

An Examination of Selected Works

by Thomas Brooks

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## Introduction

This paper addresses three classic works by the celebrated puritan author, Thomas Brooks: Heaven on Earth, Holiness, the Only Way to Happiness, and Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices. Each of these books will be addressed with an aim toward interacting with the doctrines presented therein as well as presenting methods of applying these doctrines to modern life. Given that these three works span more than 1,150 pages in total, the intent of this writer is not to provide an in-depth analysis of everything written therein, rather, it is hoped that a summary presentation of the more salient points in each work will yet be beneficial to the reader.

## The Author

Thomas Brooks was born in 1608. Interestingly, although he is without a doubt one of the most beloved authors among readers of puritan literature, little is known about his birthplace. This is especially noteworthy given that Brooks is, in Packer's (1990) respected estimation, "one of the greatest of the later Puritans" (p. 179). As Grosart (1866) observed in the "Memoir" portion of his The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks:

It is not ascertained in what city, town, or village Thomas Brooks was born; not even what country... We are shut out from all insight into ancestry, parentage, and childhood, and 'boy' surroundings of our Worthy – whether he were of 'blue blood' descent, or of a 'godly' or worldly fatherhood and motherhood, whether 'in populous city pent,' or blown upon by the freshening influences of rural life... (pp. xxiii – xxiv)

What is known about Brooks (which establishes his most probable birthplace as England) is that he entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge (alma mater of New England puritans Thomas Hooker, John Cotton, and Thomas Shephard) in 1625. While it is not known whether he actually graduated from Emmanuel, Brooks was ordained to the preaching ministry in 1640 and was assigned as a chaplain in the British Navy where he served at sea for a number of years. This particular ministry is mentioned in his aptly titled "Sea Devotions" in which he wrote, "I have

been some years at sea and through grace I can say that I would not exchange my sea experiences for England's riches."

Following the English Civil War, Brooks served as the minister of the church of St. Thomas the Apostle in London from 1648 to 1651. Subsequent ministries included his serving as rector of St. Margaret's church (the first church to burn to the ground in the Great Fire of London in 1666) and, following the passage of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, a pastorate in the Congregational church of nearby Moorfields. As Beeke and Pederson (2006) note, "Unlike many ministers, [Brooks] stayed in London during the Great Plague of 1665, faithfully tending his flock" (p. 96).

Brooks' first wife, Martha Burgess, reportedly a very godly woman, died in 1676. According to Beeke and Pederson (2006), Brooks lovingly wrote of her, "She was always best when she was most with God in a corner. She has many a whole day been pouring out her soul before God for the nation, for Zion, and the great concerns of her own soul" (p. 97). Not long after Martha's death, Brooks married Patience Cartwright. This marriage, however, would be short-lived as Brooks would die in 1680 at 72 years old.

Although, as mentioned previously, there is little known about Brooks' early years, he did leave an enduring written legacy from which much practical theological truth can be gleaned. What follows is a mere sampling from a select few of Brooks' most influential works.

### **Heaven on Earth**

#### **Overview**

First published in 1654, Thomas Brooks' now-classic Heaven on Earth is, in this writer's opinion, an indispensable treatise on the subject of the believer's assurance of salvation. This 320 page work is divided into seven chapters. In chapter one, the author presents his case that

believers may indeed attain to a “well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness” (p. 3). This chapter is subdivided accordingly under various helpful headings such as “The basis for assurance,” “God has promised assurance to His people,” “Means to be used to obtain assurance,” and one of this writer’s favorites, “Assurance is not for Arminians.” In chapter two, Brooks provides a plethora of “Weighty Propositions Concerning Assurance.” These propositions are included under the following headings, “Seven reasons why God denies assurance for a time to some believers,” “Words used in Scripture to express assurance,” “Six reasons why some do not attain assurance,” “Assurance is a personal matter,” and “Nine special seasons when assurance is enjoyed.” In the third chapter, the author writes about the various “Hindrances and Impediments that Keep Poor Souls from Assurance; with the Means and Helps to Remove those Impediments and Hindrances.” The fourth chapter of this work is entitled “Motives to Provoke Christians to be Restless till They Have Obtained a Well-grounded Assurance of Their Eternal Happiness and Blessedness.” Brooks then provides eleven motives to that end. In chapter five (the longest chapter in the book spanning some 135 pages), the author turns his attention to “Ways and Means of Gaining a Well-grounded Assurance,” providing nine specific points concerning how this may be accomplished. This includes an in-depth outline pertaining to eight things which accompany salvation: knowledge, faith, repentance, obedience, love, prayer, perseverance, and hope. The author devotes chapter six of this work to promoting an understanding of “The Differences Between a True and a Counterfeit Assurance, Between Sound Assurance and Presumption.” In this chapter, Brooks provides seventeen very helpful “marks” of a well-grounded assurance. The final chapter, chapter seven, is entitled, “Answers to Several Special Questions About Assurance” in which the author provides nine methods to

strengthen and maintain assurance, six ways that those who may have lost their assurance “may be kept from fainting,” and five methods for the recovery of lost assurance.

### **The Believer’s Entitlement to Assurance**

The apostle John, writing in 1 Jn. 4:16, declares, “*we know and rely on the love God has for us*” (emphasis added). Commenting on this text, Matthew Henry (1997) observed:

Let heaven and earth stand amazed at his love. He sent his word to invite sinners to partake of this great salvation. Let them take the comfort of the happy change wrought in them, while they give him the glory. The love of God in Christ, in the hearts of Christians from the Spirit of adoption, is the great proof of conversion.

As tangible a proof as the love of God in Christ certainly is, and as comforting as this love should indeed be for those who are believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, it must be understood that there are yet countless individuals in the church at-large who have no assurance of their salvation. In this writer’s 25 plus years of pastoral ministry, he has observed that such a lack of assurance is often based on the idea that the Christian life is to be lived in constant fear; that the believer dare not be so cavalier or presumptuous as to declare that he knows, with a certainty, that he is heaven-bound. Such declarations, some insist, can lead to the sins of pride or complacency and must thus be avoided at all costs. In this writer’s opinion, however, the problem that many have is that they view their sanctification as a *grace plus works* proposition. In other words, it is reasoned that although God indeed supplies us with enough grace to save us initially, maintaining that salvation and subsequently achieving an assurance of the same means that we must constantly work for it. This, of course, results in the formulation of any number of legalistic “do’s and don’ts” that are designed to keep the believer on track; to make sure he doesn’t slip up and perhaps lose his salvation. In deflecting this erroneous notion, the reader

would do well to recall the words of the apostle Paul in **Colossians 2:16-23** where he addresses this very tendency writing (emphasis added):

...let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? **These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.**

This is not to suggest that believers bear no responsibility for living lives that consistently honor and glorify God. There are indeed certain measures; certain steps that every believer must take in order to ensure that he doesn't fall prey to temptation and sin. In fact, this is the essence of Paul's exhortation to the Philippians in Phil. 2:12 wherein he reminds his readers, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling." The critical thing to remember, however, is that one's employment of such measures (if truly genuine and sincere) will simply be evidence of the Holy Spirit's working in and through him. As Paul related a chapter earlier in Phil. 1:6, providing a necessary balance with the aforementioned passage, he was confident that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

Simply stated, Scripture is replete with teaching on the subject of assurance and the believer's entitlement to it. As Brooks (2008) observed, "The purpose of Scripture is to help

believers to obtain assurance. Secondly, it is the very scope and end of the Scriptures to help believers to a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness” (p. 16).

### **Controversy Surrounding Brooks’ Doctrine of Assurance**

Not surprisingly, the doctrine of the believer’s assurance, as elucidated by Brooks, is not without some controversy. What is surprising to this writer, however, is the source of one of these controversies. Taking Brooks in particular to task regarding this doctrine, Protestant Reformed pastor, David Engelsma (2009) made the following observation:

...[assurance], according to puritan theology, is a grace of salvation about which it is not true, that the one who seeks shall find. All believers seek assurance as a grace “earnestly desired and highly prized,” but only a “few,” indeed, a “very few,” ever find it. And the reason is that this grace of salvation, which rightly is “highly prized” as the “best and greatest mercy,” is obtained, *not by the free gift of the Spirit of Christ, but by the working and works of the believer*. “He that will have [assurance] must work, and sweat, and weep, and wait to obtain it...none can obtain [assurance] but such as labor for it...a man must win [assurance] before he can wear it.” *The Puritan doctrine of assurance is a form of salvation by works*. A doctrine of works is necessarily also a doctrine of doubt.

