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THE  
WORKS OF THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

VOL. II.

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THE COMPLETE WORKS  
OF  
THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

VOLUME II.

CONTAINING

AN ESTIMATE OF MANTON, BY THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A.

SEVERAL DISCOURSES TENDING TO PROMOTE

PEACE AND HOLINESS.

TWENTY SERMONS ON IMPORTANT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

FAREWELL AND FUNERAL SERMONS.

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# AN ESTIMATE OF MANTON.

BY THE REV. J. C. RYLE.

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THE publication of a complete and uniform edition of Manton's works is a great boon to the readers of English theology. Many of his best writings have been hitherto inaccessible to all who have not long purses and large libraries. The few who know him would gladly testify, I am sure, that Thomas Manton was one of the best authors of his day, and that his works richly deserve reprinting.

The republication of this great divine's writings in their present form appears to demand a few prefatory remarks. What are Manton's special merits? What claim has a man of the seventeenth century on the attention of 1871? What good thing is there about him that we should buy him and read him? These are reasonable questions, to which I propose to supply an answer in the following brief essay. A calm examination of Manton's real worth appears a suitable accompaniment to a new edition of Manton's works.

The inquiry, it must be admitted, is not an easy one. The materials for forming a judgment are singularly few and scanty. Two hundred years have passed away since Manton was laid in the grave. He died in an age when his principles and his party were very unpopular, and few cared to be known as his friends and admirers. Except the long and exhaustive biography of him by Harris, which has been wisely reprinted in this edition, we possess little information about him. All other impressions about him must be based on a patient analysis of his voluminous posthumous works. Considerable familiarity with these works forms my principal claim on the reader's attention in sending forth this essay.

Let me clear the way by considering an objection which is frequently brought against Manton and other divines of his school. That objection is that he was "a Puritan." I admit the fact, and do not deny it for a moment. A friend and associate of Baxter, Calamy, Owen, and Bates—a leading man in all the fruitless conferences be-

tween Puritans and Churchmen in the early part of Charles II.'s reign—ejected from St Paul's, Covent Garden, by the disgraceful Act of Uniformity—a sufferer even unto bonds on account of his Nonconformist opinions,—if ever there was an English divine who must be classed as a Puritan, that man is Dr Manton. But what of it, if he was a Puritan? It does not prove that he was not a valuable theologian, an admirable writer, and an excellent man. Let me once for all make a few plain statements about the school to which Manton belonged—the school of the English Puritans. It is one of those points in the ecclesiastical history of our country about which the ignorance of most Englishmen is deep and astounding. There are more baseless and false ideas current about them than about any class of men in British history. The impressions of most people are so ridiculously incorrect, that one could laugh if the subject were not so serious. To hear them talk about Puritans is simply ludicrous. They make assertions which prove either that they know nothing at all of what they are talking about, or that they have forgotten the ninth commandment. For Dr Manton's sake, and for the honour of a cruelly misrepresented body of men, let me try to explain to the reader what the Puritans really were. He that supposes they were ignorant, fanatical sectaries, haters of the Crown and Church of England—men alike destitute of learning, holiness, or loyalty—has got a great deal to learn. Let him hear some plain facts, which I will venture to copy from a work written by myself in 1868 (“Bishops and Clergy of other Days”).

“The Puritans were not enemies to the monarchy. It is simply false to say that they were. The great majority of them protested strongly against the execution of Charles I., and were active agents in bringing back Charles II. to England, and placing the crown on his head after Oliver Cromwell's death. The base ingratitude with which they were afterwards treated, in 1662, by the very monarch whom they helped to restore, is one of the most shameful pages in the history of the Stuarts.

“The Puritans were not enemies to the Church of England. They would gladly have had her government and ceremonial improved, and more liberty allowed in the conduct of public worship. And they were quite right! The very things which they desired to see, but never saw, are actually recommended at this day as worthy of adoption by Churchmen in every part of the land! The great majority of them were originally ordained by bishops, and had no abstract objection to Episcopacy. The great majority of them had no special dislike to liturgies, but only to certain details in the Book of Common Prayer. Baxter, one of their leaders, expressly testifies that a very few concessions in 1662 would have retained in the Church of England

at least sixteen hundred of the two thousand who were driven out by the Act of Uniformity on Bartholomew's Day.

"The Puritans were not unlearned and ignorant men. The great majority of them were Oxford and Cambridge graduates—many of them fellows of colleges, and some of them heads or principals of the best colleges in the two Universities. In knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, in power as preachers, expositors, writers, and critics, the Puritans in their day were second to none. Their works still speak for them on the shelves of every well-furnished theological library. Their commentaries, their expositions, their treatises on practical, casuistical, and experimental divinity, are immeasurably superior to those of their adversaries in the seventeenth century. In short, those who hold up the Puritans to scorn as shallow, illiterate men, are only exposing their own lamentable shallowness, their own ignorance of historical facts, and the extremely superficial character of their own reading.

"The Puritans, as a body, have done more to elevate the national character than any class of Englishmen that ever lived. Ardent lovers of civil liberty, and ready to die in its defence—mighty at the council board, and no less mighty in the battlefield—feared abroad throughout Europe, and invincible at home while united—great with their pens, and no less great with their swords—fearing God very much, and fearing man very little,—they were a generation of men who have never received from their country the honour that they deserve. The body of which Milton, Selden, Blake, Cromwell, Owen, Baxter, and Charnock were members, is a body of which no well-informed Englishman ought ever to speak with disrespect. He may dislike their principles, if he will, but he has no right to despise them. Lord Macaulay, no mean authority in matters of English history, might well say, in his famous essay on Milton, 'We do not hesitate to pronounce the Puritans a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.'—Unhappily, when they passed away, they were followed by a generation of profligates, triflers, and sceptics; and their reputation has suffered accordingly in passing through prejudiced hands. But, 'judged with righteous judgment,' they will be found men of whom the world was not worthy. The more they are really known, the more they will be esteemed."

Such was the school to which Manton undeniably belonged. Such is the truth about the Puritans. That they were not perfect and faultless, I freely admit. They said, did, and wrote many things which cannot be commended. Some of them, no doubt, were violent, fierce, narrow-minded sectarians; some were half-crazy fanatics and enthusiasts. Yet, even then, great allowance ought to be made for

the trying circumstances in which they were often placed, and the incessant, irritating persecution to which they were exposed. And where is the great school of religious thought which is not often disgraced by some weaker members? With all their faults, the leaders of the party were great and good men. With all their defects, the Puritans, as a body, were not the men that some authors and writers in the present day are fond of representing them to have been. Those who disparage Manton because he was a Puritan, would do well to reconsider the ground they are taking up. They will find it utterly untenable. Facts, stern facts, are dead against them. They may not admire Puritanism in the abstract, but they will never give any proof that we ought not to admire, value, and study the writings of Puritan divines.

I will now proceed to offer a brief estimate of Manton's merits. For convenience sake, we will examine him in four points of view—as a man, a writer, a theologian, and an expositor of Scripture. Under each of these heads the reader shall have my opinion of the man whose works are at length about to be put within reach of the public in a cheap and accessible form. I ask him to remember that I am no more infallible than the Pope; but I can truly say that my opinion is the result of an acquaintance with Manton's writings of at least twenty years' standing.

1. *As a man*, I am disposed to assign a very high place to the author of these volumes. He strikes me as having been, not merely an ordinary "good" man, but one of singularly great grace and consistency of Christian character.

He lived in an age when party spirit ran very high, and the faults of an adversary were carefully noted and relentlessly exposed. None, perhaps, found that out to their cost so thoroughly as the Puritans, after Charles II. returned to England, and the Commonwealth was overthrown. To blacken the reputation of a Puritan, and vilify him before the public, was too often the way to get promotion; and woe to the unhappy man whose life had given even a semblance of a handle to his opponents!

In an age like this, Manton occupied for several years a very prominent position. He was not a country parson, living scores of miles from London, and absorbed in unobtrusive pastoral labours among a rural population. On the contrary, he was a standard-bearer in the fore-front of the battle—a city set upon a hill that could not be hid—a man who could neither say, nor do, nor write anything without being observed. Did Oliver Cromwell require a minister to offer up prayer at the public ceremony of his undertaking



the Protectorship? Manton was the minister.—Did the Long Parliament want a special sermon preached before its members on that great public event? Manton was frequently ordered to be the preacher.—Did the famous Westminster Assembly want a commendatory preface written to their Confession and Catechisms of world-wide reputation? They commit the execution of it to the pen of Thomas Manton.—Was a Committee of Triers appointed to examine persons who were to be admitted into the ministry, or inducted into livings? Manton was a leading member of this committee.—Was a movement made by the Presbyterian divines, after Cromwell's death, to restore the monarchy and bring back Charles II.? Manton was a leader in the movement.—Was an effort made after the Restoration to bring about a reconciliation between the Episcopal Church and the Nonconformists? Manton was one of the commissioners to act in the matter in the unhappy Savoy Conference.—In short, if there was one name which more than another was incessantly before the public for several years about the period of the Restoration, that name was Manton's. If there was one divine who, willingly or unwillingly, was constantly standing under the full gaze of friends and foes in London, that divine was the Rector of St Paul's, Covent Garden, Thomas Manton.

Now, remembering all this, I ask the reader to observe, that throughout this fiery ordeal Manton preserved a spotless reputation. I am struck with the fact, that the most violent writers of that violent day can lay nothing to his charge of the slightest importance. The most foul-mouthed and rancorous assailants of the Puritans seem unable to lay hold on any weak point in his character. No weapon forged against him seems to prosper, and no dirt sticks to his name. Even Antony à Wood, the prejudiced author of "*Athenæ Oxonienses*," can find nothing to allege against Manton, and is obliged to content himself with contemptible sneers and insinuations.

Some one may perhaps imagine that Manton was a prudent, "canny" man, who avoided doing anything to give offence, and had a keen eye to his own interests. There is not an atom of foundation for such a theory. When it was first proposed to bring to trial and execute Charles I., Manton was one of fifty-seven divines who signed and published a bold protest against the design. When Christopher Love was beheaded by Oliver Cromwell on a charge of treason, Manton accompanied him to the scaffold, and afterwards preached his funeral sermon at St Lawrence Jewry, though the soldiers threatened to shoot him. As to minding his own interests, no man perhaps ever thought less of them than Manton. The mere fact that he refused the Deanery of Rochester, when offered to him by Charles II., and afterwards resigned

St Paul's, Covent Garden, for conscience sake, is plain evidence that he never shrank from giving offence if Christ's truth, in his judgment, seemed to make it necessary.

With all these facts before us, I cannot avoid the conclusion that Manton must have been a man of uncommon graces and singular consistency of character. In no other way can I account for the comparative absence of material faults in his life, even his enemies themselves being judges. A man who went down to the grave at fifty-seven, with so fair a reputation, after spending the prime of his life in London, and mingling incessantly in public affairs, must surely have been no common Christian. It can never be said of him that his lines fell "in pleasant places," and that his grace was never tried and tested! Few modern divines perhaps ever passed through such a fiery ordeal as he did, and surely few ever came out of such with so untarnished a name. He must have been a rare combination of wisdom, tact, boldness, courtesy, firmness, sound judgment, and charity. As a godly man, I do not hesitate to place him in the foremost rank of Puritan divines; and I ask the student of his writings to remember, as they read them, that they are reading the works of one who was eminently a "good man, and full of the Holy Ghost."

2. *As a writer*, I consider that Manton holds a somewhat peculiar place among the Puritan divines. He has pre-eminently a style of his own, and a style very unlike that of most of his school. I will try to explain what I mean.

I do not regard him as a writer of striking power and brilliancy, compared to some of his cotemporaries. He never carries you by storm, and excites enthusiasm by passages of profound thought expressed in majestic language, such as you will find frequently in Charnock, and occasionally in Howe. He never rouses your inmost feelings, thrills your conscience, or stirs your heart of hearts, like Baxter. Such rhetoric as this was not Manton's gift, and the reader who expects to find it in his writings will be disappointed.

I do not regard him as a writer of such genial imagination, and such talent for illustration and similitude, as several divines of his day. In this respect he is not to be compared with Brooks, and Watson, and Swinnoek, and Adams. The pages of those worthy men are often like picture-galleries, in which the pictures are so thickly hung that you can hardly see the walls. Talent of this sort was certainly not in Manton's line. He paints his pictures and exhibits them, and they are always well sketched; but their number is comparatively small.

Learning again does not stand out as conspicuously in Manton's

writings as in the works of some of the Puritans. Judging by the list of quotations and references, you would say, that he had not so many authors at his fingers' end as Owen, or Caryl, or Jenkyns, or Arrowsmith, or Thomas Hall. Yet it is only fair to remember, that nearly all we possess of his works consists of sermons, and that a popular sermon is not the proper vehicle for an exhibition of learning. The great preacher will assimilate and digest the thoughts of other men, and make them his own, without incessantly confusing his hearers by reference to books. My own impression is that this was the case with Manton. I believe he was a great reader, and a very learned man, but that he had few opportunities of exhibiting his store of knowledge. In fact, reason and common sense point out that he could never have held the position he undoubtedly occupied as a London divine, and had such weight attached to his opinions, if he had not been a man of a well-furnished mind.

Manton's chief excellence as a writer, in my judgment, consists in the ease, perspicuousness, and clearness of his style. He sees his subject clearly, expresses himself clearly, and seldom fails in making you see clearly what he means. He has a happy faculty of simplifying the point he handles. He never worries you with acres of long, ponderous, involved sentences, like Goodwin or Owen. His books, if not striking, are generally easy and pleasant reading, and destitute of anything harsh, cramped, obscure, and requiring a second glance to be understood. For my own part, I find it easier to read fifty pages of Manton's than ten of some of his brethren's; and after reading, I feel that I carry more away.

Let no one, moreover, suppose that because Manton's style is easy, his writings show any lack of matter and thought. Nothing of the kind. The fertility of his mind seems to have been truly astonishing. Every page in his books contains many ideas, and gives you plenty to think about. No one, perhaps, but himself could have written such an immense book as he wrote on the 119th Psalm, and yet repeated himself so little, and preserved a freshness of tone to the end. The words of Dr Bates, no mean judge, are worth quoting on this point:—"I cannot but admire the fecundity and variety of his thoughts; that though the same things so often occur in the verses of this psalm, yet, by a judicious observing the different arguments and motives whereby the Psalmist expresses the same request, or some other circumstance, every sermon contains new conceptions proper to the text." This witness is true. If Manton never soars so high as some writers, he is, at any rate, never trifling, never shallow, never wearisome, and never dull. It was a striking remark of one of his cotemporaries, that "he

had heard the greatest men of their day sometimes preach a mean sermon, but he had never heard Dr Manton do so on any occasion."

I close this part of my essay by reminding the reader that Manton's writings, with few exceptions, were originally published under very great disadvantages. Most of them never saw the light till after his death, and were printed without receiving the author's last touches and corrections. This is a fact which ought not to be forgotten. None but an author knows what a vast difference there is between a work in manuscript and a work in type, and how many emendations and corrections are made in the best of literary productions, when the writer sees them in the shape of proofs. For my own part, when I take up a book of Manton's, and remind myself that it never received the author's final corrections, I am amazed that his writings contain so few blunders, and admire him more and more every time that I read him.

3. *As a theologian*, I regard Manton as a divine of singularly well-balanced, well-proportioned, and scriptural views. He lived in a day when vague, indistinct, and indefinite statements of doctrine were not tolerated. The Christian Church was not regarded by any school as a kind of Pantheon, in which a man might believe and teach anything, everything, or nothing, so long as he was a clever and earnest man. Such views were reserved for our modern times. In the seventeenth century they were scorned and repudiated by every Church and sect in Christendom. In the seventeenth century, every divine who would achieve a reputation and obtain influence, was obliged to hold distinct and sharply-cut opinions. Earnestness alone was not thought sufficient to make a creed. Whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian, whether Conformist or Nonconformist, whether an admirer of Luther, or Calvin, or Arminius, every divine held certain distinct theological views. A vague, colourless, boneless, undogmatic Christianity, supplying no clear comfort in life, and no clear hope in death, was a Christianity which found favour with none.

Now, Manton was a Calvinist in his theology. He held the very doctrine which is so admirably set forth in the seventeenth Article of the Church of England. He held the same views which were held by nine-tenths of the English Reformers, and four-fifths of all the leading divines of the Church of England down to the accession of James I. He maintained and taught personal election, the perseverance of the saints, the absolute necessity of a regeneration evidenced by its fruits, as well as salvation by free grace, justification by faith alone, and the uselessness of ceremonial observances without true and vital religion. In all this there was nothing remarkable. He was only one among



hundreds of good men in England who all taught these truths. But in Manton's Calvinism there was a curiously happy attention to the proportion of truth. He never exalts one doctrine at the expense of another. He gives to each doctrine that place and rank given to it in Scripture, neither more nor less, with a wisdom and felicity which I miss in some of the Puritan divines.

Manton held strongly the doctrine of election. But that did not prevent him teaching that God loves all, and that His tender mercies are over all His works. He that wishes to see this truth set forth should read his sermon on the words, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John iii. 16), and mark how he speaks of the world.

Manton held strongly the need of preventing and calling grace. But that did not hinder him from inviting all men to repent, believe, and be saved.

Manton held strongly that faith alone lays hold on Christ, and appropriates justification. But that did not prevent him urging upon all the absolute necessity of repentance and turning from sin.

Manton held strongly the perseverance of God's elect. But that did not hinder him from teaching that holiness is the grand distinguishing mark of God's people, and that he who talks of "never perishing," while he continues in wilful sin, is a hypocrite and a self-deceiver.

In all this, I frankly confess, I see much to admire. I admire the scriptural wisdom of a man who, in a day of hard-and-fast systems could dare to be apparently inconsistent, in order to "declare all the counsel of God." I firmly believe that this is the test of theology, which does good in the Church of Christ. The man who is not tied hand and foot by systems, and does not pretend to reconcile what our imperfect eyesight cannot reconcile in this dispensation, he is the man whom God will bless. Manton was such a man; and because he was such a man, I think his works, like the "*Pilgrim's Progress*," deserve the attention of all true Christians.

4. *As an expositor of Scripture*, I regard Manton with unmingled admiration. Here, at any rate, he is "*facile princeps*" among the divines of the Puritan school.

The value of expository preaching is continually pressed on ministers in the present day, and not without reason. The end of all preaching is to bring men under the influence of God's Word; and nothing seems so likely to make men understand and value the Word as lectures in which the Word is explained. It was so in Chrysostom's days; it ought to be so again. The idea, no doubt, like every good theory, may be easily ridden to death; and I believe that with

ignorant, semi-heathen congregations, a short pithy text often does more good than a long passage expounded. But I have no doubt of the immense value of expository preaching, when people will bring their Bibles to the service, and accompany the preacher as he travels on, or go home to their Bibles after the service, and compare what they have heard with the written Word.

The readers of Manton's works will find in them a very large supply of expository sermons. Few, probably, are aware of the enormous quantity of exposition which his writings contain. They will find full and complete sets of sermons on Psalm cxix., on Isaiah liii., on Matthew xxv., on John xvii., on Romans vi., on Romans viii., and on 2 Corinthians v.; besides regular commentaries on James and Jude. In all these works they will find every verse and every sentence explained, expounded, and enforced, plainly, clearly, and usefully, and far more fully than in most commentaries. Indeed, I defy any one to preach a sermon on any text in the above-mentioned chapters, and not to find some useful thoughts in Manton, if he will take the trouble to consult him.

The value of these expository sermons, in my judgment, is very great indeed; and it is much to be regretted that hitherto they have been so little known. Of course they are not all of equal merit. Sometimes our author digresses, and wastes his time in discussing questions not necessarily belonging to the text. But, taking them for all in all, I unhesitatingly say that Manton's expository sermons are most valuable, and the re-publication of them in a portable form will prove a great blessing to the Church.

The excellence of Manton's expository sermons, I think, lies in the following points. He generally sticks to the subject of each verse, and does not launch off into everything that may be said about each word. He generally gets over the ground with reasonable brevity, and does not weary the reader with an interminable flow of thought upon each expression. As an instance of what I mean, one single folio volume contains all his sermons on Matthew xxv., John xvii., Romans vi., Romans viii., and 2 Corinthians v. In striking contrast with this, Jacomb on Romans viii. 1-4, occupies 622 4to pages; Hildersam on Psalm li. 1-7, fills 720 folio pages with 150 lectures; and Hardy on the 1st and 2d chapters of the 1st Epistle of John, takes up two 4to volumes and 1100 pages! Flesh and blood of ordinary mould cannot stand such lengthy work as this. I hold it to be a prime excellence of Manton's expository sermons that, while they are very full, they are never too long.

For my own part, I am painfully struck with the general neglect with

which these expository works of Manton's have been treated of late. Modern commentators who are very familiar with German commentaries seem hardly to know of the existence of Manton's expositions. Yet I venture boldly to say, that no student of the chapters I have named will ever fail to find new light thrown on their meaning by Manton. I rejoice to think that now at length these valuable works are about to become accessible to the general public. They have been too long buried, and it is high time they should be brought to light. I value their author most highly as a man, a writer, and a theologian; but if I must speak out all I think, there is no part in which I value him more than as a homiletical expositor of Scripture.

It only remains for me to express my earnest hope that this new edition of Manton's works may prove acceptable to the public, and meet with many purchasers and readers. If any one wants to buy a good specimen of a Puritan divine, my advice unhesitatingly is, "Let him buy Manton."

We have fallen upon evil days both for thinking and reading. Sermons which contain thought and matter are increasingly rare. The inexpressible shallowness, thinness, and superficiality of many popular sermons in this day is something lamentable and appalling. Readers of real books appear to become fewer and fewer every year. Newspapers, and magazines, and periodicals seem to absorb the whole reading powers of the rising generation. What it will all end in God only knows. The prospect before us is sorrowful and humiliating.

In days like these, I am thankful that the publishers of Manton's Works have boldly come forward to offer some real literary gold to the reading public. I earnestly trust that they will meet with the success which they deserve. If any recommendation of mine can help them in bringing out the writings of this admirable Puritan in a new form, I give it cheerfully and with all my heart.

J. C. RYLE,

*Vicar of Stradbroke, Suffolk.*

29th October 1870.



# SEVERAL DISCOURSES

TENDING TO PROMOTE PEACE AND HOLINESS  
AMONG CHRISTIANS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

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## THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

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To the Right Honourable ARTHUR, Earl of Anglesey.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOUR,—In the learned ages of the world, it hath ever been somewhat difficult to suit books to the patronage of the learned; judicious, and impartial, such as they know you are who know you. And when such pieces are prepared, and ready to be sent abroad, it is not easy to make choice of a patron worthy of such a treatise. This presented to your lordship, worthy of a good, hath found out the best, patron; and like the incomparable ‘History of Thuanus,’ happy in its author and manner of writing, and in its patron to whom dedicated, fails only in the pen that dedicates it. The things it treateth of express much of your honour’s sentiments, wishes, value, and endeavours to keep the root of Christianity flourishing, that Christians may answer their ancient character, *vivimus, non loquimur, magna*. It savoureth of that moderation which adorns the Christian; it does with candour represent things in which many now dissent, that it would be happy for the Church of Christ if all would, on such terms, forbear each other, bear one another’s infirmities, and show that they believe ‘the Lord is at hand.’ Here, I think, is rightly stated what are the lesser, what are the weightier things of the law; and here are directions which, if followed, would keep peace and love among brethren, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. The author enjoys that sight which holiness and peace, here recommended, did lead him, and will lead others unto. He is *ἐν μακαρίτοις*, and reaps the fruit of those and other his labours, which were designed to help others to happiness also. Be pleased to give the publisher leave to send this into the world, countenanced with your honour’s name and favour, which may induce some to read and consider what you approve, and the author left (as Elijah did his posthumous letter) to make the age wiser, *i.e.*, holier and more peaceable. Assured of this favour from your honour, and hoping for this effect of the work, the publisher leaves it at your lordship’s feet, craving leave to subscribe himself, my lord, your honour’s most humble and obedient servant,

H. T.





# THE PREFERENCE OF DUTIES:

## MORALS BEFORE RITUALS.

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*But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.*—MAT. IX. 13.

THESE words are part of Christ's plea for his converse with publicans and sinners, at which the pharisees took offence.

Three answers he maketh :—

1. From their necessity, represented in a proverbial speech : 'The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.'

2. From the end of his commission : 'I came not,' as the doctor of the church, 'to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

3. Here is a third, suggested in the words read to you, by a saying of the prophet Hosea, chap. vi. 6, where a general reason is intimated, that a ceremony of the Levitical law must not hinder a necessary duty of the moral law. Therefore his conversing with them for their edification was not unlawful nor uncomely, for all rituals must give way to morals ; and so those laws of not accompanying with a heathen, or an unclean person, were never intended to be a bar to an act of mercy or charity, especially spiritual mercy and charity. And therefore, though they held the publicans profane, and unworthy their conversation (therein also stretching the law), yet Christ, without any breach of decorum, might converse with them for their good ; for if acts of mercy and charity are to be preferred before the ceremonies of the worship of God, this act of rescuing and saving a soul is to be preferred before all these ritual restraints of conversation with those who were supposed to be unworthy or legally unclean. And it is notable, these words are brought, not only to vindicate this fact of Christ, but secretly to tax the pharisaical hypocrisy of those who place religion in rituals more than morals. Elsewhere you find Christ at this argument again on another occasion, but to the same end and purpose : Mat. xii. 7. When the pharisees frowned because the disciples plucked ears of corn for their necessity on the Sabbath-day : 'If you had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless.' So that this

one sentence is notably useful to condemn pharisaism, or, which is all one, close hypocrisy, and withal to set us right in the true religion.

In the words observe:—

1. Christ's preface.

2. The words of the prophet quoted.

Christ's preface is to be regarded: 'Go ye, learn what that meaneth.' And in the other place, 'If you had known what this meaneth.' This sheweth that it is a point which deserveth well to be studied by us—this saying of the Lord by the prophet, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.'

Where observe:—

1. The form is negative, but in the sense it is to be understood comparatively: 'I will have mercy *rather than* sacrifice.' So when Paul saith, 1 Cor. i. 17, 'Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the gospel'—not *chiefly* to baptize, but *rather* to preach the gospel; so here it is not a simple negation, but a comparative, that he approved of moral duties more than sacrifice.

2. Observe the two things compared—mercy and sacrifice. In the prophet Hosea there is another word, 'I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.' Mercy comprehendeth the duties of the second table, as the knowledge of God the duties of the first table. Now this piety towards God, and charity towards our neighbour, was more acceptable service towards God than all the rites of their external worship.

*Doct.* There is much to be learned from God's expressing himself in his word that he liketh mercy to them that stand in need of it, better than the offering of the richest sacrifice.

I frame the point so as it may comply with Christ's scope and purpose.

Three things especially we learn in it:—

I. The respective value and preference of duties.

II. The guise of hypocrites, as our Saviour pincheth and taxeth the pharisees often by this point.

III. The excellency of mercy.

I. I shall speak to the respective value and preference of duties, and there I shall lay down these propositions.

1. All that God commandeth must be respected, and obedience endeavoured, partly because his laws are all holy, just, and good: Rom. vii. 12, 'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good'—viz., that law by which he was convinced, and which had brought such trouble in his heart; holy, as being the copy and draught of God's holiness; just, as doing no wrong, no infringement of our just freedom; good, as profitable to direct and perfect our operations—nothing therein is in vain or useless. And partly because they are all ratified by the same authority: Exod. xx. 1, 'God spake all these words,' not *these words*, but *all these words*: 'He that said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, said also, Thou shalt not steal;' as the apostle improveth the observation: James ii. 11, 'For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.' God hath expressed his will in one thing as well as another. And partly because in conversion we have grace given to obey all: Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness.' It

is not only fitted for righteousness, but holiness ; not only for holiness, but righteousness. As the sun is placed in heaven, that he may shed abroad his influence everywhere, and nothing is hidden from his heat and light, so is grace planted in the heart, that it may diffuse itself in a uniform obedience, and that we may be holy : 1 Pet. i. 15, 'As he that hath called us is holy, in all manner of conversation.' The heart is framed to resist every sin, and to observe all the commands of God. The new creature never cometh maimed out of the birth, or wanting any part. Well, then, holiness and righteousness must ever go together, and the obedience to both tables be inseparable. We must 'serve him in holiness and righteousness all our days,' Luke i. 75 ; not in holiness only, or in righteousness only, but in both.

2. Though all are to be respected, yet all duties are not equal, nor all sins equal. A vain thought is not so heinous a crime as the killing of a man ; and to blaspheme and curse God is a greater sin than an idle word, and idolatry than stealing of a shilling. Though all God's laws stand by the same authority, yet the matter of all is not of a like moment and consequence. And therefore the sins and duties are greater and lesser, according to the importance of the law : Mat. v. 19, 'Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so to do, shall be least in the kingdom of heaven.' There are commandments which may be called the least, and there are others which may be called the greatest—*De ordine modum*, the order sheweth the weight. The fundamental article of the covenant is to have God for our God, and to prefer natural worship before instituted, the means stated before manner and time, God before man, parents before others.

3. Simple duties of the first table are greater than duties of the second. Christ himself saith, Mat. xxii. 38, that 'this is the first and great commandment.' They must needs be the greatest, because the object of them is greatest : 'God is greater than man,' as it is said, Job xxxiii. 12. To oppose a prince in person is more than to oppose his mean officer. He that sinneth against his neighbour sinneth against God, but not so immediately, 1 Cor. viii. 12. And 2dly, because this is the great bond on the heart to enforce the duty of the second, the conscience of our duty to God : because I love, or fear, or would honour God, therefore I perform my duty to man for the Lord's sake. And so we turn second table duties into first table duties ; and so alms is a sacrifice, Heb. xiii. 16 ; and so obedience to masters is obedience to God, Eph. vi. 6. And as they enforce, so they regulate ; for we are to obey them in the Lord, and so as will stand with a higher duty we owe to God : Acts iv. 19, 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.' So that these are the greatest duties. But yet this must be understood so as the comparison be rightly made ; the chief of the first table with the chief of the second, the middle with the middle, the least with the least, externals with externals ; otherwise not. Disobedience to parents is more than an irreverent speech of God ; adultery a greater sin than coldness in worship ; stealing than not giving. The people made many prayers, but their hands were full of blood, Isa. i. 15. And therefore the order must be rightly conceived : first, love to God, then love to

men; first, the worship of God, and then duty to men in our several relations; first, acts of outward worship, then acts of outward respects to men—duties of piety, and also justice and charity. Thus the circumstantial and ceremonial duties of the first table must give place to the necessary and moral duties of the second. But when the comparison is duly made in the same rank, those laws which do simply and directly respect God are to be preferred before those duties which concern men; and sins of the highest degree against the first table are greater than sins of the highest degree against the second; and in duties, the love of our neighbour must give place to the love of God; as the love of father and mother, wife, children, friends, brethren: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man hate not father and mother,' &c., 'he cannot be my disciple.' God is chief, and most worthy of respect.

