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Mr. *BUTLER*'s

Fast-Sermon,

Preached before the

Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen,

April 28. 1697.

Clarke Mayor.

*Martis quarto die Maii 1697,
Annoq; Regis Willielmi Ter-
tii, Angliæ, &c. Nono.*

THIS Court doth desire Mr. BUTLER
to print his Sermon preached at the
Parish-Church of *St. Mary-le-Bow*, on
Wednesday last, before the Lord Mayor,
Aldermen, and Citizens of this City.

Goodfellow.

A
S E R M O N

Preached at *St. MARY-LE-BOW*,
Before the **L O R D M A Y O R**,

A N D

Court of Aldermen, and Citizens of
L O N D O N,

On Wednesday the 28th of *April*,

A Day appointed by his Majesty's Proclamation for
a General and Publick **FAST**.

By **LILLY BUTLER**, Minister of
St. Mary Aldermanbury.

L O N D O N;

Printed for **Wabazon Apiner**, at the three Pigeons in *Corn-
hil*, over against the *Royal-Exchange*. MDCXC VII.

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JAMES 4. 9, 10.

Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble your selves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

THOSE *Jewish Christians*, to whom the *Apostle* directs his Discourse in this *Chapter*, were engaged in *Wars and Fightings*; and earnestly ver. 1. wishing for the return of Peace and Plenty, and those other Advantages they fought for, but could not obtain them, ver. 2. *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not.* He therefore informs them, what was the true Cause of all their ill Success and Disappointments; they did not seek to God for the Blessings they desired, or asked them only for evil Ends, not *that, being delivered out of the hand of their Enemies, they might serve him without Fear*, but be unable to *make the more plentiful provision for their Lusts*, and with the greater Quietness and Freedom pursue the fulfilling of them: *Ye have not, because ye ask not.* ver. 2, 3. *Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your Lusts.* They had also contracted such a *Friendship with the World*, as was *Enmity with God*, to whom they had espoused themselves; and therefore he calls them *Adulterers and Adulteresses*, ver. 4. They doubled and dissembled with God in their *Hearts*, and their *Hands* were polluted with many foul Practices, which their ver. 8. greedy Covetousness had employed them in. He well knew there could be no good hopes of better Times,

till they were better themselves; and therefore proceeds to tell them, what was fit and necessary to be done by them: That they must *submit themselves to God, and resist the Devil*; that they must diligently perform the neglected Duty of Prayer, and the other Exercises of Divine Worship; *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you*: That they must prepare themselves for such Approaches unto God, by putting away the Iniquity of their *Hands*, and the Hypocrisy of their *Hearts*; *Cleanse your Hands ye sinners, and purify your Hearts ye double minded*: And that in order to the effectual working this Repentance and Reformation, they must *afflict* their Souls with a *godly Sorrow*, and *humble themselves in the sight of God*, for the Sins they had committed; and then, and not before, they might expect the happy Fruits of God's Favour. *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness: Humble your selves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.* The words of the *Text* then, if we seriously compare our Case with theirs to whom they are written, we cannot but acknowledg, are very proper Matter for our present Meditation. In speaking to them at this time,

- I. I shall shew, What that Duty is which they require of us.
- II. I shall shew, The great Necessity of this Duty.
- III. I shall shew, The Seasonableness of it at this time.
- IV. I shall shew, The great Benefit of performing this Duty, intimated in these words, *and he shall lift you up.*
- V. I shall direct to some proper Considerations, for the exciting you to it. And

VI. I

VI. I shall shew, What are the necessary Fruits of a due performance of it.

I. I shall endeavour to shew, What that Duty is which the *Text* requires of us. And to this end, I shall shew,

First, What is to be the general Matter of our Sorrow and Mourning.

Secondly, What are the necessary Qualifications of this Sorrow. And

Thirdly, The particular Reasons of our Sorrow and Humiliation for that general Matter.

