

the new birth being the rectifying, and due framing, or as the scripture phrases it, the renovation of the soul after the image of God, Ephes. iv. 24, in which self-dependence is removed by faith; self love, by the love of God; self-will by subjection and obedience to the will of God; and self-seeking by self-denial. The darkened understanding is again illuminated, Ephes. i. 18. The refractory will subdued, Psalm, cx. 3. The rebellious appetite, or concupiscence, gradually conquered, Roman vi. 7. And thus the soul which sin had universally depraved, is again by grace restored and rectified. This being pre-supposed, it will not be difficult to apprehend what it is to keep the heart, which is nothing else but the constant care and diligence of such a renewed man, to preserve his soul in that holy frame, to which grace hath reduced it and daily strives to hold it. For though grace hath in great measure rectified the soul and given it an habitual and heavenly temper, yet sin often actually discomposes it again, so that even a gracious heart is like a musical instrument, which though it be never so exactly tuned, yet a small matter puts it out of tune again; yea, hang it aside but a little, and it will need setting again, before you can play another lesson it; even so stands the case with gracious hearts, if they are in frame in one duty, yet how dull, dead and disordered when they come to another; and therefore every duty needs a particular preparation of the heart—"If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thy hands towards him." —Job xi. 13. To keep the heart then, is carefully to preserve it from sin which disorders it, and maintain that spiritual and gracious frame, which fits it for a life of communion with God, and this includes six acts in it: 1. Frequent observation of the frame of the heart, turning in and examining how the case stands with it, this is one part of the work. Carnal and formal persons take no heed to this; they cannot be brought to confer with their own hearts; there are some men and women that have lived forty or fifty years in the world, and have scarcely had one hour's discourse with their hearts all that while. It is a hard thing to bring a man and himself together upon such an account; but saints know those examinations and self-conferences