4. Moral and substantial duties should chiefly be made conscience of, and ought to take place of ceremonial observances, though belonging to the first table; for so in the text is mercy preferred before sacrifices. Which is to be regarded to a double end; partly, that we may not rest in them as the better part of our duty. If men submit never so much to external institutions about religion and worship, and think to satisfy their consciences therewith, yet they will not at all be accepted and approved of God. No. He looketh more to moral obedience than positive commands concerning the externals of religion. And therefore you have morals of the first table, or the second, often compared with, and preferred above the externals of religion; as 1 Sam. xv. 22, 'Hath the Lord any delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as idolatry.' It was spoken upon the occasion of Saul's sparing Agag, and the fat of the cattle for sacrifice, when he was to destroy man and beast. At other times it is compared with duties of the second table. The moral duties of the second table are better than the ceremonial duties of the first. If we be scanty in the one and abound in the other, it is a note of a hypocrite: Rom. xiv. 17, 18, 'The kingdom of God standeth not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' If a man do these things, he shall be accepted of the Lord, and approved of men. There are two expositions of that place, both equally probable; the one more general, that righteousness is taken for all new obedience, and peace for peace of conscience, resulting from the rectitude of our actions, and joy in the Holy Ghost for supernatural comfort, which the Holy Ghost puts into our hearts, by reflecting on our privileges by Christ, and the hopes of the world to come. Now, Christianity lieth not in outward observances, but in solid godliness. The other exposition is in a more limited sense; that by righteousness, is meant just dealing; by peace, a peaceable, harmless, inoffensive sort of living; by joy in the Holy Ghost, a delight to do good to one another, not dividing from, or hating, censuring, excommunicating one another for mere rituals, but pleasing one another to edification. These morals are more acceptable to God, and approved of men, than a furious zeal for lesser things, which belong to the ritual part, or external order of religion. It is an argument of a better spirit to be more zealous for morals and substantials than



rituals; certainly without them we shall be of no account with God. And partly to<sup>1</sup> that, when moral duties come in competition with ceremonial, the moral duties at that time must take place of the other, and all positive commands concerning the externals of religion give way to them. The Lord never appointed the ceremonies of the first table to hinder works of mercy prescribed in the second; therefore the mercy must be done, and the sacrifice left undone: as the Sabbath is both broken and kept when there is an evident necessity of preserving the creature. When David fainted, it was a moral duty to relieve him, though there were no bread at hand but the shew-bread: 1 Sam. xxi. 4, 'There is no common bread under my hands.' And Christ urgeth that, Mat. xii. 3, 4, 'Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungered; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for them which were with him, but only for the priests?' In an extraordinary case of necessity, the shew-bread is as common bread. Now the reason is plain, because positives bind only in certain cases, but we are everlastingly obliged to things moral. Therefore externals must give way both to obedience and mercy. Internal acts of worship are never dispensed with.

5. Sacrifices come under a double consideration, as they relate to Christ, the substance of them all, or as external performances rested in by that people.

[1.] In the first consideration, their gospel lay much in sacrifices, and the main duties of godliness were exercised about them, as brokenness of heart: Ps. li. 17, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' And faith in Christ, Heb. ix. 13, 14, 'For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?' And covenanting with God, Ps. l. 5, 'Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice;' and Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'

[2.] In the second consideration, the outward bare offering, considered in itself, without faith and repentance, so God disclaimeth it: Isa. i. 11, 'Bring no more vain oblations;' and Isa. lxvi. 2, 3, 'He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.' Their great confidence was in their sacrifices. God, therefore, sheweth how loathsome these things were to him, without that disposition of soul which should accompany them; being such persons as those were, he would take no offering at their hands. The Lord in all ages is uniform and like himself, in approving and enjoining duty, and in disliking sin. Morals are always prized by him before externals, and an impartial respect to necessary duties was more to him than the

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'too'?—ED.

greatest pomp of outward worship. It was so then, and it is so now. Pride, and malice, and envy, are greater evils than ceremonial uncleanness, and to fear God and work righteousness a greater duty than the best sacrifices. The performance of external duties is not, and never was, a sufficient testimony of true piety ; nay, without the love of God and men, and a uniform obedience to his holy will, is mere hypocrisy.

6. When the breach of a ceremonial precept bringeth with it the transgression of a moral precept, and is (without any absolute necessity) imposed in neglect and contempt of the law of God, then we are to run all hazards, rather than to transgress in the smallest externals ; because though the matter enjoined be but small, yet the contempt of God is a great sin, and our sincerity and obedience to God is a great matter. As for instance, when Antiochus pressed the Jews to eat swine's flesh, which in case of great extremity no question they might do, yet when he pressed them out of contempt of the law, they chose rather to be tortured to death than to yield to it. And for this they are registered martyrs : Heb. xi. 35, ' They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might receive a better resurrection.' There is a plain allusion to the story in the book of the Maccabees, concerning Eleazar, and the woman with her seven sons, so cruelly tortured. But these commands were contrary to the laws of God. Should they have said, ' God will have mercy, and not sacrifice ' ? No ; in such a case God will have sacrifice, and not mercy. Though often advised to yield, they would not abate a jot of their zeal. For though the case be but in externals, yet there is a renunciation of our relation and obedience to God's law. So Daniel opening his windows, and praying three times a day, as he was wont to do, Dan. vi. 10. That circumstance might have been forborne, you will think, in a case of such imminent peril of life. No ; he would neither forbear praying nor opening his windows ; he had wont to do so before, and without dishonouring God and renouncing his profession, he could not forbear to do so now. The promise of audience, made to Solomon at the dedication of the temple, required this ceremony as an effect of faith : 1 Kings viii. 42, 43, ' When they shall pray towards this house, then hear thou in heaven.' And David saith, Ps. v. 7, ' In thy fear I will worship towards thy holy temple.' The temple did shadow forth the body of our Lord Christ, the mediator, in whom only our prayers and services are accepted with the Father, which Solomon respected in looking towards the temple. But the chief reason is, the necessity of profession, and open profession too, against this impious law, contrived by the malice of his enemies to make him afraid. Now, to show he was not frightened from his duty, he openeth his windows, and would not forego any circumstance of his duty to God. I might instance in circumcision (as urged by the false apostles), as necessary to our justification : Gal. v. 2-4, ' Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law : Christ is become of none effect unto you. Whosoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace.' Such is the difference when God calleth us to the profession of a lesser truth. Therefore the case may be such that externals may bear great weight.

7. If the externals of God's worship instituted by himself must give place to mercy, then externals of human institution ought much more to give place to mercy. Sacrifices were of God's institution, and a way of expressing their obedience and thankfulness in his worship; yet God saith, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.' And twice is this applied by Christ—to mercy towards the souls of men in the text, and mercy concerning the bodies of men, Mat. xii., to defend the disciples rubbing the ears of corn, because they fainted for hunger. Then by like reason, where the urging of externals may cross mercy to the souls of men, by depriving them of the means of edification, and the gifts of a lively ministry, or crossing mercy to the bodies of men, by depriving them and their families of their necessary support and maintenance, in such a case they should 'learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.' And the peace and edification of the church is more valuable than that of a private man. In all external positive institutions, the apostles often urge charity to the souls of men, for which Christ died, that we neither wound them with sorrow or sin, as the sure rule to guide us, either in practising or forbearing our liberty: Rom. xiv. 15, 'Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.' So 1 Cor. viii. 11, 'And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died;' that is, the scandalous abuse of this knowledge. In short, if any great damage to the souls or bodies, scandal or inconvenience, should come upon urging these externals, surely they should be forborne; for if it be the will and pleasure of the King of kings and Lord of lords that matters commanded by his affirmative precepts should be forborne for charity's sake, men should be persuaded to remit of the rigour of their impositions in this kind, though the things imposed were indifferent, and the practice of them in some cases a duty; yet if it would destroy charity, we are to leave our prayers, public and private, forsake a sermon to save the life of our neighbour; nay, to quench the fire burning his house; nay, to help his cattle out of the ditch. But I will prosecute this no further.

Let me now make some use of what hath been said.

1. Let us take heed that we be not of the number of them that are serious and zealous in some things, but not in all. Partial zeal hath always been the note of hypocrites; as the pharisees were earnest for externals, but neglected justice and charity. Saul is an instance of partial zeal in destroying the Gibeonites and sparing the Amalekites: 2 Sam. xxi. 2, 'Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.' He was expressly commanded to root out the Amalekites, but he spared Agag out of seeming pity; but useth barbarous cruelty in seeking to root out the Gibeonites, who were to be preserved by oath and covenant; and this he is said to do in his zeal. Not a true zeal, surely, as aiming at God's glory; for it tended much to his dishonour to have them destroyed, who were new proselytes, and professing religion, and had put themselves under God's protection; but a preposterous hypocritical zeal, of aiming, as he pretended, at the welfare of the commonwealth of Israel: his main intent was popular applause, and to gratify them who envied the Gentiles should be incorporated into God's people. An hypocrite's conscience is not uniform,

but brought upon the stage for a turn. I shall give you another instance in Jehu, mighty zealous in destroying the idolatry of Baal, which was the idolatry of the house of Ahab ; but not only cold and indifferent, but resolute against the destroying the calves of Dan and Bethel, which was the idolatry of Jeroboam : 2 Kings x. 28, 29, ' Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. Howbeit, from the sins of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from them, to wit, the golden calves in Dan and Bethel.' Reasons of state persuaded the one, and dissuaded the other. His interest lay in ruining the house of Ahab, and in taking care that the tribes might not revert to the house of David. Thus you see men zealous in some things may grievously sin in others. Therefore, my beloved, be you careful to regard all God's commands in their place ; piety in its place, justice in its place, mercy in its place. The Jews, after they had smarted in Babylon, were zealous against idols, but robbed God of his dues, never took care to restore the riches of the temple. Therefore the apostle taxeth this partiality of zeal : Rom. ii. 22, ' Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege ?' The latter prophets tax them much for that crime. The Jewish form still is hatred of idolatry, insomuch that they think that all the plagues that come upon them is for the idolatry of their fathers, especially in the sin of the golden calf in the wilderness ; and translate the scene of their repentance far enough from themselves, that they may not see their present sins, both in breaking the moral law and despising Christ. And every party is observed to have their form ; one special commandment which they stick unto, which they are zealous for, whilst they neglect the rest. The reproaches of our enemies, saith the pharisee, are only for the fourth commandment,<sup>1</sup> but neglect the rest ; zealous for the Sabbath, but unconscionable all the week after. Oh, let there be no occasion for this ! Others seem to make little reckoning of other commandments, and insist only upon the fifth, obedience to superiors. The charge is sometimes carried between the third and sixth<sup>2</sup> commandment ; they will not swear, but will lie, and slander their neighbours. I mention these things to show what need we have to be uniform in our obedience unto God.

I will mention but one motive. They that do not obey all, will not long obey any, but where their interest or inclinations require it, will break all : as Herod did many things, but one command stuck with him—his Herodias, and that bringeth him to murder God's prophet, Mark vi. 20. One sin keepeth possession for Satan, and that one lust and corruption may undo all. A bird tied by the leg may make some show of escape ; so do many think themselves at liberty, but the fowler hath them fast enough.

2. Let us not rest in outward duties of worship, and place our zeal there, for that is an ill spirit that doth so, it is the badge of pharisaism : they keep a fair correspondence with God in the outward duties of his worship, but in other things deny their subjection to him ; the main reason is, because externals of worship are more easy than the denial of lusts. The sensual nature of man is such, that it is loth to be

<sup>1</sup> Qu. ' The reproaches of our enemies saith, the pharisees are only for, &c.'?—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Qu. ' Ninth'?—ED.



crossed, which produceth profaneness. Wherefore do men ingulf themselves in all manner of sensuality, but because they are loth to deny their natural appetites and desires, and to row against the stream of flesh and blood, and so to walk in the way of his own heart, and the sight of his eyes? Eccles. xi. 9. If nature must be crossed, it shall be crossed only for a little, and in some slight manner; they will give God some outward thing, which lieth remote from the subjection of the heart to him, therefore be zealous for externals; and this produceth hypocrisy, gross hypocrisy, and dissembling, whereby we deceive others, and get a good name among others, by a zeal and fervency for God's outward institutions. And this close hypocrisy or partiality of obedience, is that whereby we deceive ourselves, exceeding in external actions and duties, while we neglect those substantials wherein the heart and life of religion most lieth: such are the love of God, contempt of the world, mortification of the flesh, the heavenly mind and holy constitution of the soul, firmly set to please God in all things.

Once more; that this deceit may be more strong, men are apt to exceed in outward observances, or by-laws of their own; and this produceth superstition, either *negative*, in condemning some outward things which God never condemned, as those ordinances of men which the apostle speaketh of, Col. ii. 21, 'Touch not, taste not, handle not;' or *positive*, in doing many things as duties, and crying them up as special acts and helps of religion, which God never instituted to that end and purpose: Mark vii. 7, 8, 'Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' The spirit and genius of superstition lieth in this—neglecting many things which God commandeth, but multiplying bonds and chains of their own making. Sacrifices enough! God shall have anything for the sin of their souls, Micah vi. 6, 7. Thus these three great evils, profaneness, hypocrisy, and superstition, do all grow upon the same stem and root. First, men must have an easy religion, where the flesh is not crossed, but no mortifying of lusts, no exercising ourselves to godliness. They can deny themselves in parting with a sacrifice, but the weighty things of piety, justice, and mercy are neglected. God shall have prayers enough, hearing enough, if the humour and temper of the body will suit with it. They can fast and gash themselves like Baal's priests; whip their bodies, but spare their sins; but the heart is not subdued to God. They can part with anything better than their lusts, and disturb the present ease of the body, by attending on long and tedious duties, rather than any solid and serious piety.

II. The next lesson which we learn is, the guise of hypocrites; for our Lord intimateth that these pharisees had great need to learn the importance of that truth, as being extremely faulty: 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.'

1. The first thing notable in hypocrites is a partial zeal; they have not an uniform conscience; are very exact in some things, but exceedingly defective and faulty in others. The good conscience is entire and universal: Heb. xiii. 18, 'We trust that we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.' The sincere purpose and intention of his heart was to direct his life according to the will of God in all things. Though every one hath his failings, yet the will

and constant endeavour of a sincere heart is to govern himself universally according to the will of God in all points of duty, whether they concern God or man : as it is said of Zachary and Elizabeth, Luke i. 6, That they 'walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless,' The renewed conscience doth approve all ; and the renewed will, which is the imperial power in the soul, the first mover and principle of all moral actions, is bent and inclined to obey all ; and the new life is spent in striving to comply with all. But it is not so with hypocrites. They pick and choose out the easiest part in religion, and lay out all their zeal there, but let other things go : in some duties that are of easy digestion, and nourish their disease rather than cure their soul, none so zealous as they, none so partial as they. Now, a partial zeal for small things, with a plain neglect of the rest, is direct pharisaism ; all for sacrifice, nothing for mercy. Therefore every one of us should take heed of halving and dividing with God : if we make conscience of piety, let us also make conscience of justice ; if of justice, let us also make conscience of mercy. It is harder to renounce one sin wherein we delight, than a greater which we do not equally affect. A man is wedded to some special lusts, and is loth to hear of a divorce from them. We have our tender and sore places in the conscience, which we are loth should be touched. But if we be sincere with God we will keep ourselves from all, even from our own iniquity, Ps. xviii. 23 ; such as is most incident to us by temper, or custom of life, or course of our interests. To baulk or break with God, out of private reasons of pleasure, honour, or profit, or any corrupt interest, is to prefer these things before God, and to set up another chief good in our hearts, and to prefer it before his favour. Thus in general.

2. They place all their godliness and righteousness in outward observances or external discipline, and so their religion is more in the flesh and in the letter than in heart and spirit ; as the pharisees rested in outward worship only, or some external rules, without the inward and real duties either of the first or second table. Mat. xxiii. 25, they 'cleanse the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess ;' and ver. 28, 'Ye appear outwardly righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.' And everywhere they are represented as painted tombs without, but had much hidden uncleanness and corruption within. There was an outward formality and show of religion, when they denied the power thereof. They should join obedience to God and love to their neighbour with their outward sacrifices ; but these things were of little value and esteem with them. Now, what sacrifices were to them, that external ordinances are to us ; and what their rituals were, the same is the mode and garb of profession among us. And, therefore, external profession, or the performance of external duties according to our way, is not a sufficient testimony of true godliness. For Christ saith, Mat. v. 20, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Their righteousness was an outside righteousness, without that inward constitution of soul which doth belong to a renewed heart, and yet carried on in such a way, and applauded by men, that

the Jews had a saying, That if but two men out of all the world went to heaven, the one should be a scribe and the other a pharisee. O Christians! it is one thing to approve ourselves to God, who searcheth the heart, and another thing to approve ourselves to men, who look only to the outside and fair appearance without. A renewed heart, that is unfeignedly set to please God in all things, is more than all the pomp of external duties. And, therefore, we should study to give evidence of this by making conscience of obedience, as well inwardly as outwardly, growing in holiness all the days of our lives. This will be comfortable to us, and this will be approved of God hereafter, even such an holiness as is manifested in all the parts of our conversation, in outward carriage and secret practice, common affairs, and religious duties; in the worship of God, and charity and justice to men: Phil. iii. 3, 'We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh.' When there is a serious bent, and the true spiritual affections of a renewed heart towards God and man, and we do not rest in outward duties, but are still growing in internal grace, faith, hope, and love, and are still purifying the heart and life, that we may constantly glorify God, and do good to men, this is that which is over and above the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees: our duty is to serve God in the spirit, and to bring the inward man in subjection to him, without which externals are of little worth.

3. They were more in love with ceremonies than with substance. Sacrifices, which belonged to the ceremonies of the law, were in high esteem with them; but godliness, justice, and mercy were of little regard. And as outward things were preferred before inward, so the lesser things before the weighty: as to their duties, tithing mint, and anise, and cummin; but they have omitted the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, faith. 'These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone,' Mat. xxiii. 23. Formality and hypocrisy maketh men wise about that which is least to purpose. They make a business about ceremonies, but neglect the substance of religion. They enlarged their phylacteries, which were scrolls of parchment on which the law was written, but took no care of having the law of God written upon their hearts. Hypocrisy is an odd, trifling zeal, which runneth out upon little things. So for avoiding sin, Mat. xxiii. 24, 'They strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.' More scrupulous in a little sin than a great; in small sins very scrupulous, in greater matters very adventurous. And because this is one of the main things here intended, I shall give you instances and reasons.

[1.] Instances to prove that hypocrites have such an odd conscience that straineth greatly at a small thing. We have them everywhere out of the word of God. Herod's making conscience of his oath, but not of shedding innocent blood: 'The king was sorry: nevertheless, for his oath's sake,' &c., Mat. xiv. 9, he caused John the Baptist to be beheaded. A sinner is holden in bonds which he might lawfully break; rather than Herod will break his rash oath John shall lose his head. Of such an odd complexion is the conscience of carnal men. So the Jews, when Judas laid down the hire of his

treason, and cast the money at their feet, Mat. xxvii. 6, 7, 'It is not lawful,' said they, 'to put it into the treasury, because it is the price of blood;' pretending to be afraid to offend in the least things, when they had offended in the greater. They boggled not at betraying innocent blood, and yet they would not meddle with the gain when it was thrown back to them. Another instance of the like conscience is John xviii. 28, 'Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the judgment-hall, and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover.' They were careful to avoid legal pollution, and yet they were at the same time seeking the life of the Lord of glory. Just such another fit of conscience cometh upon them a little after: John xix. 31, They went to Pilate, and desired that the bodies might not hang upon the cross on the Sabbath-day, lest their great feast should be defiled. And thus you see that through formality and custom men may be strictly bound in conscience to perform the duties of ceremonial or external worship, whose consciences notwithstanding never scruple to violate the most weighty precepts of the law. Just of this nature was that solemn case of conscience, Zech. vii. 1, 2, about the keeping of their fasts, when the prophet telleth them they had higher matters to mind, the executing of judgment and showing mercy, and breaking off their oppressions, ver. 10. The Lord would not answer their cases about the fasts, some of which were needless and superfluous; but would have them break off their known sins. Hitherto may be reduced the harlot in the Proverbs, that enticed the young man to adultery, and yet she had her peace-offerings: 'I have peace-offerings with me this day,' Prov. vii. 14, with the 18th; made conscience of her sacrifices, but not of her honesty and chastity. Yea, also, we may reckon to this rank of conscience the instance of Bathsheba. Even the children of God have much hypocrisy, and an odd kind of conscience, when they give way to wilful and heinous sin. The passage is, 2 Sam. xi. 4, 'David took her, and committed adultery with her, for she was purified from her uncleanness.' That uncleanness was ceremonial only; but in the meantime she was committing a moral uncleanness, from which she was not so careful to keep herself. Well, then, the consciences of men being of such a make, well might God say, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;' substance, and not ceremony. And we have all need to take heed to ourselves that we do not boggle and startle at a shadow, when in the meantime we are stupid and senseless in sins of another nature and deeper dye, and preserve a tenderness in lesser things, when we give way to injustice and oppression.

[2.] The reasons why hypocrites never find their consciences awake so much as in matters ceremonial. I shall give these two:—

*First*, Because these are of easiest digestion, and will sooner satisfy the conscience. Slight duties suit best with a heart that is unwilling to come under the power of religion. Conscience is like the stomach, which naturally desireth to fill itself; and when it cannot digest solid food, it sucketh nothing but wind. They that place their confidence in their own righteousness, presently fly to their external shows. The right stating of the duties of the law, according to their due weight,



would convince them of their mistake. Therefore, that the ell may be no longer than the cloth, they confine their obedience to external observations, and so make their religion as commodious for themselves as they can. Adultery is nothing to eating flesh in Lent, or breaking some external rule. The apostle saith, 'Going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to the righteousness of God,' Rom. x. 3. Not to the way of solid righteousness and broken-hearted acceptance of Christ, but an external appearance of duty is most for their interest.

*Secondly*, To put the better pretence upon their vile practices, therefore they must have some external ceremonies to countenance them. Thus the pharisees, to countenance their oppressions, 'for a pretence make long prayers,' Mat. xxiii. 14. That made them be trusted by the destitute widows, whom they deceived. As Jezebel would have the formality of a fast, for the better colour of her impiety in destroying Naboth. In days of fasts, they were wont to inquire after heinous offenders, to execute the law upon them, as you may see Num. xv. 7, 8, and Ps. cvi. 30, so to stop God's wrath. So some expound that, Joel i. 14, 'Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders;' that is, call a court who may inquire into offenders, that they may be punished and reformed. So Jezebel calls a fast, for the better pretence of a court to take cognisance of Naboth's sin.

4. They make conscience, not only of externals instituted by God, but mostly of those that are devised by themselves. This very abstinence from converse with publicans was a thing not forbidden by the law, but an institution of their own; because of their frequent converse with heathens, they looked upon them as a polluted sort of men, and unworthy of their converse. So that this helpeth us to another character of hypocrites; they are zealous for human traditions, but transgressors of divine commands; God's precepts are little regarded; and so prefer their own institutions before the laws of God. So Mat. xv. 3, 'By your traditions ye transgress the commands of God;' namely, by holding that if a man had devoted his estate to God, he might choose whether he would relieve his parents. Men are mightily in love with their own customs, and place much religion in man's injunctions, and care not how they loosen or weaken the obligation of God's law by their impositions. The pharisees' great fault was, they would outdo the law in externals; and then, when they had set their post by God's post, they were more zealous for man's inventions than for God's ordinances; and this zeal is shown either by imposing upon themselves or others—imposing upon their own consciences when they lie in chains of their own making; on others when they make their own practice the rule of others: Mat. ix. 14, 'The pharisees fast, John's disciples fast, thy disciples fast not.' To this head we may reduce Saul's rash restraining the people by his injunction and oath, 1 Sam. xiv. 32, with ver. 38. The people had gotten a great victory, and Saul, out of his hypocritical zeal, commandeth them to fast till evening. Now what was the issue? The people, through faintness, could not pursue the enemy; Jonathan, that heard nothing of this curse and oath, was in danger of his life; and the people, being

hunger-starved, for greediness did eat the flesh and the blood together, contrary to God's law, Gen. ix. 4; Lev. xvii. 13, 14. Mark there: though hunger could not force to transgress Saul's commandment for fear of death, yet it forced them to break God's express commandment in eating the blood, which was so expressly forbidden. And at night, when God answered him not, Saul thought somewhat was in the matter; he goeth to cast lots, and the lot had found out Jonathan. Saul never thinketh of the breach of God's law—first by himself, in imposing a rash and sinful oath; or of the people's sin, in eating the blood with the flesh; and presumeth it must needs be the breach of that oath which he had imposed; and so, like a hypocrite, preferreth his own groundless command before the law of God, and of punishing this with rigour when the other is never spoken of. I have brought this story to show you how zealous men are for their own impositions on themselves and others, and how easily they can dispense with God's laws to comply with their own; and how drunkenness, whoredom, and fornication do not seem such odious crimes as violating man's customs and institutions and private rules of their own.

5. Hypocrites have a conceit of their own righteousness, and a disdain of others. This was the very case in the text; they were angry because Christ entered into the house of Matthew, a publican, and did eat meat there, though he had converted him. And elsewhere it is made the characteristic note of the pharisees: Luke xviii. 9, 'They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.' Men that fly to externals are soon puffed up, and nothing humbleth so much as a sound sense of religion; and a solemn exercising ourselves to godliness maketh us see and loathe ourselves and pity others. I find the pharisees enemies ever to the freeness of God's grace to sinners and the work of repentance, and that the bringing of poor sinners to salvation was the great eyesore. They call Christ a wine-bibber and a friend of publicans and sinners, because of his social and free, but sanctified, converse with all sorts of men, Mat. xi. 18. He would not take such a strict form as John did, because he would not seem to justify their pharisaical rigours. So again, Luke xv. 2, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;' because he went to them as a physician to heal their souls. Christ refused not familiarity with the poorest and worst, as was needful for their cure, and would not observe the humour of proud pharisaical separation, by the parables of the lost sheep and the lost groat, but confuteth it; sheweth that this is the spirit of the elder brother who envied the prodigal's return; and telleth them in another place that 'Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before them,' Mat. xxi. 31; pleadeth the cause of the woman against Simon the pharisee, Luke vii. 39. 'If this man had been a prophet, he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touched him,' Luke vii. 47: Christ telleth him, 'She had much forgiven her, for she loved much.' Well, then, a penitent, broken-hearted sense of our own being indebted to grace, and tender compassion towards others that yet go astray, discovereth the true spirit of the gospel. But to stand aloof from others by a foolish singularity,

Isa. lxxv. 5, which say, 'Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.' Some, though impure and profane, counted all others unholy and unclean but themselves. This inclosing spirit is the spirit of pharisaism; an outside strictness, without that faith, love, charity, meekness, usefulness, and humility, which is the very soul and life of Christianity. Usually gifts and outward strictness puff up men with a vain conceit of their own righteousness, and a censuring and despising others. This one text sheweth us both the spirit of pharisaism and the spirit of Christianity. The pharisees, who abounded in external observances, censured Christ for his free converse, disdained these penitent people whom he invited to a better life. But now true religion maketh men humble and lowly in their own eyes, by acquainting them with the desert of sin and their own misery, and maketh men pitiful and compassionate towards others, more ready to help than to censure them, and to use all ways and means to do them good. But when men would shine alone in the repute of holiness, they are envious to those who penitently return to their duty, as those servants who had wrought all the day envied those that came in at the last hour, Mat. xx. 12, or as the elder brother envied the prodigal, or Simon the pharisee repined at Mary Magdalene's<sup>1</sup> observance of Christ. They esteem much of their own works, merits, sufferings, and righteousness. Oh, take heed of this spirit!

[1.] The use of this branch is to press us to regard internals more than externals, and the substantials more than the ceremonials of worship, and a broken-hearted, thankful sense of our Redeemer's love before a legal righteousness. Inward worship is love, fear, and trust; outward worship is prayer, praise, hearing, reading. Outward worship is not a duty at all times, but inward worship is a duty at all times; for we should always love God, and delight in God, and trust in God. Outward worship may be omitted for a work of mercy, and in case of invincible necessities; but inward worship may never be omitted, never dispensed with. We always owe love and renewed obedience to God, and must depend upon him and delight in him. Outward worship may be counterfeited; and external worship, without holiness, is highly displeasing to God, and never pleasing but when it is in conjunction with it. Hypocrites may abound in externals, but hypocrites will not delight themselves in the Lord, nor heartily devote themselves to him, so as to serve, please, and glorify him: the inward graces cannot be counterfeited, but the outward expression may.

[2.] Be more careful of the substantials than of the ceremonials of religion, and to mind the power of godliness more than the form. The substantials of religion are the love of God and our neighbour. The circumstantials are those ways of worship which God hath appointed, whereby we are visibly to express our love to him. Now, our main care should be, in the first place, to be entirely devoted and subject to God. That was Job's character, 'one that feared God and eschewed evil,' Job i. 11. To do that we do out of love to him; obeying his laws as our rule, and depending upon his rewards as our happiness. And as to men, let us be faithful, and walk holily in our

<sup>1</sup> There is no good reason for believing that the woman alluded to was Mary Magdalene.—ED.

places, callings, and relations, being just and kind unto all, but having an exceeding dear love for our fellow-saints and everlasting companions. This is more pleasing to God than the costliest sacrifices, than all our flocks and herds, or any outward thing that we do for him. I take notice of those words of God to Solomon, when he was building him a magnificent temple, 1 Kings vi. 11, 12, 'And the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying, Concerning this house which thou art building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them, then will I perform my word to thee, which I spake to David thy father.' God hath more respect to Solomon's faithful obedience than to that glorious building. So far do morals exceed ceremonials in religion.

[3.] That you prefer a broken-hearted, thankful sense of our Redeemer's love, before legal and conceited righteousness of our own. Christ's love to sinners is that which the pharisees mainly stumbled at. An external show and fair pretence of a good life, which had no bottom of regeneration, was the superficial righteousness of the pharisees. Nicodemus, who had been of that sect, wondered when that was pressed upon him, John iii. 4, 5. An outward conformity, which was more in show than in substance, in form and fashion than in power, was their religion; abstaining from gross sins, as murder and adultery, but not purifying the heart from lusts. Murder they made conscience of, but not of envy, malice, and hatred; theft, but not covetousness and close extortion; adultery, but not wantonness or looking upon a woman to lust after her, as you may see at large, Mat. v. Thus Christ presseth us to exceed the pharisees, who turned all obedience into an empty formality, wherein they puffed up themselves as mere men, and so had never been at the market of free grace. All their wares were their own, and their righteousness of their own spinning, and therein stood upon their own bottom, without seeking the reconciling and renewing grace of the Redeemer: Luke xviii., The proud pharisee pleadeth his own merits rather than God's grace, but the publican pleaded mercy. It was long ere Paul was brought to count all but dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Phil. iii. 7-9. But on the other side, a Christian, though he maketh progress in holiness, yet, from first to last, cherisheth a broken-hearted sense of his own wants, and a thankful remembrance of his Redeemer's love, who is all in all with him, both for justification and sanctification. Before pardon, the sinner is weakened and humbled with a sense of his lost condition, and then there is a constant watchfulness, with repentance and brokenness of heart, which followeth pardon; 'loving much, because much is forgiven,' Luke vii. 47; and loathing himself, in his own sight, because of his vileness and sinfulness, after God is reconciled to him, Ezek. xvi. 63. This is the frame of heart which suiteth with the gospel state.