First, I am to shew, What is to be the general Matter of our Sorrow and Humiliation; What that is we are to be *afflicted, and mourn, and weep, and to humble our selves in the sight of God for*. It is for Sin. The *Apostle* had been declaring and reproving the Peoples Sins, and is here calling them to repent of them: *Ye Adulterers, saith he, ye Adulteresses, ye Sinners, ye double minded, be ye afflicted, and mourn, and weep*; that is, *humble your selves* in this manner, for all those Iniquities whereby ye have justly deserved such reproachful Names as these are. Every Man then should *afflict his Soul* with Shame and Sorrow, for his own, for other Mens, and for the Nation's Sins; for *all the Abominations have been done in the midst of us*, for the Sins of Magistrates, and Ministers, and of all other Ranks and Conditions of Men; for all have sinned, and helped to increase the Publick Guilt, and to compleat the Character of a *sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity*. For these things both God and the King do *call us this Day to fasting, and weeping, and mourning*. And, by our

our assembling together at this time, we make profession of humbling our selves in this manner. I shall therefore, for your farther Direction, shew,

Secondly, What are the necessary Qualifications of that Sorrow which is required of us.

1. It must be a hearty Sorrow. That Mourning and Humiliation, which God expects from us, is chiefly that of the Soul and Spirit; *Rent your Hearts, and not your Garments*, saith the Prophet *Joel*. God will not be satisfied with such outward Ceremonies and Formalities of Mourning, as those were, in which alone the Fasts of the Jews did too often consist, such as tearing their Garments, *bowing down the Head like a Bulrush, spreading Sackcloth and Ashes under them, disfiguring their Faces*, and appearing before him with a *sad Countenance*; *Wilt thou call this a Fast, and an acceptable Day to the Lord?* All these may be nothing but a vain-glorious shew and pageantry of Mourning, to attract the regard and esteem of Men; nothing but Mockery and Hypocrisy *in the sight of God*. It is the *breaking of the Heart, the melting of the Spirit, the humbling of the Soul* for Sin; this is that Humiliation which God hath the greatest respect to. The other may make us appear to Men to grieve and be afflicted, but this, this inward Sorrow is necessary to the *humbling our selves in the sight of God, who searcheth the Hearts of Men*.

2. It must be a great and deep Sorrow of Heart. All Evils are to be lamented with a Sorrow proportionable to the greatness of them; and therefore Sin being the greatest of all Evils, our Sorrow for that should be the greatest of all our Sorrows. It is to him, *that is of an humble and of a contrite Spirit*, that God hath a special regard, to him whose Spirit is even ground to pieces with Sorrow,

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as the word *Contrite* signifies. *The Sacrifices of God*, saith *David*, *Psal. 51. 17. are a broken Spirit, it is a broken and contrite Heart, which God will not despise*. It must not only be the Sorrow of the Heart, but also so great a Sorrow of it, as may fitly be called the *breaking* and grinding it to pieces, as much Sorrow as our Hearts are able to bear; especially when we bewail, as we profess to do this Day, all our Sins at once, the Sins which we, and all the People of this Land, have committed.

3. It must be an impartial Sorrow, a great and hearty Sorrow for Sin, where-ever we see it, or of what kind so ever it is. Our love to any Person or Party must not lessen our dislike of their evil-doings; neither must our Displeasure against any, make us unconcerned at theirs. We must not delight in that our selves, which we are offended with in others; or take pleasure in seeing other Men do, what we dare not do our selves: we must not mourn for one Sin, and rejoice in another: we must not hate and dislike only those Sins, which, through some opposition in our Tempers, or through satiety, or some evil Effects we feel of them, are become irksome and grievous to us; and love, and cherish, and delight our selves in the commission of others, which are more agreeable to our Humour, or Constitution, or Interest. Our *Laughter must be turned to mourning, and our Joy to heaviness*; we must be *afflicted, and mourn, and weep*, for those very Sins we were wont to take the greatest Pleasure in.

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4. It must be an humbling Sorrow. We must fo be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, as *to humble our selves in the sight of God* for the Sins we have committed, so as to wash away all the filth of Pride, and every high Thought of our selves. Our Sorrow should be attended with Shame, and a deep sense of our own Baseness. Whenever we bewail our Sins, we should *abhor and loath our selves* for them, and acknowledge the Justice of God in all the Evils they have brought upon us, and his undeserved Mercy in *that we are not utterly consumed* for them. Such a Mourner was Job, when he *abhorred himself, and repented in Dust and Ashes*. Such was David, when he confessed that he was *foolish and ignorant, even as a Beast before God*. Such was Ezra, when he *fell upon his Knees, and said, O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my Face to thee, my God: for our Iniquities are increased over our Heads, and our Trespas is grown up unto the Heavens*. And such was Daniel, when confessing, with *Fasting, and Sackcloth, and Ashes*, the Sins of his People, he thus expressed himself; *O Lord, Righteousness belongs unto thee, but unto us Confusion of Face, because we have sinned against thee*. Such Mourners should we all be this Day, *lying down in our Shame, and our Confusion covering us, and loathing our selves in our own sight for all the Evils that we have committed*.

