

# A MAN WORTHY OF REMEMBRANCE

by

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## *A Brief Biography Of Matthew Henry* (1662-1714)

*If any receive spiritual benefit by my  
poor endeavors, it will be a comfort to me,  
but let God have all the glory.*

**AD 1662 - AD 1680**

### **The Birth Of Matthew Henry**

Matthew Henry was the second son given by the Lord to Katherine and Philip Henry. He was born on October 18, 1662 in Broad Oak, in a farmhouse located in Flintshire in Iscoyd township in the county of Salop. Being born prematurely, there was fear that Matthew Henry would die at birth or soon thereafter. Therefore, he was baptized the day after his birth which happened to be a Sabbath. Mr. Holland, the Rector of Malpas, administered the holy ordinance to the weak infant. The child's infirmities was just another burden for Matthew's father, Philip Henry, who knew great sorrow as a servant of the Saviour. He was one of about two thousand ministers who resigned or were ejected from their pulpits by the Church of England for daring to dissent to the conditions set forth in the *Act of Uniformity* (1662). Matthew's mother came from a well respected family. Her modest inheritance allowed her husband to continue to live at Broad Oak and minister to the people without pay.

### **Education**

Though in poor health physically, intellectually and spiritually Matthew was gifted. As a child prodigy he was able to read out loud a chapter of the Bible when he was only three years old. Recognizing their son's unusual mental gifts Philip and Katharine Henry provided a capable teacher in the person of Mr. William Turner. From him Matthew studied Grammar and Latin. In later years Mr. Turner became the Vicar of Walburton in Sussex and the author of *A History of Remarkable Providences*.

A serious soul by nature, Matthew Henry always reflected a maturity beyond his years illustrated by extracts from a letter written in 1671. He was only nine years old at the time when he wrote to his father in London. *"Every day since you went, I have done my lesson, a side of Latin, or Latin verses, and two verses in the Greek Testament. I hope I have done all well, and so I will continue till you come."* The letter concludes with words reflecting deep spiritual insight. *"By this providence we may see that sin is the worst of evils, for sickness came with sin. Christ is the chief good; therefore, let us love Him. Sin is the worst of evils, therefore, let us hate that with a perfect hatred."*

### **Childhood Sickness**

Matthew Henry was born into a world where children died at an early age. His own brother John did not survive infancy. When he was ten years old, Matthew suffered the ravages of a lingering fever. Once more it seemed that he was going to die. Once more the Lord had mercy and his life was spared.

### **The Saving Of His Soul**

As the Lord saved Matthew Henry from an early death, He also saved him from an eternal damnation. The glorious day when he was translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son may be discerned from a document dated October 18, 1675. On his thirteenth birthday Matthew Henry wrote down *A Catalogue Of Mercies* detailing the progress of religion in his soul. There is a section in the manuscript dealing with conversion.

#### *A Catalogue Of Mercies*

*I think it was three years ago that I began to be convinced, hearing a sermon by my father on Psalm 51:17. 'The sacrifices of God are of a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise.' It think it was that that melted me; afterwards I began to inquire after Christ.*

*December 7, 1673. on a Sabbath-day morning, I heard a sermon that had in it the marks of true grace. I tried myself by them, and told my father my evidences; he liked them and said, if those evidences were true, (as I think they were) I had true grace. Yet, after this, for two or three days, I was under great fear of hell, till the Lord comforted me. I having been engaged in serious examination--What hope I have that when I die, and leave this earthly tabernacle, I shall be received into heaven--I have found several marks that I am a child of God. His ministers say:*

*1. There is true conversion where there have been covenant transactions between God and the soul. And I found that there have been such between God and my soul, and I hope in truth and righteousness. If I never did this before, I do it now; for I take God in Christ to be mine. I give up myself to be his in the bond of an everlasting covenant never-to-be-forgotten. But hath it been in truth? As far as I know my own heart, I do it in truth and sincerity. I did it December 7, and September 5, and October 13, and many other times. I do it every day.*

*2. Where there hath been true repentance for sin, and grief, and shame, and sorrow, for it, as to what is past, with all the ingredients of it, as confession, aggravation, self-judging, self-condemning, &c. And I have found this in me, though not in that measure that I should ever affront him as I have done; and ministers have assured me, that having repented of sin and believed on Christ, I am to believe that I am pardoned. Now I have done this, and I do really believe I am forgiven for Christ's sake. This is grounded on several Scriptures, Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; Matthew 5:4; Acts 2:37,38; Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9. And many other Scriptures there are where God doth expressly call people to return and repent. But hath this sorrow been true? As far as I know my own heart, it hath been true. 'But I sin often.' I lament and bewail it before the Lord, and I endeavor, by the grace of God, to do so no more.*

*3. Where there is true love of God. For to love the Lord our God with all our soul, and with all our strength, is better than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. Now, as far as I know my own heart, I love God in sincerity. But is that love indeed sincere? As far as I can judge it is so; for,*

*(1) I love the people of God; all the Lord's people shall be my people.*

*(2) I love the Word of God. I esteem it above all. I find my heart so inclined. I desire it as the food of my soul. I greatly delight in it, both in reading and hearing of it; and my soul can witness subjection to it in some measure. I think I love the Word of God for the purity of it. I love the ministers and messengers of the Word. I am often reading it. I rejoice in the good success of it. All which were given as marks of true love for the Word, in a sermon I lately heard on Psalm 119:140: 'Thy word is pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.'" It is remarkable writing and spiritual maturity for a young person who has not yet turned eleven.*

### **A Life Of Self-Examination**

The spiritual sensitivity evident in the soul of Matthew Henry was enhanced by his father Philip. A strong believer in honoring the Sabbath as a special holy day, Philip Henry expected his family to prepare for it. Each Saturday afternoon they were to spend an hour in devotional exercises. In later years his sisters would remember and comment on their brother's admonitions to them during these days.