III. I come to the third thing—the value of mercy. I shall not speak of it at large, but only with respect to this scripture.

1. It is better than sacrifice. To sacrifice is to serve God, but to show mercy is to be like God: Luke vi. 36, 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful.' Now, conformity to God is more noble than subjection to God; it hath more of perfection and



blessedness in it especially, than a particular external mode and way of subjection to God.

2. As it is preferred before sacrifice, so it is preferred before the external observation of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the great institution conducing to the enlivening of other duties; mercy, not only to the souls of men as here, or bodies of men, but mercy to the bodies of the beasts: to help a beast out of a pit is a Sabbath-day's work, Mat. xii. 11, 12.

3. It is more than gospel externals of worship. The apostle had spoken of being 'not hearers of the word only, but doers also,' James i. 22. Then saith, verse 27, 'Pure religion, and undefiled before God, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world.' Is this religion, to come to church, to hear the strictest preachers? Doth the apostle reckon this another part of religion? No; but to 'visit the fatherless and widows.' They who are truly religious have such a deep sense of God's mercy to them that they are changed into the divine nature, that they cannot but pity the miserable and afflicted. Now, the ordinances of the gospel are rational, not so carnal and servile as the ordinances under the law.

4. It is more excellent than all the gifts of the gospel. The gifts of the gospel were glorious things—gifts of tongues, gifts of healing, gifts of knowledge and utterance: 1 Cor. xii. 31, 'Covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet I show you a more excellent way.' What is that? Love, charity, mercy. Though abilities are excellent things, to be able to edify and instruct others, yet no way to be compared with the grace of charity, and the performing all our duties to our brethren out of love to God.

5. I cannot say it is above the graces of the gospel—faith and love to God; yet this I can say, that those graces are not real unless accompanied with charity: 1 John iv. 20, 'If a man say he loveth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for if a man hateth his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' He speaketh there of love to Christ, ver. 19, 'We love him because he loved us first.' There may be a great deal of hypocrisy in professing and pretending love to Christ; and so he doth, certainly, who doth malign and persecute Christians, or not show mercy to them in their distresses. We daily converse with men, meet with objects of charity, whom we should pity; but if we do not this, which is the more easy, we will not do that which is more difficult.

6. It is the qualification of finding mercy: Mat. v. 7, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Compassion to other men's bodies and souls gives this hope and confidence of finding mercy with the Lord, and that is all our hope.

It will be inquired into at the day of judgment: Mat. xxv. 35-41, 'For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick or in prison,

and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Oh, then, let us make conscience of this duty more than ever we have done.

## A DESCRIPTION OF THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION.

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*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.—*  
PHIL. III. 3.

AMONG those that entertain thoughts of religion there ever have been and will be many contests who are the true church and people of God. The lazy place their plea and claim in external observations; the serious look to the vitals and heart of religion, and cannot satisfy themselves in an outward form without the life and power. This was the very difference between the true Christians and a certain sort of persons who took upon them to be the circumcision. The Jews are often called 'the circumcision,' therefore Christ is said to be 'a minister of the circumcision,' as being sent to the people that were to be circumcised, Rom. xv. 8. And Peter is called 'the apostle of the circumcision,' Gal. ii. 7, 8, as being appointed to deal with that people. Now these Judaizing Christians, who had a zeal for the ceremonies of the law, did falsely boast themselves to be the only people of God and the true circumcision. This was the difference between them: who were to be accounted the true circumcision, the Jewish zealots, who placed their justification in the ceremonies of the law, or those who adhered to Christ only, and looked for the mercy of God through him? 'We are the circumcision' say they, excluding the other and better sort of Christians. The one had the form, and the other the effect and power; the one were circumcised outwardly, the other spiritually. The apostle judgeth for the latter; the former were *κατατομή*, 'the concision,' who, instead of circumcising themselves, did cut asunder the church of God; but the sound believers were *περιτομή*, 'the circumcision' indeed, as being circumcised by the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by Christ, Col. ii. 11. They were the true children of Abraham, who did indeed perform that for which circumcision was intended, 'for we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'

In the words we have a threefold description of the true circumcision: how they stand affected to God, Christ, self.

- I. They worship God in the spirit.
- II. They rejoice in Christ Jesus.
- III. They have no confidence in the flesh.

I. They worship God in the spirit. This clause may be interpreted :—

1. In opposition to the legal ordinances. So it is taken, John iv. 23, 24, ‘But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.’ The Jewish worship is in a sense called carnal, the Christian spiritual: Heb. vii. 16, ‘A carnal commandment;’ Heb. ix. 10, ‘Carnal ordinances imposed on them till the time of reformation;’ and ‘shadows,’ Heb. x. 1. Now the Lord would have a spiritual worship, and the truth of what was in these shadows, these external forms, he allowed (instituted in the infancy of the church), so that they ‘worship God in the spirit’ is, they have embraced the true worship of the gospel, and serve God, not by the carnal rites of the law, but by the pure rational worship of the gospel. This is part of the sense.

2. It implieth worshipping God with the inward and spiritual affections of a renewed heart: Heb. xii. 28, ‘Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.’ Worship flowing from grace, engaging the heart in God’s service, is that which God prizeth; therefore a Christian should not rest in an external form: ‘God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit,’ Rom. i. 9.

3. It doth also imply the assistance and continual influence of the Holy Spirit: Eph. vi. 18, ‘Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;’ and Jude, ver. 20, ‘Praying in the Holy Ghost.’

The *doctrine* is this: That a true Christian is known by his worship, or is one that doth worship God in the spirit.

Here I shall show you :—

1. What is worship.

2. Why a true Christian—(1.) doth worship; (2.) why in the spirit.

1. What is worship? It is either internal or external. The internal consisteth in the love and reverence we owe to God; the external in those offices and duties by which our honour and respect to God is signified and expressed.

[1.] Internal. The soul and life of our worship lieth in faith, and reverence, and delight in God above all other things: Ps. ii. 11, ‘Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling;’ such a delight as will become the greatness and goodness of God. Worship hath its rise and foundation in the heart of the worshipper; there it must begin. In our high thoughts and esteem of God especially two things—love and trust.

(1.) Love: Deut. vi. 5, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.’ We worship God when we give him such a love as is superlative and transcendental, far above the love that we give to any other thing, that so our respect to other things may stoop and give way to our respect to God.

(2.) The other affection whereby we express our esteem of God is trust, which is the other foundation of worship: Ps. lxii. 8, ‘Trust in

the Lord at all times, pour out your hearts before him.' Delightful adhesion to God, and an entire dependence upon him; if either fail or be intermitted, our worship faileth. If delight: Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' Isa. xliii. 22, 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.' They that love God and delight in him cannot be long out of his company; they take all opportunities and occasions of being with God. So dependence and trust: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;' James i. 6, 7, 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.' Dependence begets observance: they that distrust God's promises will not long keep his precepts. If we look for all from him, we will often come to him and take all out of his hands, be careful that we do not offend him and displease him.

[2.] External. In those offices and duties by which our honour and respect to God is signified and expressed—as by invocation, thanksgiving, praise, obedience. God will be owned both in heart and life, in all these prescribed duties by which our affections towards him are acted. If God did not call for outward worship, why did he appoint the ordinances of preaching, praying, singing psalms, baptism, and the Lord's Supper? God, that made the whole man, body and soul, must be worshipped of the whole man; therefore, besides the inward affections, there must be external actions; in short, we are said to worship God either with respect to the duties which are more directly to be performed to God, or in our whole conversation.

(1.) With respect to the duties which imply our solemn converse with God, and are more directly to be performed towards him—such as the word, prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and sacraments—surely these must be attended upon, because they are special acts of love to God and trust in him. And these duties are the ways wherein God hath promised to meet with his people, and appointed us to expect his grace: Exod. xx. 24, 'In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and bless thee;' and Mark iv. 24, it is a rule of commerce between us and God, 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given.'

(2.) In our whole conversation: Luke i. 74, 75, 'That we should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.' A Christian's life is a constant hymn to God, or a continued act of worship; ever behaving himself as in the sight of God, and directing all things as to his glory. He turneth second table duties into first: James i. 27, 'Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world;' Heb. xiii. 16, 'To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased;' Eph. v. 21, 22, 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' Now a true Christian maketh conscience of all this; as of internal worship, so external; as of solemn and sacred acts, so of a constant awfulness of God.



2. Secondly, The reasons.

1st, Why a true Christian doth worship God.

2dly, Why in the spirit.

1st, For the worship itself.

[1.] Because they have a deep sense of his being and excellency impressed upon their hearts.

(1.) His being. These two notions live and die together: that God is, and that he ought to be worshipped and served, Heb. xi. 6; the one immediately floweth from the other. The first commandment is, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me;' the second, 'Thou shalt not worship a graven image.' If God be, worship is certainly due to him: they that have no worship are as if they had no God. The psalmist proveth atheism by that: Ps. xiv. 1, 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;' and ver. 4, 'They call not upon God.'

(2.) His excellency. They have a clearer sight of God than others have, and are more acquainted with him than others are; and, therefore, are more prone to worship. When God had proclaimed his name, and manifested himself to Moses, Exod. xxxiv. 8, 'He made haste, and bowed himself to the earth, and worshipped.' None so ready and forward: Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.'

[2.] Because they have a principle within them which inclineth them to God: their hearts are carried to him, as light bodies are carried upward. There is such a grace as godliness, 2 Pet. i. 6, and distinct in the notion from righteousness and holiness: 1 Tim. vi. 11, 'Follow after righteousness, godliness;' 2 Pet. iii. 11, 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' What is the notion then of it? It is *tendentia mentis in Deum*—an impression left upon their hearts, which causeth a bent and tendency towards God, as the fountain of their mercies, the joy of their souls, and the centre of their rest. There is such an inclination—in some stronger, in others more remiss; but in all that are made partakers of a divine nature in some good degree, so as ordinarily to prevail over the inclinations of the flesh. As holiness noteth purity of life, so godliness an inclination to God.

[3.] Because of their relations to God, which they own. God pleadeth his right: Mal. i. 6, 'If I be a father, where is mine honour? if I be a master, where is my fear?' A father must have honour, and a master must have fear; and God, who is the common parent and absolute master of all, must have both. A worship and honour in which reverence and fear is mixed with love and joy; or, as the owning of a king implieth submission to his government, so the owning of a God adoration and worship.

2dly, Why in the spirit?

[1.] Because worship without the spirit is like a body without the soul; it is but the carcase of a duty. The heart must be the principal and chief agent in this business: Mat. xv. 8, 'This people draweth nigh to me with their mouths, and honoureth me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.' There is no love to God, rather an habitual aversion from him.

[2.] External worship is but a means to the internal ; as prayer, hearing, reading, receiving, tend to promote love, trust, heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, mortification, purity of life and conversation. Now, as the means are only valuable with respect to their end, so are these duties of hearing, reading, singing. Diligence in the use of means is good, but those acts that are conversant about the end are better,—such as the love of God, and delight and trust in God ; for *finis est nobilior mediis*. Nay, amongst the internal acts, as they are means to one another, so the nearer respect they have to the last end, the more noble they are ; as faith is more noble than bare knowledge, because knowledge tendeth to faith, Ps. ix. 10 ; love than faith, because faith tendeth to love, Gal. v. 6 ; 1 Cor. xiii. 13. Faith causeth love, and serveth as the bellows to enkindle this holy fire ; and in love, desire maketh way for delight, as its noblest act. And accordingly must all things be valued as they suit the great end, which is the enjoying of God.

[3.] A man doth not partake of the gospel blessing till he doth serve God in the spirit ; that is, till he be made partaker of the regenerating grace and actual influence of the Holy Spirit.

(1.) Of his regenerating grace : Rom. vii. 6, ‘That we should serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.’ New life is the principle of evangelical obedience ; and when we are renewed by the Holy Ghost, we walk in newness of conversation. The gospel is a ministry of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 8. It not only requireth duty, but giveth power to perform it. The letter of the law requireth, but giveth no principle or inclination to do it ; that is from regenerating grace, or the law written upon our hearts : John iii. 6, ‘That which is born of Spirit, is spirit ;’ that is, suited, inclined, disposed, fitted for a spiritual life.

(2.) Actual influence. He still worketh in us what is pleasing in God’s sight ; helpeth to mortify corruption : Rom. viii. 13, ‘If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.’ To perfect holiness, Heb. xiii. 21, that so we may serve God in all purity of life. We cannot get, nor keep, nor act, nor increase grace of ourselves, if forsaken by the Spirit of grace ; the foulest sins would become our pleasure, and the most unquestionable duties our burden. If he withdraw his quickening influences, you can do nothing.

Use 1. It reproveth those that either do not worship God, or by halves, or not worship him in the Spirit.

1. It disproveth their confidence that do not worship God. There are an irreligious sort of men that neither call upon him in public or in private, in the family or in the closet, but wholly forget the God that made them, and at whose expense they are maintained and kept.

[1.] Let me reason with you as men. Wherefore had you reasonable souls, but to praise, and honour, and glorify your Creator and Preserver ? If you believe there is a God, why do you not call upon him ? The neglect of his worship argueth a doubting of his being. If there be such a supreme Lord, to whom you must one day give an account, how dare you live without him in the world ? All the creatures glorify him, Ps. cxlv. 10 ; they passively, but you have a heart and a tongue to glorify him actually. Man is the mouth of the crea-

tion, to return to God the praise of all that wisdom, glory, and power which is seen in the things that are made. Now, you should make one among the worshippers of God.

[2.] Let me reason with you as Christians. Are you a Christian, and have such advantages to know more of God, and will you be dumb and tongue-tied in his praise? Have you the discovery of the wonders of his love in your redemption by Christ, and do you see no cause to own and acknowledge him? Have you no necessities to bring to the throne of grace? In Christianity, you know his particular providence and redemption by Christ, and should you eat, and drink, and trade, and sleep, and never think of God? Have you no pardon to sue out, no grace that you stand in need of, that you should live like a brute beast, go on in the circle of trade, business, comforts, and never think of God? You profess you know him, but in your works you deny him, and sin doubly, both against the light of reason and Christianity. All that are not avowed atheists must have some worship.

2. It cutteth off their confidence that worship him by halves. They are of many sorts.

[1.] Some worship him in public, but never in private and secret; though Christ hath given us direction to enter into our closets, Mat. vi. 6. And surely every Christian should make conscience of secret duties. There are many disputes about praying in families, though those that take their daily bread should seek God together; but there can be no dispute about praying in secret, for the precept that requireth prayer first falleth upon single persons before it falleth upon families and churches: 1 Thes. v. 17, 'Pray without ceasing.' This cannot concern families and churches; they are done at stated times, when they can conveniently meet; but every man in secret is to be often with God. Christ was often alone: Mark i. 35, 'He went out into a solitary place, and there prayed.' Surely Christ had not such need to pray as we have, nor such need of retirement, his love to God being always fervent, and so in no danger of distraction. God poured out the Spirit that we might go apart and mourn over soul-distempers, Zech. xii. 10-14. Now, God's precious gifts are not given in vain. So, Acts x. 2, Cornelius 'prayed to God alway.' Therefore, certainly, secret prayer is a necessary duty of God's worship, to be observed by all that acknowledge God to be God, and the world to be ruled by his providence, or themselves to have any need of his grace and pardon, or hope for anything from him in the world to come. Therefore, if you have any sense of religion, or think you have any need of particular commerce with God, you should make conscience of secret prayer.

[2.] Others that make conscience of external worship, prayer, hearing, reading, singing of psalms, but not of internal worship, faith, love, and hope. The external forms were appointed for the acting or increasing of internal grace; and so they superficially are conversant about the means, and never mind the end. External worship is sensible and easily done, but internal worship is difficult. External worship may procure us esteem with men; but internal, acceptance with God. External worship satisfieth blind conscience, but doth not better the heart. External worship may puff us up with a vain confidence,



but internal worship maketh us lament spiritual defects. We have not that purity of heart, that deep sense of the world to come, that absolute dependence upon God, which may quiet our souls in all exigencies. Surely they are better Christians that have the effect of the ordinances than they that have only the formality of them. The external duty may procure us toil and wearisomeness to the flesh, but the internal worship bringeth us comfort and peace. The more faith in Christ, and love to God, and lively hope of eternal life, the more is the soul comforted. Therefore, if you will always lick the glass, and never taste the honey, go on in a track of duties, but you will have no comfort in them. In short, they that go on in external duties may be said in some sense to serve God, but they do not seek after him. In pretence they make God the object of their worship, for they do not worship an idol; but they do not make him the end of their worship. A man maketh God the end of his worship when he will not go away from God without God; when he looketh to this, that his delight in God be quickened, his dependence upon God strengthened, his hatred of sin increased, and by every address to God is made more like God.

[3.] It reproveth and disproveth those that put on a garb of devotion when ministering before the Lord, but are slight and vain in their ordinary conversation. A man should be in some measure such out of duty as he giveth out himself to be in duty; for his whole life should be, as it were, a continued act of worship: Prov. xxiii. 17, 'Let not thy heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.' We should still live in a dependence upon God, and in subjection to him: Ps. xvi. 8, 'I have set the Lord always before me: he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' In point of reverence, and in point of dependence, because we are in danger to miscarry, both by the delights of sense and the terrors of sense. If a reverence of and a dependence on the great God do still possess our hearts, we shall carry ourselves more soberly as to the comforts of the world, and not be easily discouraged and daunted with the fears of the world. This is our preservative, and maketh us true and faithful to our great end.

3. Those that do not serve God in the spirit. You should worship God so as it may look like worship and service performed to God, and due to God. It is spiritual worship God requireth, and is ever pleased withal. He 'seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth,' John iv. 23; and this is most agreeable to his nature: John iv. 24, 'God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' When hearts wander, when affections do not answer expressions, is this like service and worship done to an all-seeing and all-knowing spirit? Is there any stamp of God upon the duty, of his majesty, goodness, and great power?

Use 2. For the comfort of good Christians. Here is their carriage towards God briefly set down—they 'worship God in the spirit.' A Christian is described by his proper act, *worship*; and by the proper object thereof, *God*; and by the proper part and seat thereof, *in the spirit*. Do you worship him with reverence, and with delight and affection, with a trust, hope, and confidence?

1. With reverence. Considering God's majesty and our own vileness. The majesty of God: Mal. i. 14, 'For I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts.' Slight worship argueth lessening thoughts of God. Do you know to whom you speak? It is a contempt of God if you think anything will serve the turn; you have mean thoughts of him, and do not consider him as you ought to do. So our vileness: Gen. xviii. 27, 'Who am I, that am but dust and ashes, that I should speak unto God?'—dust as to the baseness of his original, and ashes by the desert of sin. In our nearer approaches to God, thus should we think of ourselves.

2. With delight and affection, as our reconciled father in Christ. So he is to us as the well-spring of all grace and goodness. The great work of the gospel is to bring us to God as a father, Gal. iv. 6. God as a judge, by the spirit of bondage, driveth us to Christ; but Christ, by the spirit of adoption, bringeth us back again to God as a father. This is the evangelical way of worshipping, that in a child-like manner we may come to God.

3. With trust, hope, and confidence. He knoweth all our wants, can relieve all our necessities: Ps. lvii. 2, 'I will cry unto God most high, who performeth all things for me.' Worship would be a cold formality if we had to do with one that knew us not, or had not sufficiency and power to help us. But God is omniscient and all-sufficient, and hath promised to hear and help us in our straits; he knoweth our necessities when we know them not.

II. We come now to the second character: *And rejoice in Christ Jesus.*

Thence observe:—

*Doct.* That the great work of a Christian is a rejoicing in Christ Jesus, or a thankful sense of our Redeemer's mercy.

In opening this point I shall use this method:—

1st, Show you what is this rejoicing in Christ.

2dly, I shall prove that Christ is matter of true rejoicing in his person, offices, benefits.

3dly, That Christians are not sound and sincere in their profession, unless they do keep up this rejoicing in Christ.

First, What is this rejoicing?—(καυχόμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). The original word implieth such a degree of joy as amounts to glorification or boasting, or such an exultation of mind as breaketh out into some sensible expression of it. There are in it three things:—

1. An apprehension of the good and benefit which we have by Christ; for otherwise how can we rejoice and glory in him? 1 Cor. i. 30, 31, 'But of him ye are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption; that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' Christ is all that our whole rejoicing may be in him, who hath enlightened us with the knowledge of the gospel, and showed us the way of salvation, and is the author of our justification and sanctification, and of our deliverance from all calamities, and from death itself. These benefits are the cause of our rejoicing—namely, the promises of the gospel, sealed by his death, and the graces conveyed to us by his Spirit. We rejoice and glory in him, as the only and all-sufficient

Saviour. They that gloried in circumcision gloried in their entrance into the legal covenant; they became debtors to the law, but Christ hath ratified it in the new covenant by his blood; therefore here is more abundant cause of rejoicing.

2. Due affections of contentment, joy, love, exultation of heart, that followeth thereupon. A blessing ourselves in our portion, that this great happiness is fallen to our share, offered to us, at least, if not possessed by us. The very knowledge of Christianity breedeth joy: Acts viii. 8, 'And there was great joy in that city,' that is, upon the tendering of the gospel; much more when we believe in Christ, and embrace his religion, and resolve to become his disciples. They received his word gladly, Acts ii. 41. His doctrine must be welcomed with the heart, with all love and thankfulness. It is said of the jailor, Acts xvi. 34, that he 'rejoiced, believing in God, and all his house.' He was but newly recovered out of the suburbs of hell, ready to kill himself but just before; so that a man would think it were easier to fetch water out of a flint, or a spark of fire out of the bottom of the sea, than to expect or find joy in such a heart; yea, though still in danger of life for treating those as guests whom he should have kept as prisoners, yet he rejoiced when acquainted with salvation by Christ. More especially should we rejoice when the comfort is sealed up to our consciences: Rom. v. 11, 'Not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' The eunuch, when he was baptized, he 'went on his way rejoicing,' Acts viii. 39.

3. An expression of it, by an open profession of Christ's name, both in word and deed, whatever it costs us. They are said to rejoice in Christ Jesus who in those times could profess his name, though with hazard and self-denial. As the Thessalonians, who received the word with much affliction, and much assurance and joy in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thes. i. 6. And it is expressed by the parable of the man that found the true treasure, and for joy thereof sold all that he had to buy the field, Mat. xiii. 44. They are willing to lose all other contentments and satisfactions for this; Christ is enough. They needed this joy to encourage them against the trials which they then underwent for Christ's sake and the gospel's sake.

Secondly, That Christ is matter of true rejoicing, for they are fools that rejoice in baubles and trifles. A Christian's joy may be owned and justified. When Christ's birth was celebrated by angels, it is said, Luke ii. 10, 'Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy.' Here is joy, and great joy in salvation by Christ. And Mary: Luke i. 46, 47, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour.' Surely there is no cause of joy wanting in God, and in God coming as a Saviour. In short, in Christianity, all is fitted to fill our hearts with delight and joy.

1. The wonderful mysteries of our redemption by Christ. Thereby, [1.] A way is found out for our reconciliation with God, and how that dreadful controversy may be taken up, and heaven and earth may kiss each other, 2 Cor. v. 19. Surely this is glad tidings of great joy to self-condemned sinners, who stood always in fear of the wrath of God and the flames of hell. What joy is it to a condemned man,

that is ready every day to be taken away to execution, to hear that his peace is made, that pardon may be had, if he will seek it and sue it out !

[2.] A distinct relation of a defeat of the great enemies of our salvation—death, hell, the devil, and the world. He hath not only made our peace with the Father, by the blood of his cross, but vanquished our spiritual enemies, and triumphed over them, Col. ii. 14, 15. Long enough might we have lain in prison before the utmost farthing had been paid, or done anything to procure our deliverance, if our compassionate Redeemer had not taken the work in hand : had he turned us to any creature, we had been helpless. It was he purchased grace to overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh ; that quickened you when you were dead in sin ; that put Satan out of office, and ‘ delivered us from the present evil world,’ Gal. i. 4. And is not this matter of rejoicing to us ?

[3.] That hereby he hath not only abolished death, but brought life and resurrection to light, 2 Tim. i. 10. By entering into that other world, after his sufferings, he hath given us a visible demonstration of the reality of the world to come, and in his gospel discovered a blessedness to us, which satiateth the heart of man and salveth the great sore of the whole creation. If God had made nothing richer than the world, the heart of man would have been as leviathan in a little pool.

2. In the promises of Christ there is matter of joy. In the general, God is your God, and that is more than to have all the world to be yours : compare Gen. xvii. 7, ‘ I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee,’ with Ps. cxliv. 15, ‘ Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.’ We have an eternal and all-sufficient God to live upon, and from whom to derive our joy and comfort ; a God infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness to be our portion. And where is matter of joy and comfort, if not in God ? Behold the difference between carnal men and the children of God ; the world is their portion, and God is ours ; and who is better provided for ? More especially we are told, 1 Tim. iv. 8, that ‘ Godliness hath the promises of this life, and that which is to come.’ Heaven and earth are laid at the feet of godliness ; what would you more ? Surely we have full consolation offered to us in the promises of the gospel ; he can want nothing to his comfort who hath an interest in them. To instance, in the lowest blessings, those which concern this life : God is our God, that can cure all diseases, overcome all enemies, supply all wants, deliver in all dangers, and will do it so far as is for our good ; and desires of anything beyond this are not to be satisfied, but mortified, Ps. lxxxiv. 11. But then for the more excellent promises of the new covenant, which concern another world, such as the pardoning of our sins, the healing our natures, and the glorifying of our persons : 2 Pet. i. 4, ‘ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.’ The pardon of all our sins, which are the great trouble and burden of the creatures. Who will rejoice like the pardoned sinner,



who is discharged of his debt, eased of his burthen, and hath his filth covered? Ps. xxxii. 1, 'Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' Oh, the blessedness of the man! He is like one fetched back from execution. Then the taking away of the stony heart, and the giving of an holy and heavenly heart. Oh, what matter of joy is this, to have all things necessary to life and godliness! What is the trouble of a gracious heart, but the relics of corruption? Rom. vii. 24. Paul groaneth sorely, but yet blesseth God for his hopes by Christ, ver. 25. Renewing grace is dearly bought, and plentifully bestowed, Titus iii. 5, 6; and graciously offered to those that will seek after it: Prov. i. 23, 'Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.' And this promise to be fulfilled by a divine power, 2 Peter i. 3. Oh, what a comfort is the Redeemer's grace to a soul that hath been long exercised in subduing sin! It is true it groans while it is a-doing, yet the very groans of the sick show that life and health is sweet. Healing, renewing grace maketh other things sweet; as your whole duty to God, it maketh it become your delight. But the great promise is eternal life: 1 John ii. 25, 'And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.' That is a matter of joy indeed. What! to live for ever with God! the forethought of it reviveth us; the foretaste of it is a kind of heaven upon earth, 1 Peter i. 8. The certain hope of it will swallow up all grief and sorrow, Rom. v. 2, 3. So that there is no question but that in the promises of Christ there is matter of great joy.

3. The enjoyments of Christianity are very pleasing. I add this to show you, that it is not all in expectation, if we consider not only what we shall be, but what we are. For the present:—

[1.] We have peace of conscience, Rom. v. 1; Mat. xi. 29; Phil. iv. 7. Rest for our souls is anxiously sought after in other things, but only found in Christ's religion, and living according to the precepts and institutions thereof. As Noah's dove found not a place whereon to rest the sole of her foot, so we flutter up and down, but never have any firm peace of heart and conscience, till we submit to Christ, and take his counsel.

[2.] A sense of the love of God: Rom. v. 5, 'Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given unto us;' and 1 Peter ii. 3, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.'

[3.] God's presence with us, and our communion with him: 1 John i. 3, 4, 'And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, that your joy may be full;' and John viii. 29.

[4.] Access to God, with assurance of welcome and audience: John xvi. 24, 'Whatsoever ye ask in my name, ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.'

[5.] The foretastes of the life to come, Rom. viii. 23, and 2 Cor. iii. 5. So that all is to stir up this delight and joy in the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The precepts of Christ show that we have matter of rejoicing in him. What are the great duties required? To love God! Now what pain is it to delight in the Lord as our all-sufficient portion? To be mindful of him, and meditate of his excellencies and benefits: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' Is it any toilsome thing to come in a childlike manner and

unbosom ourselves to him, and beg the renewed testimonies of his love to us, especially when set awork by the Holy Ghost? Gal. iv. 6. To believe in Christ is difficult, but pleasant; to consider the Lord Jesus as the suitable remedy for the lapsed estate of mankind, both as to his work with God and us, Heb. iii. 1. He came to destroy sin and misery. Whenever we reflect upon Christ, what do we find but ample grounds of joy? John xiv. 2, 'Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me;' that is, to get off our trouble, consider we have an all-sufficient God, and an all-sufficient mediator: Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Repentance requireth sorrow for sin, only as it tendeth to joy and comfort, Mat. v. 5. It is a tormenting, but a curing sorrow. The word of God taketh care that a penitent, who hath foully miscarried, should not be swallowed up of over-much grief, 2 Cor. ii. 7. In the general, repentance and mortification are our physic to expel the noxious humours that would bring us, not only to death, but to damnation, and to keep the soul in due plight and health. And then, for self-government, we are to bridle our passions and appetites: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' The bridling our passions, it is but forbidding us to be miserable, and throw out everything that would disquiet the soul. Christ's great care was that the reasonable creature might live in peace and holy security, therefore hath discharged our cares, and sorrows, and fears: our cares, that they might not distract our minds: Phil. iv. 6, 'Be careful for nothing;' and 1 Peter v. 7, 'Cast all your care upon the Lord.' These prohibitions show you the goodness of Christ. He hath made it unlawful for you to be troubled, and to perplex your minds with anxious and distrustful thoughts. Oh! what pleasant lives we might live if we could entirely cast ourselves into the arms of God, and refer all things to the wisdom and powerful conduct of his providence! The scripture is as plentiful also in forbidding sorrow: 1 Thes. iv. 13, 'Sorrow not as those that are without hope.' Dejection and anguish of spirit is your sin. So for fear: Isa. xli. 10, 'Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God;' Heb. xiii. 6, 'So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.' What should a Christian fear? Dangers by the way?—God is his helper. To be cast into hell when he goeth out of the world?—Christ hath showed him how to flee from wrath to come; he feareth it with a fear of caution, so as to shun it, but not with a fear of perplexity, so as to disquiet and perplex his soul, for Jesus hath delivered him from wrath to come, 1 Thes. i. 10. Christianity is as contrary to sadness and misery, as life to death, and light to darkness. For the other, the crucifying and bridling of our lusts, which carry us to the good things of this world, why, that is troublesome, to be debarred of the delights which nature affects; but here are no rigorous exactions, but such as are agreeable to the reasonable nature. Christ hath forbidden us no pleasure but what may be a sin or a snare to us; he would not have man to degenerate and turn beast. All Christ's restraints are but necessary cautions for our safety. Is it burdensome to a man to keep out of danger's way, and to avoid

such things as are destructive to his soul? If a friend will take out of our hands the knife with which we would not only cut our fingers but our throats, is he to be blamed? or is he your enemy who forbiddeth you to drink poison? Forbidden fruit costs dear in the issue.