5. It must be a lasting Sorrow. It is not the Duty of one Hour, or of one Day only. *Is this the Fast that I have chosen*, saith God, *a Day for a Man to afflict his Soul?* Isa. 58. 4. The Sorrow which God

expects

expects from us, is not such as vanishes in our Sighs and Lamentations, or runs out with our Tears, and then leaves the Heart to return to its wonted hardness. It is not as a *morning Cloud*, which overcasts the Soul for a little while, *but soon passeth away*, and then all is clear again, and our Affections shine as bright as ever upon the Sins we bewailed. It is not falling out with them, and our selves for their sakes; for one Day, and renewing all our Love and Kindness the next: No, we must never smile any more upon our lamented Sins, or remember them without Shame: We must never suffer our Hearts to be *lifted up* again, or to grow insensible of that load of Sin, which we have felt so heavy upon them, and hath given them so much Pain and Trouble: We must always carry with us the same resentment of the *filthy Conversation of the Wicked*, and be continually disposed to mourn and be afflicted, *in seeing and hearing* their Abominations. I proceed now,

Thirdly, To consider the particular Reasons of this Sorrow and Humiliation, for our own and others Sins. These are the filthy Nature, the base Ingratitude, and the evil Fruits and Consequences of them. We must be *afflicted, and mourn, and weep, and humble our selves* for them; because hereby our God is dishonoured; his Authority despised, his Laws trampled on, and his Love and Goodness abused: because hereby our most Holy Religion is disgraced, and the Christian Faith exposed to the Scorn and Derision of bold and growing Infideli-

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ty: because the Peace and Prosperity of our Country is undermined, and so many Publick Mischiefs procured by them: because hereby our Minds and Consciences are defiled, and the Image of God defaced in us, the Peace of our Souls destroyed, and everlasting Wrath and Punishment incurred by us. These are all of them very sorrowful Considerations, and we must have respect to them all, in *afflicting* and *humbling* our Souls for our Sins. Thus much may suffice for the explaining the Nature of the Duty of the *Text*.

I shall therefore proceed and shew,

II. The Necessity of it, which will be manifest, if we consider,

First, That without this great and hearty Sorrow and Humiliation for our Sins, there can be no true Repentance, without which there can be no Pardon, no Reconciliation with God, no hopes of diverting the Judgments of God from this *unoward Generation*, no escaping *the Wrath to come*, no hopes of Eternal Life and Salvation. This Sorrow and Humiliation for Sin, is therefore very often expressly called for, when Men are exhorted to repent, and particularly mentioned in the account of their Repentance. Thus said the Lord to the House of *Israel*, when he called them to repent, *Joel 2. 12. Turn ye, even to me, with all your Heart, and with weeping, and fasting, and mourning, and rent your Hearts.*
Thus

Thus when *David* repented of his Sin, *in the matter* Psal. 51. of *Uriah*, he offered *the Sacrifice of a broken and contrite Heart*. And thus the Prophet *Ezekiel* foretells the Repentance of the *Captive Jews*; *Ezek. 6. 9. They shall loath themselves for the Evils that they have committed in all their Abominations*. And thus we read of the Penitent Woman in the Gospel, *Luk. 7. 38. that she came behind our Saviour weeping, and began to wash his Feet with Tears: And of St. Peter, that when he began his Repentance, he went out, and wept bitterly: And of those Converts he made, Act. 2. That they were pricked in their Heart, at the mention of their great Sin, in crucifying the Lord Jesus*. Repentance, as it is often described in Scripture, is a *turning from Sin*, and a *turning to the Lord*; a turning from Sin, in the Judgment, Will, and Resolutions, and in the Affections likewise; the love of it is turned into Hatred; and delight in it into Shame and Sorrow for it. And this inward turning from Sin goes before, and produceth the turning from it in the outward Conversation and Practice: Therefore *St. Paul* tells us, that *Godly Sorrow worketh Repentance not to be repented of, 2 Cor. 7. 10.* We first grieve for Sin, and then forsake it; We feel the remembrance of it lie heavy upon our Minds, and then and therefore set our selves to shake off the uneasy Burden.