### **A Call To The Ministry**

With such a holy background, it would have been astonishing if Matthew Henry were not inclined to the ministry. He read the Bible with eagerness, sought out the company of ministers, loved to read sermons, and practiced the art of preaching emphasizing propriety, gravity, and judgment. Some older people thought he was moving too quickly towards the ministry but the wise counsel of his father prevailed. *"Let him go on, he fears God, and designs well, and I hope God will keep him, and bless him."*

## **AD 1680 - AD 11685**

### **Preparation For The Pastorate**

With a view towards the ministry in 1680, Philip Henry placed his son under the instruction of a godly and faithful fellow minister, Mr. Thomas Doolittle of Islington. At the Academy in Islington, Matthew Henry was able to form lasting friendships among the thirty other young candidates for the ministry. Years later, men such as Mr. Henry Chandler would comment on these days and on Matthew Henry himself. *"I am sure it was the common opinion, that he was a sweet tempered, courteous, and obliging a gentleman as could come into a house; his going from us was universally lamented."*

When official religious persecution came to Islington, Dr. Doolittle was driven from town and his young seminarians had to relocate as well. Matthew Henry returned to Broad Oak where he studied independently. The Lord continued to work a work of grace in his soul reflected in a manuscript he wrote entitled *Mercies Received*.

### ***Mercies Received***

**1. *That*** I am endued with a rational, immortal soul, capable of serving God here, and enjoying Him hereafter, and was not made as the beasts that perish.

2. *That* having powers and faculties, the exercise of them has been no wise obstructed by frenzies, lunacy, &c., but happily continued in their primitive (nay happily advanced to greater) vigor, and activity.

3. *That* I have all my senses; that I was neither born, nor by accident made, blind, or deaf, or dumb, either in whole, or in part.

4. *That* I have a complete body in all its parts; that I am not lame or crooked, either through original, or providential want, or a defect, or the dislocation of any part, or member.

5. *That* I was formed, and curiously fashioned by an All wise hand in the womb, and there kept, nourished, and preserved, by the same gracious hand, till the appointed time.

6. *That*, at that appointed time, I was brought into the world, the living child of a living mother; and that, though means were wanting, yet He that can work without means, was not.

7. *That* I have been ever since comfortably provided for with bread to eat, and raiment to put on, not for necessity only, but for ornament, and delight; and that without my pains or cares.

8. *That* I have had a very great measure of health (the sweetness of all temporal mercies), and that when infectious diseases have been abroad, I have hitherto been preserved from them.

9. *That*, when I have been visited with sickness, it hath been in measure, and health hath been restored to me, when a brother dear, and companion as dear, hath been taken away at the same time, and by the same sickness.

10. *That* I have been kept and protected from many dangers that I have been exposed to by night and by day, at home and abroad, especially in journeys.

11. *That* I have had comfortable accommodations as to house, lodging, fuel, &c.' and have been a stranger to the wants of many thousands in that hand.

12. *That* I was born to a competency of estate in the world so that, as long as God pleases to continue it, I am likely to be on the giving, and not on the receiving hand.

13. *That* I have had, and still have comfort, more than ordinary, in relations; that I am blessed with such parents as few have, and sisters also that I have reason to rejoice in.

14. *That* I have had a liberal education, having a capacity for, and been bred up to, the knowledge of the language, arts, and sciences; and that, through God's blessing on my studies, I have made some progress therein.

15. *That* I have been born in a place and time of gospel light; that I have had the Scriptures, and means for understanding them, by daily expositions, and many good books; and that I have had a heart to give myself to, and delight in the study of them.

16. *That* I have been hitherto enabled so to demean myself, as to gain a share in the love, and prayers of God's people.

17. *That* I was in infancy brought within the pale of the visible Church in my baptism.

18. *That* I had a religious education, the principles of religion instilled into me with my very milk, and from a child have been taught the knowledge of God.

19. *That* I have been endued with a good measure of praying gifts, being enabled to express my mind to God in prayer, in words of my own, not only alone, but as the mouth of others.

20. *That* God hath inclined my heart to devote and dedicate myself to him, and to His service, and the service of His Church in the work of the ministry, if ever He shall please to use me.

**21. *That*** I have had so many sweet, and precious opportunities, and means of grace, Sabbaths, sermons, sacraments, and have enjoyed, not only the ordinances, themselves, the shell, but communion with God the Kernel.

**22. *That*** I have a good hope, through grace, that, being chosen of God from eternity, I was, in the fullness of time called, and that good work begun in me, which I trust God will perform.

