

**Attending upon God
without Distraction**

Attending upon God without Distraction

by

Nathanael Vincent

Introduced by Joel R. Beeke

Edited by Don Kistler



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Contents

Biographical Introduction	vii
The Epistle Dedicatory	ix
To the Reader	xiii

PART ONE

Everyone Ought to Attend upon God

1. What Attending upon God Is	3
2. What Attending upon God Implies	16
3. Various Kinds of Attending upon God	26
4. Why We Ought to Attend upon God	39
5. Reproofs for Those Who Reject Attending upon God	47
6. Exhortations for Those Who Reject Attending upon God	54
7. Directions and Consolations for Attending upon God	63

PART TWO

Attending upon God Means We Should Look upon Him as Lord and Serve Him

8. How God Is the Lord	79
9. How God's Lordship Should Impact Our Attending upon Him	92
10. Reproofs and Advice for Those Who Don't Attend upon God as Lord	100

PART THREE

Attending upon God Should Be without Distraction

11. How the Heart Is Distracted 109
 12. How to Attend upon God without Distraction. 121
 13. The Evils of Distractions and Benefits
 of Avoiding Them 128

PART FOUR

*Cases of Conscience and Applications of
Attending upon God without Distractions*

14. Cases of Conscience about Distractions 143
 15. Cautions and Expostulations about Distractions 158
 16. Directions to Remedies against Distractions 175
 17. Advice for Avoiding Distractions in
 Religious Duties 185
 18. Terrors of Distractions and Encouragements
 to Believers 199

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

Nathanael Vincent (1638–1697)

Nathanael Vincent was born in Cornwall to John Vincent, a non-conformist minister, and his wife, Sarah. He was the younger brother of Thomas. A brilliant child, Nathanael memorized and repeated sermons at age seven. He graduated from Christ Church, Oxford, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1656 and a Master of Arts in 1657. He was then appointed chaplain of the Corpus Christi College.

Vincent was ordained at age twenty-one and became rector of Langley Marish, Buckinghamshire. Ejected by the Act of Uniformity of 1662, he spent three years as a private chaplain to Sir Henry Blount and his wife, Hester, at Tittenhanger, Hertfordshire, before moving to London in 1666. A large meeting-house was built in Farthing Alley, Southwark, to accommodate the crowds that came to hear him preach. That drew the attention of the authorities, who began to harass him. On one occasion, soldiers with muskets surrounded his pulpit. When Vincent refused to stop preaching, the soldiers pulled him out of the pulpit by his hair and dragged him through the streets. He was fined and sent to prison. After several months of imprisonment, he was sentenced to banishment from the country, but a flaw in the indictment prevented that sentence from being carried out.

In 1672, Vincent was licensed as a Presbyterian preacher. It was not long, however, before he was persecuted again for preaching. On one occasion in 1681, his meetinghouse was visited by “three justices with constables and other officers.” Vincent continued to preach even though the uproar of the audience became so great that he could scarcely be heard. When the justices then commanded the people to disperse, the whole congregation broke out into singing, during which time Vincent managed to escape through a side exit. Two years later, Vincent was charged for conventicling and sentenced to a three-month prison term. Four years later, he was arrested and falsely accused of taking part in Monmouth’s Rebellion.

Vincent’s imprisonments left him so weak that for some time he was unable to preach, and resorted to writing. Most of his fourteen books were written in prison. His books reflect a warm, experiential piety expressed according to the Ramistic method of outlining. His love and concern for the body of Christ is evident in every book.

Attending upon God without Distraction invites and exhorts us to a close life with God through Christ, and shows us how to attend upon God as our Savior and Lord. Various cases of conscience, cautions, directions, and challenges are addressed with biblical and practical winsomeness and forcefulness. In some ways, this book seems even more applicable in our hurried and harried day than in Nathanael Vincent’s own day. Though the content remains unaltered, I have taken the liberty to divide this treatise into four parts and considerably smaller chapters. Our hearty thanks to Don Kisler for his initial editing work.