Secondly, The Necessity of this Sorrow and Humiliation will be farther manifest, if we consider, that without this there cannot be that Love of God which
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the *first and great Commandment* requires of us. If we *love God with all our Heart*, we cannot but look with great displeasure upon that, which is most contrary to his Nature and Will, which his Soul hates, and his Honour suffers so much by. Can we see him most highly provoked and injur'd, *whom our Soul dearly loves*, and not be afflicted at it? He that can reflect upon his Rebellion and Disobedience, that can remember how often, and how many ways he hath grieved and offended God, and not mourn and be ashamed at the thoughts of what he hath done, *How dwells the love of God in him?* How absurd are all his pretences to it?

Thirdly, The Necessity of this Sorrow and Humiliation, will be yet farther manifest, if we consider, that without this there can be no true Love of our Neighbour, without which we cannot be Christ's Disciples. Love will not suffer us to be unconcerned at the Calamities of those who are the Objects of it. We cannot but grieve to see their Bodies in pain, their Minds distracted, their Goods rifled, and their Enemies executing their bloody Designs against them; and are we not ashamed to pretend, in any sense, to love our Neighbours as Christ hath loved us, if we can see them under far greater Miseries than all these, and yet be little affected with them? If we can see them diseased in their Souls, dead in Trespases and Sins, enslaved by the Devil, pulling down the Wrath of God upon them, and ready to fall with their Souls and Bodies into unquenchable
Flames,

Flames, and not have our Bowels moved, and our Hearts pained within us?

Fourthly, Without this Sorrow and Humiliation, there can be no true Faith, without which it is impossible to please God, or to be justified in his sight. How can we believe that God is our Maker and Preserver, and the giver of every good Gift, and yet offend him daily without Remorse? How can we believe, that he hates all the Workers of Iniquity, that he is angry with the Wicked every Day, and will by no means acquit the Guilty, and yet be easy under all the great and provoking Transgressions we have committed against Him? How can we believe that the Son of God came down from Heaven, and suffered all the Shame and Torment of the Cross for our Salvation; and feel no wounds in our Spirits, no shame in our Faces, for all the ungrateful Returns we have made to his tender Love? How can we believe that he gave himself for us, to save us from our Sins, whilst we cherish and embrace them with pleasure, and will not be delivered from them? How can we believe that *Glory, Honour, and Immortality*, are the certain Reward of those that work Righteousness, and yet remember with little concern how carelessly we have neglected so great Salvation? How can we believe, that *Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, eternal Death and Misery*, will be the undoubted Portion of every Soul of Man that doth Evil, and not look with Horror and Bitterness of Spirit, upon our sinful Lives? What brutish

brautish Folly and Ingratitude doth the unrelenting Sinner accuse himself of, whenever he is so absurd, as to call himself a Christian?

I proceed,

III. To shew the Seasonableness of this Duty of Sorrow and Humiliation. God doth sometimes more loudly call to *Weeping, and Fasting, and Mourning*; and the Sins and Circumstances of a Church and Nation increase their Obligations to them, as with us at this Day. Had ever any Age or People more or greater Sins to mourn for, than we have? Is not the whole Head sick, and the whole Heart faint, and the whole Body full of Wounds, and Bruises, and putrifying Sores? Have not all sorts of Men corrupted their Ways? Are they not altogether become abominable? Are not Atheism and Infidelity, Rioting and Drunkenness, Chambering and Wantonness, Strife and Envy, Pride and Covetousness, the profanation of God's Sacred Name in horrid Oaths and Curses, and the contempt of Divine Worship, the most notorious things we can any where observe? And can sorrow for Sin ever be more seasonable than now, now that it is so general, so impudent, and so exceedingly multiplied in all its Kinds? Is it not a most proper Season to mourn for our Sins, when we have already smarted so much for them, and the Rod is still upon us? when they have brought us into so many Difficulties, afflicted us with so many Losses, shed so much English Blood, and made so many Orphans, and Widows, and Childless amongst us?