**23. *That*** I have had some sight of the majesty of God, the sweetness of Christ, the evil of sin, the worth of my soul, the vanity of the world, and the reality, and weight of invisible things.

**24. *That*** when I have been in doubt I have been guided; in danger I have been guarded; in temptation I have been succored [comforted]; under guilt I have been pardoned; when I have prayed, I have been heard and answered; when I have been under afflictions they have been sanctified; and all by Divine grace.

**25. *That*** I am not without hope, that all these mercies are but the earnest of more, and pledges of better in the kingdom of glory; and that I shall rest in Abraham's bosom, world without end.

**26. *Lastly***; thanks be to God for Jesus Christ, the fountain and foundation of all my mercies. Amen. Hallelujah. Matthew Henry, October 18, 1682

## AD 1685 - AD 1686

### Learning The Law

After Matthew Henry left Islington, and returned to Broad Oak, he sought counsel as to the future. The thought arose that the study of law would be a proper area to concentrate in. Meeting with his father's approval, in April, 1685, Matthew Henry returned to London and in Holborn Court, Gray's Inn, and began a new field of study.

Though he gave himself diligently to the learning of law, Matthew Henry was not happy. "*The more I see of the world,*" he wrote, "*and the various affairs of the children of men in it, the more I see of the vanity of it, and the more I would fain have my heart taken off from it, and fixed upon the invisible realities of the other world.*"

It was only a matter of months before Matthew Henry would return to a pursuit of the ministry. However, during his stay in London, he did what he could. He studied French, visited the persecuted saints in prison, kept the Sabbath, and continued to think of Christ. On March 1, 1686, writing to his friend George Illidge of Grays Inn in Nantwich, Matthew Henry, at age twenty four, spoke of the need to honor the Lord. "*I remember to have read, that when the famous Bishop Usher and Dr. Preston, who were intimate friends, were talking together; after much discourse of learning and other things, the bishop would say--Come, Doctor, one word of Christ now before we part. Christians who owe their all to Christ, should be often talking of Him. And surely those that know the worth of souls cannot but be concerned for their ignorant careless neighbors; which concern should put us upon doing all we can to help them out of that condition. And if there be any that are asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards, pray tell them the way. Tell them,*

- 1.** *There is but one gate into this way, and that is the straight gate of sound conversion.*
- 2. Tell them** that the way is narrow, that there is not elbow room for their lusts. Let them know the worst of it. And that those who would be good soldiers of Christ must endure hardness.

3. **Tell them**, notwithstanding this, it is a way of pleasantness; it gives spiritual, though it prohibits sensual pleasures.

4. **Tell them** that there is life eternal at the end, and let them be assured that one hour of joy in heaven, will make them amends for an age of trouble upon earth. One sheaf of that harvest will be recompense enough for a season of tears, Psalms 136:5,6."

## AD 1686 - AD 1687

### Back To Broad Oak

In June, 1686, Matthew Henry returned to Broad Oak. More determined than ever to "make known the mystery of the gospel." In the providence of the Lord, opportunities arose to preach. Souls were saved as spiritual truths were set forth without compromise. When asked as to the reason of the apostasy of so many who began well, Matthew Henry did not hesitate to answer. "They never had," he wrote, "the law in their hearts; they never acted from a principle. A man may not only have the shape of a Christian, but he may have it drawn so much to the life as that it may pass for a living Christian; there may be some kind of breath, and motion, and sense; and yet he that knows our works may say--'Thou art dead.' The scale in such a case hangs in a manner even; but sin and lust at last preponderate. Hypocrisy is the way to apostasy, and apostasy is the great proof of hypocrisy."

But "those," he continued, "who are sincere are willing and desirous to be tried; they desire the day of judgment, because every thing will then be manifested; they are frequent and inward in secret duty; they have a low and mean opinion of themselves and their own performances: they bewail and mourn over the remains of hypocrisy; they make the word of God their counselor in all doubtful cases; they ascribe the glory of all to Christ, and to take none to themselves; they keep themselves from their own iniquity."

### Leaving For London

About the end of the year, 1686, it was evident that the government was going to grant indulgences for dissenting ministers. When asked to come to London to preach to the scattered saints, Matthew Henry agreed. On January 24, 1687, his journey towards London began. He would stay for a short time at Gray's Inn and then seek a people to pastor.

### The Honor Of Ordination

In order to be a credible minister, Matthew Henry sought ordination. To that end he composed a paper which he called "A Serious Self Examination Before Ordination." "That is very requisite," he wrote, "for a man to examine himself seriously at such a time, will readily be granted by those who consider the nature of the ordinance, and of that work into which it is a solemn entrance." Selected portions of the composition reveal a man wanting to be found worthy of Christ's glory.