While not thoroughly familiar with Engelsma and his overall position on such things, this writer must humbly take exception to Engelsma’s remarks in this instance as they relate specifically to Brooks. Having read Brooks extensively over the years (and even more extensively in the preparation and completion of this writing assignment), while it may indeed be difficult to discern sometimes exactly where the line between works and grace is drawn, it is this writer’s opinion that, in the final analysis, Brooks did espouse a grace-centric salvation. Having said this, however, this writer is not ignorant of the fact that some among the later Puritans did in fact drift into error with regard to the Reformed understanding of justification by faith alone. Richard Baxter, for example, according to Beeke and Pederson (2006), “frequently leaned towards Arminian thinking...” and “...developed his own notion of universal redemption, which

offended Calvinists, but retained a form of personal election, which offended Arminians. He rejected reprobation [and] was greatly influenced by the Amyraldians and incorporated much of their thinking, including hypothetical universalism..." (p. 66). Of these glaring theological errors, Packer (1990) wrote:

It is sadly fitting that the Richard Baxter Church in Kidderminster today should be Unitarian. What we see in Baxter is an early stage in the decline, not simply of the doctrine of justification among the Puritans, but of the Puritan insight into the nature of Christianity as a whole. (p. 160)

For a more thorough examination of the doctrinal decline within Puritanism in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the writer would heartily recommend Packer's (1990) ninth chapter entitled, "The Doctrine of Justification in Development and Decline."

The charge that the Puritans, as a whole, promoted a works-based salvation is simply untenable given even a cursory reading of their writings on the subject. Unfortunately, in the opinion of some (and the writer is not suggesting that this is true in Engelsma's particular case), *any* suggestion that saving faith must be accompanied by evidence (i.e., works) is viewed as tantamount to a works-based salvation. In fact, if not exegeted carefully, a similar charge could be leveled at Scripture itself. God's Word is replete with examples wherein believers are instructed concerning the necessity of self-examination as a means of gaining assurance of their salvation. In 2 Peter 1:10, for example, believers are exhorted to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure." In 1 Cor. 11:28, the apostle Paul provides the following exhortation for one's preparation for partaking of the Lord's Supper, "...let a man examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Additionally, in 2 Cor. 13:5, he writes, "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove yourselves; do you not know yourselves how Christ is in you?" In his letter to the Hebrews, the author goes to great lengths to mark the

necessary balance between the believer's possession of assurance (to which he is indeed entitled) and how that assurance manifests itself experimentally. Note in the first place Heb. 10:19-20, where the author states unequivocally that, as believers, "we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh..." On this basis, he argues, believers have every right to "...draw near [to Christ] with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." And yet, despite these wonderful realities of the believer's possession of said assurance, there remain certain obligations which are incumbent upon him wherewith he will be able to prove to himself his entitlement to it. In light of this assurance, the author goes on to say (emphases added):

...let us *draw near* with a true heart in full assurance of faith... Let us *hold fast* to the confession of our faith *without wavering*... let us consider how to *stir up* one another to love and good works, *not neglecting* to meet together, as is the habit of some, but *encouraging* one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (vv. 22-25)

An even more sobering exhortation follows in vv. 26-27. Why is it important that the believer work to ensure that he is continually manifesting the fruits of his salvation so that he might have full assurance of the same? Because, "...if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries." The point of these passages is clearly to indicate that one who merely gives intellectual assent to the propositions of the gospel and exhibits none of the requisite fruit which should corroborate his claims to salvation, has no entitlement to an assurance of something he may not actually possess. In this writer's humble opinion, to allege that such a Scripturally verifiable assertion (which has simply been rehearsed by Brooks) is tantamount to a "doctrine of [salvation by] works" and therefore a "doctrine of

doubt” quite frankly reveals a disconcerting level of contextual misrepresentation as relates to what the majority of Puritans actually believed and taught on such matters. While it is beyond the scope and purpose of this paper to address this completely, as a necessary corrective, this writer offers only two of what are many sufficient proofs from Brooks’ own pen which quickly dispel the assertion that he advocated a works-based salvation of any kind. In the first place, in Brooks’ third point in chapter two of the book under consideration for this paper, appearing under the heading of “True believers are saved even though they lack assurance,” he states:

A man may be truly holy, and yet not have assurance that he shall be eternally happy...All may be well with him in the court of glory, when he would give a thousand worlds that all were but well in the court of conscience. (p. 40)

As for the second proof of Brooks’ thoroughly Scriptural view of salvation (i.e. salvation by grace vs. works), in his compelling treatment of Heb. 12:14, entitled “The Necessity, Excellency, Rarity, and Beauty of Holiness,” (1980) the author makes the following crystal clear defense of his beliefs concerning the true nature of salvation:

That thou hast no power to perform any supernatural act, as to believe or love God, or repent, or to change thine own heart, or to sanctify or make thyself holy, must be granted; that by nature thou art dead in trespasses and sins, and hast lost all thy spiritual senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, and feeling, can’t be denied, Eph. ii:1. It is certain that thy nature is so corrupted that thou canst not think a good thought, nor speak a good word, nor do a good work; thou art not sick, but dead, God-wards, and Christ-wards, and heaven-wards, and holiness-wards, etc...It was never known since the creation of the world that ever a dead man could make himself alive...An unsanctified person is not half-dead, as the Pelagians, Arminians, and Papists say; but as to spirituals he is stark dead, Col. ii. 13. (pp. 241-242)

In addition to the internal evidence within Brooks’ writings which supports his firm belief in salvation by grace alone, it must be noted that most Reformed theologians share the opinion of Brooks and others that, while good works are not necessary for justification (otherwise, they could not have believed in justification by faith alone), they are in fact necessary

as evidence of it. In other words, while good works are by no means required in terms of one's initial salvation (i.e., regeneration and conversion), no man will enter heaven, achieving final salvation, without having persevered in the faith, the evidence of which can be seen through the manifestation of the Spirit's work in him. As James wrote in chapter two of the epistle bearing his name, "Faith without works is dead." As one who has written extensively on the subject of puritan theology, Reverend Mark Jones (2014) commented on this issue, noting quite clearly that this is not something limited exclusively to puritan thought but it is in fact a belief shared by many in the Reformed camp:

I will say that of all the Reformed theologians I have surveyed on the matter of good works, the vast majority affirmed that they are necessary for final salvation. Francis Turretin was explicit on this question: good works are the means and way that believers possess salvation. Davenant wrote copiously and carefully on this precise question, even disagreeing with Bellarmine's interpretation of the Reformed tradition. William Ames similarly affirmed that good works are necessary to a believer, "by necessity of means without which we cannot attain the end."

Jones (2014) goes on to say about John Owen (*italics added*), "...for Owen, good works are indeed necessary for final salvation. *They are not meritorious*, but they are necessary."

### **Reasons for a Lack of Assurance**

Brooks' instruction concerning the believer's entitlement to assurance is then followed by an in-depth explanation concerning why some do not attain assurance. According to the author, there are six possible reasons: (1) It is possible that the believer has relapsed into "siding with the old man against the new, with the flesh against the spirit, with corruption against grace..." (p. 41). As any honest believer will confess, such relapses are a common malady indeed for those in whom the flesh yet wars with the spirit; (2) A man may lack assurance because he possesses a weak faith. As Brooks astutely observes, "...a little stock will bring in but a little profit; a little grace will bring in but a little peace; a little jewel yields but a little lustre..." and yet, he

maintains, “the weakest Christian is as much justified, as much pardoned, as much adopted, and as much united to Christ as the strongest” (p. 43); (3) A man may lack assurance due to the resurrection of old sins. The author qualifies this saying, “Upon the new risings of old sins, the soul begins to question all, and thus to expostulate the case: surely my state is not good, my parson is not sealed...” (p. 44). Does remaining sin not plague even the most sanctified from time to time? Again, if one is honest, it simply cannot be denied that such appearances of sins once thought to have been eradicated can indeed generate considerable concern for one’s eternal state; (4) A lack of assurance may also result from a man’s recognition that he routinely falls woefully short of that perfection which the Word requires. Surely, even the most seasoned of saints is able to echo the sentiments expressed by the apostle Paul in Rom. 7:14-25:

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

(5) A man may lack assurance because of the “smoke and clouds, those fears and doubts that corruption raises in the soul; so that the soul cannot see those excellent graces that otherwise might be discerned” (p. 45). In short, the smoke of corruption will cloud the beauty and clarity of God’s “precious graces in the soul”; (6) Finally, Brooks contends, a man may lack assurance because he fails to examine his own soul (p. 46). As Paul exhorted the Corinthians in 2 Cor.

13:5, “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” This writer would add that it is equally important, having duly examined oneself, to inquire of the Lord to do the same. As David prayed in Ps. 139:23-24, so believers in all ages would do well to pray: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.”