us? Is it not high time to *humble our selves under that mighty Hand of God*, we have felt so heavy upon us, is still so visibly lifted up against us, and from whence alone we can expect that Success, and Peace, and Settlement, our Sins have hitherto withheld from us? But that nothing may be wanting to persuade us, to concern our selves effectually for the discharge of the Duty of the Text,

I shall shew,

IV. The great Benefit of our performing this Duty, intimated to us in these Words, *and he shall lift you up.*

First, We might comfortably hope, that if we were generally, or but some good Numbers of us thus humbled, God would lift us up above all our Difficulties, and above all our Enemies; that we should dwell on high, and our place of Defence should be the *Munition of Rocks*, secure from all those Storms and Tempests our Sins have raised against us. The great End of God's sending his Judgments upon a People, is to humble and afflict their Souls; with the remembrance of those Sins whereby they have provoked him. And therefore we may reasonably hope, that he who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men, will take off his Rod; when the Design of his Correcting is in some good measure accomplished. God had expressly threatened to destroy *Nimrod* within *fourty Days*: Yet when they fasted, and cried, and humbled themselves before him,

Jonah 3. him, he repented of the Evil he said he would do unto them. And when the King of Egypt had gathered a mighty Army against Israel because they had forsaken God, 2 Chron. 12. and the Lord saw that the great Men particularly humbled themselves, he sent his Prophet to tell them, that he would not destroy them, but grant them some deliverance, and his Wrath should not be poured upon them by the hand of Shishak. And accordingly we read, *vers.* 12. that in Judah things went well. Is it then in our Power to do any thing, so serviceable to our publick Peace and Prosperity, and shall we still neglect it? Are not these Blessings worthy to be fought with Tears and Sorrow? and would they not be very cheaply purchased by the performance of so reasonable a Duty, after so large an Expenditure of Blood and Treasure in vain for the recovery of them?

Secondly, Our particular penitent Sorrow and Humiliation, may prevail with God to lift us up above those Calamities it may be too late for us to prevent. When Men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble Person, Job 22. 29. An eminent Instance of this distinguishing Providence of God, we have Ezek. 9. 4. where God commands a Mark to be set on the Forehead of those that did sigh and cry for the Abominations that were done in the midst of Jerusalem, that the Ministers of his Wrath might not come near any of them, *ver.* 6. For such Men are the particular Care of Heaven, and the peculiar Objects of the Divine Favour. To this Man

Man will I look, saith God, Isa. 66. 2. even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.

Thirdly, God will lift up them that mourn and afflict themselves, as the Command of the Text requires; that is, He will raise their drooping Spirits, revive and comfort their humbled Souls. He is therefore called by St. Paul, 2 Cor. 7. 6. The God that comforteth those that are cast down. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, saith the Prophet Isaiah, he hath sent me to preach glad Tidings to the Meek, to bind up the broken hearted, and to comfort them that mourn, Isa. 61. 1, 2. Such Men have an everflowing Spring of Comfort always abiding in them, even the Holy Spirit of God, who dwelleth with such as are of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the Humble, and to revive the Spirit of the contrite Ones; to give them such a Sense of the Divine Love, such joyful and glorious Hopes, as will abundantly sweeten the worst Condition they can be in: So that to be thus sorrowful, is the best way to be always rejoicing.

Fourthly, God will lift them up, who thus humble themselves in his sight here, to his own everlasting Kingdom hereafter, where they shall shine as the Sun, and whither no Clouds can reach, to diminish ought of their Glory and Joy. Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, Mat. 5. 3. As God delights to dwell with such Men here, so will he receive them to dwell with himself hereafter, when he

will dry up all their Tears, heal all their Wounds, put an end to all their Sorrows, and fill their Souls with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory; when he will no longer speak to them, as he doth in the Text, Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; but will call them to enter into the Joy of their Lord, to sing the Song of the Lamb, and to exercise themselves in perpetual Hallelujah's.