**"Q [uestion]. What am I?** This is a needful question, because in ordination I give up myself to God in a peculiar manner; and will God accept the torn, and the blind, and the lame? Surely no. The sacrifice must be searched before it was offered, that it might be sure to fit its end. Now, though the truth of grace be not perhaps necessary to the esse of a minister (for Judas himself was an apostle), yet it is necessary to the bene esse. A man cannot be a good minister

*without it. And therefore come, my soul, let us inquire what am I? And let the inquiry be strict and serious, for a mistake here is fateful.*

**Q[uestion] II. What have I done?** *This is also a needful question, that searching and examining what hath been amiss, I may repent of it, and make even reckonings in the blood of Christ, that I may not come loaded with old guilt to put on a new character, especially such a character as this. Aaron and his sons must offer a sin-offering to make atonement before they were consecrated, Lev. 8:34. For he that comes near to God under guilt of sin unrepented of, comes at his peril, and the nearer the more dangerous. And therefore, O my soul, what have I done? My soul cannot but answer, I have sinned, I have perverted that which is right, and it hath not profited me.*

**Q[uestion] III. From what principles do I act in this undertaking?** *This is also a very material inquiry in every action, to ask whence it comes, especially in so great a turn of life as this.*

**1.** *I hope I can say that it is of faith; and I am concerned it should be so, for 'whatever is not of faith is sin.' It is good for every man that he be fully persuaded in his own mind. etc.*

**2.** *I hope I can say, I act herein from a principle of true zeal for the glory of God; that this great thing I do, as I should do every thing to the glory of God, that my light may shine, that Christ's kingdom may be advanced, the power of godliness. The desire of my soul is, that 'whether I live I may live to the Lord, or whether I die I may die to the Lord, and that living and dying I may be the Lord's.'*

**Q[uestion] IV. What are the ends that I am at in this great undertaking?** *It is a common saying, that the end specifies the action; and, therefore, it is of great consequences to fix that right, that the eye may be single, for otherwise it is an evil eye. A bye and base end will certainly spoil the acceptableness of the best actions that can be performed. Now what is the mark I am at in this great turn of my life? Let conscience be faithful herein, and let the Searcher of hearts make me known to myself.*

**1.** *I think I can say with confidence, that I do not design to take up the ministry as a trade to live by, or to enrich myself by, out of the greediness of filthy lucre. etc.*

**2.** *I think I can say with as much assurance, that my design is not to get myself a name amongst men, or to be talked of in the world, as one that makes somewhat of a figure. No; that is a poor business.--If I have but a good name with God, I think I have enough, though among men I be reviled, and have my name trampled upon as mire in the streets. etc.*

**3.** *I can appeal to God, that I have no design in the least to maintain a party, or to keep up any schismatic faction; my heart rises against the thoughts of it. I hate dividing principles and practices, and whatever others are, I am for peace and healing; and if my blood would be sufficient balsam, I would gladly part with the last drop of it, for the closing up of the bleeding wounds of differences that are amongst true Christians. etc. My ends then are according to my principles, and I humbly appeal to God concerning the integrity of my heart in them.*

**Q[uestion] V. What do I want?** *And what special things am I now to desire of God, the God of all grace? When I know whither to go for supplies. I am concerned to inquire what my necessities are. The requests I have to put to God are such as these.*

i. *That he would fix and confirm and establish my heart in my dedication of myself to the work of the ministry.*

ii. *That He would in a special manner be present with me in the ordinance of dedication, filling my heart with such an experimental sense of the excellency of Christ, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, as that I may have cause to remember it, by a good token, as long as I live; that He would manifest Himself to me, mark me for Himself; and leave some sign behind him in my soul, that may make it evident God was there of a truth; that He would give me a comfortable earnest of the success of my ministry, by a single owning of me in my entrance upon it.*

iii. *That He would fit and qualify me for this great work to which He is calling me. When Saul was anointed king, 'God gave him another heart, an heart fit for kingship.' I would fain have another heart, a heart fit for ministerial work, filled with ministerial gifts and graces. 1. Ministerial gifts. etc. 2. Ministerial graces. etc. (1) Sincerity. etc. (2) Humility. etc.*

iv. *That God would open a door of opportunity to me, and make my way plain before me, that the call I have to my work may be clear and satisfying, and that God would bless and succeed my endeavors for the good of souls.*

**Q[uestion] VI. What are my purposes and resolutions for the future?** *This is also a requisite inquiry, when I am to put on a new character, and one so honorable. What shall I do that I may 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called?'*

1. *I purpose and resolve by the grace of God, that I will have no more to do with the unfruitful works of darkness, seeing it will not only be my duty as a Christian, but my office as a minister to reprove them rather. 'Pride, passion, worldliness, wantonness, vanity, are things the man of God must flee.' 1 Timothy 6:11. etc.*

2. *I purpose and resolve that, by the grace of God, I will abound more than ever in all manner of gospel obedience; that I will strive to be more humble, serious, and watchful, and self-denying, and live more above the world and the things of it; that I will pray with*

*more life, and read the Scriptures with more care, and not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; that I will abound in good discourse, as I have ability and opportunity with prudence; endeavoring as much as I can 'to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things.'*

3. *In particular, I resolve in the strength, spirit and grace of Jesus Christ my Lord, to consider well and perform my ordination vows; to hold fast the form of sound words which I have heard and received in 'faith and love which is in Christ Jesus;' and never to let go any truth, whatever it cost me; ever owning the Scripture as 'the only rule of faith and practice.' etc.*

**AD 1686 - 1694**

### **A Crisis Of Identity**

Being found worthy of ordination, a determination had to be made of formal association. By birth and conviction Matthew Henry was a non-conformist. However, perhaps he could be of service in the established state Church of England. For a brief period Matthew Henry seriously considered the possibility of an Episcopal ordination. On April 28, 1687, he abandoned the idea for specific reasons.