### **Hindrances and Impediments to Assurance**

In chapter three of this work, the author actually “doubles down,” as it were with regard to his insistence that a man can be saved and yet lack assurance. He does this by discussing at considerable length the various “hindrances and impediments that keep poor souls from assurance; with the means and helps to remove those impediments and hindrances” (p. 92).

While a thorough examination of this chapter is well beyond the scope of this particular offering, the ten impediments (with the briefest of commentary) are as follows: (1) “The despair of mercy hinders assurance” (p. 92). In short, there are many who believe themselves to be unreachable by the mercy of God and, in their despair, lack any semblance of assurance that it might actually be so. These, Brooks contends, need only look to the countless examples in Scripture wherein God has been pleased to save the most wretched among men; (2) “To dispute about things too high for our thoughts hinders assurance” (p. 103). Some men lack assurance because they believe that they must know everything there is to know about God, including the secret things. As the author himself is quick to point out, however, according to Deut. 29:29, these “secret things belong to the Lord.” Curiosity is one thing, however, it must be understood that the believer’s assurance is never based on the unreasonable expectation that he must know everything there is to know about God; (3) “The lack of self-examination may hinder assurance” (p. 105). The man who will

not “Examine [himself], whether [he] be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5) will find it difficult to maintain any sense of assurance. Those who profess Christ must always ask themselves the most probing questions such as, “Is my life manifesting the requisite fruit which substantiates my claims of salvation?” or “Do I feel the conflict between my flesh and spirit as I struggle to glorify God in all I think, say, and do?” or “Am I aware of the chastening hand of God when I sin?” Self-examination is vital as a means of securing and enjoying one’s sense of assurance; (4) “Mistaken views about God’s work of grace hinder assurance” (p. 107). Simply stated, the difference between the common grace of God and His special work of grace in salvation must be noted if true assurance is to be enjoyed by the believer; (5) “The grieving of the Holy Spirit by the believer hinders assurance” (p. 109). This particular point is one of the simplest of all. As Brooks relates, this lack of assurance comes from :

The grieving and vexing the Spirit of grace by not hearkening to His voice, by refusing His counsel, by stopping the ear, by throwing water upon that fire He kindles in their souls and by attributing that to the Spirit that is to be attributed to men’s own passions and distempers, and to the prince of darkness and his associates.

(6) “The judging of spiritual matters by mere feelings hinders assurance” (p. 109). To allow one’s feelings to be the judge of his assurance is, in Brooks’ opinion, tantamount to dethroning God and making a god out of one’s sense and feeling. What’s more, he argues, if one is intent on doing so, he “must resolve to live in fears, and lie down in tears” (p. 110); (7) “The indulging of laziness and carelessness hinders assurance” (p. 110). A lazy Christian, wrote Brooks, “will always lack four things, viz., comfort, content, confidence, and assurance” (p. 111). Indeed, it only stands to reason that one who does nothing to further kingdom and cause of Christ and cares nothing for doing the things which prove and promote his own sanctification to himself as well as to the watching world will likely not find a great deal of assurance that he is who he professes

to be. This makes a fitting segue into Brooks' next observation; (8) "The neglect of duties hinders assurance" (p. 112). The habitual neglect of the ordinances of the church (or, sacraments, as my Protestant brethren prefer) or the omission of other religious duties is a sure recipe for a corresponding lack of assurance; (9) "Love of the world hinders assurance" (p. 114). Simply put, one cannot be simultaneously devoted to Christ and enamored with the world. As Brooks writes, "Ah! What doth all the sweet delights and contents of this world, but make men lose the scent of heaven, but divert men from hunting after assurance, and from running after Christ, in the sweetness of his ointments" (p. 115); and, finally, (10) "The cherishing of secret sins hinders assurance" (p. 116). I trust that this final observation needs no further clarification.

### **Motives for Seeking Assurance**

Chapter four of this work is entitled, "Motives to provoke Christians to be restless till they have obtained a well-grounded assurance of their eternal happiness and blessedness." In this chapter, Brooks supplies nine such motives for the readers' consideration. Among the most impactful of these to this writer are the following four examples. In the first place, there are "many [who] have been lost who thought they were saved" (p. 126). Equally true in all generations, there have been and continue to be many individuals who, having made a profession of faith at some time in their lives, believe themselves to be saved despite the fact that their lives do not reflect any spiritual fruit which is able to substantiate their claims. It seems as though what many believe to be the fairly modern phenomena of "easy-believism" and "decisional regeneration" (philosophies in which mere assent to a set of theological facts, even though devoid of corroborating evidence commensurate with true conversion, is seen as sufficient for salvation) are not so modern after all. Because so many are taught that salvation is simply theirs for the asking, there are indeed many who think themselves to be saved who are actually lost.

And wherein lies the motivation in this for Christians? All who believe would do well to examine themselves to determine whether or not they be in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5).

The second particularly impactful motive brought to bear by the author is his insistence that “a well-grounded assurance is of great value to a believer” (p. 132). Indeed, can anything be greater than to know, as one’s hour of death approaches, that his eternal rest in Christ is assured? How many poor souls, lacking such assurance, have lived their final days on this earth plagued with fear and doubt because they would not let this wonderful Scriptural teaching permeate their hearts and minds? The author cites Augustine as an example of one availing himself of this particular motive:

How sweet was it to me of a sudden to be without those sweet vanities; and those things which I was afraid to lose, I let go with joy, for thou who art the true and only sweetness, didst cast out those from me, and instead of them didst enter in thyself, who art more delightful than all pleasure, and more clear than all light.” (p. 133)

This brings to mind a favorite hymn, the chorus of which says, “Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.” One of the greatest benefits of consistently looking to Christ and seeking to be filled with His word (Col. 3:16) is the resulting assurance that can be enjoyed by the believer.

The third motive presented as an impactful example to this writer involves the believer’s consideration that “assurance renders burdens light” (p. 135). Brooks appeals to the lives of the apostles as a fitting example of the power of this particular motive. Knowing that they “had a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, went through honour and dishonour, evil report and good report” (2 Cor. 5:1, 6:8-11). They often lived in the most austere conditions, languished in poverty and were confronted with many weaknesses, diseases, and deaths; they

were faced with burden after tremendous burden brought on by false teachers and false apostles. And yet, even as their circumstances seemed hopeless, “they cheerfully bore all burdens without them being a burden, through the power of a well-grounded assurance” (p. 135).

The fourth example offered from among the motives the author cites as beneficial to provoke believers to restlessness until they attain full assurance of their faith is this: “God urges Christians to get assurance” (p. 136). This, Brooks insists, is patently clear from Scripture. In 1 Pe. 1:10, for example, believers are exhorted to “give diligence to make [their] calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall.” In 2 Cor. 13:5, Paul exhorts believers saying, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.” The writer to the Hebrews voices a similar sentiment writing in Heb. 6:11, “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” Brooks sums these passages up candidly, writing:

Ah! You dull, doubting, drowsy Christians, you should take all these commands of God and press them with all the power and authority you can upon your hearts, to awaken them and provoke them to get assurance of your eternal well-being. (p. 136)

### **Advantages Accompanying Assurance**

Brooks then turns his attention to listing (with comment) eleven advantages which accompany assurance. Once again, while an exhaustive treatment of these is simply beyond the scope of this particular work, even listing them for the reader here should be sufficient to promote at least a rudimentary understanding of the author’s spirit and intent. These advantages of assurance are comprised of the following: (1) It produces heaven on earth; (2) It sweetens life’s changes; (3) It keeps the heart from desiring the world; (4) It assists communion with God; (5) It preserves from backsliding; (6) It produces holy boldness; (7) It prepares a man for death;

(8) It makes mercies taste like mercies; (9) It gives vigour in Christian service; (10) It leads to the soul's enjoyment of Christ; and (11) It will keep a Christian from being deceived by counterfeits. The author summarizes this chapter by writing:

I have been the longer upon these motives to provoke your soul to get a well-grounded assurance, because it is of an eternal concernment to you, and a work to which men's hearts are too backward. Though assurance carries a reward in its own bosom, yet few seek after it; though the pains of getting it be nothing to the profit that accompanies it, yet few will sweat to gain it. If the inducements laid down will not awaken and provoke you to be restless till you have got the "white stone" and "new name," till you have got assurance of your pardon in your bosoms, I know not what will. (p. 149)

### **Ways to Assurance**

The author continues this work by identifying the various ways and means of gaining a well-grounded assurance. These include the believer's being active in exercising grace, being obedient to the Lord's commands, following the instruction of the Holy Spirit, being faithful in one's attendance to the ordinances, being mindful of the scope of God's promises of mercy, distinguishing Christ's true followers from those who are not, seeking to grow continually in God's grace, seeking assurance even during the best of times, and determining whether or not one is in fact in possession of the things that accompany salvation (e.g., knowledge, faith, repentance, obedience, love, prayer, perseverance, and hope). Of course, the author goes to great lengths in defining and qualifying each of these ways by which believers are to gain assurance of their salvation but, once again, a full treatment of these matters lies well outside the purpose of this paper. The writer would, however, heartily comment this wonderful work in its entirety to the reader who desires to know more about the subject at hand.