Thus then you see how necessary, how seasonable, and how profitable, the Duty of the Text, and the Duty of the Day is: And shall we not, now at length, set our selves in earnest to the performance of it? Shall we still rejoice to do Evil, and delight in the forwardness of the Wicked? Shall we still maintain the Character which the Prophet gave of Niniveh, Zeph. 2. 15. *This is the rejoicing City that dwelleth carelessly?* God forbid! Let us search and try our Ways then, and know every Man the Plague of his own Heart, and turn to the Lord with weeping and mourning, for all our great and crying Sins. And for the afflicting our Hearts with this Sorrow, I shall,

V. Direct to some proper Considerations for this purpose.

First, Let us consider the Goodness and Mercy of that God we have sinned against, and try to afflict our Souls with Shame and Sorrow for the base Ingratitude of our Sins. When David had put Saul in mind of the tender regard he had had for his Life and Safety, we read that *Saul lift up his Voice and wept*, at the thoughts of his cruel Designs against him: And will not our

1 Sam. 14. 16.

Souls

Souls melt with Sorrow, when we consider the tender Love, the great and innumerable Favours of that good God we have injured and provoked? Was ever Love so great as his, or Ingratitude so vile and monstrous as ours hath been? How kind, how compassionate, how bountiful a Father have we offended? O the Riches of that Forbearance and Long-suffering we have despised! O the height and depth of that Love we have abused! The Ox knows his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib; but ungrateful Wretches that we have been, we have not known, we have not considered as we ought, our innumerable Obligations to love and serve him, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. That we should thus requite the Lord, the Lord that made and bought us, that preserves and provides for us, of whom and from whom are all the good things we enjoy! What more than brutish stupidity are our Hearts depraved into, if they are not pierced through with Sorrow at the remembrance of such prodigious Ingratitude?

Secondly, Let us endeavour to afflict our Souls with Sorrow, for the Sins we have committed, by considering the bitter Sufferings of the Son of God by and for them. They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn and be in bitterness, saith the Prophet, Zech. 12. 10. And methinks we should always be thus affected when we look upon him, when we consider the Death and Passion of our Blessed Saviour, who did bear our Sins in his own Body on the Tree. How doleful were his Cries, how tormenting his Pains, how

shame-

shameful his Death, when *he carried our Sorrows*, and *our Iniquities were laid upon him*? Are we not pained at the very Heart to think, how insensible we have hitherto been of all these things; how we have renewed and increased his Sorrows, *Crucified him afresh*, and again and again *put him to an open shame*, by the hardness of our Hearts, and the scandal of our Lives? O my Soul! methinks we should every one of us be ready to say, How canst thou any longer endure the Thoughts of these things without shame and remorse, the Thoughts of thy Redeemer's Sufferings, and thy own Ingratitude? Did the Son of God cry out under the burden of thy Sins, and art thou easy and cheerful under them? Did he bleed and die for thee, and canst thou not weep for him, for the Sufferings thou hast brought upon him, and thy unkind behaviour towards him? O Blessed Jesus! that I should be thus insensible of thy intolerable Sufferings, and of thy infinite Love! that I should take Pleasure in that which brought thee to so much Sorrow! that I should cherish and embrace, and be so fond of that, by and for which thou wast wounded, and bruised, and put to all the Shame and Torments of the Cross! Oh! what Lamentations, what Tears, can be loud or bitter enough to bewail the shameful returns I have made, for that precious Life and Blood which were so freely given and shed for me?

Thirdly, Let us endeavour to *afflict our Souls* with Grief and Shame, by considering the filthy and abominable Nature of Sin, we have been so fond, and spent so

so much Time in the service of. There is not any thing in Toads or Vipers, so ugly, so loathsome, so destructive, as there is in Sin; *Every Creature of God is Good*, but Sin is the Devil's Off-spring, it is the Devil's Image and Work. And what can make us more deformed than that, which makes us resemble him; which the *God of Love* cannot but hate; which the *Father of Mercies* cannot but abhor, which *he cannot look upon*? It is the Transgression of a *Holy, Just, and good Law*; it is the corruption of our Nature, the *plague of our Hearts*, and the *filthiness of our Flesh and Spirit*; and do we not blush and loath our selves, to think how much we have set our Hearts upon it; that it was for this, for the sake of this, so base and filthy a thing, that we have been all this while abusing the Love of a most Merciful Father, and defeating the Design of our Compassionate Redeemer, *who gave himself for us to redeem us from Iniquity*?