5. For those duties which concern our neighbour. To love all men, to do good to all men, it is a blessed and godlike thing to be giving rather than receiving, Acts xx. 35. The delight of doing good is much more than the cost; it is to be as earthly gods among our neighbours. This work rewardeth itself, because it is such a contentment and satisfaction to our minds. For justice: To do as we would be done to; what more pleasant? We would have others bound by these laws, why not ourselves? It is horrible to require one measure of dealing from them to us, and use a quite contrary ourselves. Would men hate, defraud, oppress others, and expect nothing but kind and righteous dealing from them? this is a gross partiality. Therefore, as our interest calleth for justice, so doth our conscience, and it would be a trouble and an affront to reason not to do it. So for fidelity in our relations. These things maintain order of families, and conduce to our safety and private peace, as well as they belong to our duty to God; so that on which side soever we look, we see what matter of joy there is in Christ.

I come now to show you:—

Thirdly, The reasons why Christians are not sound and sincere in their profession unless they keep up this rejoicing in Christ.

1. We do not else give Christ his due honour, if we do not esteem him who is so excellent in himself and so beneficial to us, even to a degree of rejoicing. The magnifying of Christ was intended by God in the whole business of our redemption and deliverance, that we might esteem him, delight in him, count all things dung and dross that we might gain him. Now we do not comply with this end, but have mean thoughts of his grace, if we be not affected with joy at it.

It argueth a double defect:—

[1.] That we are not sensible of our great misery without him; nor—

[2.] Affected with the great love he hath showed in our deliverance, and the felicity accruing to us thereby.

[1.] We are not duly sensible of our great misery without him. Alas! what could we have done without his passion and intercession? If he had not died for sinners, what had you to answer to the terrors of the law, the accusations of your consciences, the fears of hell, and approaching damnation? How could you look God in the face, or think one comfortable thought of him? Had we wept out our eyes, and prayed out our hearts, and never committed sin again, this would not have made God satisfaction for sin past: paying new debts doth not quit old scores: long enough might we have lain in our blood ere we could have found out a ransom which God would accept; besides him there is no Saviour. And then for his intercession: If he did not hide your nakedness and procure you a daily pardon, you would not be an hour longer out of hell. If he did not bring you to God, you could have no comfortable access to him; your prayers would be cast back as dung in your faces, if the merit of his sacrifice did not make



them accepted. And shall all this be told you, and owned by you for truth, and will you not rejoice that God hath found a ransom and provided an intercessor for you? Surely it cannot be imagined that you are sensible of your case if you be not thankful for your remedy.

[2.] You are not affected with the great love which Christ hath showed in your deliverance, nor the felicity accruing to you thereby. It is said, Eph. iii. 19, 'That you may know the love of God, which passeth knowledge.' Before he had pressed them to make it their study to comprehend the height, length, and breadth; and when they have all done, the love of Christ passeth knowledge. Christ would pose men and angels with an heap of wonders in delivering us from misery and sin. Now should not we rejoice and make our boast of this? Surely we vilify and bring down the price of these wonders of love, if we entertain them with cold thoughts, and without some considerable acts of joy and thankfulness. Shall angels wonder, and we, the parties interested, not rejoice? Certainly we are not affected with the great felicity accruing to us. Felicity cannot be sought after without the highest affections and endeavours. Now, if we can rejoice in trifles, and not rejoice in the love of God, how can we be said to mind these things?

2. A man's joy distinguisheth him. There is a seeking joy and a complacent joy: Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.' It is good to observe what it is that putteth gladness into our hearts: the love of God, and his goodness in Christ. Every man is discovered by his complacency or displacency: Ps. iv. 7, 'Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased;' Rom. viii. 5, 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.' To rejoice in the creatures, as accommodating or pleasing the flesh, is the joy of the carnal; to rejoice in outward ordinances and privileges, without other things, is the joy of the hypocrite and common professors. Let us carry it a little farther. The devils and damned are out of all hope and possibility of joy; the angels and glorified saints rejoice in the full fruition of God: there is *gaudium vite* and *gaudium patriæ*; there is the joy of the way, and the joy of our home at our journey's end. The latter is set forth, Ps. xvi. 11, 'In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' The other is in Christ, and the use of his healing and recovering methods, and the desires and hopes of the glory to come. This is the joy, or well-pleasedness of mind, which is proper to us in our journey: 1 Pet. i. 8, 'In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' The comfort of travellers differeth from that which a man hath in heaven: it is a joy that he hath as he is going home; and therefore how should the serious Christian be described, but by his rejoicing in Christ Jesus?

Use 1. To reprove those that cannot keep up their rejoicing in Christ Jesus as soon as they are mated with any calamity or affliction in the world. Is not grace better than any natural comfort taken from us? Heb. xii. 11. 'No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable

fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Surely, when we have such cause of rejoicing in Christ, to be dejected with every little adversity showeth weak faith. Have you peace with God and communion with him at every turn, and shall a blasting of the creature destroy all your comfort? Have you hope of glory, and cannot you bear a disappointment in the world? Are you assured of the care of your heavenly Father, and his particular providence over you, and yet so full of grudging and repining thoughts when he retrencheth you a little and blasteth your worldly probabilities? Surely it argueth too much addictedness to present comforts and love of the ease of the flesh. Have you a due sense of the world to come, and that better and enduring substance, and yet complain so bitterly of worldly losses? Have you a God in covenant with you who hath engaged all his love, wisdom, and power, to help you, and to turn all things to your good? Rom. viii. 28. What though the trial of your faith and patience be very sore? Did you capitulate with God and bargain with him how much you would suffer the flesh to be crossed, and that in such sharp afflictions you would be excused, that your gourd should not be altogether smitten and dried up? You can bear any other cross but this; but was this excepted out of your resignation?

2. It reproveth those that cherish a carnal rejoicing. A believer should rejoice in Christ Jesus: Luke x. 19, 20, 'Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, &c. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' Rejoice not in this, that you are in dignity and honour; this is not your felicity, nor the direct way to your felicity. The higher you climb, your station is the more dangerous: they are safer that stand on the ground, than those that are on a pinnacle. Rejoice not in that you have abundance of earthly riches, but that you have a taste of higher and better things. Be not affected so deeply with lower mercies as to overlook the special mercies that accompany salvation. Rejoice not in this, that you have convenient habitations in this world, but in that you have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; in that you have comely bodies, but that you have hopes of a better resurrection, when this mortal shall put on immortality; not in the nobility of your birth, but that you are born of the Spirit: John i. 12, 13, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Rejoice not in that you have great friends to stand by you, but that in the new covenant you are made a friend of God, as Abraham was. Not in that you have costly accommodations to please the flesh: no, this may be the bane of your souls: Rom. viii. 13, 'They that live after the flesh shall die;' and Luke xvi. 25, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.' (Dives fared deliciously every day, and Lazarus was full of sores, and desirous to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.) 'Thou hast received thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.'

*Use 2.* Is to encourage you to rejoice in Christ Jesus. Now, because we are helpers of your joy, 2 Cor. i. 24, and God is best pleased with this frame of spirit, 1 Thes. v. 16, I shall resume the main discourse; and

- I. Handle the nature of it.
- II. Show you whether this joy may be without assurance.
- III. Show you the spiritual profit of it.
- IV. The helps or means by which it is raised in us.

I. For the nature of it. It is an act of love, begotten in us by the sense of the love of Christ, revealed in the word, and shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, whereby the soul is more affected with delight in the grace of the Redeemer than with all other things whatsoever.

In which description observe:—

1. It is *an act of love*. The acts of love are two—desire and delight. They both agree in this: that they are conversant about good, and are founded in esteem. We think it good. They differ, because desire is the motion and exercise of love, and delight the quiet and repose of it. Desire is expressed in that speech, Ps. lxxiii. 8, ‘My soul followeth hard after thee.’ A believer cannot forbear to seek after God. Desire of union keepeth us up in the pursuit of him. Delight is expressed in that form of speech, Ps. xvi. 5, 6, ‘The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup. The lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place; yea, I have a goodly heritage.’ He hath all his joy, and pleasure, and contentment in God. Desire supposeth some want or absence of the valued object; delight, some kind of enjoyment. Either he is ours, or might be ours if we would ourselves; for the offer is cause of joy, as well as the enjoyment. If our desires have reached the lovely object, it is cause of joy, or if it be within our reach; as when Christ and his benefits are offered to us, and left upon our choice. And therefore it is said, Jonah ii. 8, ‘They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies.’ *Their own*, though not possessed by them, yet they are offered to them: they might have been their own, if they did not exclude themselves. The object is in a sort present, and brought home to us in the offers of the gospel.

2. It is an act of love *begotten in us by the sense of the love of Christ*. For love only begetteth love: 1 John iv. 19, ‘We love him, because he loved us first.’ The object of love is goodness. Now, we loved God in Christ, for the goodness that is in him, the goodness that floweth from him, and the goodness we expect from him; all these attract our love.

[1.] The goodness that is in him, moral and beneficial. Moral, which is his holiness: Ps. cxix. 140, ‘Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.’ If we love his law for the purity thereof, then certainly we must love God. How else can we study to imitate him? for we imitate only that which we love and delight in as good. Then for his beneficial goodness, Ps. c. 5, ‘For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations;’ and Ps. cxix. 68, ‘Thou art good, and doest good.’

[2.] The goodness that floweth from him; not only in our creation, but our redemption by Christ, which is the stupendous instance of his

goodness to man : Titus iii. 4, ' After the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared,' &c. (In the creation there was *φιλανθρωπία* ; in redemption, *φιλανθρωπία*.) That God found a ransom for us, and so great as his only-begotten Son, this was love and goodness indeed.

[3.] The goodness we expect from him, both in this world and the next. Here reconciliation and remission of sins, which is a blessing that doth much draw the heart of man to delight in Christ ; for she loved much to whom much was forgiven, Luke vii. 47. We keep off from a condemning God, but draw nigh to a pardoning God. Therefore the apostle saith, Heb. vii. 19, The bringing in of this better hope by the gospel doth cause us to draw nigh to God. Being at peace with God, and reconciled to him, we may have access with confidence and boldness to the throne of grace ; are no more at distance with God, looking upon him as a consuming fire. The gospel giveth us liberty to come to him, and expect the mercy and bounty of God, through Jesus Christ. So in the next world eternal life and glory, which is our great reward, merited by Christ : Mat. v. 12, ' Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' This is a solid, lasting, satisfying, substantial good. Worldly joys are but seeming, they appear and vanish in a moment, every blast of temptation scattereth them. Well, then, offers of pardon and life by Christ are the matters of this joy, as they free us from the greatest miseries, and bring us to the enjoyment of the truest happiness. If you ask me, then, Why is a Christian described rather by rejoicing in Christ than by rejoicing in the pardon of sins and eternal blessedness ? I answer, Because Christ is the author and procurer of these things to us ; and by our joy we express not only our esteem of these benefits, but our gratitude and thankfulness for the mercy and bounty of God, and the great love of our Redeemer.

3. The description sheweth how the sense of this goodness is begotten in us. The love of Christ is *revealed in the word and shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost* ; and I add, *believed by faith, and improved by meditation.*

[1.] It is revealed in the gospel, or word of salvation which is sent to us. Therefore it is said, Acts xiii. 48, ' When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God ; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Surely the mind of man, which is naturally discomforted and weakened, and strangely haunted with doubts and fears about the pardon of sin and eternal life, is mightily revived and encouraged with these glad tidings of this salvation dispensed to us by a sure covenant, Heb. vi. 18. And if the Gentiles that heard these things were glad, proportionably we should be glad, for the gospel should never be as stale news to sinners, or as a jest often told. Our necessities are as deep as theirs, and the covenant standeth as firm to us as it did to them ; therefore if we have the heart of a guilty man, it should be as welcome to us.

[2.] It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. So much is asserted by the apostle : Rom. v. 5, ' The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' Our dry reason cannot give such a lively sense of these comforts as



the revelation of the Holy Ghost. And this is the difference between a believing by tradition and believing by inspiration. Believing by tradition giveth us but cold thoughts of these mysteries, but believing by inspiration warmeth the heart, and reviveth it with an unspeakable joy, and is called 'tasting the good word,' which is the privilege of those who are enlightened by the Spirit, Heb. vi. 4; and a tasting that the Lord is gracious, 1 Peter ii. 3; which much differeth from the common reflection upon those things which flesh and blood may give us, or the bare reports of men stir up in us. The Spirit's light is lovely, and ravisheth and transporteth the soul; and where it is permanent and rooted, it effectually changeth the soul. Some are altogether careless, not affected at all with these things, as the habituated worldly sinner, 1 Cor. ii. 14. They are folly to him; for spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. Some are to a degree affected by the common work of the Spirit, Heb. vi. 4-6; but it is not rooted, it is not predominate<sup>1</sup>, so as to control other affections and delights; they have a rejoicing in the offers of pardon and life, but it is a joy that leaveth some darling sin still predominant. But there is a third sort that have such a taste of these things that they are renewed and changed by it, Heb. iii. 6. Now, then, if you would have this rejoicing in Christ Jesus, you must apply yourselves to Christ, in the use of the appointed means, for the renewing of your natures; for love and delight are never forced, nor will be drawn forth by bare commands and threatenings, yea, and not by the proposal of promises, though the enjoyments be never so great and glorious. This may a little stir us, and this is the matter of joy, but not the cause of joy. But this joy proceedeth partly from the inclination when the heart is suited, and partly from the attractive goodness of the object; and both are powerfully done by the Holy Spirit, as the heart is renewed, and the object is most effectually represented by him, Eph. i. 17, 18. And this we must wait for.

[3.] It is *received and believed by faith*. This is often told us in the Scripture: 1 Peter i. 18, 'In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;' and Rom. xv. 13, 'The God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing.' We cannot be affected with the great things Christ hath done and purchased for us till we believe them. There is in faith three things—*assent, consent, and affiance*.

(1.) *Assent*, or a firm and certain belief of the truth of the gospel concerning Christ as the only sufficient Saviour, by whom alone God will give us the pardon of sins and eternal life: John iv. 42, 'We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world;' and John vi. 69, 'We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.' When we are verily persuaded of this, as we are of anything that appeareth true to us, this stirreth up joy. Others have but a hearsay knowledge, not a believing assent. Surely Christ is a delectable object; what hindereth, then, but that we rejoice in him? Nothing but want of faith; for if this be true, we so necessitous, and he so all-sufficient a remedy, why are we not so affected with these things as the worth of them doth

<sup>1</sup> That is, 'predominant.'—ED.

deserve? Nothing can be rationally said but that we are not soundly persuaded of the truth of it.

(2.) A *consent*. This grace is dispensed by a covenant which bindeth mutually, assureth us of happiness, and requireth duty from us. Therefore an unfeigned consent, or a readiness to fulfil those terms expressed in the promise, is required of us, or a resolution to repent and obey the gospel. Christ hath offices and relations that imply our comfort, and other offices and relations which imply our duty; or rather, the same do both. He is our teacher and king, as well as our priest; and we must submit to be ruled and taught by him, as well as depend upon the merit of his sacrifice and intercession: Heb. v. 9, 'And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.' And they are so taught the truth that is in Jesus, that they put off the old man, and put on the new, Eph. iv. 20, 21. True believers must be scholars, daily learning somewhat from Christ; yea, his priesthood implieth duty, dependence, humble addresses; a broken-hearted coming to God by him; as his kingship and prophetic office implieth privilege also. His defending and teaching us by his Spirit.

(3.) There is *affiance*, which is a reposing of our hearts, or a relying upon God promising remission of sins and eternal life for Christ's sake alone—that he will be as good as his word, while we diligently use the means ordained to this end, Rom. ii. 7. And this confidence hath an influence upon this joy, Heb. iii. 6, or a delightful sense of our Redeemer's grace.

[4.] It is *improved by meditation*; for the greatest things do not work unless we think of them, and work them into our hearts. The natural way of operation is, that objects stir up thoughts, and thoughts stir up affections: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' The more frequent and serious thoughts we have of the love of God in Christ, and the more deep and ponderous they are, the more do they blow up this holy fire into a flame. Now, for this end was the Lord's Supper instituted, where the whole gospel is applied and sealed to us, that this delight might be afresh acted and stirred in us at the Lord's Table, while our minds are taken up in considering Christ the great apostle and high priest of our confession, Heb. iii. 1. Surely it should not be an idle and fruitless contemplation; it should stir up love, and what stirreth up love stirreth up delight. I come now to the last part of the description.

[5.] The particular affection caused by this sense is mentioned: *We delight in the grace of the Redeemer more than in all other things whatsoever.*

Where—(1.) Take notice of the affection itself.

Then—(2.) The degree of it.

(1.) The affection itself, which is delight, or a well-pleasedness of mind, in the grace that is brought to us by the knowledge of Christ. This enlargeth the heart, and filleth it with a sweetness and contentment; and the vent of it is praise, for the heart being enlarged, cannot hold and contain itself: Ps. ix. 14, 'I will show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Sion; I will rejoice in thy salvation.' Joy cannot be kept within doors; it will break out in all

suitable ways of expression. The heart doth first rejoice, and then the tongue doth overflow. The heart is filled with joy, and then the tongue with thanksgiving. So Ps. xxxv. 9, 'My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in his salvation.' Nothing disposeth the heart to praise so much as this holy joy. There is no true thanksgiving if this be not at the bottom of it.

(2.) For the degree: The heart doth delight in Christ above all other things. As to the sensitive expression in the lively stirring of joy, we may to appearance be more affected with outward benefits, because fleshly objects do more work upon our fleshly senses, as carrying a greater suitableness to them. Religion is a grave, severe thing, not seen so much in actual transports, as in the habitual complacency and well-pleasedness of the mind: yet in solemn duties there may be as great ravishment of soul: Ps. lxxiii. 5, 'My soul shall be ravished as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.' When they feel the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, they are in effect transported with it, more than with all the delicates and banquets of the world, and cannot hold from praising God. But generally it must be measured by our solid complacency and judicious esteem. What we prize most, and would least want, and would not forego for all other things; so the saints rejoice in God and Christ more than in any worldly matter whatsoever: Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;' Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches;' Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us; thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased;' Ps. lxxiii. 3, 'Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.' This is that which they love most, and keep best, and are most loth to want. This is that which giveth a value to life itself; and without which that which is most precious and desirable is little or nothing worth; and giveth them more comfort than what is most comfortable in this world; and is the most cheerful employment for their thoughts to think upon. This is delight in Christ.

II. Whether this may be had without assurance? And can those who are dark in their interest in Christ, and know not whether they have any grace or no, rejoice in him? To this I answer, Yes, certainly; for there are general grounds of rejoicing, for the gospel bringeth glad tidings to sinners, as it offereth to them a way how to escape out of their misery, and enter into the peace of God.

But more distinctly:—

1. The scripture speaketh of a twofold rejoicing in Christ—before faith and after faith. Before faith is full-grown and is but in the making, as those, Acts xiii. 48, 'When they heard this, they were glad,' &c.; and he that had found the true treasure, for joy thereof sold all that he had, Mat. xiii. 44. There was joy before the thorough consent—though introductive of it, yet antecedent to it. And the reason is, because God hath showed them the way how to free themselves from misery, and to enjoy true felicity and happiness. Now, if there may be a joy before faith, certainly before assurance. The very



offer of a remedy is comfortable when in misery. And then there is a joy after faith, as joy and peace in believing, when they take the course to get this liberty and deliverance by Christ; yet this is faith, not assurance. As a sick man, when he heareth of an able physician who hath cured many of the same disease wherewith he is oppressed, he rejoiceth, and conceiveth some hope that he may be cured also. When he hath lighted upon this physician, and beginneth to make use of his healing medicines, he is more glad, and expecteth the cure. But when he is perfectly recovered, and feeleth it, then he is glad indeed. So when a broken-hearted creature heareth the glad tidings of the gospel, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, he rejoiceth that God hath found out such a Saviour to recover the lapsed estate of mankind. But when he submitteth to Christ's healing methods, and trusts himself with his skill and fidelity, he is more comforted, and doth more intimately feel the benefit of this course in his own soul; but as he groweth more assured of his health and salvation, his comfort still increaseth, and his joy is more unspeakable and glorious. So that this joy may be without assurance, for the causes of it at first are knowledge and faith.

2. There is a joy that accompanieth seeking, even before we attain what we seek after: Ps. cv. 3, 'Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.' There is a great deal of contentment in this course, though that complacential joy which is our full reward be yet reserved for us. Yet there is a joy in seeking; better be a seeker than a wanderer. This blessed Saviour am I waiting upon! Though we have attained to little communion with him, yet it is a comfort that we are seeking farther measure. Delight and joy keepeth up our endeavours.

3. When our right is cleared, then we have more abundant joy: 2 Pet. i. 10, 11, 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, you shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be administered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Some are afar off, others not far from the kingdom of God; others make a hard shift to go to heaven through many doubts and fears, some sail into the haven of glory with full sails, with much joy and peace of soul.

III. I shall show you the spiritual profit of this joy.

1. It is such a joy as doth enlarge our heart in duty, and strengthens us in the way of God: Neh. viii. 10, 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' There is a natural deadness and dulness in holy duties, which we often find in ourselves, which cometh to pass partly from the back-bias of corruption, weakening our delight in God, and partly from the remissness of our will towards spiritual and heavenly things. Now, the most proper and kindly cure of it is this delight and rejoicing in Christ; for a man will readily do those things which he delighteth in, though toilsome and difficult. Let the heart be but affected with the grace of Christ, and our joy will soon vent itself in a thankful and delightful obedience: 1 John v. 3, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous;' Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches;' Ps. xl. 8, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea,

thy law is within my heart.' The hardest services are pleasant to one that delighteth in Christ; they are sweetened by his love, and quickened and enlivened by the sense and esteem that we have of the benefits he procureth for us. Shall we refuse to do anything for such a compassionate Saviour, who died for us to reconcile us to God, and bring us to the everlasting fruition of him? So that the life of all obedience dependeth on this joy.

2. It is our cordial to fortify us against all the calamities and infelicities of the present world, and maketh every bitter thing sweet to us, whether they be the common afflictions incident to man, or persecutions for righteousness' sake.

[1.] For the common afflictions. A Christian is never in a right frame till he hath learned contentment in all estates; that he doth not overjoy in worldly comforts, nor overgrieve for worldly losses, 1 Cor. vii. 30, but carrieth himself as one that is above the hopes and fears of the world. Now, there are many means to be used that we may get this humble and composed frame of heart; but the most constant and effectual cure of worldly sorrow is to keep our rejoicing in Jesus Christ, and to be satisfied with the fruits of his redemption. This, like the wood that was cast in at Marah to make the bitter waters sweet, doth sweeten our troubles, and supply our wants, and swallow up our griefs and infelicities; for we have that in Christ which is better than the natural comfort taken from us: Hab. iii. 17, 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' He supposeth not only some want, but an utter destitution and desolation of all things, and yet his heart was kept up by joy in God. So elsewhere, Rom. xii. 12, 'Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.' The comfort of reconciliation with God, and the hopes of heaven, do most breed patience in afflictions. And, certainly, joy is the best cure of sorrow; *contraria contrariis curantur*. Now, the joy that must be opposed to worldly sorrow is not worldly, but either spiritual or heavenly joy. Spiritual in the present fruits of Christ's death: Heb. xii. 11, 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' Heavenly; surely eternal joys will best vanquish temporal sorrows: Heb. xii. 2, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' This will enable us patiently and cheerfully to bear all things.

[2.] Persecutions. We need to be fortified against this, that we may boldly profess our faith in Christ, without any fear of sufferings, and may not faint under them, but bear them with courage and constancy. Now, this is the fruit of this rejoicing in Christ; witness these scriptures: Acts v. 41, 'They went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name;' Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye

have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' So Mat. v. 12, 'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you;' and in many other places; and 1 Peter iv. 13, 'Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with an exceeding joy;' and James i. 2, 'Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers trials.' Surely, Christ and heaven are worth something, and such trials do in part show how much we esteem him, and value him above any interest of ours.

3. It doth draw off the heart from the delights of the flesh. Not only *contraria contrariis curantur*, but *similia similibus*. Carnal pleasures put the soul out of relish with better things, and draw off the heart from God. A fleshly mind is easily blinded and enchanted with worldly vanities; therefore, it concerneth us to check our inclination to sense-pleasing and flesh-pleasing, which is so natural to us. How shall it be cured but by seeking our delight elsewhere? Every man must have some oblectation, for love cannot lie idle in the soul; either his love is taken up with the joys of sense or the joys of faith—with vain pleasures or with chaste and spiritual delights. The one spoileth the taste of the other. A spiritual mind, that is feasted with higher delights, cannot relish the garlick, and onions, and flesh-pots of Egypt: Cant. i. 4, 'We will remember thy loves more than wine.' And a brutish heart, that is wholly lost and sunk in these dreggy contentments which gratify sense, valueth not the favour of God, thinketh it canting to talk of communion with him, and the joys of hope to be fantastical expressions. They love pleasures more than God, 2 Tim. iii. 4. Now, if we would restrain and check this inclination, we should rejoice in Christ, and delight our minds and hearts in the remembrance of his love and benefits. Whatever pleasure a man doth find or imagine to find in sensual, fleshly courses, that and much more is to be had in Christ, where we rejoice at a surer and more sincere rate: Eph. v. 4, 'Not jesting, but rather giving of thanks.' Carnal mirth doth not so cheer worldlings as the remembrance of the favours and blessings we have by Christ. Keep the heart thankful and sensible of God's goodness and Christ's love, and you will not need vain delights. So Eph. v. 18, 'Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.' These are motives and marks also, for by these three things you may know whether you have this joy, yea or no.

IV. The helps or means by which this joy is raised in us.

1. A sense of sin and misery. This maketh you more sensible of the mercy of the deliverance, and to be more affected with it, as the grievousness of a disease maketh the recovery more delightful. The law condemned you, his ransom must absolve you; sin made you dead, his grace quickeneth and puts life into you. Always as our sense of misery is, so is the sense of the recovery; if one be bitter, the other is sweet. None prize and esteem Christ so much as the broken-hearted and burdened.

2. An entire confidence in Christ: for so it followeth, 'Have no confidence in the flesh.' If we have no confidence in the flesh, and look for all from the mercy and bounty of God through Christ, we shall prize him: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'Unto you therefore which believe, he

is precious ;' Phil. iii. 8, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.'

3. A constant use of the means whereby this joy may be fed and increased in us ; as the word, sacraments, and prayer, 'The word: Ps. cxix. 102, 'I have not departed from thy judgments, for thou hast taught me.' Then prayer, suing out of our right: John xvi. 24, 'Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.' So for the sacraments; baptism: Acts viii. 39, 'When they were come up out of the water, the Spirit caught away Philip, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.' The Lord's Supper; it is our spiritual refection.

4. Sincerity of obedience: 1 Cor. v. 8, 'Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleaven bread of sincerity and truth.' Practical delight is the chiefest, above that of contemplation, a more intimate sense.

We come now to the last part of a Christian's character: *And have no confidence in the flesh.* To understand it, consider there are two things called *flesh* in scripture.

1. External privileges belonging to the worldly life; such as wealth, greatness, and worldly honour. Now to glory in these is to glory in the flesh, and to trust in these is to trust in the flesh, which should be far from Christians: Jer. ix. 23, 24, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he knoweth me, that I am the Lord,' &c. Where the prophet laboureth to beat them off from their vain confidences, that they might not rely upon their power, policy, and wealth, but a saving knowledge of and interest in God, whose goodness and faithfulness could only secure them against all evils, and procure them all manner of blessings.

2. The outward duties and performances of religion, especially the ceremonies of Moses. Those, consisting in external observances, are called flesh; and to have confidence in the flesh is to place our confidence in external privileges and duties. For the apostle explaineth himself, ver. 4, 'Though I might also have confidence in the flesh: if any other man thinketh he may have confidence in the flesh, I more.' He was not any whit inferior to any of the Judaizing brethren in outward privileges and duties; yea, had greater cause of glorying in the flesh than any of the pretenders among them. And then instances, in his Jewish privileges, circumcision, his family, his sect—a pharisee; his partial obedience or external righteousness—'as to the law blameless.' To rest on these things, then, for our acceptance with God is to have confidence in the flesh. And elsewhere he saith, Gal. iii. 3, 'Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?' when they reverted to the ceremonies of the law. This is called flesh, because they consist in outward things. Corrupt nature is pleased with such things, and doth plead and stand for them.

*Doct.* That a good Christian doth not place his hope and confidence of acceptance with God in external privileges and performances.



In the first character, a Christian is described by his worship ; in the second, by his joy ; in the third, by his confidence.

In handling this point, I shall show you :—

I. What are these externals which are apt to tempt men to a vain confidence.

II. That naturally men are for a mere external way of serving God, and place their whole confidence therein.

III. Why a good Christian should have no confidence in this external conformity to God's law.

I. What are these externals in religion which are apt to tempt men to a vain confidence ? They may be referred to two heads : they are either commanded by God or invented by man—God's externals or man's externals.

1. God's externals : such as he hath instituted and appointed, either in the law of Moses or in the law of Christ. In the law of Moses, such as circumcision, with all the appendent rites. These are called, Heb. ix. 10, 'Carnal ordinances, imposed on them till the time of reformation.' These were to be observed while the institution of them was in force and stood unrepealed, which was done at the coming of Christ : John iv. 23, 24, 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' These made great trouble in the infancy of the church, for the Jews and Judaizing Christians were loth to depart from the rituals under which they were bred and brought up, though Christ fully evidenced his commission from heaven to repeal those laws, and his apostles strongly pleaded the ancient prophecies which foretold it. But these are of no more concernment to us, except to direct us how to behave ourselves in like cases.