## Holiness, the Only Way to Happiness

### Overview

In this straightforward and intensely practical work, Brooks examines in considerable detail, the Biblical doctrine of holiness. The book is divided into four main headings wherein the author addresses: (1) the definition of holiness; (2) the truth of the proposition that “without holiness, no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14); (3) the reasons why there can be no happiness without holiness; and (4) practical application. As proof of the intense practicality of this work, the reader will note that under this particular heading alone, Brooks cites sixteen marks of a holy person, fifteen motives, sixteen counsels, seven objections, six evidences of the reality and power of holiness, sixteen provocations to increased holiness, twelve evidences of higher degrees of holiness, twelve consolations to all who have real holiness, and seven positions concerning holiness. Given this undeniably exhaustive treatment of the subject, the reader will no doubt understand and appreciate that, given this assignment’s limitations, only a representative portion of the material presented in this book will be considered at this time.

### **Holiness the Way to True Happiness**

One of the most interesting and compelling portions of this work is Brooks’ Epistle Dedicatory in which his stated aim is to address all sorts and ranks of people. To this end, he begins with a brief discourse on man’s common desire for happiness, something which, in his estimation, is “too glorious a thing to be found in anything below real holiness” (p. 3). Despite the fact that the attainment of happiness is a topic so steeped in subjectivity (i.e., everyone has his own idea concerning the source of true happiness), Brooks insists that “a desire for happiness is planted in all men by the constitution of nature [and is] so engraved [in man’s nature] that even the fall of Adam, as great as it was, has not blotted it out” (p. 3). Man’s innate desire for

happiness, the author maintains, is “left in man for a stock to graft holiness on” (p. 3). The main theme thus established on this premise is that there is only one way to true happiness; only one way by which fallen man can be restored to his once happy estate: holiness. In other words, man was created in a perfect state of holiness, lost it in the fall, and has longed ever since, deep within his soul, to regain it. This, Brooks insists, is characteristic of every man, thus supporting his dedication of this work to “all sorts and ranks of people” (p. 3). Since, in his own words, “God intends to save some of all sorts, ranks, and degrees,” he felt that he must address the same.

The author goes on to note that “where God is resolved to save, where he is resolved to make happy, there he is resolved to make holy” (p. 5). As previously mentioned, given the current climate of “easy-believism” and “decisional regeneration” today, in the minds of many of those professing Christ, salvation is viewed as little more than a divine insurance policy against the fires of hell. Thus, for many, any suggestion that salvation must be accompanied by the fruits of sanctification is interpreted as a form of salvation by works. Unfortunately (but not surprisingly) this has produced many professing believers who are convinced of their salvation even though their lives are devoid of any evidence in the affirmative. The so-called “carnal Christian” heresy is one example of how far afield from Scripture one can actually find themselves in the process of justifying his evidenceless Christianity.

Brooks goes to considerable length in this work to establish the Scriptural teaching that genuine saving faith will, of necessity, be accompanied by corroborating evidence. And what particular evidence will predominate in the true Christian? Holiness. Those who have truly been saved by God’s grace and are being sanctified will see a corresponding increase in practical holiness. Granted, as will be discussed later in this work, the degree or level of practical holiness on display at any given time will indeed vary from person to person as God continues to mold

and shape them into the image of Christ. As such it will, in turn, be a tremendous source of happiness. More importantly, the author insists, is the fact that “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

### **What is This Holiness?**

In the ensuing pages, the author asks and answers the question, “What is this holiness?” He begins by stipulating that there is a “six-fold holiness” (p. 38) addressed in Scripture. In the first place, he observes, there is a legal holiness. A legal holiness consists in a “perfect conformity in heart and life to the whole revealed will of God” (p. 38). This was the holiness exhibited by Adam before the fall, yes, but is this the holiness man must regain if he is to see the Lord? Thankfully, it is not. As the author notes, if this was the case, “then woe to every man who ever was born; for then no man would ever see the Lord” (p. 38).

Secondly, there is an imaginary, conceited, or feigned holiness. As Prov. 30:12 indicates, “There is a generation which is pure in their own eyes and yet is not washed from their filthiness.” Simply stated, this alleged holiness does not classify as true holiness and, therefore, cannot supply true happiness. The Pharisees saw themselves as the holiest of men and yet Jesus routinely reminded them that theirs was only an imaginary holiness. For example, in Matt. 23:27, Jesus says to them:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

Although there are no Pharisees proper in the church at-large today, in this writer’s opinion, much of what passes for holiness in many professing believers can also be classified as feigned

holiness. Of course God alone is able to distinguish between those who exhibit genuine versus feigned holiness, however, all believers would do well to understand that feigned holiness will not and cannot lead to happiness.

The third kind of holiness addressed by Brooks, which is very similar to feigned holiness, is “outward, external, visible holiness, which includes men’s freedom from scandalous vices, and their ordinary performance of religious duties” (p. 41). While outward holiness is certainly both desirable and commendable (not to mention commanded in the Word of God), it is possible that it, too, may be insufficient to effect true happiness. As Brooks notes:

Now it is certain, without this outward visible holiness there is no happiness...Yet this must be granted – that a man may be visibly holy – who is not inwardly holy (2 Tim. 2:15). A man may be outwardly holy who is not throughout holy. A man may have an outward dress of holiness upon him who has not the Spirit and vitals of holiness in him. (p. 42)

In what way does this kind of holiness differ from the feigned holiness previously considered? It seems to this writer that the difference lies in one’s motive and intent. Those who exhibit a feigned holiness may actually believe themselves to be truly holy. Conversely, those who exhibit this kind of outward or external holiness do so with the intention of deceiving others. As the author continues, “...those are the worst of vices which are covered over with the show of virtue; so they are the worst of sinners, who cover over their inward filthiness with the disguises of outward holiness” (p. 42).]

The fourth type of holiness addressed by the author is relative holiness. This, he maintains, is a “special relation which people or things have unto God” (p. 43). It includes two things: (1) a separation of people or things from common use, and (2) it involves a dedication of these things to a holy use. The former distinction signifies God’s setting apart certain people (e.g., the priesthood, believers themselves) and things (e.g., the temple furnishings and

accessories, the elements of the Lord's Supper) and removing them from their previous spheres of common use. The latter distinction involves the taking of these things and dedicating them to a holy use.

The fifth type of holiness addressed by Brooks is an "imputative" holiness (p. 45). This of course is a reference to Christ's holiness which is imputed to all who believe. It must be understood that this does not refer to the holiness which is Christ's alone by virtue of His deity (which cannot be shared with any man). Instead, as the name suggests, this "mediatory" (p. 45) holiness is that which has been credited or reckoned to the believer on the basis of Christ's perfect holiness. It is on the basis of this holiness that Paul writes in Eph. 5:27 of Christ's one day presenting "the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." In Col. 2:10, the apostle refers to this holiness as that which will render all believers "complete in Him."

In the sixth place, Brooks addresses inherent, internal, qualitative holiness. This, he maintains, lies in two things: (1) in the infusing of holy principles, divine qualities, or supernatural graces into the soul (Gal. 5:22-23) and (2) in a holy use and exercise of those supernatural graces in a way of holy walking.

### **The Proposition: No Holiness, No Happiness**

The author then goes on to prove the truth of the proposition that without holiness, men can never see God and be eternally happy. He does this by introducing several substantiating points. First, he contends, God has quite plainly revealed in His word that the doors of heaven are bolted and barred against all unholy ones. Using 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 1 Pe. 1:4, and Gal. 5:19-21, Brooks makes a compelling case which indeed validates the aforementioned proposition. In short, the wicked will not gain heaven.