(1) *It is a tacit owning of the prelatical power of ordination, which the [Episcopal] bishops usurp and claim as the sacred prerogative of their miters; and will by no means allow to every gospel presbyter. And doth not our submission thereto implicitly justify that usurpation?*

(2) *The pretended fasts, and too formal prayers with which the bishops manage that solemn service, render it less comfortable to a serious, honest heart, that knows the weight of that work upon which ordination is an entrance.*

(3) *The making of two distinct orders of deacons and priests is certainly owned by submitting to two distinct ordinations; a Scripture deacon seems to be ordained to serve tables, and not to give himself to the Word and prayer, and it is very hard for one who is self-devoted to the ministry, to say that he thinks himself moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him the office of a deacon. etc.*

Matthew Henry would not be an Anglican minister. He would identify himself with the non-conformist. He would seek to be ordained by the leading Presbyterian ministers of London.

### **A Confession Of Faith**

The Presbyterian ministers gladly welcomed the opportunity to ordain Matthew Henry. To that end that asked for a written *Confession Of Faith*. On May 9, 1687 Matthew Henry offered the following.

#### ***A Confession Of Faith***

**1. *I believe that there is a God, an incomprehensible, perfect Being; a Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, and truth, having His being of Himself, and giving being to all things.***

*I believe that the living and true God is but one. And that in the unity of the Godhead there is a trinity of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that these Three are but One God, the same in substance, equal in power, and glory. This is a revealed mystery which I do believe, but cannot comprehend.*

**2. *I believe that this God, who was God from eternity, did in the beginning of time, create, or make out of nothing, the world, the heaven, and earth, and all things visible and invisible, and this He did by the Word of His eternal power, in the space of six days, and all very good.***

*And that the same God doth by the same power uphold and maintain the creatures in that being which He at first gave them, by the constant concurrence of providence, for by Him all things subsist, from the highest angel to the meanest worm.*

*And that this God in the right of creation and preservation, is the supreme absolute Sovereign and rector of the world, ruling and governing all His creatures and all their actions, according to the wise, holy, and eternal counsel of His own will, to the praise and glory of His own good name.*

**3. *I believe that God, as the governor of the world, hath given a law to His rational creatures, according to which they are to walk, in order to their glorifying and enjoying Him.***

*And that to the present sons of men, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are given, as the only rule to direct them both in faith and practice.*

*That this Book of Scripture was given by inspiration of God, holy men speaking and writing as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

*And that this is the foundation of all revealed religion, and a perfect sufficient rule of direction to the children of men.*

**4. I believe** that God made man upright in His own image, consisting in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the inferior creatures.

*And that He made a covenant of works with him, promising life, upon condition of a perfect and perpetual obedience, threatening death upon disobedience; and giving him command of trial, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil upon pain of death.*

**5. I believe** that man being left to the freedom of his own will, at the instigation of the devil, sinned against God in eating the forbidden fruit, and so fell from his estate of holiness and happiness; and he being a common person, all his posterity fell with him into an estate of sin and misery.

*That all the sons of men are born children of disobedience, wanting original righteousness, and under a corruption of the whole nature, slaves to the flesh, the world, and the devil.*

*And consequently children of wrath, obnoxious to the justice of God, and the condemnation of the law.*

*And that no creature is able to deliver them out of this condition.*

**6. I believe** that God having from all eternity, of His mere good pleasure, elected a remnant of mankind to everlasting life, did, in infinite wisdom, find out a way to save and deliver them out of this sinful and miserable estate, and to bring them into a state of salvation; and that was by giving His only begotten Son to be their Redeemer, who being

*God, and one with the Father, according to the determinate counsel of God, did, in the fullness of time, take upon him, our nature, a true body, and reasonable soul, and became man, being conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, and called Jesus.*

**I believe** that this Jesus was the true Messiah, promised to, and expected by the patriarchs under the old testament.

*That He lived a holy sinless life, and fulfilled all righteousness, being made under the law; that He underwent the miseries of this life, the wrath of God for our sins, and as a sacrifice for sin died a cursed death upon the cross, thereby satisfying divine justice for the sins of man, and so reconciling us to God, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness. That He was buried, and that having conquered death, he rose again the third day, and having commissioned His apostles and ministers to preach the gospel to all the world, He ascended into heaven, where He is and continued to be, God and man, our prevailing Intercessor with the Father, and the glorified Head over all things to the Church. In all this gloriously executing the three great offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.*

**7. I believe** that in Jesus Christ there is a new covenant of grace made and published in the gospel, the tenor of which is, that all those who in the sight and sense of their lost and undone condition by nature come to Jesus Christ, and truly repent of all their sins, and heartily renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and all their own righteousness in point of justification, and by a lively faith cordially resign themselves to Jesus Christ as their Prince and Saviour, covenanting to be His humble servants, and serving Him accordingly, ( sincerely though

*not perfectly), in all manner of gospel obedience, shall have all their sins pardoned, their peace made, their persons justified, their natures sanctified, and their souls and bodies eternally saved.*

**8. I believe** that the Holy Spirit doth effectually apply the redemption purchased by Christ to all the elect, by working in them that which is required of them, convincing them of sin, enlightening their minds with the knowledge of Christ, renewing their wills, and not only persuading them, but powerfully enabling them to embrace Jesus Christ, as He is freely offered in the gospel.