2. There are externals in the law of Christ, such as the sacraments—baptism and the Lord's Supper ; hearing of the word, external prayer, and the like. Now the rule is that they must be used, but the outward act not rested in as a sufficient ground of our acceptance with God. Used they must be in faith and obedience, because God hath instituted them under great penalties. As circumcision, while the command was in force : Gen. xvii. 14, 'The man-child whose flesh is not circumcised shall be cut off from his people ; he hath broken my covenant ;' so baptism : Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Not want, but neglect or contempt. Therefore, all these duties must be used as means of salvation, and as expressions of the inward truth of our faith in God and obedience to him. We must not cast off ordinances, but yet they must not be rested in as sufficient grounds of our acceptance with God. While circumcision was in force, they relied on it, as it distinguished them from other nations as the genuine seed of Abraham, and so reckoned to be within the covenant. But the servants of God did always disprove<sup>1</sup> this vain confidence : Rom. ii. 28, 29, 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in

<sup>1</sup> That is, 'disapprove.'—Ed.

the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.' They rejoiced in a shadow when they wanted the thing signified, if there were no mortification of sin, or putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. But not only the apostle, but the prophet long before disproveth<sup>1</sup> their vain confidence: Jer. ix. 25, 26, 'Behold, the days come when I will punish them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised; Egypt and Edom, with the children of Ammon and Moab, are uncircumcised in flesh, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart.' God would proceed against wicked persons and people, circumcised as well as uncircumcised. Were those things spoken to them only, and not to us also? Surely all may learn from hence that by a bare submission to outward rites we are not approved of God, without minding the true reformation of heart and life, and expecting the pardon of our sins by Jesus Christ. You are baptized, but are you washed from your sins? You hear the word, but is it the power of God to your salvation? You frequent sacraments, but is the conscience of the bond of the holy oath into which you are entered upon your hearts? There is more required in Christianity than outward profession, whether in word or deed—namely, the conscience of your dedication to God—or else the work doth not go deep enough: 1 Cor. xiii. 3, 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth men nothing.' You content yourselves with your tale and number of duties, praying morning and evening, and reading so many chapters; but where is the spirit and the fruit of all that you do? They that are given to fasting think themselves very devout if they fast often, be their hearts never so full of rancour. Many huddle over many prayers, but they do not go from their heavenly Father with a heavenly mind. They give alms, but live loosely. As Michal laid a statue in David's bed, and covering it with David's apparel, made Saul's messengers believe it was David himself sick in bed; so many persons cover themselves with certain external actions belonging to religion, and the world believeth them truly sanctified and spiritual, whenas, indeed, they are but statues and apparitions of devotion to God. But this is but a vain show, a placing the means instead of the end—the subordinate instead of the ultimate end.

2. Man's externals, invented by themselves, by laws of their own, and outward observances of their own devising. Men's whole religion running out into externals, they are not contented with the forms of worship instituted by God, but add somewhat of their own, and love to bind themselves in chains of their own making: as the Jews, not being perfect as appertaining to the conscience, by the use of the instituted ceremonies of Moses, invented other things to make them more perfect.

Now, as to this, I shall only observe:—

[1.] That as the outside of worship is most minded by a carnal Christian, so the inside by a renewed Christian: Mat. xv. 8, 'This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.' Their hearts are averse from God. The carnal Christian is all for uncovering the head, and

<sup>1</sup> That is, 'disproveth.' —ED.



bowing the knee, but taketh no care of the heart: Isa. lviii. 5, 'Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day unto the Lord?' The pharisees were zealous for washing before meat, as if it were an holy religious act, because it was one of their own traditions, Mat. xv. 2, but took no notice of inward defilement.

[2.] They are more zealous for human inventions than moral and commanded duties, Mat. xv. 3, 4—for the rudiments of the world, as the apostle calleth them, Col. ii. 8, than the unquestionable ordinances of Christ; for a worldly religion must be supported by worldly means.

[3.] I observe, that the more external pomp there is of man's devising, the less spiritual truth; for it gratifieth the natural corruption, which is all for the outside. Some few externals God intended for an help, but when men will be adding, they become a burden and an impediment. God did not abrogate his own ceremonies for men to appoint theirs.

II. That naturally men are merely for an external way of serving God, and place their confidence therein.

Here I shall show you:—

1. That their hearts are set upon external worship.

2. That therein they place all their confidence.

1. That naturally men's hearts are chiefly set upon external services; and that—

[1.] Out of laziness; externals being more easy than worshiping God in the spirit: Mat. xxiii. 23, 'They tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, but omit the weightier things of the law, τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου, judgment, mercy, faith.' Conscience is like the stomach, which naturally desireth to fill itself, and when it cannot digest solid food, filleth itself only with wind. So here, outward things are more easy, but mortifying sin, and solid godliness, is more difficult; this the natural man cannot digest, and therefore culleth out the easier and cheaper sort of religion, which puts him to no great trouble or self-denial.

[2.] Out of their indulgence to the flesh. A man can spare anything better than his lusts, his estate, the present ease of the body, their children, anything for the sin of their souls, Micah vi. 6–8. The question is not how to satisfy justice, but how to appease conscience, while they retain their sins. They would buy out their peace with vast sums of money, mangle their flesh, like the priests of Baal, to spare the sin of their souls, do anything, endure anything, but the subduing the heart to God. The sensual nature of man is such, that he is loth to be crossed; if he must be crossed, only a little, and but for a while; and therefore affects an easy religion, where the flesh is not crossed, or but a little crossed. Now, slight duties performed now and then do not much trouble the flesh, where there is no mortifying of lusts, no serious godliness.

[3.] Out of pride. Man is a proud creature, and would fain establish his own righteousness, and have somewhat wherein to glory in himself, Rom. x. 3. A russet coat of our own is better than a silken

garment that is borrowed of another: Luke xviii. 9, 'Christ spake this parable against those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.' There is such a disposition in men, that if by any means they can hold up a pretence of righteousness of their own, will not pray, and wait, and consecrate, and devote themselves to God, that they may attain his righteousness, if they have anything to plead, if they have a partial righteousness, if they be not to be numbered among the worst of men: Luke xviii. 11, 'The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.' If they have an external righteousness, they will plead that, 'I fast twice in the week, I give tithe of all that I possess,' &c. A legal spirit is natural to us. Though men dare not pretend to a universal conformity to the law in a strict sense, yet, if they can make a shift to get any external conformity to the law, they are confident of divine acceptance. Yea, so sottish is their conscience, that they will catch hold of anything: Judges xvii. 13, 'Now I know God will bless me, because I have a Levite to my priest,' giving him meat and drink, and about fifty shillings per annum! So willing are we to justify ourselves, by something in ourselves, or done by ourselves. Therefore, that the ell may be no broader than the cloth, they devise a short exposition of the law, that they may entertain a large opinion of their own righteousness.

[4.] There is another reason—interest. External forms of religion draw an interest after them, therefore the apostle saith, Rom. ii. 29, 'Whose praise is not of men, but of God;' and Gal. i. 10, 'If I yet please men, I were not the servant of Christ.' And 'rudiments of the world,' Col. ii. 8. It maketh a man to be applauded and countenanced by the world. Let a man betake himself to such a religion, there are those which will back him and stand by him, and their disfavoured and displeasure he shall incur if he forsake it. And where the false worshippers are the prevailing party, he runneth great hazard by contradicting such form and opinions. Therefore the heart of that man that is set on externals takes up with the religion of his country, whether true or false.

2. They place their confidence therein. Every man that hath a conscience must have something to trust unto. Now, what feedeth his confidence but the religion which he hath chosen? There are two things which detain men from God and Christ: some false imaginary happiness, and some counterfeit righteousness, wherein they please themselves. The false happiness is as their God, and the counterfeit righteousness is as their Christ and mediator, and so they are secure and senseless; and, until God open their eyes, they neither seek after another righteousness, nor trouble themselves about the way whereby they may attain it. That men set a false happiness is evident, for ever since man fell from God he ran to the creature, Jer. ii. 13, left the fountain for the cistern; and if we can make a shift to patch up a sorry happiness apart from God, we never care for him, or will not come at him, Jer. ii. 31. Our pleasure, our profit, our honour, that is our God. And if we can enjoy these things without any rubs and checks, we look no farther, and will not seek our happiness in an invisible God, nor wait to enjoy it in an invisible world. But the

second error is, that there is something instead of Christ to us, to keep the conscience quiet. Our happiness is to satisfy our desires, our righteousness to allay our fears. Now here we run to a superficial religion, or something external, which is diversified according to men's education—pagans to the *ἔργον νόμου*, Rom. ii. 15, Jews to the observances of the law, Christians to baptism, outward profession, or some strict form without the power, under which we shelter ourselves, and by which we bolster up our confidence, till God convince us of our mistakes. And so Christ and his renewing and reconciling grace is neglected and disregarded, certainly not cordially accepted as our Redeemer and Saviour.

I come now to show :—

III. Why a good Christian should have no confidence in the flesh.

1. Because till we are dead to the law we cannot live to God. Now, to be dead to the law is nothing else but to have our confidence in the flesh, or external righteousness, mortified. You hear often of being dead to sin, and dead to the world ; you must be also dead to the law, or otherwise you cannot live in Christ, and bring forth fruit unto God : Gal. ii. 19, ' For I through the law am dead to the law, that I may live unto God ; ' and Rom. vii. 4, ' By the body of Christ ye are become dead to the law ; that ye may be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.' We grow dead to the law, when thereby we understand our sinful miserable estate without Christ, and how unable we are to help ourselves. By the convincing power of the law we know our sins ; by the condemning power of the law we know the misery and curse we are subject unto ; by the irritating power of the law we find that the righteousness which the law requireth is not in us, nor can it be found in us. Now in one of those places we are said *by the law* to be dead to the law, and in the other, *by the body of Christ*. By the law itself we are said to be dead to the law, as it maketh us to despair of righteousness by that covenant. By the body of Christ (that is, by the crucified body, or death of Christ), so we are dead to the law, as we are invited to a better hope or covenant, which Christ hath established by bearing our sins on his body on the tree, or enduring the curse of the law for us. Be it by the one, or the other, or both, none will value the grace of Christ till they be dead to the law. Men will shift as long as they can patch up a sorry righteousness of their own, mingle covenants, turn one into another, make one of both, chop, change, mangle, and cut short the law of God ; do anything rather than come upon their knees and beg terms of grace in a serious and broken-hearted manner. None can partake of Christ but those that have their legal confidence mortified, who are first driven, then drawn to him. None but they who are convinced of sin fly to Christ for righteousness ; none but they who are left obnoxious to wrath and the curse prize his delivering us from wrath to come ; none but those who are made sensible of their impotency will seek after his renewing grace, but will still keep to their base shifts, mingling and blending covenants, resting in a little superficial righteousness, or half-covenant of works, or mingling a little grace with it ; are not brought in a humble, penitent, and broken-hearted manner, to sue out their pardon in the name of Christ, and so regularly to pass from covenant to covenant.

2. The superficial righteousness doth not only keep men from Christ, but set them against Christ, his way, his servants, and true interest in the world. These were dogs, evil-workers, to whom the apostle opposeth the true Christians. Usually they that are for the form, oppose the power: Gal. iv. 29, 'He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.' They that have but the form and shadow of godliness, no more than the power of nature carrieth them unto, will persecute those that have the reality and truth, —that is, the renewing and reconciling grace of Jesus Christ; partly, because the true spiritual worshippers, by their serious godliness, disgrace and condemn those that lazily rest in an empty form; and therefore they cannot endure them. At the bottom of their hearts they have an enmity and hatred against God, and vent it on his people: 1 John iii. 12, 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' Partly, because there is in them a spirit of envy and emulation; both are rivals for the favour of God. The spiritual worshippers take the right way, and the formalists the wrong way to obtain it; the first are received, the latter rejected. And they being at such great pains and costs in their wrong way, cannot endure that any should be preferred before them; witness Cain and Abel. Where carnal confidence is, there is bitterness of spirit against sincerity.

3. Because they have so much to do with God. They that look to men, may rest in an outward appearance; but one whose business lieth mainly with God, must look to the frame of his heart, that it be right set towards holiness. Now this is the course of a thorough Christian. It is God's wrath that he feareth, God's favour that is his life and happiness, God's presence into which he often cometh, God's mercy from whom he expecteth his reward, and with God he hopeth to live for ever. Now, bare externals are of no account or worth with God: John iv. 24, 'God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;' 1 Sam. xvi. 7, 'But the Lord said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart;' Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirit.' Men judge after the outward appearance, but God weigheth the spirits.

4. Because of the nature of gospel worship, which is simple, spiritual, and substantial; therefore called *spirit*, often in opposition to the ceremonies of the law, and the ministration of the spirit unto life, 2 Cor. iii. 8. The law is called *letter*, and the gospel *spirit*. Now, for a Christian to turn the ordinances of Christ into flesh, which were appointed to be the ministration of the Spirit, this is to alter the nature of things, and turn the gospel, by which is all our claim and hope, into a dead letter.

5. This confidence should not be cherished by a Christian, because it can bring no solid peace to the conscience, for the present external justiciaries are uncertain. The man that kept all these things from his youth, saith, 'What lack I yet?' Mat. xix. 20. He asketh as a man



unsatisfied; for our bondage doth not wear off with external duties, but is increased rather till we are justified in the name of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit. But suppose it satisfieth blind conscience for the present, yet afterwards, men whose hearts are not found in God's statutes, fall into sad complaints, and are involved in a maze and labyrinth of doubts and troubles, whence they know not how to extricate themselves. They have so much sense of religion as to understand their duty, and yet are so little brought under the power of it, as not to be able to make out their claim. But if this be not the case of all, when the hour of death cometh, we shall find all is but froth, 1 Cor. v. 5, 6. If we have not minded the Redeemer's grace, his whole grace, the imputation of his righteousness, and the regeneration of his Spirit, and lived in obedience to his sanctifying motions, then we shall be filled with horror and amazement.

The first use is caution. Take heed of having confidence in the flesh, of placing religion, and valuing your interest in God, by external observances; but look to this, that your hearts be upright with God in the new covenant. To this end:—

1. Take heed of a false happiness. The wisdom of the flesh, which is natural to us, doth incline us to it, James iii. 15, doth only prompt us to pleasure, profit, and honour. We set our hearts on vain delights, and are wholly carried to them, value our happiness by them. Whilst we indulge this sensual inclination, the soul careth not for God, other things are set up instead of God. The belly is god: Phil. iii. 19, 'Whose God is their belly.' Mammon is their god, Mat. vi. 24. And honour and worldly greatness is another idol which men set up, while they value the praise of men more than the praise of God, John xii. 43. Carnal self-love maketh idols, and sets up other gods instead of the true God. Now therefore make it your first work to return to God as your rightful lord and chief happiness, as your sovereign lord. If you make it your business and purpose to worship God in the spirit, you will rejoice in Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh. Spiritual worship convinceth us of defects, and you will see a need of Christ's renewing and reconciling grace. Our treasure and happiness is our god. Now therefore do you value your happiness by the favour of God, and not by worldly things?

2. In the next place, take heed of a superficial righteousness; for this is plain confidence in the flesh. This maketh you senseless and ignorant of your danger, and careless of the means of your recovery, and so your conviction and conversion is more difficult. And therefore Christ saith, that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before pharisees and self-justiciaries, Mat. xxi. 31. No condition is more dangerous than to be poor and proud; corrupt, and yet conceited and confident. The most vicious are sooner wrought upon than those that please themselves in external observances, without real internal holiness or change of heart.

This is twofold:—

1. Outward ordinances.

2. Partial morality.

1. Outward ordinances: to rest in your attendance upon and use of these. Consider how displeased God was with those that submitted

to sacraments without reformation: 1 Cor. x. 1-5, 'With many of them God was not well pleased, but they were overthrown in the wilderness.' Spiritual meat and spiritual drink could not keep them from destruction when they murmured, when they fell from Christ to idolatry, when they lusted after quails, when they tempted Christ; and will he be more favourable to you? Oh, rest not then in the outward use of the ordinances of Christ! God may vouchsafe you this favour, and yet not be well pleased with you. Many that have eaten and drunk in his presence, yet are finally rejected for their sins, Luke xiii. 26. Many prize the seal, yet tear the bond; that is, break the covenant, yet seem to value the seal of the covenant, that they may have confidence in the flesh, in the bare external performance.

2. Partial morality: those that live fairly and plausibly, but want the true principle, the spirit of Christ; the true rule, the word of God; the true end, the glory of God; that are in with one duty and out with another; fail in their duties to God or men; are much in worship, but defective in common righteousness; love friends, but cannot forgive enemies; it may be they will forgive wrongs, but make no conscience of paying debts. Now there are two arguments against these: these neither understand the law nor the gospel; not the law, its strictness, purity, and spiritual exactness; nor the gospel, which offereth a remedy only to the penitent, those who are deeply affected with the pollution of their natures, the sins of their lives, and the consequent misery; but those that are puffed up with a vain conceit of the goodness of their estate, without any brokenness of heart.

[1.] They are injurious to the law, as they curtail it and reduce it to the external work, Gal. iv. 20. Ye that desire to be under the law, hear what the law saith; if you will stand to that covenant, do you know what it is? The duty is impossible, Rom. viii. 3. The penalty is intolerable, for 'the law worketh wrath;' and it is a law of sin and death to the fallen creature, Rom. viii. 2. The curse is very dreadful and terrible. Nothing more opposite to the law than this partial righteousness. The law, well understood, would humble them.

[2.] This resting in a partial external righteousness is also opposite to the gospel, which inviteth us in a broken-hearted manner to accept Christ. He came to call sinners, not those who are righteous in their own eyes, Mat. ix. 13. It is a remedy for lost sinners, not for them that need no repentance: Luke xv. 7, 'I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.' Nothing is more opposite to the gospel than this confidence in the flesh. The woman that was a sinner was preferred before Simon a pharisee, Luke vii. 44; and the self-condemning publican before the self-justifying pharisee, Luke xviii. 13; the penitent adulteress before her accusers, John viii. The most despised sinners, repenting and believing in Christ, find more grace and place with him than those that satisfy themselves with some external conformities.

A second use is by way of examination. Are you of this temper, that you have no confidence in the flesh?

If you are:—



1. You are still kept humble and thankful; humble, with a sense of sin and deserved wrath; confessing and forsaking your sins, and glorying in Christ only, you are kept vile in your own eyes, and in a humble admiration of grace: Luke vii. 47, 'Wherefore I say unto you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven her, for she loved much,' &c. She loved much, because much was forgiven. When God is pacified, yet you loathe yourselves: Ezek. xvi. 63, 'That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.' And you ascribe all to the mercy of God and the merit of Christ; blessing God for him and imploring pardon for your best duties, our righteousness being but as filthy rags.

2. A partial outside obedience will not satisfy you. A heart that findeth rest in empty formal services certainly places confidence in the flesh. They neither look after the change of their natures, nor their reconciliation with God by Christ. They challenge God: Isa. lviii. 3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?' and Luke xviii. 12, 'I fast twice in the week, and I give tithe of all that I possess.'

3. Thankfulness or gratitude sets you a-work for God, rather than a legal conscience. Duties are performed as a thank-offering rather than a sin-offering, out of love to God rather than fear.

## WHAT KIND OF PERFECTION IS ATTAINABLE IN THIS LIFE?

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*Let, therefore, as many as be perfect be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*—PHIL. III. 15.

THESE words are inferred out of the foregoing context, as the illative particle *therefore* sheweth.

In the words are two things:—

1. His exhortation to the strong and grown Christian: *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.*
2. His condescension to the weak: *And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*

In the former branch we have:—

1. The term by which the strong Christian is expressed: ‘As many as be perfect.’ He had said before of himself that he was not yet perfect, ver. 12. Yet now he supposeth it both of himself and others: ‘Let us therefore, as many as be perfect.’ Therefore perfection must be taken in a limited sense, to avoid the seeming contradiction.

2. The advice or counsel given, ‘Be thus minded;’ what is that? *τοῦτο φρονεῖτε*, ‘Think the same thing with me.’ What that is must be known by the foregoing context, and may be gathered from the third verse. He had spoken of some false teachers and Judaizing brethren, who gave out themselves to be patrons and defenders of the circumcision, and other ceremonies of the law, as if these things did commend them to God. Now the apostle reproveth them, and saith they were not *περιτομή*, ‘the circumcision,’ but *κατατομή*, ‘the concision,’ destroyers and renders of the church, not the true people of God, who were sometimes noted by the term *circumcision*. They are the *concision*, the cutters and dividers of the church; but we are *περιτομή*, the true *circumcision*, ‘who serve God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;’ that is, who have no confidence in any superficial righteousness, but seek our justification before God, and the renovation of our natures from Christ alone; and serve God by exercising this grace in faith, love, and hope; or who seek to Christ alone for his renewing and reconciling grace, that we may serve God in a spiritual manner, and so at length attain

the promised glory. Now this he proveth by his own instance, who had as much cause to glory in the flesh as any of them, but suffered the loss of all things, and counted all things wherein they gloried, and he might have gloried, but loss and dung, that he might obtain this grace from Christ Jesus, and at length, after a diligent, self-denying course of service and obedience, be brought home to God. Now, saith he, 'As many as be perfect, *τοῦτο φρονεῖτε*, mind this,' take care of this, and do you, with the loss of all things, press to this.

3. His condescension to the weak, who were not satisfied with the abrogation of the ceremonies of the law, though they had embraced other parts and points of Christianity: 'And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this to you.' Here—

[1.] Something is supposed, that they should not be cut off from the rest of Christians, either by the harsh censures or rigorous dealing of the strong, or the pertinacious obstinacy of the weak. The perfect, that have the truth of their side, must not condemn others; nor the weak must not condemn and censure them.

[2.] Something expressed, or the reason of this mutual condescension and forbearance. If they be sincere and humble, God will at length show them the truth.

I begin with his counsel to the strong and grown Christian; and there I shall speak, first, of the term by which they are expressed: 'Let as many of us *as be perfect*.'

*Doct.* That there is a kind of perfection attainable in this life.

I shall, first, explain the point by several distinctions.

Secondly, prove that all Christians should endeavour to be perfect.

For the first, there is a double perfection: *perfectio termini et præmii*, and *perfectio viæ seu cognitionis et sanctitatis*—a perfection of the reward, and a perfection of grace.

1. Of the reward which the saints shall have in heaven, where they are freed from all sinful weakness: 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 'When that which is perfect shall come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' In heaven there is perfect felicity and exact holiness; then the saints are glorious saints indeed, when they have neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor blemish, nor any such thing, Eph. v. 27; when 'presented faultless before the presence of his glory,' Jude 24. Now this we have not in the world; but because this we expect in the other world, we are to labour after the highest perfection in holiness here, because allowed imperfection is a disesteem of blessedness. Do we count immaculate purity and perfection in holiness to be our blessedness hereafter? and shall we shun it, and fly from it, or at least neglect it, as if it were our burden now? No surely! 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, as Christ is pure,' 1 John iii. 3. He that looketh not for a Turkish paradise, but a sinless estate, will endeavour it now, get as much as he can of it now. When you cease to grow in holiness you cease to go on any farther to salvation; you seem to be out of love with heaven and blessedness when your desires and endeavours are slaked.

2. The perfection of grace and holiness is such as the saints may attain unto in this life: Col. iv. 12, 'That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.' So we are perfect when we want none of those things which are necessary to salvation, when we study to

avoid all known sin, and address ourselves to the practice of all known duty, serving God universally and entirely.

Secondly, There is perfection legal and evangelical. Legal is un-sinful obedience; evangelical is sincere obedience: the one is where there is no sin; the other no guile, no allowed guile. The one standeth in an exact conformity to God's law, the other in a sincere endeavour to fulfil it; the one will endure the balance, the other can only endure the touchstone.

1. The legal perfection is described Gal. iii. 10, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the words of this law to do them.' A personal, perpetual perfect obedience. It supposeth a man innocent; it requireth that he should continue so; for the least offence, according to that covenant, layeth us open to a curse; as the angels, for one sin, once committed, were turned out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise. The omitting of aught we are to perform, the committing aught we are forbidden, yea, the least warping, as well as swerving, by an obliquity of heart and spirit, maketh us guilty before God. Now this is become impossible through the weakness of our flesh. Rom. viii. 3. Man is fallen already, and hath mixed principles in him, and cannot be thus exact with God.

2. Evangelical: when the heart is faithful with God, fixedly bent and set to please him in all things: 2 Kings xx. 3, 'Remember, Lord, I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.' This may be pleaded in subordination to Christ's righteousness; this perfection is consistent with weakness: 2 Chron. xv. 17, 'Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was perfect all his days;' and yet he is taxed with several infirmities. This perfection all must have: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.' What is done for God, as it must be done willingly, readily, not by constraint, but the native inclination of the soul; so perfectly, that is, with all exactness possible. As some may do many things which are good, but their hearts are not perfect with God: 2 Chron. xxv. 2, 'He did that which is right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.' Not a sincere bent of soul towards God alone. When the heart is divided between God and other things, Hosea x. 2, 'Their heart is divided;' James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' A heart against a heart; in point of faith, between God and other confidences; in point of love, between God and the vanities of the world; and God's interest is not chief, nor do we love him above all things; in point of obedience, between pleasing God and pleasing men, and pleasing God and our own vain fancies and appetites, honouring God and promoting our worldly ends; you set up a rival and partner with God. Now this perfection we must have, or else not in a state of salvation.

Thirdly, There is a perfection absolute and comparative.

1. That is, absolutely perfect to which nothing is wanting. This is in our Lord Christ, who had the Spirit without measure; this is in our rule, but not in them that follow the rule: Ps. xviii. 30, 'As for God, his way is perfect.' But that absolute perfection is not in any of the saints here upon earth, I prove by these arguments:—

[1.] Where there are many relics of flesh or carnal nature left, there a man cannot be absolutely perfect ; but so it is with all the godly, there is a double-warring working principle in them : Gal. v. 17, ' For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' And it is actually confirmed in Paul, witness his groans, Rom. vii. 24, ' Oh wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?' Mark there, the apostle speaketh of himself, not of another ; of himself, in his present renewed estate, not of his past and unconverted estate, when a pharisee. His past estate he had spoken of, ver. 9, ' Sin revived, and I died ;' but, ver. 14, ' I am carnal ;' and ver. 15, ' That which I do, I allow not ;' and ver. 18, ' How to perform that which is good, I find not.' Many things there said cannot agree to a carnal man. As, for instance, not allowing sin, ver. 15 ; hating sin, in the same verse : ' What I hate, that do I ;' so delight in the law of God, ver. 22. Again, there is a double man distinguished, ver. 17, ' It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me.' Again, he distinguisheth between him and his flesh, ver. 18 ; so between an outward and inward man, ver. 22, 23. Lastly, He giveth thanks for deliverance by Christ, all which are competent only to the regenerate. Now, these things being so, surely God's best servants are not absolutely perfect.

[2.] There are none but sometimes sin : 1 Kings viii. 46, ' For there is no man that sinneth not ;' and Eccles. vii. 20, ' There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not ;' and James iii. 2, ' In many things we offend all ;' 1 John i. 8, ' If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Therefore, no man so perfect as to be without all sin.

[3.] There is none but need the mercy of God, and ought to pray for this mercy for the pardon of their daily sins, Mat. vi. 13, as we pray for daily bread. This petition our Lord directeth us to put up, not for the sins of others, but our own. Now these arguments prove that no man hath a righteousness that is perfect, without defects. The best of God's children have innumerable frailties, which may humble them, and which should be seriously laid to heart, and watched over, every step of our way to heaven.

2. There is a comparative perfection, and that is twofold :—

[1.] When those who live under the law of Christianity are compared with other institutions.

[2.] When the professors of Christianity are compared among themselves.

[1.] When the professors of Christianity are compared with those that live under other institutions. They that submit to Christ's terms are said to be perfect, because Christianity itself is a perfection. For instance, take that one place (and the rather, that I may wrest it out of the hands of the Papists, who distinguish between evangelical precepts of necessary duty, and counsels of perfection, to establish monkery and voluntary poverty, as a more perfect state of life than that which the common sort of Christians live). Their most colourable place is Mat. xix. 21, ' Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in



heaven, and come and follow me.' Is not this a counsel of perfection? Doth not Christ call it so? Or is every one bound to give all his goods to the poor, and turn monks or anchorites? No; the meaning of the word, *If thou wilt be perfect*, is no more but this, if thou wilt ascend to that higher pitch and rule of living, to which I come to raise men, if thou wilt be a Christian. The perfection here spoken of is Christianity itself, not a heroic eminent degree of it; and the condition here required is matter of command, not counsel; only such as if we will not submit to, we are not Christians; for a man that would have the privileges of the gospel, he must submit to the duties of the gospel, or the conditions required by Christ, that is to be a perfect, thorough Christian. You will say, Must we sell all and give to the poor, in contemplation of the heavenly reward?

*Ans.* 1. Every man is bound to bestow goods, land, and life as God shall direct, and part with all the wealth in the world whensoever it is required of him. Now, it may be required of us directly or by consequence. Directly, by an expressed command, such as this young man had from Christ; and actually to sell our estates, and give to the poor, obligeth none, unless we have such a like command from Christ himself as this young rich man had. By consequence, when we cannot obey any particular precept of Christ without danger of being undone by it. And so it obligeth all Christ's disciples to part with all, rather than to break with Christ; for no man is a Christian unless he selleth all for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 46. And our Lord telleth us, that he that loveth anything more than him, is not worthy of him, Mat. x. 37; that is, is no Christian; so that if it be impossible to preserve our fidelity and obedience without parting with our wealth, we must impartially perform it, though it be with loss of estate and life itself; and if we do not resolve and undertake to do so, we are no Christians, and cannot be saved. In baptism, we vow to forsake the world and follow Christ, when the world cometh in competition with him. If, in a time of trial, we do not perform it, we forfeit the privileges of Christianity, and all title to blessedness. Therefore this perfection is necessary for all Christians. You esteem, prefer, choose Christ above all, resolving, whatever it cost you, to be faithful to him; it is not a high and arbitrary point in Christianity, but a necessary duty. You will say, What can the strongest Christian do more than sell all, than part with all?—*Answer*, They can do it with far greater love, readiness, and joy, than the weak Christian can do. The difference between Christians is not in the thing done, but the manner of doing. Well, then, this is to be perfect, thus must you all be perfect; for this perfection is necessarily constitutive of sincerity; you are not true Christians without it.

[2.] When compared with others of the same profession, believers are distinguished into perfect and imperfect. Though none can attain to absolute perfection of holiness, yet there are several degrees of grace, and diversities of growth among Christians, and the strong are said to be perfect in comparison of those weak ones who are raw in knowledge, or feeble and impotent in the resistance of sin. Thus the perfect are opposed to the babes in Christ; as, when he had spoken of our 'growing into a perfect man in Christ Jesus,' he presently addeth,



'That henceforth we be no more children,' Eph. iv. 13, 14. And elsewhere, when he had spoken of the 'perfect,' 1 Cor. ii. 6, who are skilful in spiritual things, he presently opposeth to them the 'babes in Christ,' chap. iii. 1. The same you may observe in Heb. v. 13, 14, 'He that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age,' *τελείοι*, 'perfect,' as in the margin. See also 1 Cor. xiv. 20, 'Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men,' 'perfect, or ripe of age.' These, and many other places, show the notion of *perfect*: it is not absolutely taken, but comparatively. Those who well and thoroughly understand Christian doctrine, and are habituated to a course of godliness, and have a confirmed faith and love to God, and this in opposition to novices and inexperienced Christians newly entered into Christ's school. Now thus we must be perfect, not always children. It is a monstrous thing, after many years' growth to be a babe still, and an infant still. This sense is of chief regard here.