### Positional versus Practical Holiness

At this point, one must make the critical distinction between positional and practical holiness. Positionally speaking, every man, woman, and child who has ever been given the gift of faith in salvation has been set apart or declared holy by God. This is best exemplified in passages such as **Heb. 10:10-14** (italics added):

And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For *by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

That all who have been saved are *positionally* holy (i.e., set apart) is true regardless of the degree of one's *practical* sanctification, which will indeed vary from person to person. This variation serves as tangible proof that although one may be positionally holy, perfect practical or experiential holiness is simply not possible this side of heaven. Indeed, if such practical holiness were actually achievable by those who yet reside in bodies of corruption (1 Cor. 15:42, 52), this would require the negation of numerous Scriptures to the contrary. The Word of God is simply replete with example after example of exhortations for believers to continue striving for holiness. Consider what is perhaps the most fundamental of these exhortations, 1 Pe. 1:14-16:

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Also, as Paul writes in 2 Cor. 7:1, "Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of a reverence for God." 1 Thess. 4:7 is also quite helpful in this regard: "For God did not call us to

be impure, but to live a holy life.” Even Brooks himself acknowledges that he is not referring to sinless perfection. He writes:

A man who is truly holy can never be holy enough; he sets no bounds or limits to his holiness; the perfection of holiness is the mark that he has in his eye; he hears, and prays, and mourns, and studies, and strives that he may come up to the highest pitch of holiness. (p. 107)

So says the apostle Paul in Phil. 3:12-14 (italics added):

Not that I have already obtained it *or have already become perfect*, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

True positional holiness will manifest itself in the form of a relentless pursuit of increased practical holiness as the believer “prays for it” (p. 108), “believes for it” (p. 108), and “hopes for it” (p. 108).

Of course, one of the most convincing evidences of true holiness in the believer will be his “holy hatred, detestation, and indignation against all ungodliness and wickedness” (p. 109). This is the attitude of the Psalmist in Ps. 119 who wrote, “I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word” (v. 101), “I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path” (v. 104), and “...because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path” (v. 128). According to the author, this holy hatred for anything contrary to God’s will results in man’s making every possible effort to eradicate sin in his life. The man intent on the pursuit of true holiness, for example, will “rise against secret sins” (p. 111). In this writer’s humble opinion, this is one of the most important elements in the pursuit of personal holiness, especially in light of the aforementioned feigned and/or external holiness that so many seem content to display. How soon man seems to forget that his so-called “secret” sins are,

before an omniscient and omnipresent God, as visible as if they were committed in the public square. As recorded in 1 Sam. 16:7, “The Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” This unnerving reality should be at the forefront of the mind of one who is seeking true personal holiness as he ought.

Additionally, his heart will “rise against the least sins” (p. 111). As Brooks relates, this can only occur when man recognizes that “God looks and expects that the least sins should be shunned and avoided” (p. 114). Why? Because the man pursuing true holiness “knows that the indulging of the least sin is ground sufficient for any man to question his integrity and sincerity towards God” (p. 114). Quite often, even the most seasoned of believers can be guilty of ranking or classifying certain sins in an effort to mitigate or minimize their significance. The truth, however, is that even those sins considered to be the least offensive are an affront to a thrice-holy God and are indeed sufficient to cause one to question his sincerity towards God. The writer is reminded of Jesus’ question in Lk. 6:46, a very simple question that all who continue in sin would do well to answer: “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

Finally, the author writes, “a holy heart knows that the least of sin cost Christ his dearest blood” (p. 115). If the sincere believer is looking for motivation that will enable him to determine the status of his own heart with regard to even the least of his sins, here it is. It must not be overlooked that man’s sin, whether considered to be big or small, significant or insignificant, cost Christ His blood on the cross. For the true believer, remembering this one poignant fact can be one of the greatest deterrents against future sin. The words of Stott (1968) are both relevant and helpful in this regard:

Every time we look at the cross Christ seems to say to us, 'I am here because of you. It is your sin I am bearing, your curse I am suffering, your debt I am paying, your death I am dying.' Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have inflated views of ourselves, especially in self-righteousness, until we have visited a

place called Calvary. It is there, at the foot of the cross, that we shrink to our true size.  
(p. 179)

### **Motives and Counsels to Holiness**

To assist the reader in his pursuit of holiness, Brooks next turns his focus on providing more than one hundred pages of motives intended to “stir and provoke their hearts to look and labor after real holiness” (p. 150) and counsels through which he proposes the means “for the obtaining of holiness” (p. 150). This is followed by seven common objections to the doctrines presented in the book and a total of forty-seven responses to those objections.

In the opinion of this writer, among the most noteworthy of Brooks’ fifteen motives for holiness (and perhaps the most controversial as well if not properly understood) is his teaching that “there is a possibility of obtaining holiness” (p. 153). Holiness, he maintains, is one of God’s communicable attributes and, as such, believers should be encouraged to seek after it:

...sinners, remember this, it is possible that those proud hearts of your may be humbled; it is possible that those hard hearts of yours may be softened; it is possible that those unclean hearts of yours may be sanctified; it is possible that those blind minds of yours may be enlightened; it is possible that those stubborn wills of yours may be tamed; it is possible that those disordered affections of yours may be regulated; it is possible that those drowsy and defiled consciences of yours may be awakened and purged; it is possible that those vile and polluted natures of yours may be changed and purified. (p. 153)

The sad reality, at least in this writer’s considerable experience in counseling others, is that holiness is seen as either unattainable or, in some extreme cases where the easy-believism heresy has taken root, unnecessary. While reserving further comment on the latter, in the case of the former, holiness is often viewed as unattainable simply because it is often misunderstood as tantamount to sinless perfection. Reasonably so, many believers who are faced with such a daunting standard shrink back considering even their best efforts at achieving holiness to be an exercise in futility. As stated previously, however, this is simply neither what the author nor the

Word of God itself advocates. A concise but thorough treatment of Brooks' position in this regard can be found in the section of this work entitled, "Positions concerning holiness." In his second of seven related positions, the author writes that "...holiness rises by degrees; it rises gradually in the souls of the saints" (p. 429):

Look, as the body of a man grows and increases by degrees in stature and strength, till it comes to its full growth and perfection (Eph. 4:16); so grace and holiness will grow and increase by degrees, till grace be turned into glory... Though the ocean be full, yet the bottle cannot be filled but by degrees. We are poor narrow-mouthed bottles, and therefore what we take in of holiness must be by degrees. Our incapacity is so great, that at present we are noways able to take in a fulness of holiness; and therefore God drops in now a drop and then a drop, now a little and then a little, as we are able to take it in... When our holiness is perfect, our happiness shall be perfect; and if this were attainable on earth, there would be but little reason for men to long to be in heaven. (p. 429).

There is also further evidence that the author is not promoting sinless perfection in the statement immediately following this wherein he writes that "...there is a great deal of preciousness in the least degree of holiness" (p. 429), signifying that, unlike perfection (which, by definition has no variation), holiness will indeed vary in degrees. He also indicates that "all saints are not alike holy" (p. 431) which further proves the point that he is not referring to sinless perfection. This is also clearly indicated in his observation that Christians "may be more eminently holy at one time than at another" (p. 432). The pursuit of holiness is not something that should be avoided simply because one perceives it as unattainable. To the contrary, given that God commands His elect to be holy, such a pursuit should be a priority for one who seeks to honor and glorify Him. Though this writer, for various reasons (which he would be happy to share in another place and time), would not heartily recommend everything he has written, Tozer (1961) nevertheless provides an excellent balance between the desire to be holy on the one hand and the daunting nature of the task on the other, writing:

To Israel first and later to His Church God spoke, saying, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” He did not say, “Be ye as holy as I am holy,” for that would be to demand of us absolute holiness, something that belongs to God alone. Before the uncreated fire of God’s holiness angels veil their faces. Yea, the heavens are not clean, and the stars are not pure in His sight. No honest man can say, “I am holy,” but neither is any honest man willing to ignore the solemn words of the inspired writer, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Caught in this dilemma, what are we Christians to do? We must, like Moses, cover ourselves with faith and humility while we steal a quick look at the God whom no man can see and live. The broken and contrite heart He will not despise. We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ as Moses hid himself in the cleft of the rock while the glory of God passed by. We must take refuge from God in God. Above all we must believe that God sees us perfect in His Son while He disciplines and chastens and purges us that we may be partakers of His holiness. (pp. 113-114)

### **Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices**

#### **Overview**

This work is based on 2 Cor. 2:11, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Brooks uses this passage as a fitting backdrop to the study that ensues concerning how believers are tempted or enticed by Satan and what remedial efforts might be undertaken to avoid his devices.

The author begins his treatment of this subject by citing Eph. 6:11 as his preliminary proof text indicating that Satan does in fact use various devices or “wiles” to entrap man. The Greek word translated as “wiles” (μεθοδίαζ), he insists, is notably emphatic as it indicates much concerning Satan’s typical *modus operandi*. For example, he is most effective at ambushing or catching man unawares through deception and scheming. As Brooks (2010) states, Satan hurts more “in his sheep’s skin than by roaring like a lion” (p. 13). The author also appeals to 2 Tim. 2:26 as further proof of Satan’s tactics wherein Paul writes: “...that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” The phrase “taken captive,” translated from a singular Greek word (ἐξωγορημένοι), signifies one’s being taken

alive, much as the hunter's prey is taken in snares or traps or as a man is taken captive as a prisoner of war. As the author elaborates, "Satan has snares for the wise and snares for the simple; snares for hypocrites, and snares for the upright..." (p. 13).

