

Hercules Collins

Sin and Temptation

If Adam who was created after God's own image {Gen.1:27} had pure inclinations as he came out of the hand of God, fell upon the first temptation, do we think to stand who have now so many passions in the soul, and a nature more prone to vice than virtue, when assaulted by temptation. {Rom.7:18.} No, it cannot be; only as we are kept by the mighty power of God through faith; {I Pet.1:5;} which grace we can as little act without the grace of God, as make a world. What would many give under a trouble of sin and guilt, if they could believingly lay hold of one Gospel promise, and how hard a thing hath some experienced this to be; yea impossible, till God hath delivered them by his Spirit! The same may be said of repentance when the soul hath sinned, how much do gracious souls desire repentance unto life, but experience teacheth us how hard it is to get a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Oh how often are we ready to cry out of the hardness of heart; from hence there is ground of humility, and the lying at the throne of grace continually for ourselves; as of ourselves, we cannot think a good thought, how can we then think that of ourselves without Divine Aid {II Cor.3:5,} we can stand in the swellings of Jordan; and as ever we would go through a storm of outward affliction, let us first keep down and under indwelling lusts and indwelling sin; for let not that man think to wear the cross of persecution, that doth not first wear the cross of mortification, and let not that soul doubt of wearing the cross of tribulation, that daily wears the cross of self denial and mortification; for he that hath power over his own spirit, is more than he which taketh a city. {PV.16:32} We should habituate ourselves to wear the public cross, by wearing it first more privately in our houses, in our families, in our shops and trades. For let not that person think he will ever be able to part with his houses, lands, liberties for the Lord Jesus Christ that cannot first part with a secret lust. But if granted grace enough to wear daily the cross of mortification of the old man; you need not fear but He that giveth grace to do the greater, will give grace to do the lesser; for I look upon the subduing of corruption a greater thing than enduring persecution; though neither can be done as it ought, without help from Heaven. – Therefore, study thy duty and depend upon the Promise, which will bring in suitable strength in every condition. If thou shelter thyself under the wings of God's attributes, and say with David, "Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort;" {Ps.71:3;} but especially then, when the heart is like overwhelmed within; then to cry with David, "lead me to the Rock that is higher than I;" {Ps.61:2.} that is, to the Eternal Rock of Ages, God himself; there to solace ourselves in his Divine Perfections, and that our present trials may no more, yet so much affect us, as they may terminate in God's glory and our everlasting comfort and joy. – Let us banish and expel the Achan out of our hearts and out of our churches {Jos.7:23-27} and show ourselves zealous against sin, exercising judgment, as Phinehas of old. {Ps.106:30} – O; pray hard to be fitted for Christ's Kingdom, and then that his Kingdom may come. Believe down thy corruptions, watch down thy sins, pray down thy iniquities, and the Lord send deliverance, and get Himself a glorious Name; for do you not long to see Christ exalted, and God admired in the displaying of his glorious attributes, power, wisdom, holiness, justice; not so much for the sake of our deliverance, as that God may get Himself glory; and we should be willing to be footstools, and Christ exalted upon his Throne. Hercules Collins {Voice from Prison, by Hercules Collins, prisoner at Newgate, 1684}

Considerations Concerning God's Eternal Decree

Some Considerations to quiet any under pressing trials, in order to their patient submitting to, and cheerful doing of the Divine will. First; consider, who can govern the world better

than He which made it? Who can dispose of His creatures better than He which gave them a being? Who can tell how to keep a house or nation in order, better than He which made them? Shall magistrates acquire the name of wise governors, and shall not the Governor of the world, who is essentially wise, be so accounted in His "working all things after the counsel of his own will?" Who is fitter to govern the world than He which made it? This was the very argument God stilled Job, withal; "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Hadst thou no hand in making the world, and wouldest thou a hand in governing it? Am I not able to govern and dispose of my creatures by the same wisdom I made them? Did I take no counsel of man in framing it, and shall I come to man for wisdom to govern it? Had I no counsel of man when I made my decree, and shall I come to man for wisdom to execute them," {Job 38-42,} when it's for my own glory to "work according to the counsel of my own will?" Secondly; consider, God takes pleasure in all His purposes and decrees; as God's counsels will stand, because immutable, so His counsels are called "His pleasure." "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." {Is.46:10} God's electing, redeeming, adopting, sanctifying, and saving the Ephesian saints, is called "the good pleasure of his will;" that wherein He took delight, or was well-pleasing to Him. {Eph.1:5} Shall God take pleasure in His decrees, and the execution of them, and shall we not be pleased with what God is pleased withal? Shall we cheerfully submit to His just decrees, and His will and pleasure of earthly governors, as unto Him whose Kingdom rules over all? All good men do delight in their own just decrees and purposes, and shall not God in His, who cannot go out of Himself or His own purposes to a greater Good, because He is the chief Good? If it do please God to make you His people, {I Sam.12:22,} and for your profit is pleased to correct you, {Heb.12:10,} shall we not say, "Blessed be God" for the one, as for the other. "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." {Job 1:21} Although it is too low for a Christian to say, I must submit; it is the glory of a believer to embrace the Divine will. Reprobates and devils must submit. If it be God's will to divest a poor sinner of the Devil, he must come out, whether he will, or not. Pharaoh indeed obeyed God's will in letting Israel go; but it was sore against his will. A believer will submit to the Divine will out of choice, and not force, for that is no more than devils and reprobates do; and herein Christ is our Pattern, though the human flesh did sometimes recoil and draw back under the sense of approaching judgment, as good men sometimes do; yet His judgment and will was for complying with the Divine will, though it was to die, {Lk.22:42,} not only from the eternal transaction between the Father and the Son in reference to man's salvation, but knowing it was best to choose the will of such a One who is not only righteous, holy and good, but will "work all things after the counsel of his own will." Thirdly; consider, Divine contentment ariseth alone from this principle: Am I content with this revolution, this alteration in the nation, in my family, my person, in my estate, because it is my Lord's will? So Paul could never be content in every condition, but from this principle, knowing not only that the condition he should be in was best for him, but that it was also according to the purpose of God's own will. "Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed." {Phil.4:11,12} Some heathens, called Stoics, labored after contentment in every condition, from the improvement of natural principles; but that was far from Divine contentment. God's content and satisfaction ariseth out of Himself and His decrees, knowing Himself perfect. Now when our state of contentment is in accordance with principles of godliness, it flows from this principle purely, and abstract from all other considerations, this is the Divine will, therefore I submit, and therefore am content, and can do no other but choose it, because it is the will of One who is perfect in Wisdom. Lord, if Thou shouldst refer any case to me, to make my own choice, I would refer it to Thee again, and say as the brethren of Berea and Thessalonica, concerning Paul whom they loved dearly, and shed so many tears for at parting, "The will of the Lord be done." {Acts 21:14} Fourthly, consider,