3. There is a perfection of parts, and a perfection of degrees; that is growth.

[1.] Perfection of parts is when we have all things that belong to a sincere Christian, or to a state of salvation; as living creatures are perfect as soon as they are brought forth, for they have all things belonging to that creature; it is not maimed or defective in any part: thus an infant is perfect the first day of his birth, as well as a man of riper age. Thus a Christian must have the perfection of integrity, all the parts which belong to a new creature; grace to enlighten the mind, bend and incline the heart to God, govern the affections, rule the appetite; one grace added to another, that the Christian may be entire and perfect, and in no point lacking, James i. 4. What is defective in parts cannot be supplied by any after-growth. A Christian cannot be perfect in degrees unless he be perfect in parts; leave out one necessary grace and the new creature is maimed; some leave out temperance, others patience, others love, 1 Peter ii. 5, 6, 7.

[2.] There is a perfection of degrees, that is, when a thing is absolute and complete, and to which nothing is wanting, and hath attained its *ακμή* and highest pitch. So we are only perfect in heaven, Heb. xii. 23, 'The spirits of just men made perfect;' those spirits who are unclothed and divested of the body; in their mortal life only they were upright,<sup>1</sup> but in their heavenly life perfect. Here they walked with God, and endeavoured an universal obedience to him, and so made capable; but now live with God, and are admitted into a nearer communion with him than we mortals are; they are freed from all sin and temptation, they are beyond growth: corn doth not grow in the garner, but in the field. Well, then, though we be not perfect in degrees, yet we must all be perfect as to parts, we must entirely resign ourselves to God's use, without allowing any part or corner of our hearts to be possessed by any other.

4. Perfection is to be considered with respect—(1.) to our growth, or (2.) our consummation; here it is only *in fieri*, there *in facto esse*. Things are said to be done when they are begun to be done, 2

<sup>1</sup> That is, 'they were only upright.'—Ed.

Cor. v. 17. And so they are said to be perfect who are in the way of perfection; he that is in his growing estate, increasing more unto grace and righteousness; 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image;' 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'Though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' They do seriously set upon the work. Thus perfection is taken:—

[1.] As to means. The ministry was appointed 'for the perfecting of the saints,' Eph. iv. 12. That they may be more enlightened and more sanctified; more brought to the knowledge of God and obedience of his will. There are means appointed by God for the perfecting of grace, as well as the first working of it in us: 1 Thes. iii. 10, 'That I may perfect what is lacking to your faith.'

[2.] As to the improvement of means: 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' making progress in the way of grace towards perfection, when the habit is more increased: 2 Peter i. 8, 'For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ.' And Christian practice is more uniform: 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'That as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and please God, so that ye would abound more and more.' It is not enough to have grace, but we must grow in grace; progress is always necessary, though exact perfection be not attained, so that then the heart is perfect with God, when you make it not a slight purpose only, but your constant endeavour to come up to your pattern and rule, continually striving against sin, and aiming at a higher degree of holiness.

(2.) Consummate. When after all the hazards of the present life, when at length we shall be presented to Christ, and by Christ to God. Presented to Christ: Col. i. 28, 'That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;' that is, fully complete, according to that holiness required and exemplified by Christ. And by Christ to God: Col. i. 22, 'To present you holy, and unblamable, and irreprovable in his sight.'

I now come to the reasons.

Secondly, The reasons why we must be perfect, that is, not only sincere, having all parts of a Christian, but endeavour after the highest perfection, and for the present, want nothing conducive nor necessary to salvation.

1. We have a perfect God: Mat. v. 43, 'Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.' God's perfection is our copy, and that is exact, and we are required to imitate him; and, therefore, we must not set bounds to our holiness, and say, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;' when we are come never so far, yet this is not like God. The force of this rule is not taken off, because it is limited to one perfection in the divine nature in the Evangelist Luke, for he readeth, instead of being perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, 'Be ye merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful,' Luke vi. 36—that is a special way of Christian perfection; but God's children must aim at the perfection of all virtues, not only love to enemies. As mercy is one of the divine perfections which we ought to imitate, so is holiness, veracity, and wisdom, 1 Peter i. 15, 16. Surely this direction was given in the gospel to some purpose or not: if not, then Christ spoke words in vain; if to some purpose, we are obliged to perfection; though we cannot fully ob-

tain it in this life, we must still aim at more, and come more near to it. And having God for our pattern, we should always set him before our eyes, as he is represented to us in his word, and his Son Jesus Christ, the express image of his person, to be imitated by us.

2. We have a perfect rule: Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of God is perfect;' and 2 Tim. iii. 17, 'The word of God is able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work,' The strictness of the law as a rule is adopted into the covenant of grace, into the very frame and constitution of it, and so far bindeth as to allow no weaknesses and imperfections, but that we must still bewail failings, and strive after the utmost conformity to it in all things. As we have a perfect pattern, so we have a law still, that is the perfect rule of all righteousness, and therefore we should endeavour to conform to it more and more.

3. We have a perfect Redeemer: Col. ii. 10, 'Ye are complete in him.' We have all things from him, and in him, necessary to salvation. In ourselves we are empty, destitute of everything which might commend us to God, but there is a fulness in Christ to be communicated to all who, being sensible of their own emptiness, do seriously apply themselves to him; a perfect wisdom, a perfect righteousness, perfect sanctification, and supplies for our perfect glory and blessedness. He beginneth by his Spirit to renew our natures, and this grace is still of the growing hand, till all be crowned in glory; there is a complete fulness in our Mediator.

4. There is a perfect reward, or a perfect state of glory, in which there is nothing wanting, either to holiness or happiness. The scripture describeth it by our growing up into a perfect man in Christ Jesus, Eph. iv. 13. We have our infancy at our first conversion, when liable to childish ignorance and many infirmities; we have our youth and growing age, when making progress in the way of grace towards perfection; and lastly, we have our perfect manly age when we are come to our full pitch, when grace is fully perfected in glory. In scripture there is nothing said of the fading and declining time of old age. Oh! blessed will that time be, when we shall be holy and undefiled, above the reach of temptations; when believers receive all immediately from the fountain of holiness, and are filled with the fulness of all perfections. And shall we that have such hopes be lazy and negligent? No; we must press towards the mark, if we expect it as our felicity, we must prize it, and seek after it, and get more of it every day.

*Use 1.* Is to press and exhort you to labour after Christian perfection.

1. Motives. What you lost in Adam must be recovered in Christ, or else you dishonour your Redeemer. Now we lost in Adam innocence and perfect holiness, therefore you must seek to recover it by Christ, for certainly Christ is more able to save than Adam to destroy, Rom. v. 17. The abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness came by Jesus Christ. It is true, Christ doth his work by degrees; but if we mind it not, and lazily expect that he should make us perfect, how will it ever be? for God will not save us without us; and as far as we hope for anything, we must endeavour after it, for Christian hope is not a devout sloth, but an encouragement to diligence.

2. We pray for perfection, and therefore we must endeavour after

it, otherwise our prayers are a mockery. We pray, Mat. vi. 8, and 1 Thes. v. 23, 'The God of peace sanctify you throughout, even your whole body, soul, and spirit.' We pray for complete sanctification in hope to obtain it. Prayer is not for God's sake, but ours—a solemn binding ourselves to use the means, that we may obtain the blessings that we ask.

3. In our making covenant, we purpose to do the whole will of God; now where there is a purpose, there must be an endeavour and a progress, for otherwise it is not made with a true heart, Heb. x. 22. A man may purpose duty in a pang, which afterward he retracts in his conversation and practice; he may wish for perfection, like it in the general, not considering it as exclusive of his beloved lusts, but there he will be excused. Yea, he may sincerely purpose it, yet be faint and slack in his endeavours. Therefore, we need to be exhorted continually to be more earnest and diligent in holiness, to avoid 'all appearance of evil,' 1 Thes. v. 22. Not to allow ourselves in the omission of any known duty, James iv. 13, or the commission of any known sin, though never so near and dear to us: Ps. xviii. 23, 'I was upright before thee, and kept myself from mine iniquity.' Therefore, unless we comply with these exhortations, and set ourselves sincerely to do the whole will of God, the challenge will be brought against us which was brought against the church of Sardis, 'I have not found thy works perfect before God,' Rev. iii. 2. Your vows were good, but your practice is not answerable.

4. Consider the comfort and peace of that man who doth more and more press towards perfection: Ps. xxxvii. 37, 'Mark the perfect man, behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.' They have a sweet life, and a happy close, a tolerable passage through the world, and a comfortable passage out of the world.

For means:—

1. See that the work be begun, for there must be converting grace before there can be confirming grace, life before there be strength and growth, as there must be fire before it can be blown up; for what good will it do to blow a dead coal, to seek strength before we have life? It is as if we should give food or physic to a dead man. The secure and impenitent are not to be confirmed and strengthened, but humbled and changed. We must first choose God for our portion before we can be exhorted to cleave to God, Acts xi. 23. First, the perfection of sincerity before the perfection of growth and progress, the measures and degrees following the real being of grace in the soul.

2. If you would be perfect, the radical graces must be strengthened, which are faith, hope, and love; strong faith, fervent love, lively hope. Such a faith as realiseth the unseen glory, and giveth such a deep sense of the world to come, as that you are willing to venture all upon the hopes of it; such a hope as sets the heart upon glory to come, as present things do not greatly move us; such a love as levelleth all our actions to God's glory, and our eternal enjoyment of him, Jude 20, 21.

3. Use the means with all seriousness and good conscience. These conduce to perfect what is lacking to your faith, to root you, ground



you in love, confirm you in hope, that the thoughts of heaven may be more affecting and engaging. Now the principal means are the word, and sacraments, and prayer.

[1.] In the word you have principles of faith, obligations to love, and arguments of hope; therefore it is said, God buildeth us up by the word of his grace, Acts xx. 32.

[2.] The sacraments strengthen faith, hope, and love, as signs and seals of the love of God, through Jesus Christ, in the new covenant, that so our consolation may be more strong. They strengthen our faith and hope, as a bond or a vow: so they excite and engage our love and obedience: we bind ourselves to God anew, to pursue our everlasting hopes, whatever they cost us. Our great diseases are proneness to evil and backwardness to good: we check the one and cherish the other.

[3.] Prayer; for it is God that perfects us, 1 Peter v. 10. He must be sought to; his blessing maketh the means effectual.

4. Think much and often of your perfect blessedness, which you expect according to promise, which will quicken and excite you to more diligence. There is a time coming when the mind shall be filled with as much light, and the heart with as much love and joy, as the capacity of it is able to contain. There will be:—

[1.] A complete vision of God and Christ, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. No desire of the mind shall be unfilled or unsatisfied with the knowledge of God in Christ.

[2.] A complete possession and fruition of God. Here we are in a waiting, expecting, longing posture, but there is a plenary fruition; we are filled up with all the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 19, and 1 Cor. i. 30. God is all in all.

[3.] A complete similitude and transformation into the image of Christ, 1 John iii. 2; Ps. xvii. 15. Here grace is mingled with corruption; we are like God by the first-fruits of the Spirit, but unlike him by the remainders of corruption; but in heaven we shall be wholly like him. Here we resemble Christ, but we also resemble Adam, yea, and often show forth more of Adam than Jesus; but there we only show forth the holiness and purity of Christ, his image shineth in us without spot and blemish.

[4.] A complete delectation arising from all the rest, the vision, fruition, and likeness of God, Ps. xvi. 11. Those delights are full and perpetual: our great business will be to love what we see, and our great happiness to have what we love. This is our never-failing delight; we enter into our Master's joy, Mat. xxv. and 1 Peter iv. 13, 'That when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with an exceeding joy.' The Lord hath reserved the fulness of his people's joy until that time when sorrow will be no more.

Use 2. Are we perfect, that is, grown Christians in the way to perfection?

The notes of it are:—

1. When there is such a base esteem of worldly things, that our affections are weakened to them every day. One half of religion is dying to the world, as the other half is living to God, the mortifying of self-love, and the strengthening and increasing our love to God.



Self-love is gratified by the pleasures, honours, and profits of the world; so love to God aimeth at the enjoyment of God, when we get above the hopes and fears of the world, and the delights of sense. 'I am crucified to the world,' Gal. vi. 14, when everything is 'loss and dung' for Christ's sake.

2. When more unsatisfied with present degrees of holiness, with a constant endeavour to grow better. Our maimed and defective service is a real trouble to us; we bewail our wants and imperfections; I cannot do what I would: 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' It is the grief and shame of your hearts that you serve God no better; you are still groaning, longing, striving after greater perfection: but when you allow yourselves in your imperfections, and digest failings without remorse, you are weaklings in Christianity. A true Christian desireth the highest degree of holiness, and to be freed from everything that is sin, cannot sit down contented with any low degree of grace; it is a trouble to him that he knoweth and loveth God no more, and serveth him no better; his smallest sins are a greater burden to him than the greatest bodily wants and sufferings, Rom. vii. 23, 24.

3. Such are more swayed by love than fear. Weak Christians are most obedient when most in fear of hell; but the more we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, the more we advance towards our final estate. At first our pride and sensuality beareth sway and rule in us, and have no resistance, but now and then some frightenings and ineffectual checks from the fears of hell. Such they<sup>1</sup> are not converted yet. And if the sense of religion do more prevail upon us, yet our condition is more troublous than comfortable, and all our business is to escape the everlasting misery which we fear; and so we may forsake the practice of those grosser sins which breed our fears, or perform some duties that may best fortify us against them. But this religion is animated by fear alone, without the love of God and holiness, that is only preparative to religion, near the kingdom of God; but when really converted, we have the Spirit of his Son inclining us to God as a Father, Gal. iv. 6. But as yet the spirit of adoption produceth but weak effects; we differ little from a servant; it is 'perfect love casteth out fear,' 1 John iv. 18. When the soul loveth God, mindeith God, and is inclined to the ways of God, delighteth in them as they lead to God, then we are in a better progress, and more prepared for our final estate: his great motive is love, his great end is perfect love. For the present he would serve him better, because he delighteth in his ways. 'Oh, how I love thy law!' Ps. cxix. 97, and ver. 140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' They are willing and ready for God; these are thoroughly settled in a Christian course.

4. The grown Christian is more humble, he seeth more of his defects than others do. Weak Christians are more liable to be puffed up than the wiser and stronger; for the more men increase in grace, whether knowledge or holiness, the more they know their emptiness, unmortifiedness, and manifold sins and failings, the more they know of the jealousy of God's holiness, of the evil of sin, of the strictness of the covenant, have a deeper sense of their obligations to God, and

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'such as they who'?—ED.

have more experience of their own slippery hearts: sin is more a burden to them than ever they see; they have more<sup>1</sup> difficulties to grapple with, and all this keepeth them humble and low in their own eyes. All this is spoken to press you to look to this growth and progress which is our perfection. By the way, he that thinketh he hath grace enough to be saved, and careth for no more, dealeth more niggardly with God than he would do in the world; if a man hath bread enough to keep him from starving, would he be content? There is no truth where no care of growth; if our condition be safe, it is not sure to us.

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'than ever; they see they have &c.' !—Ed.

## A PERSUASIVE TO UNITY IN THINGS INDIFFERENT.

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*As many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*—PHIL. III. 15.

I NOW come to the other part of the text:—

1. *As many as be perfect, be thus minded* : τοῦτο φρονεῖτε, think the same thing with me—that is, forsaking all other confidences, cleave to Christ alone, whatever it cost you. Mind this, take care of this, be thus affected; let us actually perform that to which circumcision was designed; let us worship God in a spiritual manner, trusting Christ as the substance of all these ceremonial shadows, depending upon him for his renewing and reconciling grace, and adhering to pure Christianity, without mingling with it the rudiments of Moses.

2. *If in anything ye be otherwise minded*, know not the abolition of the ceremonies through weakness of faith, or an affected ignorance; yet having knowledge of so many saving truths, we hope in time God will reclaim you from your error. Well then—

[1.] Here is a difference or dissent supposed: ‘thus minded,’ and ‘otherwise minded.’

[2.] Lenity expressed towards the dissenters: ‘If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this to you.’

*Doct.* That when God’s people are divided in opinion, all lenity and mutual forbearance should be used to prevent things from coming to an open rupture.

So sweet and mild was the discipline in the apostle’s days, that he would not compel men to do whatever he or others did conceive to be good, or to forbear what they did conceive to be evil, but, without force, leave them to God’s direction and illumination.

Here let me show you:—

1. What lenity and forbearance should be used.

2. The reasons why lenity and forbearance should be used.

1. What lenity and forbearance should be used. Let us state it in these considerations:—

[1.] There may be, and often are, differences of opinion about lesser things in the church; partly because of the different degrees of light.

All barks that sail to heaven draw not a like depth of water. And partly because of the remainders of corruption in all. Inordinate self-love is not in all alike broken and mortified, and so their particular interests have an influence upon their opinions. And partly because of the accidental prejudices of education and converse, &c.

[2.] When these differences arise, we should take care they come not to a rupture and open breach. This is the course the apostle taketh here; he doth not by and by despair of the dissenters, and reject them as heretics, but beareth with them, hoping in charity God will at length reveal their error to them by the ministry of his servants, through the powerful operation of his Spirit, and not suffer them to run on in dividing courses from the rest of his people. So should we do in like cases. Partly because when these differences of opinion breed division and separations, the church is destroyed: Gal. v. 15, 'For if ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another.' Backbitings, revilings, and reproaches make way for a total vastation of the whole church, a ruin to both parties. Partly because the whole<sup>1</sup> is scandalised: John xvii. 21, 'That they may all be one, that the world may believe that thou has sent me.' Divisions in the church breed atheism in the world. Partly because there are enemies which watch for our halting, and by our divisions we are laid open to them. Our Lord and Master hath told us with his own mouth, that 'a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand,' Mat. xii. 25. Never was it so well with the people of God, but besides their divisions among themselves, they had common enemies; and Nazianzen calls them 'Common Reconcilers,' because they should engage God's people to a unanimous opposition to the kingdom of Satan in the world. And partly because then mutual means of edification are hindered. As long as charity and mutual forbearance remaineth, there is hope of doing good to one another; but when men break out into opposite parties, they are prejudiced against all that light that they should receive one from another, suspecting every point as counsel from an enemy: Gal. iv. 16, 'Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?' When men are once engaged in a way of error, whosoever is an enemy to their error is counted an enemy to themselves; yea, they can hardly bear that sound doctrine which doth directly cross their opinions, but are apt to cavil at all that is said by a dissenter. And partly because when men give themselves up to separating and narrow principles, the power of godliness is lost, and all their zeal is laid out upon their petty and private opinions, and so religion is turned into a disputacity. That is the reason why the apostle doth so often tell them, Gal. vi. 15, 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;' and Gal. v. 6, 'For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love;' and 1 Cor. vii. 19, 'Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping the commandments of God.' Observe it where you will, and you shall find that separation and distance from the rest of believers, doth not befriend godliness, but undermine it. A regiment fighting apart from the rest of the army of

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'the world?'—ED.

Christ, is always lost through their own peevishness ; at least, they lose great advantages of promoting the kingdom of Christ.

[3.] To prevent this open rupture, there must be all lenity used and mutual forbearance. We must not rigorously obtrude our conceits upon others, either by church-power, or private censure. It may be done either way ; sometimes by church-power, especially when it is possessed or invaded by the more self-seeking sort of Christians ; as we read in the Revelations of the beast that pushed with the horns of a lamb—that is, used church-power, and under a pretence of church-constitution destroyed them that were truly the church of Christ. And our Lord telleth us, John xvi. 2, ‘ They shall put you out of the synagogues ; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, shall think that he doth God good service.’ Putting them out of the synagogues was an abuse of ecclesiastical power : it may be so, the builders may refuse the corner-stone. On the other side, private censures may as much break the law of forbearance as public censures, when inferiors promote their differences with turbulency, heat, and animosity, and rend and tear all things, yea, themselves, from the body of Christ, and sober Christians, censuring all that dissent from them as no Christians. There is such a sin under the gospel as the gainsaying of Korah, Jude 11. The sin of Korah is and may be committed in the New Testament. The sin of Korah was invading an office that no way belonged to him, and censured his superiors, as if they took too much upon them, because all the Lord’s people were holy, and erected another ministry in their stead. He, being a Levite, would do the office of a priest as well as Aaron ; and when summoned to appear before Moses, said, ‘ We will not come,’ Num. xvi. 11, 12. Now the apostle saith, in the perishing of Korah their own doom was foretold. Again, ver. 19, ‘ These are they that separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit.’ Whence it is clear that private men, in their sphere, may rend the church. And the factions at Corinth proved it : 1 Cor. i. 12, ‘ I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos, and I am of Cephas, and I am of Christ,’—as impailing and appropriating the common salvation to themselves. Much milder was the apostle : 1 Cor. i. 2, ‘ Jesus Christ, theirs and ours.’ Now what remedy is there but lenity and mutual forbearance ? This I shall state :—

1. As to the matter of the strife. It must be considered that we must dispense this forbearance as the matter will bear. There are great disputes about toleration ; only let me tell you now, that we speak not of the toleration of the magistrate, but of the church, what things are within the latitude of allowable differences within the church. The magistrate’s concessions may be larger ; for in supernatural things, such as matters of religion are, he may bear with that which the church ought not to bear with in them that have submitted to a higher institution, or in its own members, or rather private Christians one with another. But in this limited forbearance there are extremes, and for want of right stating of things, men fight with their friends in the dark ; some think all things should be suffered ; some nothing wherein to bear with our brethren. The one sort of Christians is for imposing on their brethren all things that have gotten the vogue and the favour of authority, and that not only



on their practice, but their judgments too; and this in matters not fundamental or destructive to faith or worship, but in things controversial or doubtful among godly and peaceable men. But if it should not go so high, contending about every difference of opinion, and urging our brethren with everything we conceive to be right, is a breach of Christian love, and destroyeth the use of those differing gifts which Christ hath given to the church, and crosseth his mind in the frame of the scriptures, which are clear in soul-saving matters; in other things, especially matters of discipline and order, more dark and obscure. It is also contrary to the mild and gentle government of the apostles, who press in lesser matters a forbearance; as Paul, Rom. xiv. 1, 'The weak in faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations;' receive him, own him, but do not cast him out of the church, nor trouble him for doubtful things, but let him come to himself, for men will sooner be led than drawn.

The other extreme is of them that will have all things to be tolerated, even blasphemy and fundamental errors, as if the scriptures were uncertain in all things. No; in things absolutely necessary to salvation, it is clear, open, and plain: 'The law is a lamp, and a light,' Prov. vi. 23, and Ps. cxix. 105. And in such a case we are not to 'bid him God-speed,' 2 Epist. John 10. In such cases of damnable heresy, the law of Christian lenity holdeth not; but if we agree in the principal articles of faith, let us embrace one another with mutual love, though we differ from one another in variety of rites and ceremonies and discipline ecclesiastical. If we agree in the substantials of worship, let us go by the same rule, do the same thing: though in circumstantialia there be a difference, these are matters of lesser moment than separation, or the other<sup>1</sup> division of the church.

2. As to the persons contending, there is a difference. The apostle, when he persuadeth this lenity and mutual forbearance, excepts those that raise troubles in the church, and distinguisheth between erring Christians and their factious guides: Phil. iii. 2, 'Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision.' The poor seduced Christians he would have to be pitied, but the renders and cutters of the church, he would have them beware of such.

3. The forbearance itself. It is not a forbearance out of necessity, because we dare do no otherwise, but voluntary choice out of Christian pity and compassion, knowing that we need as much forbearance from God and others, for we all have our mistakes and failings; not a forbearance out of policy, till we get opportunity to suppress others: the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for us. God often layeth that restraint upon us by his providence; and it is well he doth: but it should be the restraint of grace, not a respect to our own ease, lest we create trouble to ourselves, but upon Christian reasons. No; the apostle sheweth you whence this forbearance should come: Eph. iv. 2, 3, 'With all lowliness and meekness and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

There are four graces enforce it:—

[1.] Lowliness, which is a grace and virtue, whereby a man, from

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'utter'?—ED.

the sense of his own infirmities, doth esteem but meanly and soberly of himself, and all that is his.

[2.] Meekness, whereby we are rendered tractable, gentle, affable, and easy to be entreated and conversed withal, James iii. 17.

[3.] Long-suffering, which is nothing but meekness extended or continued, and not interrupted by length of time, or multiplication of offences.

[4.] Love to our Christian brother or neighbour, whereby our hearts are inclined or well-disposed towards them for their good. 'Love covereth a multitude of sins,' 1 Peter iv. 8. Maketh us bear with many things in the person loved, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 'Charity suffereth long, and is kind;' and ver. 7, 'Beareth all things, hopeth all things.' This is the forbearance we press, a forbearance out of meekness and humility and love for Christ's sake.

4. In this forbearance, both strong and weak have their part, and are much concerned, as having either of them much to do herein. Which, that we may clear to you, let us consider:—

*First*, What they are not to do.

1. Not to leave the truth, or to do anything against it. No; the apostle saith, 'Let as many as be perfect be thus minded;' not change truth for error. Strings in tune must not be brought down to strings out of tune, but they brought up to them.

2. Not to connive at their sin or error, for that is not love but hatred: Lev. xix. 17, 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.' To let him go unconvinced is to harden him: 2 Thes. iii. 15, 'Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.' The sins of others must not be let alone under the pretence of forbearance; and there must be no neglect of means to reclaim them from their sin, but meekly we are to hold our light to them, and use all holy means of convincing and satisfying their judgments.

*Secondly*, What they are to do.

1. The strong are not to deal rigorously with the weak, nor insult over them, nor pursue them with censures, but wait till God declare the truth unto them, and must promote their conviction with all gentleness and condescension. We are to feed Christ's lambs as well as his sheep, and for both we need love, John xxi. 15, 16. Among the flock of Christ there are variety of tempers and degrees of strength, both lambs and sheep. We must imitate our Lord: Isa. xl. 11, 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.' We should condescend to the weak and feeble ones, as well as consider what the strong and confirmed can bear. Though we cannot love their weakness, yet we must love the weak, and bear with the infirmities of the weak, not break the bruised reed. Infants must not be turned out of the family because they cry, and are unquiet and troublesome; though they be peevish and froward, yet we must bear it with gentleness and patience, as we do the frowardness of the sick; if they revile, we must not revile again, but must seek gently to reduce them, notwithstanding all their censures; to entertain them with contempt is to prejudice them quite against

all instruction. Job would not despise the cause of his man-servant or maid-servant when they contended with him, Job xxxi. 13.

2. The weak. But who will own this title and appellation? Because in controversies of religion, all seem to stand upon the same level, and another differeth from me as much as I do from him; their opinion is as far from mine, as mine from theirs; who then shall be accounted weak?

I answer:—

1. Our rule is plain; and as it distinguisheth error from truth, so weakness and partial Christianity from that which is more perfect and thorough. Besides, it is clear some have not the gifts of knowledge and experience that others have, nor such advantages of education and study, and helps of knowing the truth; and though they are not to captivate their understandings to the dictates of others, yet they should search and search again and again, and have double light, when they are by the seeming evidence of truth forced to differ.

2. Christianity teacheth us to think meanly of ourselves, and not to be wise in our own conceits: Phil. ii. 3, 'In lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves;' at least, we should have such a sense of our imperfections as to make us tractable and teachable.

3. If you will not own yourselves weak, do the part of the strong meekly, hold forth your light, produce your reasons to convince others; but if you have nothing to produce but your obstinacy and ignorance, surely you are not only a weak, but a perverse brother. But what are the weak to do? Not to rend and cut off themselves from the rest of Christians, or be strange to them upon every lesser dissent, nor to raise troubles by your censures, but to be humble, teachable, diligent in the use of means, to lay aside obstinate prejudices, to examine how it cometh to pass that the rest of the godly and you differ; to leave room still for the discovery of God's mind where your grounds are not clear and certain, and to count it no shame to retract that former practice which a future conviction disproveth.

II. The reasons.

1. From the necessity, excellency, and utility of union. What more clear in the scriptures than that Christians should endeavour to be united? Christ prayed for it: John xvii. 21–23, 'That they all may be one, that they may be one as we are one, that they may be perfect in one.' And the apostle enforceth it by the most vehement intreaties that can be used: Phil. ii. 1, 2, 'If therefore there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercy, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind.' Who can withstand such an adjuration and powerful beseechings as these, that if ever they found any comfort by his ministry, and ever had any hope by Christ, ever any influence of the Spirit, ever any pity and compassion over souls, that they would look after unity in judgment, love, and affection, and lay aside their differences, and carnal emulations? Again, they caution us against those that cause divisions: Rom. xvi. 17, 18, 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and

avoid them ; for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.' They press unity upon us by very cogent arguments, that carry the highest reason with them : Eph. iv. 4-6, ' There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.'

Seven uniting considerations are there heaped up together :—

[1.] There is one body of Christ, whereof all are members. The whole church maketh but one body, knit by faith to Christ, their head, and by the bond of love among themselves ; and the meanest Christian is a member in this body. Now it is unnatural if the members of the same body should tear and destroy one another, and that the body of Christ should be rent and torn ; and woe be to them by whom it is so !

[2.] This body is animated by one Spirit ; that if any be a member of this body, it is necessary that he have the Spirit of God abiding in him, to renew and quicken him. Now, this one and the self-same Spirit, as the apostle calleth him, 1 Cor. xii. 11, worketh in all the saints. If his gifts be various, they proceed from the same author, and they are variously dispensed, to preserve society and communion, that one may not say to another, ' I have no need of thee.' However, there is but one new nature in all the sanctified.

[3.] One hope of glory. We are all joint-heirs of the same kingdom, we all expect one end and happiness, where we shall meet and live together for ever. Now those that shall meet and live together in glory hereafter, should live together in peace and concord here.

[4.] There is 'one Lord,' one Mediator and blessed Saviour. Now, shall the servants of one Master fall at odds with themselves, neglect their Master's work committed to them, beat their fellow-servants, and eat and drink with the drunken ?

[5.] 'One faith,' *fides quæ creditur* : he meaneth the doctrine of faith in the gospel. We agree in the same fundamental truths of the gospel as the only object of saving faith, and shall we strive about things of less importance and moment ? There is but one gospel, which is the seed of our new birth, the rule of our faith and lives, the foundation of our hope, the food of our souls.

[6.] 'One baptism,' that is, the same new covenant sealed and confirmed by baptism ; and when our Father's testament is clear, do we quarrel about petty and mean things ?

[7.] 'One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.' We have one common God and Father, whose eminency is above all creatures, whose presence and powerful providence runneth through all creatures ; but his special presence, by the gracious operations of his Holy Spirit, is in the regenerate. Surely this is a strong bond of union, to be one in God. He is the common Father of all believers, through Jesus Christ. Some are weak, some strong, some rich, some poor, but they have all an equal interest in God. Now, for us, who are so many ways one, to be rent in pieces, how sad is that ! All these places, and many more, show how every Christian should, as far as it is possible, be an esteemer and promoter



of unity among brethren, and not only make conscience of purity, but of unity also, which, next to purity, is the great badge of Christianity.