Fourthly, Let us endeavour to *afflict our Souls* with Shame and Sorrow, by considering what means of Reformation, and what earnest Invitations from God we have sinned against. God hath given us marvellous Light, frequent Warnings, great and precious Promises, severe and dreadful Threatnings, and called upon us with the greatest Compassion and Importunity, that he might reclaim us from our Sins. And is it *not an evil and bitter thing*, O Sinner, that thou hast resisted all these, rendered them all of none effect; and, in spite of all the Methods of Heaven, still persisted in the dangerous, ungrate-

ungrateful, and filthy Ways of Sin? Try then how thou canst affect thy Heart with such Reflections as these upon thy sinful Doings. Had I been born amongst Heathens and Infidels, my Sin and Folly had been less; but all that I have done against my God, and Saviour, and my own Soul, I have done it in a bold and obstinate defiance of the *Glorious Gospel* of the Son of God; against the plainest Commands, and the strongest Motives to Obedience revealed in it. There I had *Life and Death*, Heaven and Hell, plainly *set before me*; but neither did the one *move me with Fear*, nor the other encourage me with Hope, to forsake my Sins, and return to my God. How often have my God and Saviour *besought me* by their *Ambassadors to be reconciled, to come unto them that I might have Life*? How have they *stretched out their Hands all the Day long*, and, with repeated Declarations and Instances of Mercy and Compassion, invited me into their Embraces? But alas! all this hath been done to a stubborn and gain-saying Wretch. O my foolish and unhappy Soul! that thou shouldst be thus obstinately bent upon Sin and Ruin! that thou shouldst be thus insensible of the most gracious Offers of Pardon and Mercy, and the most dreadful Denunciations of Wrath and Vengeance! that thou shouldst make so light of the most condescending Addresses of thy offended God, of the most compassionate Invitations of a dying Saviour! How *grievous* should the remembrance of these things be, how intolerable the Burden of them?

Fifthly,

Fifthly, Let us endeavour to *afflict and humble our Souls*, by considering how shamefully we have contradicted our Profession, and broken our most solemn Engagements, by the Sins we have committed. Is it possible we can think, without regret and shame, how we have dishonoured the Holy Name by which we are called, how contrary we have walked to the Precepts and Example of our Lord and Master, and how frequently we have broken our Vows and Resolutions of Amendment? Say to thy Soul then, and try how it will work upon it; Oh! what a shameful Sinner hast thou been? How wide a Difference is there betwixt thy Profession and thy Practice? How holy is thy Religion, how loose and prophane thy Life? How regardless hast thou been of the Vows of thy Baptism, of the Promises thou hast made in thy Distress, and of the most solemn Engagements thou hast entered into at the *Table of the Lord*? O my Soul! doth it not become thee bitterly to bewail such false and absurd dealing, such bold dissembling with thy Almighty and Gracious Lord, such presumptuous Violations of the *Covenant of thy God*?

Sixthly, Let us endeavour to *afflict our Souls* with Shame and Sorrow, by considering for what Trifles and Vanities we have committed and continued our Sins. When *Lysimachus* had sold himself and his Army for a Cup of cold Water, he thus lamented the foolish Bargain he had made;

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Plutarch.

O ye Gods, said he, for how short a Pleasure have I made my self of a King a Slave! So let the Sinner say within himself; For what perishing Enjoyments, for what poor and short Delights, have I forfeited the Favour and Love of God, and endangered the Life of my immortal Soul? For what Vanities have I wearied my self, in committing Iniquity? What Fruit have I of all those things for which I am now asham'd, and the End whereof is Death? That I should spend my Strength for that which is not Bread, and my Labour for that which profiteth not! That I should so wilfully expose my self to everlasting Death and Misery, for the Pleasures of Sin, which are but for a Season! That I should prefer the empty Profits of Iniquity, before the inestimable and incorruptible Reward of Righteousness! That I should so offend my Merciful Creator, dishonour my Gracious Redeemer, and grieve the Holy Spirit of God, so often and so wilfully as I have done, for things that perish in the using, for the most vain and momentary Enjoyments!