*And that the same Spirit continues to dwell in them, and to work all their works in them, weakening their corruptions, strengthening their graces, guiding their way, comforting their souls, witnessing their adoption, enabling them more and more to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness, and keeping them faithful and steadfast unto the end.*

**9. I believe** that all true believers make up one invisible sanctified Church, which is the mystical body of Jesus Christ, receiving vital influence from Him as from their Head, and having communion in the same spirit of faith and love.

*And that all those who by baptism outwardly profess faith in Christ, as the true Messiah, make up the universal visible Church of Christ on earth, of which Jesus Christ is the only ruling Head, and as such hath instituted ordinances for worship and discipline, which are to be observed and kept pure in particular churches, which are to be observed and kept pure in particular churches, and hath appointed the standing office of a gospel ministry, for the due administration of those ordinances, to the edification of the Church, and hath promised to be with them always to the end of the world.*

**10. I believe** that God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained, who will raise the bodies of all men from the grave, and judge them all according to their works, sending the wicked, impenitent, and unbelievers, into everlasting punishment, and receiving the righteous into life eternal, to be together for ever with the Lord.

*And that then He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all to eternity."*

### **An Hour Of Honor**

On March 8, 1687, Matthew Henry was formally ordained to preach the glorious gospel of redeeming grace. Those who ordained him offered a surprisingly brief testimonial. "We, whose names are subscribed, are well assured that Mr. Matthew Henry is an ordained minister of the gospel. Sic Testor. W. Wickens. Fran. Tallents. Nath. Vincent. James Owen. Rich. Steele. March 9, 1687.

### **A Man With A Message**

On June 1, 1687, standing before his new congregation at Chester, Matthew Henry preached from 1 Corinthians 2:2, "*I am determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*" According to one witness on this occasion, the man and the message was received with joy and thankfulness. The Lord blessed and many souls were brought under the sound of the gospel.

### **The Making Of A Marriage**

Matthew Henry would labor at Chester for many wonderful years. It was at Chester that he would meet his future wife, Katharine Hardware. Unfortunately, the relationship was not without initial opposition. Mrs. John Hardware felt her daughter should marry well which in context meant that she should marry for social prominence and financial security. She did not feel that the life of a non-conformist minister could provide these things.

By the grace of God the relationship between Matthew Henry and Katharine progressed despite the parental protest. Love for the man himself and a willingness to endure hardships for Christ moved the couple towards the altar. In August, 1687, all obstacles were overcome and the marriage was consummated. After the ceremony, the newlyweds resided with Mr. and Mrs. John Hardware who grew to love, admire, and appreciate their son-in-law and esteem him in the Lord.

### **One Dark Day**

Having overcome so many difficulties, the tragedy that came to Matthew Henry was all the more painful. While laboring in childbirth, Mrs. Henry contracted smallpox. She died on Thursday, February 14, 1689, at the tender age of twenty-five. Overcome with grief Matthew Henry would later say, "I know nothing that could support me under such a loss as this, but the good hope that she is gone to heaven, and that, in a little time, I shall follow her thither." The funeral service was held at Trinity Church in Chester, on Saturday evening, February 16. Mr. Lawrence preached the sermon from Philippians 1:21--"*To die is gain.*"

### **A Child Is Born**

While a beloved wife and mother died, the child she conceived survived to be publicly baptized by grandfather Philip Henry. Dedicated to the Lord, the child was named in honor of her mother, Katharine. Speaking briefly at the baptismal service, Matthew Henry was able to comment, "*Although my house be not now so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make me not to grow; and, according to the tenor of this covenant, I offer up this my child to the Great God, a plant out of a dry ground, desiring it may be implanted into Christ.*"

### **To Live Again**

In the months that followed the death of Katharine, Matthew Henry and his daughter continued to reside in the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Hardware. As time progressed, it was obvious that Matthew Henry should marry again. He needed a companion and the child needed a mother. Mrs. Hardware suggested one of her own relatives as a possible match for her son-in-law. The name of the lady was Mary Warburton, the daughter of Robert Warburton, Esquire of Grange, in the county of Chester. Because she was a good and godly young lady, Matthew Henry pursued the relationship with success. On July 8, 1690, the marriage was solemnized at Grange. Mr. and Mrs. Philip Henry were present to rejoice with their son and to receive into the family a new daughter-in-law. After the service, Matthew Henry and Mary went to Chester.

### **A Daily Diary**

On November 9, 1690, Matthew Henry decided to keep a diary of his life's journey. He would be faithful in this endeavor until the end of his life. The first record notes a simple entry of a soul searching for sanctification. "November 9, 1690. This day I concluded my subject of redeeming time from Eph. 5:16; and, among other things, directed as very useful, to keep a short

account every night how the day has been spent. This will discover what are the thieves of our time, and will show us what progress we make in holiness; and now, why should not I make the experiment?"