Vincent died suddenly in 1697, at age fifty-eight; he was survived by his wife, Anna, and six children. His funeral was conducted by Nathaniel Taylor. He was buried in the non-conformists’ burial ground at Bunhill Fields.

The Epistle Dedicatory

*To the Truly Honorable Sir William Ashurst, Knight,
and Alderman of the City of London*

Much Honored Sir,

I did not address you when you were like the rising sun, and made the chief seat in this city, where you were deservedly placed to shine with more than ordinary luster; when you discovered and were severe against the works of darkness, and your influence was so benign and kind for the sustenance and benefit of London. But now you have run your course so well, and have done so without the least cloud; nay, with so much clearness and glory. I make this dedication to you, desiring your serious perusal of a treatise, the subject of which is of such great importance. And indeed now that you have quit the chair and have less public business to manage, and may have more leisure to retire into yourself, and from company and from civil affairs; this *Cure of Distractions* in religious duties knocks at your door, the author desiring that it may be helpful to your meditations and devotion.

'Tis a great respect and honor that is due to the gods on earth, as magistrates are called, and inferiors should apply to them accordingly, with a great sense of their distance. With what reverence then are we to approach the supreme Majesty, the Lord of Hosts, the King of glory! Our highest apprehensions are infinitely below Him, and the best of saints would rather

worship Him than perform anything that is unworthy of the name of worship.

Among the many faults in holy duties, there is one that will never be quite mended in this world, and that is distraction; but yet more and more help may be still attained against it. And these sermons with which I now present you, I hope may, with a blessing from heaven, contribute something and be successful in this way.

If religious duties were but well done, everything else would be done the better; for it is from God alone that we have ability to do as we ought in any matter whatsoever. The Lord gives wisdom and grace most liberally to them who most sincerely seek Him. And such as have most help from God will best perform their duty towards man; and both church and state will find them the most useful members. Religion is certainly the truest policy. The wisdom of this world, says the apostle, and of the princes of this world, comes to naught; but the power of godliness makes men better in every capacity and relation. How it alters and amends persons, families, and nations where it is encouraged and prevails! Righteousness and peace, joy and love, are found to be the blessed effects of true religion. It tames the fierceness and subdues the malignity of corrupt nature, and makes man to look something like what he was in the state of innocence.

All who wish well to this city and nation must desire that God may be better served, and that men by His service may be bettered. How happy would we be if people were all righteous! Violence then would be no more heard in our land, nor wasting and destruction within our borders; our walls would be called salvation, and our gates praise, and the Lord Himself would be to us an everlasting Light, and our God our glory!

I wish that all lord mayors for the future may follow your example, and endeavor to suppress wickedness, and that they

may never be ashamed of holiness, which is the glory of God, and is most unreasonably looked upon as matter of disgrace to any man. Sir, you are descended from religious ancestors, and religion is that which truly ennobles your blood and family. An increase of this nobility and of all other blessings is wished to yourself and yours, Honored Sir, by your most humble servant,
—Nathanael Vincent

To the Reader

Reader, it is a subject of the highest consequence, and in which all are concerned, that I address in this treatise. I design some relief against that which is the general complaint of serious Christians, who would fain offer to God more spiritual and well-pleasing sacrifices, but are hindered by the remaining sin and vanity of their own minds. They are called indeed the habitations of God through the Spirit; but these habitations are haunted with distracting thoughts and vain imaginations, to their great grief and disturbance. The work and service of the God of heaven is the principal business everyone has to do in this world; and though no duties are to be slightly done to man which are done for the Lord's sake, yet, in attendance upon Himself, and in those duties which more immediately we perform to Him, a holy awe becomes us. Our hearts should be immovably fixed, and we should exert the utmost vigor of our spirits. To trifle with a jealous God, whose all-seeing eye strictly observes all we do, and wherever we fail, is to despise Him to His face, and to act to the great peril of our own souls.