### **Satan's Devices**

Brooks then commences to list each of Satan's devices under five separate headings as well as to propose remedies for each. Given the limited scope of this paper, the writer will give a summary treatment of what he considers to be the more salient of these 37 devices, their proposed remedies, as well as occasional personal insight.

### **Satan's Devices to Draw the Soul to Sin**

In this category, Brooks brings to light twelve particular devices. The first of these (and one of Satan's most effective devices) is said to lie in his ability to "present the bait and hide the hook" (p. 15). In other words, he is quite adept at presenting the pleasures associated with sin while obscuring the penalty thereof. This was certainly evident in the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Eve was told, "you shall surely not die – for God does know that in the day you eat [of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil], then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." It is true that Adam and Eve would certainly know good and evil but not in the way Satan had implied. Instead of becoming as gods, they instead became the objects of His judgment. In this writer's opinion, this is one of Satan's most clever (and oft-used) tactics. Sin is indeed most often presented in the most attractive ways; it appeals to man's fallen flesh and promises, not the judgment of God, but fulfillment and satisfaction. One would certainly do well to heed the immortal wisdom of Solomon in Prov. 16:25, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death." And what does Brooks

propose as a remedy for this particular device? He actually suggests four ways by which this device may be avoided.

First, the believer must keep his distance from the bait that Satan so attractively offers. As the apostle Paul exhorts in Rom. 12:9, believers are to “Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.” Commenting further, Brooks writes:

The best course to prevent falling into the pit is to keep at the greatest distance from it; he who will be so bold as to attempt to dance upon the brink of the pit, may find by woeful experience that is a righteous thing with God that he should fall into the pit. (p. 16).

The second remedy suggested by the author to be employed against Satan’s “presenting the bait and hiding the hook” is to “consider that sin is but a bitter sweet” (p. 16). In other words, what may seem sweet will soon be revealed to be the poison is truly is.

Thirdly, Brooks points out that one must solemnly consider that sin will “usher in the greatest and saddest losses that can be upon our souls” (p. 17). And what does one lose in sin? The sense of divine favor, the joy one has in Christ, the peace which passes understanding, the divine influences upon the soul which refresh, quicken, raise, strengthen, and gladden the believer, and the loss of many outward mercies which the soul may have otherwise enjoyed.

The fourth remedy proposed by the author regarding this particular device of Satan is for the believer to seriously consider that sin is of a very deceitful and bewitching nature. As Brooks observes, “Sin gives Satan a power over us, and an advantage to accuse us and to lay claim to us, as those who wear his badge” (p. 18).

The second of Satan’s many devices brought to bear under this heading is his practice of “painting sin with virtue’s colors” (p. 18). In other words, instead of showing sin for what it truly is, Satan often paints it as virtue. By way of personal observation, one would be hard-pressed to deny that, although this was most certainly a problem during the author’s own day, this is also

one of Satan's most effective ploys in today's postmodern world of moral relativism and subjectivity. Things that were once viewed as sinful are now viewed by many as simply "alternative life choices" which, under a system in which there are no moral absolutes and no remaining bases upon which such absolutes might be formed, are perfectly acceptable. It must be further understood that Satan has not merely been successful in luring in an unfortunate few with this tactic, he has, it seems, duped society at large. Francis Schaeffer (1982), speaking at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, spoke with astounding prescience when he made the following observation in this regard:

Now this is the real reason for the breakdown in morals in our country. It's the real reason for the breakdown in values in our country, and it is the reason that our Supreme Court now functions so thoroughly upon the fact of arbitrary law. They have no basis for law that is fixed, therefore, like the young person who decides to live hedonistically upon their own chosen arbitrary values, society is now doing the same thing legally. Certain few people come together and decide what they arbitrarily believe is for the good of society at the given moment, and that becomes law...It should be noticed that this new dominant world view is a view which is exactly opposite from that of the founding fathers of this country. Now, not all the founding fathers were individually, personally, Christians. That certainly is true. But, nevertheless, they founded the country on the base that there is a God who is the Creator who gave the inalienable rights...There is no possible way to heal the relativistic thinking of our own day, if indeed all there is a universe out there that is silent about any values. None, whatsoever! It is not possible. It is a loss of values and it is a loss of freedom which we may be sure will continually grow. (p 1.)

As Brooks explains:

Satan knows that if he would present sin in its own nature and dress, the soul would rather fly from it than yield to it; and therefore he presents it unto us, not in its own proper colors – but painted and gilded over with the nature and show of virtue, that we may the more easily be overcome by it, and take the more pleasure in committing of it. (p. 18)

Even more recently, the reader may be aware of a prayer prayed by Minister Joe Wright at the opening session of the Kansas Senate in 1996 in which he touched upon this very subject. He prayed, in part:

[Father,] we know Your Word says, "Woe to those who call evil good," but that's exactly what we have done. We have lost our Spiritual equilibrium and inverted our values. We confess that; we have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism; We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism; We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle; We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery; We have neglected the needy and called it self preservation; We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare; We have killed our unborn and called it choice; We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable; We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem; We have abused power and called it political savvy; We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition; We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression; We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

And what remedies does Brooks offer for this most insidious of Satan's devices? Once again, there are four.

First, he urges the believer to consider the fact that "sin is never a whit the less filthy, vile, and abominable by its being colored and painted with virtue's colors" (p. 18).

Secondly, the author points out that the believer would do well to understand that the more sin is painted with the colors of virtue the more dangerous it is. In other words, the greater pains that Satan resorts to in order to make sin appear less serious, the more serious and damaging that sin will actually be.

Thirdly, Brooks insists that believers should begin to look at sin in the present the same way as it will be seen on the final day. As he pleadingly indicates:

Ah, souls! When you shall lie upon a dying bed, and stand before a judgment seat, sin shall be unmasked, and its dress and robes shall then be taken off, and then it shall appear more vile, filthy, and terrible than hell itself. (p. 19)

The fourth remedy offered by the author against this device is for the believer to seriously consider the sobering fact that even the “prettiest” of sins so painted by Satan “cost the best blood, the noblest blood, the life-blood, the heart-blood of the Lord Jesus” (p. 20). Indeed, the believer who makes it a point to consider all sins in light of their ultimate cost, not merely to oneself, but to the Lord who suffered and died for those sins, should be far less prone to commit them.

The third of Satan’s devices offered for the reader’s consideration is his extenuating and lessening of sin. Satan routinely seeks to convince the child of God that the particular sins in which he is engaged are “not that bad” or, at the very least, “not as bad as others which could be committed.” As this writer must confess, mitigating sin sometimes remains a problem even in those who, having followed Christ for many decades, should know better.

And what remedies does Brooks offer for this common malady? In the first place, he challenges his readers to consider that those sins which are seemingly the smallest or least significant often bring about the greatest wrath of God. Sins like the eating of “an apple,” “gathering a few sticks on the Sabbath,” and “touching the ark,” (p. 21) although seemingly insignificant to those committing them, brought down the wrath of God nonetheless. In the author’s words, “...those sins which you call little, are such as will cause God to rain hell out of heaven upon sinners as he did upon the Sodomites” (p. 21).

The second remedy involves the consideration that the small “lesser” sins will invariably lead to the committing of greater sins. It must be understood that the author is not in any way minimizing so-called lesser sins, but is merely pointing out that to avoid more significant sin by opting to commit what seems to be lesser sin is to sin anyway.

In his third proposed remedy against this device, Brooks urges his readers to consider the folly of yielding to little sins. As he observes, "...oftentimes there is the greatest unkindness showed to God's glorious majesty, in the acting of the least folly, and therefore you will not displease your best and greatest friend by yielding to his greatest enemy" (p. 23).

The fourth remedy, according to the author, is to seriously consider that the smallest sins carry with them the greatest danger.