2. From the consideration of our mutual frailties, who have all in part a corrupt will, guided by a blind mind. Now, as the apostle saith of the high priest, who is taken from men, Heb. v. 2, that he is 'one that can have compassion of the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, for that he is compassed about with infirmities;' this should be verified in every one of us. One sinner ought to have compassion of another. The word is *μετριοπαθεῖν δυνάμενος*, can reasonably bear with the ignorance of brethren, because of the common relation: Gal. vi. 1, 'Ye which are spiritual, restore him with meekness;' so 'him that is weak, receive,' Rom. xiv. 1. The apostles, being immediately inspired, were more infallible than we are.

[1.] Oh, do but consider what we were, and what we are: 'For we ourselves were sometimes foolish and disobedient,' Titus iii. 3. Did not we all sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death? Were we not all ignorant of the ways of God, and the things which belong to our peace? Hath God merely by his grace brought us to the knowledge of his truth? and shall we condemn and disdain our weak brother, or insult over him, and determine and judge rashly of him? 'Who maketh thee to differ?' 1 Cor. iv. 7.

[2.] What we are—weak creatures, not infallible. Now after we are light in the Lord, we have our errors in knowledge and practice, some more, some less, according to the degree of our growth, Ps. xix. 12. God revealeth to his saints all necessary truth, but not every particular truth, out of wise dispensation.

3. From the consideration of the probability of divine illumination.

[1.] This illumination cometh from God only. It is he that powerfully revealeth it, and setteth the heart in the belief of it: Acts xvi. 4, and 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7, 'I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.' The best means may be disappointed, till God co-operate with them. Let us, then, with patience, use the means, and refer the issue to God: 2 Tim. ii. 25, 'In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if, peradventure, God will give them repentance unto life.' If we seek to force men to our opinion, before men are convinced, that is a tyranny which will do little good; it may make hypocrites, but it will never make real converts.

[2.] This illumination is given by God by degrees. The apostle prayeth for the converted Ephesians, that 'God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation,' Eph. i. 17. They had it before, but he meaneth a greater measure. Therefore, weak Christians are not to be discouraged though they see not as far as others. Some see more, some less, according to the state and condition wherein God will employ them. Some need more light than others, as ministers more than people, governors more than inferiors; but all have sufficient. Some at first see men walking like trees, Mark viii. 24, 25, but afterwards the light groweth more clear and more distinct. In short, he doth not reveal his mind to his children all alike, nor all at once, but here a little and there a little, as narrow-mouthed vessels can take it in.

[3.] Those who are not for the present, may be afterwards instructed in the truth. The apostle proceedeth in the hopes of that:—



(1.) Upon the supposition that they were already converted to the Christian faith, and were sincere in the belief and profession of it. Those that belong to God will one time or other be enlightened in the knowledge of all necessary truths: 'For God that hath begun a good work, will perfect it,' Phil. i. 6. If the saints at first conversion, when they were called from darkness to light, did not hinder illumination then, and the knowledge of those many soul-saving truths which God revealed to them then, so as to recover them from a partial error, we may presume that God will give them a further understanding of the way of salvation, though now under some error; as Aquila and Priscilla expounded to Apollos the way of God more perfectly, Acts xviii. 26.

(2.) Upon the supposition that they were humble and tractable: Ps. xxv. 9, 'The meek he will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way.' They lie open to information; but if men be puffed up with self-conceits, there is more hopes of a carnal fool than of them, that is, a sensual and brutish man.

(3.) That they will not neglect any means of study and prayer. Study—for we must dig for knowledge as for silver (Prov. ii. 4)—not only cry for it, but dig for it in the mines of knowledge; common and obvious apprehensions lead us into error. And then prayer: Ps. cxix. 18, 'Lord open mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.' God must take away the veil. Now, then, upon prayer to God, and applying themselves to the use of holy means, God will show them they are deceived. If you study and not pray, it is just with God to leave you to your prejudices; if you pray and neglect means, you must not think that God will extraordinarily inspire you, for he revealeth truth by his blessing on ordinary means.

(4.) Upon suspicion that they continue in the communion of the church: Eph. iv. 15, 'Speaking the truth in love.' While we keep unity and keep love, others have greater hopes to convince, they to be convinced; and so both, while they divide not, by this mutual condescension, may the better wait for this illumination; but in their separation, their errors are confirmed while they hear but one side, nothing to undeceive them, but all to root them in their errors.

(5.) He supposeth that they walked orderly according to their light. Now if God hath begun to enlighten them in other things, he will discover more truths to them, John vii. 17; upon the whole, deal tenderly with them and tolerate them, till they be taught of God.

(6.) As to the nature of his confidence, 'God shall reveal.' There is a twofold confidence, a confidence of faith grounded on a promise, and a confidence of charity grounded on appearance and probability, 1 Cor. xiii. 7. We hope the best, though the event doth not always follow; the former is on the forementioned grounds, the latter on appearance. The appearance of them; so Gal. v. 10, 'I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be no otherwise minded; for he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment whoever he be.' This confidence was grounded on charity, that through the Lord's grace they should be reclaimed from their error, and brought to embrace the truth. We are not to despair of the recovery of any, but

in charity to hope the best of all men, as long as they are curable. Thus for the third reason.

4. Fourth reason, from the temper of those that are perfect. A grounded Christian beareth with the infirmities he seeth in others, and pitieth and helpeth them, and prayeth for them more than the weak, who are usually most censorious and addicted to the interest of their party and faction in the world, and make a bustle about opinions rather than solid godliness; but the grown Christian is most under the power of love and a heavenly mind, and so loveth God and his neighbour, is most sensible of his own frailty, hath a greater zeal for the welfare of his church and interest in the world, and seeth farther than others do.

Use is to press us to this lenity and forbearance to one another.

To this end take these considerations:—

1. Consider in how many things we agree, and in how few we differ. There is a threefold unity; in mind, and heart, and scope.

In mind: Rom. xv. 5, 6, 'Now the God of patience and consolation grant that you be like-minded one towards another, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God.'

In heart: Acts iv. 32, 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.'

As to the scope, Rom. xv. 5-7. Now as to the way, it is either the general way of faith and holiness, for all that shall be saved are of one mind as to the substantials of faith and worship: Jer. xxxii. 39, 'I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever.' But there may be a different practice as to some lesser things; should we for these break with one another?

2. Take more notice of their graces than of their infirmities. Is there no good thing found in them? Rev. ii. 6, 'But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans.' See also ver. 2 and 5. He beginneth and endeth with their commendation, though in the middle of the epistle he reproveth them for their decay; he taketh more notice of what is right than what is wrong. We reflect upon the evil of every party, but do not consider the good.

3. Remember how open the enforcements to love and unity are, and how much the grounds of separation lie in the dark, and are in a doubtful case, but union is the safest part.

4. Think of God's love and forbearance towards us before we received the light of his truth, and were brought to the obedience of his will; as God dealt with the Israelites, so with every one of us: Acts xiii. 18, 'He suffered their manners in the wilderness.' If we had been dealt with rigorously, we had been cut off from the number of God's people, had such stumbling-blocks and prejudices laid in our way, that we should never have been converted to God.

5. This forbearance cannot in reason be expected from others to ourselves, if we be not ready to repay it to others. There is no man which hath not infirmities of his own which call for forbearance, James iii. 2. In the general, every man is obliged to do as he would be done unto, Mat. vii. 12. So in particular, he is reprov'd when he had his own debt forgiven him, yet took his fellow-servant by the throat and showed him no mercy, Mat. xviii. 28. We have all our failings and mistakes; usually God punisheth censures with censures,

Mat. vii. 1, injuries with injuries. Paul, that stoned Stephen, was himself stoned at Lystra. So he punisheth separations with separations; they are endless, as circles in the water beget one another.

6. Consider how dangerous it is to reject any whom Christ will own for his. Will Christ admit him to heaven, and will you think him unfit for your communion here upon earth? Despise not the weak brother, for God hath received him, Rom. xiv. 3. The Gentile believer must not despise the scrupulous Jewish believer, and cast out of his communion the Gentile Christian; if God hath admitted him into his family, shall we exclude him? So Mat. xviii. 6, 'Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea.' Now what greater offence than to cast them off from the privileges of the Christian church, either by public or private censures which are causeless or unwarrantable, at least no way grounded on necessary things?

7. As we must not on our part give offence or occasion the divisions, so we must not take offence when it is given by others; for charity, as it provoketh not, so it 'is not easily provoked,' 1 Cor. xiii. 5. So likewise if a rent be made by others, we must do what we can to heal it. If an angry brother call us bastard, yet let us own him as a brother and a child of the family: for 'Blessed are the peacemakers,' Mat. v. 9. The world censureth us for compliers and daubers, but God counteth us his genuine and true children.

8. Our endeavours after unity among the professors of Christianity ought to be earnest and constant: Eph. iv. 3, '*Endeavouring* to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' I add this partly because many make fair pretences of peace and union, which their practice contradicteth; all cry out of the divisions, but every one keepeth them up; and partly, because when it is endeavoured we shall find difficulties and disappointments, but we must not rest in some careless endeavours, nor grow weary though we meet not with present success; and partly because the instruments of so great a good are usually sacrificed to the wrath of both parties. We must be content to digest affronts, reproaches, censures, and injuries, and love them that hate us: 2 Cor. xii. 15, 'Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am beloved of you.'

## NOT TO BE OFFENDED IN CHRIST, THE READY WAY TO BLESSEDNESS.

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*And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.*—MAT. XI. 6.

THESE words are the conclusion of Christ's answer to John's disciples, who were sent from him in prison to inquire if Christ were the true Messiah, or they must look for another. This message was not sent for his own satisfaction, but theirs; not his own, for he had before openly owned Christ as such, John i. 29, but theirs: they are offended in Christ out of respect to their master. For answer Christ referreth them to his works, whether they were not such as the prophets foretold were to be performed by the Messiah.

Two things he urgeth:—

*First*, His miracles.

*Secondly*, His preaching the gospel.

*First*, His miracles. 'The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' This was foretold: Isa. xxxv. 5, 6, 'Then the eyes of the blind shall be open, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.' And then for his setting afoot the gospel, compare Isa. lxi. 1, with Luke iv. 18. Isa. lxi. 1, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening the prison to them that are bound.' Luke iv. 18, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' And Luke iv. 21, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.' This is here expressed, 'The poor have the gospel preached to them'—(πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται) 'The poor are evangelised'—have not only the promises of the gospel offered to them, but the impression and power of it is left upon their hearts. By *the poor* may be meant the humble-minded, or persons of the meanest and lowest condition—the humble-minded, or such as were affected with their sin and misery. The proud resist and stand out against the gospel, but the broken-hearted thankfully accepted glad tidings

of this salvation. The Messiah was to preach to 'the poor,' Luke iv. 18. But in Isa. lxi. 1, it is 'the meek.' The gospel doth affect the poor needy soul, so as to put a stamp of grace upon it. They that are sensible of their sin and misery are the proper objects of this dispensation; or else it may be meant of persons of the meanest and lowest condition. The Christian church was made up of such at first: James ii. 5, 'Hearken, my beloved brethren; hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?' and 1 Cor. i. 26, 'For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' Christ did not then call the eminent and great, but the obscure and despised of the world, lest religion should seem to owe its growth and progress rather to the power of the world than to the evidence of the truth. Now these are said to be evangelised, that is, to have a good share in the blessed message, they above others being wrought upon and affected with it. To be evangelised implieth grace on God's part, and on theirs a willing reception of the impression of it, so as to be changed by it. The poor are all to be gospelled; those whose poverty is sanctified to make way for brokenness of heart, which is not said to exclude the rich from all benefit; some were called then, though not many. Grace, where it prevails in the heart, puts rich and poor on the same level. It humbleth the rich, and exalteth the poor, James i. 9, 10. It teacheth the one to abound, the other to be abased, Phil. iv. 12. Poverty and riches do as they are used. Now, saith Christ, tell John the things that ye hear and see; let him expound the characters of the Messiah as they lie in the Old Testament; and if they be verified in me, see what application and inference you ought to make. Therefore he dismisseth them with this conclusion: 'And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.'

In which words observe:—

1. The privilege: *And blessed is he*: it is meant of our supreme blessedness.

2. The qualification: *Whosoever is not offended in me*. Where observe—1. It is negatively expressed: *not offended*. 2. There is a universal negative: *whosoever is not*. But are all those who are not offended at Christ saved? I answer, No; you must look upon this conclusion as annexed to the last clause of the former verse,—'The poor have the gospel preached unto them: and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.' To be offended is to be scandalised, or kept from owning Christ as the true Messiah: all are happy and blessed so far as they are evangelised, and miserable so far as scandalised. When the kingdom of heaven is brought to us, nothing can bar us from entering into it but our being offended in Christ. But if we be not scandalised so as to hinder our being evangelised, then we are in a happy and blessed condition; that is, blessed so far as the impediment of our blessedness is removed; and indeed, that is all the blessedness we can attain unto in this life. Thus blessedness is ascribed to pardon of sins, Ps. xxxii. 1, because that taketh away the legal impediment. Blessedness is ascribed to sanctification, Ps. cxix. 1, 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way,' because that removeth the



moral incapacity, and so is a forerunner of eternal happiness: and here it is ascribed to not being offended in Christ when he is sufficiently revealed to us, as it removeth the impediment of our faith, which is always some offence and dislike that we take at Christ and the ways of God.

The point that I shall insist on is this:—

That whosoever, being invited to embrace the gospel, is not offended in Christ, is in the ready way to true blessedness.

In the prosecution of this point I shall use this method:—

*First*, To show you what it is to be offended in Christ.

*Secondly*, Upon what occasions men were then offended.

*Thirdly*, Whether this sin were proper to that age only, or we may now be guilty.

*Fourthly*, I shall show you the kinds of this sin.

*Fifthly*; How it is true that those which escape this sin are in the ready way to salvation.

*First*, What it is to be offended in Christ.

I answer—To be offended in Christ is to be offended because of Christ; something in him which we dislike, which is a hindrance to our receiving and owning him in that quality wherein he appeared in the world, and offereth himself to us—namely, as our Lord and Saviour. *Σκάνδαλον*, in the natural sense of it, signifieth either any obstacle or hindrance laid in a man's way, by which the passenger is detained or stopped: peculiarly it is put for those sharp stakes which they were wont to stick in the ground in the ancient way of warring, to wound the feet and legs of their enemies in their pursuit of them, against which they used greaves of brass: most usually *σκάνδαλον* signifieth a stone or block in the way, at which a man is apt to stumble and fall. So 1 Peter ii. 8, 'Unto them which believe, Christ is precious; but a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them that stumble thereat.' A rock with respect to those that travel by sea, a stone of stumbling with respect to those that travel by land. So it is used here, 'Who are not scandalised at Christ.' In this expression there is something expressed and something supposed.

1. It supposeth some offer and revelation made to us, that grace is brought home to us, and salvation offered to us. Jews and professing Christians are more properly said to be offended in Christ than heathens who never heard nor sought after him, 1 Cor. i. 23: 'We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness.' They stumble who, being invited to come to him, dislike and are displeased with something in him; or being on their way, are upon some occasion and temptations laid aside and prejudiced, and either stumble or fall in the way undertaken by them, or have no heart to go forward, but either directly retire or faint.

2. It expresseth or implieth such an offence, that either they are kept off from Christ, or else drawn away from him.

[1.] Some are kept off by their carnal prejudices, or offence they take at somewhat of Christ, and so continue in their unbelief; thus Christ is said to be a rock of offence to 'the disobedient,' 1 Peter ii. 8, that is, the impenitent and unbelieving world, who, out of indulgence to their lusts, slight an offered Saviour.

[2.] Others are drawn from him, as those that had carnal expectation when they were disappointed: John vi. 66, 'From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.' This is the offence, when we are either discouraged *from*, or *in* the ways of godliness.

I now come to show you:—

*Secondly*, Upon what occasions were men then offended in Christ. They were displeased with his person, sufferings, doctrine.

1. His person. They were somewhat alarmed with his miracles, and the wisdom of his gracious speeches, but how to reconcile this with the meanness of his person they were at a loss. Sometimes his birth and breeding were a distaste to them: Mat. xiii. 55, 56, 'Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, Joses, Simon, Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him.' So Mark vi. 3, 'Is not this the carpenter, brought up in the same trade with Joseph?' Thus upon the consideration of his mean and known beginning they forsook him. Sometimes they quarrelled at his country, not where he was born, but bred. He was born in Bethlehem, but bred in Nazareth, which was in Galilee, and Galilee, as they conceived, was looked upon by God as a mean and despicable place: John vii. 52, 'Art thou of Galilee? (speaking to Nicodemus), search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.' This was the common conceit, for Jonah was of that country. So John vii. 41, when some said, 'This is the Christ,' others said, 'Shall Christ come out of Galilee?' That country was under a reproach. Nay, a good man was possessed with this prejudice: John i. 46, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? And Philip saith, Come and see.' Trial would make him of another mind. But many good people are led away with common prejudice, and so overlook things and persons of the chiefest regard, &c. Sometimes they were offended at the meanness of his followers: John vii. 48, 'Have any of the rulers and pharisees believed in him? But this people, that knoweth not the law, are cursed;' that is, the rabble are ready to follow any false teacher, and such ones follow him.

2. They were offended at his doctrine, the mysteriousness of it, as when he had spoken of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, they could not tell what to make of it. If it signified anything, it signified his death, and that was a point not to be touched upon in the hearing of them that expected a glorious, pompous Messiah, that should subjugate other nations to them. Therefore Christ saith, 'Doth this offend you?' John vi. 61. Yea, the offence was so great, that 'many of his disciples went backward, and walked no more with him,' ver. 66. Sometimes they were offended at the holiness of it, as when he pressed the pharisees, who were altogether for external observances, to look after an inward cleansing: Mat. xv. 12, 'Knowest thou not that the pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?' This was a great distaste to them to hear that a man is defiled by sin, and not at all by meats, and that the washing of the heart is the chief thing.

3. The great stumbling-block of all was his sufferings. This offended good and bad. The good: Mat. xxvi. 31, 'All of you

shall be offended because of me this night. For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. And Peter saith, 'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended,' ver. 33. The bad: This was the great stumbling-block to the Jews: 1 Cor. i. 23, 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block.' By this they fed their obstinacy and prejudice. They could not believe that he that was crucified as a malefactor was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world.

*Thirdly*, Was it not proper to that age only? I answer, No; we also may be prejudiced, and guilty of this sin of being offended in Christ. You will say, What danger is there of that now, since Christ is publicly owned, and Christianity in fashion, and the world run into the church?

I shall show you:—

1. That there is danger still.

2. What is likely to offend since Christ's exaltation.

1. There is danger still:—

[1.] Because though the name of Christ be had in honour, yet the stricter profession and practice of godliness is under reproach, and the nominal hateth the serious Christian, though both own the same Bible, believe the same creed, and are baptized with one and the same baptism into the same profession. Those that are false to their religion will malign and scorn those that are true to it, and live up to the power of it. As there is no commerce between the living and the dead, so no true friendship between the carnal and the heavenly. Among the outside Christians, it will be matter of reproach to be serious and diligent; and they that are so, will be accounted more precise and nice than wise. No wonder if they slight you, who first slight God, and Christ, and their own salvation.

[2.] It may happen that the stricter sort of Christians are the poorer sort; and such as carry no great port and appearance in the world; and so, though they be precious in the eyes of God, yet they may be despised by men. Strictness of religion is many times looked upon by some as too mean a thing for persons of their rank and quality; and so whilst the poor receive the gospel, they, to keep up their greatness, go the broad way to hell; these are offended in Christ. In Salvian's time, *Quantus in Christiano populo honor Christi est, ubi religio ignobilem facit; Coguntur esse mali ne viles habeantur*,—religion makes them base, and men are compelled to be evil, that they may not be scorned and disgraced. Now we should resolve to be more vile for God, 2 Sam. vi. 22.

[3.] Though men be not distasted against Christianity in whole, yet in part; though they be not offended in Christ altogether, yet they take offence at some of his ways, wherein his glory and interest is concerned. In the age that we live in, many of those things that fall within the conscience and compass of our duty may be under a cloud and disesteem. Now they that have received light about these things should not be offended though the generality of the world decry and oppose them. Christ gets up by degrees; and where the main of religion is received, yet all the parts and branches of it are not

received, which must be required in their place; and though we are not always bound to the positive profession of lesser things, yet we are bound negatively; we must do nothing against the truth, 2 Cor. xiii. 8. We must not renounce a truth because it is run down by a vulgar prejudice, but in all meekness of wisdom own the better way. Such constancy of mind is expected from a good man, who consults with conscience rather than interest.

[4.] The world may not be able to bear the owning of these truths; and therefore, those who set them afoot may be disgraced, afflicted, and reproachfully used; but the knowledge of a hated truth is a greater argument of God's favour than the prosperity of the world: Prov. iii. 32, 'Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways; for the froward is an abomination unto the Lord, but his secret is with the righteous.'

[5.] There is no man in the world but, if he run up his refusal of Christ, or his impenitency and unbelief, to its proper principle, he will find it to be some offence or dislike, either because of the inward constitution of his mind, or the external state of religion in the world. Either he cannot bring his heart to suit with the strictness, purity, and self-denial of Christ's religion, or Christ's religion to suit with his heart. As the young man, Mark x. 22, 'He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions.' Or else, if both suit, the world liketh not the match; so that it cometh to this point, that he must be an enemy to God or the world: James iv. 4, 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God! Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.'

2. What is likely to offend, since Christ's exaltation of his person in heaven, and his religion in the world?

[1.] The many calamities which attend the profession of it. John, who was his forerunner, was now in prison when Christ spake these words; and Christ foretelleth grievous troubles and afflictions: Mat. xxiv. 10, 'And then many shall be offended.' And he foretelleth us that we may not be offended: John xvi. 1, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended;' that is, scandalised by the hazards which attend Christ's service, or take occasion to alienate themselves from him. Yet all will not do: Mat. xiii. 21, 'When persecution ariseth for the word, by and by he is offended.' A man is offended when he findeth that which he did not look for. Many promise themselves ease and peace in Christianity; and when it falleth out otherwise, they dislike what they formerly seemed to prize.

[2.] They may take offence at Christ's doctrine, at the purity, the self-denial, the simplicity, the mysteriousness of it.

(1.) The purity of it. To holy men this is an argument of love: Ps. cxix. 140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' But to the carnal of dislike and offence: John iii. 20, 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light; neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' They have somewhat to conceal, somewhat which they are loth to part with. And so, lest they should be found faulty, and engaged to reform themselves, they cannot endure



the light of the gospel, and are offended at Christ's strict doctrine, as sore eyes are at the brightness of the sun. This light is not only shining, but scorching.

(2.) The mortification and self-denial of it. Mortification respects our lusts, and self-denial our interest. Our worldly interests are the baits of our carnal desires or lusts. Now, to crucify the flesh or deny the world are both distasteful to flesh and blood; and, therefore, they are apt to say, 'This is an hard saying;' and 'What strange doctrine is this?' 1 Peter iv. 4, 'They think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot.' It is matter of great admiration that others should abandon their course of life. The sweetness of Christ's service is wholly hidden from them; therefore they hate that religion which they do profess, and all that are serious in it. They think strange God should plant desires in them which he would not have to be satisfied. But they do not distinguish between what nature craveth and corruption lusteth after. That the inordinancy is from themselves, and therefore have a secret dislike of Christ in their souls, because they would do what they list, not what they ought. They would not be fettered by any of his laws, or look upon that fruit as forbidden which corrupt nature hath a longing unto, as if all necessary restraint were a kind of prison to them.

(3.) The simplicity and plainness of the gospel, void of human wisdom and excellency of words. It is a plain thing teaching the way how sinners may return to God and blessedness. This doctrine is clad in the simple attire of a vulgar style; and this was the offence of the Gentiles, who would be gratified with eloquence and profound knowledge: 1 Cor. i. 22, 'The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom;' that is, the Jews, who were trained up in extraordinary dispensations, they would have miracles and prodigies from heaven. The Gentiles look for profound philosophy in the gospel, and scorn it because they find it not there. Their offence was because they found not matter of dispute, but practice; for they were altogether bred up in the uncertain debates of their philosophers. But little did these mind that there was a sublimity of wisdom in this plain doctrine (1 Cor. ii. 6, 'We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world,' &c.), as discovering the true way of easing the conscience, and the nature of true happiness, which were the two things about which the wisest and profoundest of them spent all their thoughts and speculations. Nor did they mind this: that laws would lose their authority, if not delivered in a plain style; nor would our duty so clearly be stated by man's reason as by God's authority. When it is to be found out by man's reason it is left more to the uncertainty of dispute. Bare nature is a hard book to study in, nor are the lessons of it so easily found out. While the wise men of the world were debating about felicity and happiness, practical godliness died upon their hands, and men strove rather to be witty than good, and so delivered things more coldly, and not with that life and power and authority for the reclaiming and reducing man to his duty to God; like the curious wits of our age, who delight to speak finely, rather than successfully, in the matters of religion.

(4.) The mysteriousness of it above all natural reason. The devil



playeth on all hands ; sometimes the doctrine of the gospel is too plain, sometimes too mystical. It cannot enter into their hearts to conceive how God should be distinguished into three persons, how God should become man, and the like ; and therefore scoffing atheists, such as are rife in the latter days, question all ; and having lost the light of their reason, yet retain the pride of their reason, and are objecting all the difficulties they can think of against the truth of the word of God, and are apt to say, as Nicodemus, John iii. 9, ‘ How can these things be ? ’ Till they see a reason for everything they will not own it. Indeed, we must see a reason why we believe everything, and that is, divine revelation contained in the word of God ; but we cannot always see a reason of everything which we do believe, for many things are mysteries, and we receive them as we do pills, not chew, but swallow them ; we take them upon the credit of the revealer : to chew produceth a loathsome ejection ; to swallow, a wholesome remedy. Believing in the common notion of it is a receiving a truth upon the trust of another ; so it differeth from knowing, for then we reason of ourselves ; and divine faith is a receiving such things as God hath revealed, because he hath revealed them. Then our first inquiry is, Whether these things be so or so ? not how they can be so ? Therefore we begin at the wrong end if we inquire first, How can this be ? In many cases, *constat de re*, the thing is evident in scripture ; but, *non constat de modo*, how it can be is beyond our reach. Now, when we should believe, we dispute and cavil, rather than inquire. If anything be not plainly revealed by God, you may reject it without sin ; but if it be, you must not contradict all that you cannot comprehend—the Trinity of the persons in the unity of the divine essence, or how a virgin should conceive, or how a God can become man. It is sufficient that all this is revealed in scripture, which carrieth its own evidence in its forehead, and shineth by its own light, and hath the seal and stamp of God upon it. In short, to believe is not to receive a thing in its own evidence, but upon the credit of the testifier. If you will not credit it unless the thing be evident in itself, you do not believe Christ, but your own reason ; and instead of being thankful for the revelation, you quarrel with his truth, because it is somewhat above your capacity. You should captivate your understandings to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5.

I now come to show you :—

*Fourthly*, The kinds of this sin of being offended in Christ. Three distinctions I shall give you :—

1. There is an offence with contempt, and an offence with discouragement.

[1.] The offence with contempt is when we are prejudiced against, or turn from the faith ; either never embrace it, or quite forsake it. Contempt produceth unbelief and disobedience. They are so given over to their sinful courses that they cannot be persuaded to relinquish them : John iii. 19, ‘ This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.’ Nothing will gain them to submit to Christ’s healing methods ; they think he seeketh their loss and hurt rather than their benefit, because he would reclaim them from their lusts. These

reject all admonitions, and remain obstinate and impenitent in their sins.

[2.] The offence with discouragement : when men are staggered in their hope and obedience. Troubles are distasteful to the flesh, which seeketh its own ease. Some are discouraged in a greater, some in a lesser degree : Heb. xii. 3, 'Lest ye wax weary, and faint in your minds.' Weariness is a lesser degree of deficiency, faintness a greater. These terms are translated from the body to the mind.

2. There is an offence of ignorance and an offence of malice and opposition.

[1.] The offence of ignorance and weakness : when men are carried with a blind zeal. 'I verily thought that I ought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth,' saith Paul, Acts xxvi. 9. Men of a superstitious conscience are like a blind horse, full of mettle, but ever and anon stumbling. But this is more pardonable : 1 Tim. i. 13, 'Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious ; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.'

[2.] There is the offence of malice and opposition, when men err, not only in their minds, but in their hearts ; do not know, and do not desire to know ; they would not know what they know, and are willingly ignorant ; *volentes audire, quod auditum damnare non possunt*, &c. (Tertul. in Apol.) They have not a mind to know that which they have not a mind to do. They would not know the truth because they have a mind to hate it. This is spoken of, Acts xiii. 45, 'They were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.' This is malice ; men first hate, then persecute and oppose the truth. Conviction choked with prejudices breaketh out into rage against that way they were convinced of, or the light of which they cannot rationally withstand. Herod taketh offence against John the Baptist, whom he formerly liked, and then beheadeth him. Light resisted, or not kindly used, maketh a man turn devil, that he may the more deface all feelings of conscience. This is the malignity of revolvers, Hosea v. 5 ; they will hear nothing to the contrary.

3. There is a total and there is a partial offence. The total offence is when men will give Christ no place in their hearts, but remain in their infidelity : John viii. 24, 'Because ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.' When they will take no warning, they shall perish for despising the remedy. The partial offence is, when they do not receive all of Christ, though they may be sound in the main ; these are those that the apostle speaks of, that they are 'saved as by fire,' 1 Cor. iii. 15. Some doctrine or practice, wherein they allow themselves, may prove false and unchristian ; yet the man may be mercifully dealt with by Christ, and freed from having his portion with unbelievers ; yet it goeth hard with him, as one involved in a common fire hardly escapeth out of it ; their salvation is more difficult. In short, every one is more happy, as he is less apt to be offended in Christ ; but they are most unhappy that are most offended in him.

I now come to show you—

*Fifthly*, How it is true that those that escape this sin are in the ready way to salvation.

To this I answer—

1. The negative includeth the positive, and must be thus explained : He that is not offended, but evangelised, hath the power and virtue of the gospel stamped upon his heart : ‘Blessed is he.’ Among them that are offended, some forsake and fall off from Christ, others never come at him. But these believe so as to be changed and converted. Nothing hindereth them when Christ hath gained their liking and esteem ; for this esteem that we speak of now is not a simple speculative approbation (for that may be, and no change follow : Rom. ii. 18, ‘Thou approvest the things that are excellent’), but a practical comparative approbation : all things considered, Christ is best for their turns. Always a change followeth this esteem : Phil. iii. 8, ‘I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.’ And till we have this esteem, there is some secret offence that we take at Christ, either at his person, doctrine, precepts, or the bad entertainment they have in the world ; and for the contrariety of our affections, Christ and we do not close with full complacency and delight.