“Our God,” said the apostle, “is a consuming fire.” And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, found Him so to their cost and sorrow when they “offered strange fire, such as he commanded them not.” We must do what God commands, and as He commands, else what we call our religious duties will be looked upon by Him as acts of disobedience.

Ever since the first man parted from God, the mind of man is notoriously fickle and wavering. Being unsettled by sin, it

roves up and down the earth from one vanity to another; but with what difficulty is it brought back to God! And though it is engaged to approach near to Him, yet if it is not narrowly watched, in the twinkling of an eye it starts back and is gone away from Him. To keep our hearts with all diligence is our duty, but they will not be held in from wandering by our most careful custody. It is the hand of that God alone, by which the whole universe consists and is kept from dissolution, that can fix the mind of man and hinder its being distracted in His service.

A great deal of pain is taken in the world to little purpose. "All things," said Solomon, "are full of labor; man cannot utter it." And yet he affirms that there is no profit under the sun. But it is lamentable to think that in the church there should be so much labor in vain. Distraction of mind keeps the heart away from God, and from the duty that seems to be performed to Him; it hinders the stirring of holy affections and the actions of saving grace, and it turns religion into a mere bodily exercise. And how can that be profitable to the soul which is a great way off, and so little regards what is done? How can it be acceptable to God, who is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in Spirit and in truth?

The Church of Rome is for implicit faith, for blind obedience, and for worship in an unknown tongue. How distracted must that worship be? How can the people's thoughts be intent upon what they do not understand? Too many Protestants in their devotions mind what they themselves say as little as if they did not understand the words they spoke. And truly the Protestants sin with greater aggravation because, though they have means of better instruction, their duties are no better performed.

The cure of distraction in religious services is very difficult. Some think lightly of the disease and imagine the cure needless; others are discouraged from striving against distractions, as

if it were impossible to overcome them—but nothing is too hard for the great Physician. He can heal the mind's vanity and bring the heart into God's presence; He is able to cast down imaginations, to hinder them from rising again, and to bring thoughts into captivity and obedience.

A sense of my own wanderings in those ordinances I administer and engage in has put me upon a more serious study how to prevent them. And I would be the first and best follower myself of that counsel which I give to others. And if the Lord is served with greater attention and spirituality, and if the hearts of those who shall read this treatise are more than ever in the work of God, and more benefited by doing it, the great end is obtained, which is designed by

—Nathanael Vincent

PART ONE

Everyone Ought to Attend upon God

CHAPTER 1

What Attending upon God Is

“That ye may attend upon the Lord
without distraction.”

—1 Corinthians 7:35

The Apostle Paul had a great and fervent zeal for the honor of God, that He might have such attendance as He commands, and which most rightfully appertains to a Lord so great and good. Unto Him both heaven and earth owe all service and obedience. The apostle also manifests an extraordinary care for the souls of men, that they might not fail to give that attendance which is enjoined them as their duty, and which is also their advantage, honor, and security. The thoughts, the hearts, and the endeavors of all should run in this way as to a matter of the mightiest importance and concern. Here, if we are undistractedly serious and sincere, all is safe—and that both throughout time and to eternity. But if attendance upon God is either neglected or negligently given, though we are never so intent and industrious about other things, our souls and all our labor will be lost together.

In 1 Corinthians 7, a little before our text, the apostle admonishes the Corinthian saints of the shortness of time and of the transitoriness of this present world, and then informs

them what kind of attendance upon Himself God requires and expects from them.