If we did but seriously consider these things, and press them hard upon our Minds, surely we could not be altogether stupid and insensible under them, we could not but feel some remorse for the Folly and ingratitude of our Sins, and humble our selves in the sight of God for them. I shall hope therefore, that we are in some measure thus affected with these Considerations have been laid before us, that we feel our Hearts afflicted with Shame and

Remorse,

Remorse, for our many and great Transgressions. This is that temper of Soul, which becomes the Fast that God hath chosen, and which we profess to appear before him with. O that we might all manifest to our selves and to the World, by our future Behaviour, that we have not dissembled with God this Day; but at length humbled our selves in sincerity before him, and indeed sorrowed after a Godly sort, both for our own, and the Nation's Sins!

I shall conclude my Discourse with shewing,

VI. What are the necessary Fruits of such a true godly Sorrow.

First, It must and will be followed with an actual forsaking the Sins we have mourned for, and lamented. If we are in earnest pricked to the Heart, with the remembrance of our former Sins, how can we consent to stick such Thorns into them again? Can we be easily persuaded to repeat those Practices, which have so deeply afflicted our Souls, and created us so much Shame and Sorrow? Can we willingly load our selves with those Burdens again, we have heartily sigh'd and groan'd under? If we do return to the service of the same Lusts, and persist in the same sinful Neglects we pretend to bewail, it is most certain we are not humbled unto this Day; we proclaim

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our selves Dissemblers with God, or such extravagant lovers of Sin, that, though it hath cost us a great deal of Grief and Pain, yet we cannot but still cherish and embrace it. And then what will all our Sorrow avail? It will aggravate the Guilt of our continued Disobedience, and we shall be but the greater Sinners, the greater Mourners we have been.

Secondly, Our Sorrow and Humiliation must, and if it be sincere, it will be followed, with vigorous and earnest Endeavours to restrain and reclaim Men from those evil Practices, which give us so much Grief and Vexation. To what purpose do we pretend to fast and mourn for the Sins of the Times, if we neglect to do our parts to make them better? It is very much in the Power of this Assembly, of the Magistrates and Officers of this City, to advance the Reformation of it, at least to prevent the bold and publick commission of many of those Sins, we are met together to *humble our selves for*. And what provoking Hypocrisy must it be, to pretend to *mourn and be afflicted* for those Maladies, we have power to cure, and will not? Is it possible you can lay to Heart, as you profess to do this Day, the Dishonour is done to our God and Religion, the Mischief is done to our Countrey and to the Souls of Men, by the open and insolent Vices of the Age, if any little, private, worldly Considerations can hold your Hands from a zealous and faithful execution of those Laws, which are

are made for the Terror and Punishment of such evil Doers? For God's sake then, for the sake of our most Holy Religion, for the sake of all that is dear to us here, for the sake of those Souls for whom Christ died, and for the discharge of our Oaths and Consciences, let us do all that is proper for us, in our several Places and Circumstances, at least to repress the Growth and Insolence of open Wickedness: Let the World see by our Zeal and Diligence, and Courage, in prosecuting this Design, that we do not sigh and mourn in appearance only for the Abominations that are done in the midst of us; that the sight of them is really so grievous and hateful to us, that we cannot forbear, as far as it is in our Power, to force them out of Publick View and Practice. *We must all shortly appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ*, to give an Account of our executing those Trusts God hath reposed in us. And do we not tremble to think of being found unfaithful, in the most weighty and important Matters of our Duty both to God and Man? But *I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak*. You have already given many Instances of your Zeal in *striving against Sin*, and the Effects of it are not altogether invisible. May its Flames increase and spread yet more and more, till it have burnt up all those Briars and Thorns, which prick and wound the Souls of all Righteous Men, and hedge up our Way to Peace and Settlement. Then would you have Praise of God, and Peace in your Minds, and the Applause of all good Men.

A Fast Sermon

Men, and the Generations to some would call you Blessed. Then you would have comfort in the Hour of Death, and boldness in the Day of Judgment, and an exceeding great Reward in Heaven, inestimable Treasures, unfolding Crowns, and Joy unspeakable for ever more. Amen.

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