed of a morose, supercilious behaviour. Religion does not take away civility, but refines it. *"Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the children of Heth"* (Gen. xxiii. 7). Though they were of a heathenish race, yet Abraham gave them a civil respect. St. Paul was of an affable temper. *"I am made all things to men, that I might by all means save some"* (1 Cor. ix. 22). In lesser matters the apostle yielded to others, that by his obliging manner he might win upon them.

(c) To walk magnanimously. Though we must be humble, yet not base. It is unworthy to prostitute ourselves to the lusts of men. What is sinfully imposed ought to be zealously opposed. Conscience is God's diocese, where none has right to visit, but He who is the Bishop of our souls (1 Pet. u. 25). We must not be like hot iron, which may be beaten into any form. A brave spirited Christian will rather suffer, than let his conscience be violated. Here is the serpent and the dove united, sagacity and innocence. This prudential walking comports with our high calling, and does not a little adorn the gospel of Christ.

To walk worthy of our calling is to walk influentially — to do good to others, and to be rich in acts of mercy (Heb. xiii. 16). Good works honour religion. As Mary poured the ointment on Christ, so by good works we pour ointments on the head of the gospel, and make it give forth a fragrant smell. Good works, though they are not causes of salvation, yet they are evidences. When with our Saviour we go about doing good, and send abroad the refreshing influence of our liberality, we walk worthy of our high calling.

Here is matter of consolation to you who are effectually called. God has magnified rich grace toward you. You are called to great honour to be co-partners with the angels, and co-heirs with Christ; this should revive you in the worst of times. Let men reproach and

miscall you; set God's calling of you against man's miscalling. Let men persecute you to death; they do but give you a pass, and send you to heaven the sooner. How may this cure the trembling of the heart! What, though the sea roar, though the earth be unquiet, though the stars are shaken out of their places, you need not fear. You are called, and therefore are sure to be crowned.

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