His admonition concerning time is startling in verse 29: “the time is short.” The allusion here is to sails that are no longer spread, but are bound up when the ship is just come to the harbor. The word also signifies to wind up a body in grave clothes so that it may be fit for the sepulcher. Time is thus ready to be wound up continually, and to be buried, as it were, in eternity, compared to which it is but as a drop to the whole ocean, and this very drop is ever wasting. Time is a short thing, in a continual flux, and every moment growing shorter. Other things are of less value because they can be enjoyed but for a little while; the epithet “temporal,” or lasting only “for a season,” when added to the greatest wealth—the highest pleasures, nay, even to diadems and kingdoms—makes them fall in the esteem of a discerning judgment. But the worth of time is enhanced by the brevity of it. The day of salvation, the acceptable time in which we, and our attendance upon God, may be accepted, cannot extend beyond the limits of the time of life. Now we must make peace with God, work out our own salvation, and provide for eternity; this must be done now or never. There is not a moment of time but is too good to be lost; there is service and work enough to do in it, and to lose all our time is to everlastingly lose ourselves.

The apostle speaks of the world’s transitoriness: the “fashion of the world passes away.” Mammon is but a sorry master, and really is unworthy of that frequent attendance and mighty respect that is given to it. Sin has made man foolish and the world vain. And it is an undeniable argument of man’s folly that a vain world is so concerned over those things that are so apt to fade and change.

As scenes in a comedy or tragedy alternate, and quickly the last act comes, and the play is at an end, so this world is

continually varying. Now there appears one, and a little after quite another face of things. The face of the sky is not more mutable than the state of human affairs. And thus it is likely to be until the world's end, when "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10).

That God whom Christians attend upon is unchangeable, and so is His love for them; and the inheritance they expect hereafter is "incorruptible, and fadeth not away." But they themselves are strangers and pilgrims in this world, and should behave themselves as passengers who are traveling toward a better world. And as for their enjoyments by the way, they should love them as if they were about to leave them. Joy should be moderate in the fruition of them; and when they are taken away, sorrow should not be excessive, nor transgress the bounds of grace and reason.

The apostle, as a man well acquainted with the court of heaven, directs believers' attendance upon the Lord, who dwells and reigns there. He is very careful not to cast a snare upon the Corinthians, nor to impose upon conscience what God does not impose. Papal authority is audacious and anti-christian, and is bold to command (and that upon the highest penalty) what the Lord never required. But the apostle abhors spiritual usurpation. He would have all observe what God called them to, and in every condition to abide with God, and to "attend upon the Lord without distraction."

In these words take notice of the Lord with whom we have to do. The eyes of servants are to their masters and the eyes of worshippers should be to the Lord whom they adore. And if they had a greater respect for this Holy One, what an influence it would have upon their lives and services! The word *Kurio*, or "Lord" in the New Testament, is put for "Jehovah" in the Old. The God whom Christians acknowledge is the Lord Jehovah, who has His being of Himself, has dominion over all.

Observe what this Lord requires and calls for, and that is attendance upon Him. The Greek word which the Holy Ghost uses is very significant and emphatic. It implies access unto God and abiding with Him, and being fit for and well pleased with both.

Who is to attend upon the Lord? All men owe homage and service to Him, which is their honor and interest to pay. But those who are His own children and people are by special obligations and favor called to this duty and privilege of attending upon their God, and they have a new principle and nature that inclines them to it.

Here is a direction as to the manner of attending on the Lord: it must be without distraction. Plutarch says that the study of wisdom occurs without distraction when nothing is able to call away the mind and make it cease that study. In attending upon God, there must be intention in the mind and a full bent of the heart, with strength of affection and desire, not to be diverted, much less extinguished. All other business, comparatively, must be looked upon as trivial; attendance upon the Lord must be with the greatest seriousness.

I derive three doctrines from the words:

First, the children of men ought to attend upon God; this the text plainly supposes.

Second, in attending upon God we should look upon Him as the Lord and serve Him accordingly.

Third, attendance upon the Lord should be without distraction.

DOCTRINE 1. The children of men ought to attend upon God. The heaven of heavens is His throne, and He is attended on by thousands and ten thousands of glorious and holy ones who minister unto Him and stand before Him. And yet upon earth, which is His footstool, He calls for attendance too; for

He “rejoices in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights are with the sons of men,” who understand Him and themselves so well as to seek after Him. He requires continually to be waited on. Hosea 12:6: “Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.” Injunctions to wait are reiterated, with the encouraging promise of divine aid and strengthening grace. Psalm 27:14: “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” Psalm 37:34: “Wait on the LORD, and keep his way.” This way is true; walking in it is holy and safe, and its end is peace.