### **Satan's Devices to Keep Souls from Holy Duties**

Not too many years ago, there were actually laws in the majority of states that forbade certain secular activities on Sunday (e.g., working, the selling of alcohol, travel, sporting events, etc.). These restrictions are commonly referred to as "blue laws." Stemming from a principle dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when many laws of the land were based on puritan standards of holiness and piety, it was believed that through these laws, morality could be legislated in such a way as to stimulate greater attention to holy duties such as church attendance, fellowship, and the like. In many states, variations of these "blue laws" still exist, although in a greatly diminished form. In this writer's state of residence (Texas), for example, one still cannot purchase liquor on Sunday and most automobile dealerships are also closed (under current Texas law, dealerships must remain closed on either Saturday or Sunday; the dealer makes the determination on which day to close, most of whom elect to close on Sunday). Are these "blue laws" and other attempts at legislating morality effective? Is it possible that all man needs in order to devote himself more consistently to holy duties is a longer, more carefully considered list of do's and don'ts? Not according to the apostle Paul who reasoned thusly in Col. 2:20-23:

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion

and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

While certainly noble in their intent, even under the most strictly enforced legislation (whether of the “blue” variety or not) Satan is, and has always been, quite successful at keeping souls from holy duties. And how does he do this? By enticing man to be so in love with the present world and all it has to offer in the here and now that he has no interest in cultivating a true love and desire for the things of eternity. As Brooks laments:

Ah! How many professors in these days have for a time followed hard after God, Christ, and ordinances; until the devil has set before them the world in all its beauty and finery, which has so bewitched their souls that they have grown to have low thoughts of holy things, and then to be cold in their affections to holy things, and then to slight them, and at last, with the young man in the gospel, to turn their backs upon them...The honors, splendor, and all the glory of this world, are but sweet poisons, which will much endanger us, if they do not eternally destroy us. Ah! The multitude of souls that have glutted on these sweet baits and died forever! (p. 70)

The author proposes eight remedies for this particular device. These include: (1) dwelling on the impotency and weakness of the things here below; (2) considering the vanity of all earthly things; (3) viewing all things on earth as uncertain and mutable; (4) to consider that the greatest things the world has to offer are, by and large, hurtful and dangerous; (5) to contemplate that all the felicity of this world is mixed. Light is mixed with darkness, joy with sorrow, pleasure with pain, honor with dishonor, and riches with poverty; (6) to better acquaint ourselves of more blessed and glorious things. As Brooks notes, “That which raised up their spirits (Heb. 10 and 11) to trample upon all the beauty, finery, and glory of the world, was the acquaintance with, ‘and assurance of better and more durable things’” (p. 75); (7) to seriously consider that true happiness “is too big and too glorious a thing to be found in anything below that glorious God – who is a Christian’s *summum bonum* – his chief good” (p. 76); and (8) to solemnly consider the

dignity of the soul. “Oh,” the author writes, “the soul of man is [of] more worth than a thousand worlds!” (p. 77).

### **Satan’s Devices to Keep Saints in Sad Condition**

In addition to drawing the soul of man into sin and keeping him from holy duties, Satan is also able to “keep saints in [a] sad, doubting, questioning, and uncomfortable condition” (p.

103). As Brooks observes:

Though Satan can never rob a believer of his crown, yet such is his malice and envy, that he will leave no stone unturned, no means unattempted, to rob them of their comfort and peace – to make their life a burden and a hell unto them, to cause them to spend their days in sorrow and mourning, in sighing and complaining, in doubting and questioning. (p. 103)

One of the best examples of this condition can be observed in David in Ps. 42:5 as he writes, “Why are you cast down, O my soul?” Writing about this malady, which Lloyd-Jones (1965) refers to as “spiritual depression,” he notes that this “seems to be a condition which has afflicted God’s people right from the beginning, for you find it described and dealt with in the Old Testament and in the New” (p. 10).

Brooks goes on to provide insight into several of Satan’s most cunning devices through which he is able to keep souls in this condition. The following are but a few of those presented in the book. The first of these involves Satan’s ability to cause the believer to fixate on his sin. Or, as the author puts it, “to mind their sins more than their Savior; yes, so to mind their sins as to forget, yes, to neglect their Savior...” (p. 103). And what are some of the remedies the author proposes for this particular device? In the first place, he reminds the believer who is thus affected to reconsider that although Christ has not freed him from the presence of sin, he has most surely been freed from the “damning power” of sin. As the apostle Paul wrote in Rom. 8:1, “There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

The second remedy of note that Brooks puts forth involves the believers looking upon all of his sins as “charged upon the account of Christ, as debts which the Lord Jesus has fully satisfied” (p. 105). In this writer’s many years of pastoral experience, it seems that far too often believers find themselves defeated by the feeling that their sins, even though sufficiently and forever atoned for by Christ, will yet be held against them. While it is indeed desirable for one to feel remorse for his sins, leading to repentance, he should never allow himself to gravitate to the unhealthy extreme of doubting the efficacy of Christ’s finished work in atoning for those sins.

Thirdly, Brooks writes, believers would do well to repent for being discouraged by their sins. Such discouragement, he observes, “will cost them many a prayer, many a tear, and many a groan; and that because their discouragements under sin flow from ignorance and unbelief” (p. 107). In short, what the author is suggesting is that many believers are actually ignorant of God’s super-abounding love for them as well as the “real, close, spiritual, glorious, and inseparable union that exists between Christ and their precious souls” (p. 107). He goes on to point out that “God never gave a believer a new heart that it should always lie a-bleeding, and that it should always be rent and torn in pieces with discouragements” (p. 108). This writer is careful to add that, based on his other writings in the area of sin, Brooks is in no way promoting the idea that one’s sin should be mitigated or relegated to lesser significance. He is by no means advocating the idea proposed by Paul’s rhetorical question in Rom. 6:1, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?” Brooks would no doubt readily echo Paul’s incredulous response, “May it never be!”

The second device wherewith Satan is able to keep saints in a sad condition is, Brooks maintains, “by working them to make false definitions of their graces” (p. 108). Chief among the graces which are incorrectly defined is faith itself. Satan often works in man to convince him that

his idea of faith simply does not equate with or measure up to the faith required for salvation.

This, the author contends, leads to keeping men in “a sad, doubting, and questioning condition, and makes them spend their days in sorrow and sighing, so that tears are their drink, and sorrow is their food, and sighing is their work all the day long” (p. 108).

For this particular spiritual malady, Brooks offers four responses, the first of which the writer considers for this paper, namely, that the believer would do well to consider that while there may indeed be great measures of faith displayed, this does not mean that there will always be a great corresponding measure of assurance. The author’s thoughts here are worthy of special note:

The Canaanite woman in the Gospel had strong faith, yet no assurance that we read of. ‘these things have I written unto you,’ says John, ‘who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life’ (1 Jn. 5:13). In these words you see that they did believe, and had eternal life, in respect of the purpose and promise of God, and in respect of the seeds and beginnings of it in their souls, and in respect of Christ their head, who sits in heaven as a public person, representing all his chosen ones, ‘Who has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus’ (Eph. 2:6); and yet they did not know that they had eternal life. It is one thing to have a right to heaven, and another thing to know it; it is one thing to be beloved, and another thing for a man to know that he is beloved. It is one thing for God to write a man’s name in the book of life, and another thing for God to tell a man that his name is written in the book of life...” (pp. 108-109).

In total, Brooks presents eight unique devices employed by Satan that are designed to keep man in a sad condition. Unfortunately, the limited nature of the current assignment prevents a more thorough examination of each. This said, however, the writer would heartily recommend a full reading of them at the reader’s convenience.

### **Satan’s Devices to Destroy and Ensnare All Sorts and Ranks of Men**

In the next section of this work, the author turns his attention to the reality that Satan’s attacks are not limited to the weak and feeble but are devised to destroy and ensnare men of all

ranks and sorts the world over. Satan's designs in this area can routinely be witnessed, not only historically but in the present day as well, as affecting "the great and honorable of the earth" (pp. 135-144), "the learned and the wise" (pp. 144-146), "the saints" (pp. 146-156), and "poor and ignorant souls" (pp. 157-159).

### **Five More of Satan's Devices**

The author culminates his expansive list of Satan's devices with five additional means whereby Satan attacks believers. First, he suggests to the soul the greatness and vileness of his sins (p. 160). Secondly, he suggests to sinners their unworthiness (p. 166). In the third place, Satan suggests to sinners "the lack of such and such preparations and qualifications" (p. 168). Fourthly, he suggests to the sinner Christ's unwillingness to save (pp. 170-171). Finally, Satan causes the sinner to "mind more the secret decrees and counsels of God, than his own duty" (p. 171). With regard to this final device, this writer has encountered many professing believers over the years who have fallen prey to this particular device. Indeed, there are countless believers today who, instead of tending to the various spiritual disciplines which lend themselves to personal growth and sanctification, tend to focus on (even to the point of fixation) that which is simply unknowable. One dear elderly saint with whom the writer has been meeting for the better part of a year has spent a tremendous amount of time and energy over the last 20 years trying to understand the prophetic ramifications of the books of Daniel and Revelation. Only when she was asked how these studies were contributing to her sanctification did she finally admit that her soul had been starving for more "nutritious" spiritual food for years.