all in God, and all about God, serves to bring about His decrees and counsel. First, all in God, if I may so express it; all the attributes of God are concerned in the accomplishment of His eternal will; his Will decrees all, His Wisdom orders all and His Truth and Power accomplishes all. Mark, God's Power acts not beyond His Purpose; though in point of power, God could do many things more than He doth, and prevent many things that come to pass; yet in point of His decree, cannot. In point of power God could prevent those garments rolled in the blood of the nations of the world, and many family, relative, personal afflictions upon us, and upon the churches; yet in point of His decree cannot. The Power of God is active, one whilst to accomplish His will, and at another time ceases to act, to bring about the Divine purpose. If God withdraw His Power from a creature, he quickly ceases to move; and if God do send forth His Spirit, we are activated. {Ps.104:29,30} Some may say, I committed my near relation, husband, wife, or child, into God's hand, with a firm belief God could raise them up; and yet they died. Soul, thou didst well to believe in God's Power, but would you have God act His Power contrary to, or in the preventing His decrees? Remember God's Power acts not beyond His decrees, but all in God, either in a way of action or cessation from act, serves to bring about His own eternal will. Secondly; all about God serves to complete His Divine purposes and decrees. The holy saints and angels in glory all "do his commands, hearkening unto the voice of his word." {Ps.103:20-22} The spirit of the living creatures, and the wheels, went in Ezekiel's vision, wherever the Spirit of God went for to accomplish His will; so the four spirits or chariots in Zechariah's vision, {Zech.6:1-4,} which came out from between the mountains of brass, the immutable decrees of God, these are all employed in the four quarters of the world, to accomplish those eternal decrees; so that whatever providences they were employed about, whether frowning providences, toward the enemies of God and His church, signified by the red and black horses, or mixed providences signified by the grizzled and bay horses, some mercy and some affliction; or whether smiling providences upon the church, signified by the white horses in the third chariot, these all serve to accomplish the immutable decrees of God; and seeing none shall enter the Holy Place "but he which doth the will of the Father," {Mt.7:21,} let it be our daily cry, "Lord direct and help me to do thy will on earth, as it is done in Heaven; {Mt.6:10;} to suffer patiently, and do cheerfully the will of God upon earth, is a very great resemblance of the Heavenly life; for there is nothing in Heaven, but the Divine will done and delighted in. The angels which are in chains of darkness, their hearts did no sooner rise against the Divine will, but were cast out of Heaven into Hell; and all such as obey not the Gospel of Christ, can expect no less than flaming fire. {II Thes.1:8} Is it fit a king should entertain a company of rebels, which continually oppose His will? Let such remember, as God hath Power and Goodness enough to fix the godly and obedient in everlasting bliss, so He hath Power and Justice enough to fix the disobedient in complete misery. Remember, O disobedient soul! He does work all things according to the counsel of his own will. Will you not tremble at his presence, who appointed the sand for the bound of the sea? {Jer.5:22} "Who knows the power of his anger?" {Ps.90:11} Whoever hardeneth himself against God, and prospered? Who but one lunatic would oppose the joint commands of a general, whose army is an hundred thousand strong that can crush him as a moth? Oh! What Armies in Heaven and earth can God raise against an impenitent sinner, an army of angels, stars, lice, frogs, caterpillars, locusts; yea, God can arm thy own conscience against thee, which is more than all. Provoke not this Lord to jealousy. Are you greater than He, who can destroy soul and body in Hell? Rather labor to "take hold" of his strength, that ye make peace with him, and you shall make peace with Him. {Is.27:5} Finally, doth "God work all things after the counsel of his own will?" Then blessed is the nation, whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance, because the counsel of the Lord standeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations. {Ps.33:11,12} Hercules Collins {Mountains of Brass, or a Discourse upon the Decrees of God, 1696}