In handling this doctrine I shall, first, show you what is supposed in man’s attendance upon God; second, tell you what is implied in this attendance; third, speak of several sorts of attending upon the Lord; fourth, assign the reasons why the children of men ought to give their attendance upon God; and, fifth, make application.

First, I am to show you what is supposed in man’s attendance upon God. There are several prerequisites for this; for man is not easily persuaded to this duty, though the performance of it proves never so beneficial to him. Now, that there may be this attendance:

1. Man must firmly believe that there is a God. Hebrews 11:6: “But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.” As God is *to* everlasting, so He is *from* everlasting. If He had not ever been, and that of Himself, he would never have been; neither could anything else ever have had a being. The existence of creatures supposes that there is a Creator, and attendance upon God supposes that there is a God to be attended on. The stronger the assent to this truth is, the greater will be the care to understand how the attendance may be acceptable. The being of a God, few

will deny in words; but there is an abundance who deny Him in their works, even among those who profess to know Him. And being so foolish as to say in their hearts that there is no God, it is no wonder that with their hearts they refuse to seek Him.

Man should look upward and see how the heavens declare the glory of God, and how the firmament shows His handiwork. The visible creation is not more obvious to the eye than the eternal power and Godhead of Him who made all things are clearly to be seen by the mind of man (Romans 1:20). And if man will but look into his own heart, he may find this truth deeply engraved there, that God is. Therefore the apostle speaks thus of the Gentiles, who had only the light of nature in Romans 1:19: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them." Let none go about to obliterate this truth concerning the being of a God, but undoubtingly accept it; for it is the first stone in the foundation of all truly religious service and obedience.

2. Man must have a sense that he had his being from God and was made for Him; and truly he is made such a creature that he will never be quite unmade so as to become nothing. He is capable of knowing and serving his Master, and enjoying Him forever. God has made all men for Himself, and in some way or another He will secure His own honor and have glory from the very worst. But as for His own people, He has formed, bought, and newly made them for Himself, that they might show forth His praise (Isaiah 43:21). Man should eye the hand that made him, and the end for which he was made. Our bodies will be found to be a curious piece of divine workmanship, if the construction, variety, and use of their parts are considered. But though our flesh is of God's forming, yet, in a more immediate manner, He is called the Father of our spirits. And wherefore have our souls a thinking faculty but that God may be thought

of? Why do we have memories but that our Creator from our youth may be remembered? And if we live to have gray hairs, He in no wise is to be forgotten. Why are we capable of loving, desiring, and taking delight but that God may be the chief Object of these affections? In Him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28), so that we might live to Him, move according to His will, and be indeed His servants.

3. Man must be persuaded that God is rightfully his Ruler, and has given him a law and commandments by which he is to be governed. Mammon and Satan are mere usurpers, and where they reign they ruin. The evil one is to be resisted, not obeyed; and man was made to have dominion over the creatures, not to be enslaved by them. But God is man's Sovereign by right, and may lay upon man what commands He pleases; and yet He has given them none but what are holy, just, and good (Romans 7:12). And the better these are obeyed, man becomes more holy, just, and good himself, and partakes more of the divine nature. Would we attend upon God? We must have respect unto His commands. David plainly intimates the gain of obedience when he says, "More are they to be esteemed than gold, yea, than much fine gold." He signifies the pleasure of obedience when he adds, "sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10).

4. Man must be convinced that by sin he has departed from God, and has justly incurred His displeasure. The natural distance between God and man as a creature must ever remain. God is, and will be forever, infinitely above and superior even to those who are in heaven. He "humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven" (Psalm 113:6). But the moral distance that is between God and man, or the enmity that sin is the cause of, may be eliminated. When man attends upon God, he should come with a deep sense of how he has provoked

Him, that he is by nature a child of wrath (Ephesians 2:3), and in his practice a rebel. And since man has acted like an enemy, so he deserves to be dealt with as one.