### **Seven Characteristics of False Teachers**

This device/remedy formula continues throughout the majority of the book. At the end of this work, however, Brooks departs from this formula to present a separate section entitled,

“Seven Characteristics of False Teachers.” Though given a far briefer treatment than the main points in this work, Brooks does a masterful job of helping the reader understand how best to identify and avoid false teachers. To this end, he writes:

Now the best way to deliver poor souls from being deluded and destroyed by these messengers of Satan is, to discover them in their colors, that so, being known, poor souls may shun them, and fly from them as from hell itself. (p. 173]

The seven characteristics he shares are thus certainly worthy of brief consideration here. The first of these characteristics concerns the false teachers’ common identity as a “men-pleasers.” As the author notes, “They preach more to please the ear than to profit the heart” (p. 173). These “soul poisoners,” as he calls them, do not speak for the Lord but for themselves. In the second place, Brooks writes, false teachers are “notable in casting dirt, scorn, and reproach upon the persons, names, and credits of Christ’s most faithful ambassadors” (p. 174). Thirdly, false teachers are “venters of the devices and visions of their own heads and hearts” (p. 174). The fourth characteristic Brooks presents concerning false teachers is that they “easily pass over the great and weighty things both of law and gospel, and stand most upon those things that are of the least importance and concern to the souls of men” (p. 174). Fifthly, the author states that false teachers “cover and color their dangerous principles and soul-deceptions with very fair speeches and plausible pretenses, with high notions and golden expressions” (p. 175). In the sixth place, the author notes, false teachers “strive more to win over men to their opinions, than to better them in their lives” (p. 175). Finally, Brooks writes, false teachers “make merchandise of their followers” (p. 176).

### **Six Propositions Concerning Satan and His Devices**

As a means of preventing any objections to what he has written, the author presents six propositions concerning Satan and his devices.

The first of these propositions involves what this writer remembers as one of 1970's comedian Flip Wilson's most famous comedic lines: "The devil made me do it." As integral as this line would become to Wilson's comedy career, Brooks' argument along these lines is far from funny. As he observes, "I think that oftentimes men charge that upon the devil which is to be charged upon their own hearts" (p. 177). As the author goes on to indicate, Satan may indeed tempt the believer, but he is unable to conquer us without our heart's consent.

The second proposition offered by Brooks is that Satan does in fact have "a great hand and stroke in most sins" (p. 178). It was Satan, he writes, who tempted David to number the people. It was Satan who caused Peter's sin of rebuking Christ. It was Satan who tempted Cain to murder his brother, Abel. And it was Satan who put into Judas' heart the treason that led to his betrayal of Christ.

In the third place, the author proposes that "Satan must have a double permission before he can do anything against us" (p. 178). By this, he is referring to both God's permission and ours. The former can of course be seen in the example of Job (Job 1:11, 12; 2:3-5). Though Satan certainly had enough malice to destroy Job, he could not even so much as touch him without God's permission to do so. This is also exemplified in the account of Jesus before Pilate in the nineteenth chapter of John's gospel. As He was being interrogated by Pilate, Jesus was asked (v. 10), "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him (v. 11), "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above."

The fourth of Brooks' propositions is that only spiritual weapons are useful to the soul in engaging in combat with the devil. This is precisely what the apostle Paul addresses in Eph. 6 in his exhortation concerning the proper use of the believer's spiritual "armor." If we are to

successfully engage in what is clearly spiritual warfare (2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:12) then our weapons must likewise be of a spiritual nature.

Brooks' fifth proposition is that "we may read much of Satan's nature and disposition by the diverse names and epithets that are given him in the Scripture" (p. 181). Indeed, he is called Behemoth (Job. 40:15), he is called an adversary (1 Pe. 5:8), he is referred to as Abaddon the destroyer (Rev. 9:11), he is also referred to in various other places in Scripture as a lion, a dragon, a serpent, etc. All of these worst names, maintains Brooks, are reflective of and fitting for the worst of all created beings: the devil.

The author's sixth and final proposition is that "God will shortly tread down Satan under the saints' feet" (p. 181). Brooks' words here are especially encouraging:

Christ, our champion, has already won the field, and will shortly set our feet upon the necks of our spiritual enemies. Satan is a foiled adversary. Christ has led him captive, and triumphed over him upon the cross. Christ has already overcome him, and put weapons into your hands, that you may overcome him also, and set your feet upon his neck. Though Satan be a roaring lion, yet Christ, who is the lion of the tribe of Judah, will make Satan fly and fall before you. Let Satan do his worst, yet you shall have the honor and the happiness to triumph over him. Cheer up, you precious sons of Zion, for the certainty and sweetness of victory will abundantly recompense you for all the pains you have taken in making resistance against Satan's temptations. The broken horns of Satan shall be trumpets of our triumph and the coronets of our joy. (p. 181)

### **Ten Special Helps and Rules Against Satan's Devices**

This work concludes with ten special helps and rules that can be employed by the believer against the many devices of Satan that have been addressed herein. While a brief summary of each is provided below, it is highly recommended that the reader procure a copy of this wonderful book and conduct a more thorough examination of each.

First, one of the most helpful suggestions for one who would not be taken in by Satan's devices is to consistently strive to walk by the rule of the Word of God (Prov. 12:24; Gal. 6:16).

As the author notes, “Those who keep to [this] rule shall be kept in the hour of temptation” (p. 184).

The second help provided by the author is for the believer to be careful not to vex and grieve the Holy Spirit of God. And why is this important? Because it is the Holy Spirit who is best able to uncover the devil’s plotting against us, and if we grieve the Holy Spirit we have no assurance that He will protect us from the devil’s wiles. The Spirit of the Lord is the believer’s counselor, comforter, upholder, and strengthener and, as such, we dare not grieve Him who is our greatest help.

Thirdly, if the believer would avoid being taken in by any of Satan’s devices, he must “labor for more heavenly wisdom” (p. 185). As the author goes on to observe, there are many who are educated; many who possess great intellects, however, there are but a few truly wise souls:

Ah, souls! You had need of a great deal of heavenly wisdom, to see where and how Satan lays his baits and snares; and wisdom to find out proper remedies against his devices, and wisdom to apply those remedies seasonably, inwardly, and effectually to your own hearts, so that you may avoid the snares which that evil one has laid for your precious souls.

The fourth of Brooks’ ten helps involves the believer’s immediate resistance to Satan’s first motions. As James writes in James 4:7, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Indeed, allowing the first subtle temptation to sin to linger in the mind will invariably result in the committing of the same.

Fifthly, Brooks writes, “If you would not be taken with any of Satan’s devices, then labor to be filled with the Spirit” (p. 185). Based on this writer’s pastoral experience, this particular point is often missed by many who fail to note the difference between being indwelt by the

Spirit versus being filled by the Spirit. If one is to be able to withstand the temptation to sin, his ability to succeed will be directly proportionate to the level of the Holy Spirit he possesses.

In the sixth place, the author cites humility as absolutely essential in the avoidance of Satan's devices. He observes, "An humble heart will rather lie in the dust than rise by wickedness, and sooner part with all than the peace of a good conscience" (p. 186). God has promised throughout His word that He will teach, dwell with, fill and satisfy the humble (Ps. 25:9; Is. 57:15; James 4:6).

The seventh help offered by the author is for the believer to "keep a strong, close, and constant watch (1 Thess. 5:6)" (p. 186). This certainly stands to reason as one who is asleep is hardly in a position to defend against anything, much less the devices of Satan. The Lord addresses this very concept in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's gospel. Granted, in this particular passage He is speaking in relation to His glorious return, however, the principle is the same: "...if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into." Vigilance is a critical component in being able to avoid the snares of the evil one.

In the eighth place, the author writes, the one who would avoid Satan's devices will keep up his communion with God. "A soul," he writes, "high in communion with God may be tempted – but will not easily be conquered. Such a soul will fight it out to the death" (p. 187). The best example of this can be seen in the life of David. As long as he maintained a close communion with God, he stood strong even in the face of his enemies. When his communion with God waned, however, he found himself at the mercy of those same enemies. Close communion with God is absolutely essential in avoiding Satan's schemes.

Ninthly, the author maintains, the believer should never engage Satan in his own strength. As was already noted, Satan is a defeated foe. Sound reason would thus dictate that all engagements with him be left to His conqueror.

Finally, Brooks observes, if one would avoid the snares of Satan, he must be routinely engaged in prayer. As David prayed in Ps. 141:8-10, all believers would do well to do likewise:

“...my eyes are toward you, O GOD, my Lord; in you I seek refuge; leave me not defenseless! Keep me from the trap that they have laid for me and from the snares of evildoers! Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by safely.”

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Thomas Brooks is without a doubt one of the more cogent among the Puritans in terms of his being able to relate what are often difficult concepts of truth to a very wide audience. His work is doctrinally sound, tremendously readable and, more importantly, intensely practical. The three works treated in this assignment have brought much light and considerable joy to this writer and will not only be highly recommended to others but will also be required reading for many with whom he is engaged in discipleship.

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