### **The Birth Of A Baby**

A happy event occurred on April 12, 1691. Matthew Henry and Mary received into their arms and hearts a daughter who was named Elizabeth. Once more grandfather Philip Henry was called upon to administer the ordinance of baptism. With great joy he spoke from the text, Isaiah 43:10, "*Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen.*"

### **In The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death**

As wonderful as the birth of baby Elizabeth was, she would not live to maturity in this world. Heaven was to be her home. Young Elizabeth, a victim of an era of poor medical knowledge, contracted hooping-cough and a fever. Three days before she died, Matthew Henry sensed the worse and wrote about what he was thinking. "The child has had an ill night; she is very weak, and in all appearance worse; but I am much comforted from her baptism. I desire to leave her in the arms of Him who gave her to me. The will of the Lord be done. I have said, if the Lord will spare her, I will endeavor to bring her up for *Him*. I am now sitting by her, thinking of the mischievous nature of original sin, by which death reigns over poor infants."

On July 19, 1692, Elizabeth was gently carried by angels from the arms of her earthly father to the bosom of her heavenly Father. Her days of suffering were soon over and she was safe in the arms of Jesus. Bowed down with sorrow like Job, Matthew Henry did not hide his grief. "*In the morning I had the child in my arms, endeavoring solemnly to give her up to God, and to bring my heart to His will; and presently there seemed some reviving. But while I was writing this, I was suddenly called out of my closet. I went for the doctor, and brought him with me; but, as soon as we came in, the sweet babe quietly departed between the mother's arms and mine, without any struggle, for nature was spent by its long illness; and now my house is a house of mourning. She was a pretty, forward child, and very apprehensive; she began to go and talk, and observe things very prettily. I had set my affection much upon her.*"

### **New Mercies And Miseries**

In due seasons, the Lord was pleased to heal the hearts of Matthew Henry and Mary. Their love was renewed and hope revived that God would be pleased to give them another child. On April 3, 1693, their desires were honored with the birth of a daughter. Who else but grandfather Philip Henry would be asked to baptize the child? The text he chose for the blessed occasion was Genesis 35:5. "*Esau asked, who are those with thee? And he said, the children which God hath graciously given thy servant.*" Two major points were made: (1) children are the gifts of God and, (2) children of the covenant are His gracious gifts.

While new mercies bring great joy, they can also be the harbinger of new miseries. Such was the present situation for in less than three weeks little Mary died. The day and date was Friday, April 21, 1693. After only one day of illness, the child suddenly died. With great grace amidst deep sorrow Matthew Henry simply said, "*The Lord is righteous. He takes and gives, and gives, and takes again. I desire to submit: but, O Lord, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.*" Later, the Lord would enlarge the courage of this saint to counsel others in the same situation. "*They are His by right,*" Matthew Henry proclaimed, "*and His by your consent. You*

*should restore them when He calls for them, and do it freely. I know it is hard, but it must be done."*

### **A Review Of Righteousness**

As 1693 came to a conclusion, Matthew Henry took notice of the year and wrote his thoughts. *"I am now come to the close of another year, which has begun and ended with a Sabbath. I have received many mercies the year that is past. I have been brought low, and helped. My dear wife is spared. I am yet in the land of the living, though many have been taken away. But how little have I have done for God! What will become of me I know not. I find little growth. If any thing hath at any time affected me this year it hath been some sweet desires of the glory which is to be revealed. I have often thought of it as that which would help me in my present duty."*

### **AD 1694 - AD 1699**

### **A Period Of Spiritual Prosperity**

In 1693, Mrs. Hardware passed through the portals heaven. The death of Matthew Henry's first mother-in-law was the last personal sorrow he would have to endure for three years. During this period of personal spiritual prosperity, he was able to enjoy the presence of Christ and success in ministry to souls.

### **A Harvest Of Death**

Beginning in April of 1696, the sorrows of life returned to torment the soul of Matthew Henry. Latter, he would reflect that, *"those who were to be witnesses of Christ's agony, were the witnesses of His transfiguration."* On the 14th day of the month, Matthew Henry's second father-in-law, Mr. Warburton, went to heaven. Then, almost without warning, Philip Henry was dying. At about eight o'clock in the evening [June 23], Matthew went to see his father for the last time. *"As soon as he saw me he said, 'O son, you are welcome to a dying father; I am now ready to be offered up; and the time of my departure is at hand.'" A little after midnight, with his faithful wife holding his hand, Philip Henry went home to heaven.*

On September 8, 1697, Matthew Henry wrote a precious letter to his sisters offering comfort. Little did he know that death would continue to stalk him and all whom he loved. In 1698, his little daughter Ann died after contracting the measles. The day of death was November 16, 1698. Once more Matthew Henry left to wonder and to write. *"We resign the soul of the child to Him who gave it; and, if the little ones have their angels, doubted not of their ministration in death; we have hopes, through grace, that it is well with the child."*

The next year, 1699, brought more distress with the death of his sister and her husband. Three sisters and one son were left behind. What could be done? What should be done? Matthew Henry and his wife agreed. The orphaned children would be taken into their household. It is a matter of record that the children grew to maturity, embraced Christ as Lord and Savior, and forever appreciated their aunt and uncle who came to them in their hour of need.