When the Syrians came to the king of Israel, they had sackcloth on their loins and ropes on their heads (1 Kings 20:32). They had newly been in arms against him, and now they declare how ill they deserve to be treated by him. For offenders to approach God without any trouble for their offenses is not to attend upon Him, but to affront Him. These are His own words: "Woe to them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me" (Hosea 7:13). And hear the language of the penitent church in Lamentations 5:16: "The crown is fallen from our head; woe to us, that we have sinned!" When we come for mercy, we must be sensible that mercy is undeserved and that "to us belongeth confusion of face" (Daniel 9:8). There should be a penitential acknowledgment that we have been foolish, disobedient, and deceived; that we have served various lusts and pleasures, and in ourselves are so hateful to God that we are unworthy to be admitted into the number of His attendants.

5. Man must hear the call of God to return to Him, and to obedience and duty. The angels who sinned were not spared, nor called to attend upon God in order to gain recovery after their apostasy. Indeed, we find Satan an intruder among "the sons of God," who "came to present themselves before the LORD" (Job 1:6), but it was not to beg grace for himself; his chains of darkness hindered his hope of finding any. He comes as an accuser of Job, and desiring permission to do him mischief. But man, though departed from God, is called to come back again. Hosea 14:1: "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Man is sought after as well as saved, or sought that he may be saved. And if the

Lord did not seek him, but left him to his own imagination and inclination, his imaginations are so vain, his inclinations so perverse and wicked, that he would never cease going astray till he died without wisdom. The call of God is loud and earnest, that man would turn from his disobedience and do his duty. Proverbs 8:4: "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man." Proverbs 1:23: "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." Proverbs 8:34: "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors."

6. Man must look upon God as accessible in Christ. When Adam fell into the first transgression, showing a contempt of God and of His covenant, and the life that was there promised, he was turned out of Paradise, and a flaming sword was placed to hinder his reentering and gaining access to the tree of life. Life could no longer be had by the first covenant; therefore he and his faith were directed to the promised seed, who would bruise the serpent's head. And in time He would be manifested to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). This work of the devil was sin, whereby man had departed from his Maker. Now Christ, the second Adam, suffered once for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring man to God, and make up the breach that sin had made between them (1 Peter 3:18). As God is but One, so there is but one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:5-6), and there is no access to God by any other. But, says the apostle, "in Christ Jesus our Lord...we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (Ephesians 3:11-12). Under the Old Testament there was but one temple, one altar for burnt offering and sin offering to make an atonement. A heathen thought it a dishonor to the Lord Jehovah that Hezekiah had taken away His high places and His altars,

and had commanded Judah and Jerusalem to worship before one altar (2 Chronicles 32:12). But the mystery and meaning of this was that Jesus Christ alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that no man comes to the Father but by Him.

7. Man must plainly discern his ignorance and impotence to give a right attendance upon God, without the direction and aid of His Word and Spirit. Nay, as man lacks both skill and strength to serve the Lord, so he has no will to do it; there is an indisposition and even an ill disposition in him, which plainly shows that the light and grace of the Word and Spirit are of absolute necessity for an attendance upon God that is acceptable to Him. When man goes off from God and takes himself to himself in matters of religion, he ranges infinitely, like a seafaring man who has lost his compass in a mist, moving swiftly, but to no purpose. Then there shall be more words than what is written, more articles than what God has put into our creed, more commands than the Lawgiver ever gave; nay, more gods and more mediators than one. Man's invention will be fruitlessly fruitful, and himself restless and endless in his own ways. We should see our need of instruction and help from the Spirit of the Lord. Both light and liberty, strength and liveliness in all holy duties are from Him.

It is through the Son as Mediator, and it is by the Spirit as our Helper, that we have access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18). The apostle acknowledges in Romans 8:26, "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." The holy and gracious desires of the saints are the breathings of this Spirit in them; acceptable petitions that will find audience are of His drawing up and editing. "He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). He is the Instructor of all those who are taught to profit. Ordinances, gifts, and administrations, which

are so useful, are from the Spirit, and the benefit and success of them is owing to Him. His aid is earnestly to be implored and thankfully to be accepted. Preparation for attendance upon God is necessary. Psalm 10:17: "Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." And this preparation is the work of the Spirit.

8. Man must not doubt, but must be thoroughly persuaded that God is ready to be found of such as attend upon Him, and is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Satan pretends to be the representer of God to man, and he represents Him in two contrary ways. Both ways are false, and are indeed misrepresentations. From secure souls, he endeavors to hide the wrath of God, His holiness, justice, and jealousy, so that he may heighten presumption. From awakened and humble hearts, he endeavors to conceal His mercy and grace in Christ so that he may kill their hope and discourage them from engaging in the work of God. But 'tis wisdom in man to hear what the Lord speaks of Himself; for He best knows Himself, and the revelations He makes of Himself are most certainly true. Now as He has told us that He would wound the head of His enemies, and as He accounts those His enemies who go on still in their trespasses (Psalm 68:21), so He has assured us that He is good and ready to forgive those who are troubled because they have offended, and who see their need of pardon. He is "plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon" Him (Psalm 86:5).

It is a mighty encouragement to attend upon God when we see the door of hope standing open, and that the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear His displeasure and hope in His mercy (Psalm 147:11). The tables of the Law were put into the ark, and the mercy seat was above it, a plain intimation that the Lord who sits upon this mercy seat will not enter into judgment

with His servants nor mark their iniquities, but will be merciful to the unrighteousness of them who turn to Him. This should raise hope in dejected spirits, and cause that hope to abound. Psalm 130:7–8: “Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

9. Man must not think to divide his service between God and mammon. Our Lord Himself tells us that “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” To mind the world as if it were the most desirable thing, and to serve the Lord only for the world’s sake, is hateful earthly mindedness and hypocrisy. When the children of Israel assembled themselves before God only for corn and wine, their cries were but howlings in His ears (Hosea 7:14). If we would attend upon God, we must come out from the world. Conformity to the world and walking after the course of it must cease. The most desirable good things of it must be condemned in comparison with God and the better and enduring substance. We shall never look and aim so as to obtain the things that are unseen and eternal unless the eye is shut against the things that are seen and temporal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Attenders upon God may and ought to mind their secular business which their particular callings lead them to. Christians are cautioned against idleness as great disorderliness, and are commanded and exhorted by our Lord Jesus Christ “with quietness to work, and to eat their own bread” (2 Thessalonians 3:12). This, notwithstanding, must ever be remembered: that the things of this world are to be regarded so far as God has commanded, that they must be begged of Him, and kept, used, and improved for Him. They must not be liked for themselves,

but so far as God is enjoyed with them and in them. And in the greatest abundance of them, this should be the heart's language, which came from the heart and mouth of Luther: "Lord, I will not be put off with such things as these! 'The Lord is my portion,' saith my soul; and I have looked and longed and wait for Thy salvation!"

10. Man must consent to cast away whatever may come between the Lord and him. And what that is, the prophet plainly tells us in Isaiah 59:1–2: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Separation from God is the hell of hell; and this hell upon earth is caused by sin. Sin is that which provokes the Lord to be angry with man, and with His soul to hate him; to behold him afar off so that he is not admitted into His favor, or unto fellowship and communion with Him. To talk of fellowship with God and to walk in this darkness of sin is to lie to others and to deceive ourselves. This middle wall of partition must be thrown down, or else there can be no drawing nigh unto God. James 4:8: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; purify your hearts, ye double-minded." The hand must not practice and work wickedness; the heart must not regard and like it. The more the heart is desirous of purity, the more fit it is to attend upon the Lord, to serve Him and to see Him. Therefore you read in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And 2 Corinthians 6:17–18: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."