### **AD 1700 - AD 1704**

### **A New Beginning**

The dawning of the eighteenth century offered a new beginning for Matthew Henry. *"This new-year's day I have solemnly renewed the resignation, and surrender of my whole self to God, as my God, deliberately and upon good considerations.*

*I have renounced the world and the flesh, as knowing they cannot make me happy, and have devoted my whole self to the blessed Spirit, to be enlightened, and sanctified, and so recommended to the Son, as qualified for an interest in His mediation, according to the tenor of the gospel.*

*I, likewise, devote myself, through the Spirit, to the Lord Jesus Christ, as my Advocate with the Father, and my way to Him; by Him to be recommended to the grace and favor of God the Father, relying upon Christ's righteousness alone, for, without Him, I am less than nothing, worse than nothing.*

*I, likewise, devote myself through the Lord Jesus Christ, to God the Father, as my chief good and highest end; as the author of my being, to whom I am obliged in duty; and the felicity of my being, to whom I am obliged in interest. O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant; may I ever be free in thy service, and never desire to be free from it. Nail my ear to thy door posts, and let me serve thee for ever."*

Despite the prevailing presence of death and personal loss that he had already endured in life, Matthew Henry had also known great grace from the hand of God. He was therefore anxious to see what the future would bring.

### **A Season Of Grace**

The years 1700-1701-1702 and 1703 passed swiftly. These were years of unusual Divine favor and personal peace. These were years of spiritual refreshing. Such a prolonged season of grace was needed because, beginning on the Lord's day, August 27, 1704, Matthew Henry would again know severe affliction.

### **A Sudden Seizure**

While reading the Scriptures in the morning worship service Matthew Henry suddenly fainted. He should have rested but instead, he continued to travel and preach. It was a mistake. Within a week he was in bed where he would have to remain for the next three weeks. While Matthew Henry's heart longed to preach Christ, he conceded to his situation and told his family that if he could not go to the house of God, he would at least go to the God of the house.

### **A Second Season Of Grace**

Recovering from his personal ordeal, spiritual strength was added to physical health for the years 1705-1708. These would be years of great grace marred only by the death of his beloved mother in 1707. The years were moving rapidly now. Matthew Henry sensed the passage of time and lamented that he had not been more diligently for the Master. On October 18, 1708, Matthew Henry would record his thoughts in his diary.

*"To-day I have finished the forty-sixth year of my life. My infancy, however, was useless; and even in my mature age, how many months, and days have I spent to little purpose! So that I have lived scarcely one-tenth part of my time. Forgive, O Lord, my idleness and sloth. For me to live may it be Christ."* While it is a characteristic of conscientious men that they are too critical of themselves, it is to their eternal credit that they have such sensitive souls.

**AD 1709 - AD 1712**

## **A Greater Sphere Of Service**

As Matthew Henry grew in grace and in knowledge of the Saviour, his labor of love for the Lord was recognized by many. Numerous congregations invited him to pastor their assemblies. Preaching engagements abounded. Despite opportunities for a greater sphere of service in Hackney, in Manchester, and in London, Matthew Henry declined to do more than what he thought his gifts and talents merited. His heart for the time, belonged to the congregation of Chester.

## **Leaving At Last**

Despite turning down many opportunities, from 1687 onward to go elsewhere, in 1711, Matthew Henry finally found the Lord's permission to leave the Church at Chester. The congregation at Hackney simply would not rest until he came to be their pastor. Finally, he consented. *"In May, 1711, I went to them, and stayed till the end of July, and before I parted with them signified to them my acceptance of their invitation, and my purpose to come to them, God willing, the spring following."* His reasons for leaving Chester are recorded in detail. One reason in particular is poignant. *"Though the people at Chester are a most loving people, and many of them have had, and have an exceeding value for me, and my ministry, yet I have not been without my discouragement there, and those such as have tempted me to think that my work in that place has been in a great measure done; many that have been catechized with us, and many that have been long communicants with us, have left us, and very few have been added to us."* Little did Matthew Henry know that he had but a short time to live.

## **Graduation Into Glory**

While at Hackney (1712-1714), Matthew Henry pursued his pastoral duties with zeal and care all the while very much aware of how little pastoral fruit is truly produced in the lives of people. *"There are,"* he wrote, *"but few who are truly religious; who believe the report of the gospel, and who are willing to take the pains, and run the hazards of religion. Many make a fair show in the flesh, but few only walk closely with God. Where is he that engageth his heart, or that stirs up himself to take hold of his Maker?"*

At fifty-one years of age, Matthew Henry, a faithful servant of the Saviour was wearing out. The spirit was willing to continue but the flesh was weak. The end of his earthly labors came on Tuesday, June 22, 1714 at 8:00 AM. With his eyes fixed on heaven, Matthew Henry fell asleep in the Lord.

*In vain our fancy strives to paint  
The moment after death,  
The glories that surround the saint,  
When he resigns his breath.*

*One gentle sigh his fetters breaks;  
We scarce can say, 'He's gone,'  
Before the willing spirit takes  
Her mansion near the throne.*

*Faith strives, but all its efforts fail  
To trace her heavenward flight;  
No eye can pierce within the veil,  
Which hides that world of light.*

*Thus much (and this all) we know,  
They are supremely blest;  
Have done with sin, and care, and woe,  
And with their Saviour rest.*

*On harps of gold His name they praise,  
His presence always view;--  
And if we here their footsteps trace,  
There we shall praise Him too.*