2. This esteem produceth a uniform obedience ; for they that thus esteem Christ will study to please him. Delight in our master breedeth delight in our work : Col. i. 10, ‘That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God ;’ and 1 Thes. ii. 12, ‘That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.’ The only way to know whether we be more or less offended in Christ, is to compare our conversation and practice with his precepts. His benefits commend themselves to our affections, his precepts to our consciences ; the one sweeten the other. We have such a good master, we can never do enough for him. If we like Christ, nothing will be grievous that he giveth us in charge : 1 John v. 3, ‘His commandments are not grievous.’

3. When we are not offended in Christ we are the better fortified against temptations to apostasy. They are of three sorts—errors, scandals, persecutions.

[1.] Errors. Many are drawn away with vain pretences, ‘But we have an unction from the holy one, and know all things,’ 1 John ii. 20. But they are an offence, not only of seduction, but contristation : Rom. xvi. 17, ‘Mark them which cause errors and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.’ These are wens of Christ’s mystical body, not parts. Errors in the church breed atheism in the world. Many question the ways of God, and give over all religion ; because there are so many differences and sects, therefore they think nothing certain. Certainly God saw this discipline to be fittest for his people ; he hath told us there must be errors ; he would not have us to take up religion upon trust, without the pains of study and prayer. Lazy men would fain give laws to heaven, and teach God how to govern the affairs of the world ; they would have all things clear and plain, that there should be no doubt about it. But the Lord, in his wise providence, seeth it fit to permit these things, ‘That they which are approved may be made manifest.’ To excuse the trouble of a search, study, and prayer, men would have all things

agreed, else they take offence at religion, and that is one means to draw them off, even after profession. The canonists say, *Non fuisset discretus Dominus Deus, nisi unum constituerit universalem judicem*. This was their blasphemy, that God was not discreet and wise, unless he had appointed one universal and infallible interpreter. This is men's natural thoughts; the Jews say that Christ was not the true Messiah. Why? Because if he had been, he would not have come in such a way as to leave any of his countrymen in doubt, but would so plainly have discovered himself that all might know him. So many think religion is but a fancy, and so fall off to atheism and scepticism at last, and irresolution in religion, because there are so many sects and divisions, and all upholding it with plausible pretences. And to excuse laziness or prejudice, men pretend want of certainty; but God's word is plain to all that will do his will, John vii. 17.

[2.] The scandalous and evil practices of professors. These do not only infect but offend many, and cause them to stumble at religion, or fall into a dislike of the way of salvation. Scandal is far more dangerous than persecution. In persecution, though many be discouraged, yet others are gained to a liking of religion. There are many that have been gained by the patience, courage, and constancy of the martyrs, but never any were gained by the scandalous falls of professors. Persecutions do only work upon our heart, which may be allayed by proposal of the crown of life; but by scandalous actions, how many settle into a resolved hardness of heart! In crosses and persecutions many men may have a secret liking of the truth, and a purpose to own it in better times; but by this kind of scandal, men grow into an open and professed dislike thereof. In persecutions there is not a dislike of religion itself, but of the hard terms upon which it must be received; but by scandals men dislike religion itself, and nourish a base and vile opinion thereof in their hearts, and so they grow loose and fall off. And this mischief doth not only prevail with the lighter sort of Christians, but many times those which have had some taste, it makes them fly off exceedingly: Mat. xviii. 7, 'There will be offences, but woe unto them by whom they come.' Christ hath told us all will not walk up to the religion they own; but a man that is not offended in Christ will not be offended at the disorders of those that profess his way: 1 John ii. 10, 'He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.' All things that offend will not be taken away till the reapers come: Mat. xiii. 41, 'The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.' In the meantime he that loveth Christ, and loveth his brother, dareth not reason from some to all, from persons to the religion; for religion is not to be judged by the persons that profess it, but the persons by the religion. These things must ever be distinguished: the rule and the practice, the form and the power. The form, manner, or model of truth may be complete, though the virtue of this religion doth not prevail over all those that come under the profession of it. It is against all reason that the excellency of Christ should stand to the courtesy of man's obedience. The art is not to be judged by the bungling of the artist; and then



for the other, the love of the brethren will not permit them that they should judge of all the rest by a few, and those the worser part. This is, as if a man should judge of a street by the sink or kennel, or throw away the whole cluster or bunch of grapes for one or two rotten ones. Shall the apostles be judged of by Judas? or the good angels by the bad? or Abraham's family by Ishmael? If some make shipwreck of a good conscience, others keep up the honour and majesty of religion, as well as they disgrace it.

[3.] The troublesome poverty and mean outside of those that profess the gospel, and their many troubles and calamities; as in Christ's time the grandees and learned rabbis did not own Christ. 'Have any of the pharisees or rulers believed in him?' that is, persons of eminence and place. Celsus, the heathen, maketh the objection, Should a few mariners (meaning fishermen) prescribe to the world? But God never intended that truth should be known by pomp, nor condemned or disallowed for troubles that accompany it. The drift of Christianity is to take us off from the hopes and fears of the present world; therefore he that liketh Christ and his promises is not likely to be separated from him by persecution, Rom. viii. 37. He is held to him, not only by the head, but by the heart.

Now the use that we should make of this is caution. Take heed of being offended in Christ. I shall show you:—

1. Who are in danger of it.
2. The heinousness of it.
3. What we should do to avoid it.

1. Who are in danger of it? I answer—

[1.] All such as are hardened in malice and opposition against those that profess godliness, and have a male talent<sup>1</sup> against strictness, and are glad when it meeteth with any trouble or disgrace. The clearest evidence will not convince these men. Such were the froward obstinate Jews, who were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way, Acts xix. 9. Again, there are some that are more moderate, but are discouraged in their first attempts of a godly life, and so give over through despondency. The bullock is most unruly at the first yoking; the fire at first kindling casts forth most smoke. This they cannot bear, therefore give it over as hopeless. And then partly the insincere, whose league with their lusts was never dissolved. And again, weak Christians, who are not fortified and rooted in the love of God, and the faith and hope of the gospel.

2. I shall show you the heinousness of it.

[1.] It is unreasonable. Whatsoever hindereth any man from coming to Christ or embracing the gospel, it is an offence not given but taken. There is nothing in Christ to make us stumble and be offended at him:—Jer. ii. 5, 'What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?'—but everything that may draw our desire or delight towards him; yet by men's blindness and ignorance it is very frequent: Luke xix. 42, 'They do not know the things which belong to their peace in this their day.'

[2.] It is very natural. We are apt to set stumbling-blocks in our

<sup>1</sup> An almost obsolete word, meaning ill-will.—ED.



own way, and matter of offence before our own feet; and take up every obvious pretence to excuse ourselves to ourselves from hearkening to the offers of the gospel. Flesh and blood will stumble in God's plainest ways: Hosea xiv. 9, 'The ways of the Lord are right; the just shall walk therein, but the transgressors shall fall in them.' They will count every molehill a mountain, and be offended at everything which concerneth God, and their duty and obedience to him.

[3.] A prejudicate opinion and malice is always apt to pick quarrels at truth and goodness: Acts xvii. 5, 6, 'The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason, and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These which have turned the world upside down are come hither also.' So chap. xviii. 6, 'They opposed themselves and blasphemed.'

[4.] It is a dangerous sin. If we continue to be offended in Christ, Christ will be offended at us at the last day. We get nothing by dashing against the corner-stone; we hurt not Christ but ourselves: Mat. xxi. 44, 'Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.'

3. What shall we do to avoid it?

[1.] Get a clear understanding, or a zeal according to knowledge: Rom. x. 2, and John ix. 39, 'For judgment I am come into the world, that they which see not might see, and they which see might be made blind.' This will be the effect of my coming, that the ignorant will be enlightened, and learned men will not see the things before their eyes; they were hardened and left to their own prejudices.

[2.] Get a good measure to mete things withal. The Jews were offended in Christ, because they were leavened with a notion of a pompous Messiah; and so judged of all things concerning Christ as they suited with that conceit. So John vii. 24, 'Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.' We judge according to appearance, but judge not righteous judgment. This is no good measure, but an idol of our hearts. Many are in an evil way, but yet want not their pretences. As the tradition of the elders, Mat. xix. 2; and succession, John viii. 33; the novelty of Christ's doctrine: Mark i. 27, 'What new doctrine is this?' The vile abject condition of Christ and his disciples. They never enter into the merits of the cause, but determine it by prejudicate opinions. A good measure, therefore, is necessary. There is *mensura mensurans*, and *mensura mensurata*, a measure measuring, and the measure that is measured. The measure that is measured is an upright unbiassed mind.

[3.] Labour to get a mortified heart. They are most apt to be scandalised that have a carnal bias upon their hearts, a contrariety of affections to the gospel, Luke xvi. 14; John v. 44; xii. 42, 43; who are leavened with covetousness, jealousy of reputation, fear of disgrace, and the like.

[4.] Get a fervent love: Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.' It is want of a true and hearty love that maketh us so easy and apt to take offence.

A second use that we make of it is this,—Be sure to take heed of prejudices against practical godliness.

1. Some take prejudice against the necessity of regeneration. But surely there is a necessity of fitting us anew to the use and end for which we were made. For the use see Eph. ii. 10, and for the end John iii. from the 3d to the 5th verse.

2. Another prejudice is the difficulty of a godly life : Mat. xix. 25, 'With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' Use will make it easy ; at first it is most hard and tedious.

3. Another prejudice is the persecutions which attend it. God will have his servants and graces tried. They that go to sea must look for wind and waves, but in the haven we shall have rest. In heaven we shall enjoy full and eternal rest.

## WISDOM IS JUSTIFIED OF HER CHILDREN.

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*For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.*—MAT. XI. 18, 19.

IN this context Christ had likened the people of the generation in which he lived to boys playing in the streets, and personating (as children are given to imitate what they have seen in elder persons) sometimes festivities, acting the part of a musician, but their fellows danced not; sometimes funerals, acting the part of the mourning women who were to weep for the dead, cry, Ah, my brother! but they upbraided their fellows, that they would do nothing as they should, neither follow them in their mirth nor sadness. So the people of that generation, whatsoever messages God sent unto them, they accepted them not and obeyed them not. Some great exceptions they had still to the messengers employed. One kind of exception they have to John, and the quite contrary to Jesus; and so they are not pleased, neither full nor fasting, as we say. Their censure of John was that he was an hypochondriac, or a frantic fellow; the devil was in him that he was so austere. But Christ, that was gentle and affable, they censure him as a loose person, or favourer of such. 'For John came neither eating and drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, A man gluttonous, and a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.'

In the words three things are observable:—

1. The different form and course of life wherein John and Christ appeared.

2. Their censures both of John and Jesus.

3. The receiving of the gospel by the unprejudiced.

1. The different course of life wherein John and Christ appeared. 'John came neither eating nor drinking;' that is, lived in a strict austere course of life, not after the ordinary diet of men; for we read he had his raiment of camels' hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey. But the Son of man came eating and drinking; that is, using the ordinary diet of men, and eating promiscuously with all company, in a more free use of the creatures, taking the fare as he found it, and conversing with all sorts

of men in a familiar course of life ; sometimes with publicans, as Zaccheus ; sometimes with pharisees, as Simon, Luke vii. He observed no such abstinency, but ate meats indifferently. Sometimes he had nothing but barley-bread and water ; sometimes he was at feasts, and using wine, and conversed with men indifferently.

2. Their censures both of John and Jesus. John 'hath a devil ;' that is, he is a person possessed, out of his wits : for the Jews ascribed all distempers to the devil. And of Christ their censure was that he was 'a glutton, and a friend of publicans and sinners.'

3. The receiving of the gospel by the unprejudiced, 'but wisdom is justified of her children.' This last clause needeth opening, that we may know what is wisdom, who are her children, and how they justify it.

[1.] By wisdom is meant the doctrine of the gospel, called elsewhere, 'The counsel of God,' as appeareth by the parallel place, Luke vii. 29, 30, 'And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves.' The gospel is called wisdom, because it is the result of God's eternal wisdom. The doctrine of Christ crucified is called, 'the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. i. 24 ; and again, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 'the wisdom of God in a mystery.'

[2.] The children of wisdom are the professors of it. It is an Hebraism ; as 'children of wrath,' 'children of light,' 'children of this world,' &c.—the professors and followers of the gospel. Wisdom hath her children : all are not alike indisposed ; some are begotten to God by the doctrine of grace.

[3.] Justified. As this is opposed to crimination, so to justify is the work of an advocate. As it is opposed to condemnation, so it is the work of a judge. Wisdom's children will bear witness to their faith, or the doctrine of God, by their profession and godly life and ready obedience, and exalt it as much as others decry it, and every way manifest that they hold it for good and right.

Many points might be observed hence, as—

1. That God sendeth forth his servants with divers dispositions ; some more austere in life, others more social in their carriage ; some sad and mournful, others cheerful and pleasant ; some more thundering in doctrine, others more gently inducing people to repentance. Since God maketh use of variety of gifts and tempers, let us observe this wisdom, not bring all to the law of some admired instance and example. As there is a difference of stomachs, some for meats baked or roasted, others for boiled, so God fits his servants severally to do good, as the persons they are to treat with need.

2. That men are qualified according to the dispensation wherein God useth them. John, as a preacher of repentance, was austere ; Christ, as a giver of pardon, mild and affable. John was to come in the spirit and power of Elias, and therefore to imitate him in his course of life. He was sent forth to raise and awaken a sleepy world besotted in security. But Christ, who was to come with the glad tidings of salvation, and to call sinners to grace and pardon, chose to appear in a meek, sweet, and social way of converse, that his benignity

in drawing the most grievous sinners to himself might thereby be manifested.

3. That men are apt to complain, quarrel, and except against what is done by God, and whatsoever methods are used to reduce them to a sense of their duty. Both John and Jesus were sent by God, but men have ever somewhat to say: John is too rough and austere, and Christ too sociable and familiar with sinners. They dislike the severity of the one, and the free converse of the other. So in other cases, old men, they say, dote, young men are too rash; some they find fault with because they are so facile and easy; with others, because they are obscure and deep. People are always unsatisfied.

4. That neither the severity of the law, nor the glad tidings of salvation, will of themselves work upon men, unless God set in by his Spirit: for both the dispensation of John and Jesus was without its effect.

5. Though some obstinately refuse the gospel, yet others accept of it, and live accordingly. Wisdom hath her children, who justify and defend her ways as much as others impugn and oppose them, Acts xvii. 34. God seldom lighteth a candle but he hath some lost groat to seek.

All these points might be profitably insisted on, but I shall make use of this text to give you this observation:—

That Jesus Christ, when he came to set up the gospel, did not tie himself to a wilderness-life of austerity in total abstinence from common meat and wine, as John the Baptist did, and as they thought that he that professed extraordinary sanctity should have done.

In the prosecution of this point I shall use this method:—

1. I shall show you that the censures of the two things disliked in Christ were not just.

2. Give you the reasons why he lived and chose this form and sort of life.

3. The profitable observations that we may build thereon.

1. That the censures of the two things disliked in Christ were not just. The two things disliked in Christ were:—

[1.] His diet.

[2.] His company.

[1.] His diet. He ‘came eating and drinking:’ he did eat and drink as other men, but with great piety, and with great temperance and sobriety. His piety was remarkable: John vi. 11, ‘And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed them among the disciples;’ and ver. 23, ‘Nigh unto the place where they had eaten bread, after the Lord gave thanks.’ All our refreshments should be sanctified; they are great mercies, though ordinary. They come down from heaven, and direct us to seek the blessing thence, from whence we have the comforts themselves. Though we have but slender provisions, we should be thankful; Christ gave thanks for five barley-loaves and two fishes. Mark, here he doth not mention the miracle, but the thanksgiving. Christ had expressed himself in such a way as made deep impression on the standers-by, and would fully convince us that the blessing of all enjoyments is in God’s hand.



His temperance and sobriety is observable; five barley-loaves and two fishes were carried about, as the standing provision for himself and family, Luke ix. 13. Christ's provision is such as may teach sobriety and contentment with a mean condition unto all. At another time he beggeth a draught of water to quench his thirst, John iv. 7. And therefore the exceptions against his diet were not just.

[2.] Against his company. They accused him of eating with publicans and sinners in the text. So Luke xv. 2, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;' because He went to them as a physician to heal their souls, Luke v. 30. He conversed with the meanest, and refused not familiarity with the poorest and worst, as was needful for their cure. The pharisees thought it to be against all decorum that he would speak and converse with all sorts of people, publicans and harlots not excepted; but Christ coming to save all sorts of people, it was necessary that he should converse with all sorts of people.

2. The reasons why he lived and chose this sort of life.

[1.] Because he would not place religion in outward austerities and observances. Men superstitiously appoint to themselves unnecessary tasks, and forbid themselves many lawful things, and this they call by the name of holiness. When Satan, who is usually a libertine, pretendeth to be a saint, he will be stricter than Christ himself; as the pharisees were in the choice of their company and outward observances. Christ foresaw this spirit would be working in the world: 'Touch not, taste not, handle not, after the commandments and doctrines of men,' Col. ii. 21, 22. That men were apt to place religion in a simple abstinence from the common comforts of life, under a pretence of more than ordinary mortification: neither eat, nor taste, nor touch. Over-doing in externals is usually an undoing in religion: the quaker's spirit and the monkish spirit is an apocryphal and bastard sort of holiness, a spirit that suiteth not with the temper of the gospel and the example of Christ.

[2.] Christ would live a strict, but sociable and charitable life, and did not observe the laws of proud pharisaical separation, but spent his time in doing good, and healing all manner of bodily diseases, and instructing the souls of men upon all occasions. There is a disposition in men, by a foolish singularity, to stand aloof from others. The prophet toucheth it, Isa. lxxv. 5, 'They said, stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou.' Some then, though impure and profane, would seem holier than others, and counted all unclean and polluted beside themselves. This spirit rested in the pharisees in Christ's time: Luke v. 30, 'The scribes and pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?' So Luke vii. 39, 'If this man had been a prophet, he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.' And afterwards the whole people of the Jews were possessed with this spirit, and would not endure that any should converse with the Gentiles, as fearing to be defiled by them. Now Jesus Christ would not countenance this inclosing spirit; coming to do good to all, he would converse with all.

3. Jesus Christ coming into the world, as to redeem us to God, so

to set us an example, would take up that course of life which was most imitable by all sorts of persons, and calculated, as for the honour of God, so for the benefit of human society. He intended his religion not only for recluses and votaries, but for men of all conditions, professions, and employments, and therefore would not fright us from religion by affected austerities, but invite us to it by a sanctified converse with all kind of companies; and no man now can excuse himself, saying that he cannot imitate the form of Christ's living, since it is competent to all kind of persons, even those who are not shut up, but whose callings engage them to be abroad in the world; for it is religion that puts us upon the discharge of all duties to God and man. The sum of it is comprised in the love of God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves. We love all, even enemies, with that common love which is due to humanity, and all that fear God with a special love. Now this may be exercised in the shop better than in the cloister and solitudes, and wherever we go we may go about doing good; and this may be done by all sorts of persons, princes and peasants, noblemen or tradesmen, as well as ministers and people of a more retired life.

[4.] Coming into the world, to set up the kingdom of God, it was fit his form of life should suit with the nature of that kingdom. John Baptist telleth them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand;' and Christ himself, that the kingdom of God was come, and was among them. Now what is the nature of this kingdom of God? The apostle telleth you that 'The kingdom of God standeth not in meat and drink, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17. There are two expositions of that place, and both equally probable; the one more general, the other more limited and restrained to the context: more general, that righteousness is taken for all new obedience, and peace for peace of conscience, resulting from the rectitude of our actions; and joy in the Holy Ghost, for that supernatural comfort which the Holy Ghost puts into our hearts, by reflecting upon our privileges in Christ, and the hopes of the world to come. Now Christianity consists not in eating, or not eating such or such meats, or such kind of observances, but in solid godliness, or in the practice of Christian graces and virtues. The more limited sense is, that by righteousness is meant just dealings; by peace, a peaceable, harmless, inoffensive sort of living; by joy in the Holy Ghost, a delight to do good to one another; to advance and build up one another in godliness, not dividing, hating, excommunicating, censuring one another for lesser things and mere rituals, but pleasing our neighbour to edification: Rom. xv. 2, and 1 Cor. x. 31-33, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God: give no offence, neither to Jews nor Gentiles, nor to the church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.' This meek, holy, charitable converse to the glory of God, without offence and scandal, is that which promoteth God's kingdom; and this would Christ teach us in his own form and course of life, conversing in a sanctified manner with all sorts of persons to their profit and benefit.

[5.] Because Christ would not gratify human wisdom: as he would

not gratify sense by choosing a pompous life, so he would not gratify human wisdom by choosing an austere life. There are two sorts of men in the world who are not of God—the men of the world and the saints of this world. The men of the world are brutish sensualists, who are all for pomp and glory. Christ would not gratify these, but came meek and poor, to teach us humility, self-denial, and contentation: Mat. xi. 29, ‘Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.’ He did not bustle in the world for respect and honour; his complaints of his enemies, and his answers to them, were full of meekness, and stood not to abase himself for the Father’s glory and men’s good: so he did not gratify the men of the world. The saints of this world are such as are strict in outward observances, in eating or not eating, in marrying or not marrying, in forbearing such company, in such a number and tale of devotions, in abstaining from such lawful things; these things the apostle saith ‘have a show of wisdom,’ Col. ii. 23. The world is mightily taken with bodily exercise and outward strictness. As the men of the world love to pamper the body, so the saints of this world needlessly afflict and dishonour the body; this hath a show, and nothing but a show: but Christ would not gratify these neither. He used a free, but a holy life, and so was censured and traduced as a wine-bibber and a glutton, to teach his followers to be contented to be ‘judged according to men in the flesh, and live to God in the spirit,’ 1 Peter iv. 6. He came to preach, and to give inward regeneration and renovation. To show the proper way of mortification, which is not by a severity of life, but by deadening the mind to the esteem of the world. That kind of life which consists in outward rigours hath some honour and reputation in the world, and maketh a fair show in the flesh; but he would teach us the life which consists in faith, holiness, sobriety, humility of mind, charity, obedience to God, joy in the spirit, and comfort of the promises, which the world liketh not so well. Outward and rigorous observances are more plausible, but the power of godliness, and a true sense of the world to come, the world hateth.

[6.] To show us the true nature of mortification, which consists not in a bare abstinence and shameful retreat from temptations, but in a spirit fortified against them; not in a monkish discontent with the world, but a holy contempt of it when we most freely use it; and in bridling and governing the appetite and desire, rather than in scrupulous refraining from the object itself; in a using of the world, but not abusing of it, 1 Cor. vii. 31; not so much scrupling the comforts of the present life, as a valuing and esteeming the comforts of a better life; prizing more the Christian vow than any by-laws of our own. The apostle telleth us, 1 Tim. iv. 8, that ‘bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable to all things.’ Abstinence from daily meats, wines, marriage, is an act of self-denial, but a very small one; for all the good it doth is to tame the members of the body, and its external motions and actions, without sanctifying the heart and inward part, as a lively faith, fear, and love of God doth. The profit of bodily exercise is little in comparison of inward piety, which is necessary to a comfortable life here, and a blessed hereafter.

*Thirdly,* The observations which we may build thereon.

1. We may observe the humanity, goodness, and kindness of that religion which we profess, both with respect to ourselves and others.

[1.] Ourselves. Man consists of a body and a soul, and hath respects for either, else he were unnatural. The body, indeed, we are apt to overprize, and therefore we need not a spur but a bridle for our affections to the bodily life; and therefore religion, in the precepts of it, interposeth by way of restraint rather than exhortation: Titus ii. 12, 'That we should live soberly,' &c.; and Rom. xiii. 14, 'Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Do not cherish carnal desires. The apostle telleth you, 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it,' Eph. v. 29. Our usual fault is an excessive pampering of the flesh. Some have hated their own souls, at least, by consequence and interpretation; therefore we dare not let loose the reins, and give either encouragement or allowance to men to indulge their carnal desires; yet, to avoid prejudice, we must grant what may be granted, for men are apt to think that religion is a sour thing, and abridges them of all the comforts of their lives. No; besides the rich comforts it provideth for the soul, it alloweth and forbiddeth not so much sensitive pleasure as tendeth to the holiness of the soul, and furthereth us in God's service. It rebuketh and forbiddeth nothing but what really may be a snare to us; it considereth all things, meats, drinks, marriage, wealth, honours, and dignities of the present world, as they have respect to God and a better world, and as they help and hinder us in the pleasing God and seeking immortality.

[2.] With respect to others. The spirit of our religion may be known by the example of our dearest Lord. It is not a proud, disdainful spirit, that refuseth the company of the meanest and worst, so we may do them good. He came to save sinners, and conversed with sinners. He came to redress the miseries of mankind, and went up and down doing good; though his familiarities were with the most godly, yet he disdained not the company of others. And surely his religion, where it prevaieth in the hearts of any, it causes them not only to deal justly with all, but to love all, all mankind, with a love of benevolence; it maketh us to long for the good of their souls, and desirous also to do good to the bodies of those that are in need. It is said, indeed, Prov. xxix. 27, 'An unjust man is an abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.' But we must distinguish of the hatred of abomination, and the hatred of enmity. We hate our sinful neighbour, as we must ourselves much more, in opposition to the love of complacency, but not in opposition to the love of benevolence; so we must neither hate ourselves, nor our neighbour, no, nor our enemy. The business of your lives must be, to do good to all, especially to the household of faith. God's natural image is on all men, his spiritual image on his saints; and we must love God in all his creatures, especially in his children. This is true religion, consecrated by our Lord's example.

2. We may observe, that an external holiness, which consisteth in an outside strictness, without that faith, love, charity, hope, usefulness, and activity which is the very soul and life of Christianity, usually puffeth up men with a vain conceit of their own righteousness, and a censuring and a despising of others. This text sheweth us both the



spirit of pharisaism and the spirit of Christianity. The pharisees, who abounded in outward observances, censured Christ for his free converses, and disdained those sinners whom he invited to a better life, Luke xviii. 9-12; and they were ignorant of true wisdom, which is justified, embraced, and received by all her children. Learn, then, that an unruly, fierce, censorious spirit, which is only borne up by external advantages, is not the right spirit of the gospel. True religion maketh men humble and low in their own eyes, acquainteth them with their desert, sin, and misery, and maketh them pitiful and compassionate to others, and more ready to help them than to censure them, and to use all ways and means to do them good.

3. The main observation is this,—That a free life, guided by a holy wisdom, is the most sanctified life, and bringeth most honour to God, and is most useful to others.

Here I shall show you:—

1. Wherein lieth this free life, guided by holy wisdom.

2. How it is the most sanctified life.

1. Wherein lieth this free life, guided by holy wisdom. It is said of Enoch, Gen. v. 22, That he ‘walked with God, and begat sons and daughters;’ that is, dedicated himself to God’s service, and lived in most strict holiness. And there you see the use of a conjugal life in its purity may stand with the strictest rules of holiness. So for worldly affairs, when the course of our calling engageth us in them, it is not using of the world, but over-using is the fault, 1 Cor. vii. 31. So for the comforts of this life: Ps. lxii. 10, ‘If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.’ The business is not to withdraw them away, but to withdraw the affection. So for the lawful delights, there are two extremes,—clogging and retrenching our liberty with outward burdensome observances, or abusing our liberty to wantonness: Gal. v. 13, ‘Ye are called to liberty, only use not your liberty as an occasion to the flesh.’ Corrupt nature venteth itself both ways; either by superstitious rigours, or by breaking all bonds, and enlarging itself according to the licentiousness of the flesh. Meat, drink, apparel, are in their own nature indifferent; neither must superstition work upon them, nor profaneness; and in the mean between both lieth godliness.

2. How it is the most sanctified life.

[1.] Partly because it suiteth with the example of Christ. He came, as to expiate our offences, so to give us an example: 1 Peter ii. 21, ‘Leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps;’ and 1 John ii. 6, ‘Walk as he walked.’ It is high presumption to aim at an imitation of Christ in those acts of his which he did for satisfying the Father’s justice or proving his deity; yea, it is impossible to imitate him in those. Yet in actions moral we are bound to imitate him, and in actions indifferent, not to suffer our liberty to be straitened, but to govern circumstances according to that holy wisdom. Christ retired not from the society of men, but used the greatest freedom in a holy way.

[2.] Because there is more true grace in being dead to the temptation, than to retreat from the temptation. A Christian is not to go out of the world, neither by a voluntary death, John xvii. 15, nor by an unnecessary sequestration of ourselves from business and the affairs



which God calleth us to, 1 Cor. vii. 20, 'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called;' but to be crucified to the world, Gal. vi. 14,—that is, grace to withdraw our hearts from the world, while we converse in it and with it. Many real Christians, when they hear us press mortification and deadness to the world, think they must leave their callings, or abate of their necessary activity in their callings. Alas! in the shop, a man may keep himself unspotted from the world, as well as in the closet; in a court, as well as in a cell. We read of saints in Nero's household, Phil. iv. 22. He was a great persecutor, yet some saints could live there, within his gates: there were some professors of the gospel. So Rev. ii. 13, 'I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.' In the sorest and thickest of temptations a Christian may maintain his integrity. In short, our way to heaven lieth through the world; and though, if I be left to my choice, I should choose that course of life in which there are least temptations, yet when God, by the posture of our temporal interest, or the course of our education, or the nature of my employment and usefulness, hath determined me to a life more incident to a throng of temptations, I may the better venture upon them, and must not leave my service for supposed snares. Affectation of privacy may be a slothful retreat from public business, and it is more glorious to beat an enemy than to fly from him; and grace is seen in overcoming rather than in shunning difficulties.

Well, then, learn from the whole, that true mortification consists in a change of the frame of heart; in a resolution against the baits of sense, rather than removing our presence from them; in being not of the world, though we are in the world; not in casting away our enjoyments, but in an equal mind in all conditions, James i. 9, 10: that to be poor in abundance, humble in high places, temperate and godly in the freest course of life, is to imitate the life of Christ: that then we are properly mortified, when our esteem, value, and affection is mortified: that grace showeth itself more in choice than in necessity; in an abstinence from the delights of the flesh when we have them, rather than when we want them: that we may follow our business and yet be godly: that the overcharging of the heart is the great evil that we should beware of: that we may use company, but not to partake of their sins; yea, to make them better, and to purify them by our example.

I now proceed to the last clause: *But wisdom is justified of her children.*

We have observed:—

1. The different form and course of life wherein John and Jesus appeared.

2. Their censures of both.

3. The receiving of the gospel by the unprejudiced.

In this last observe:—

[1.] The exceptive particle, *but*. Though undeserved censures are cast upon the ways of God, yet at length there is a wisdom found in them. Ignorant men mistake them, carnal men slight them, the pro-

fane snuff at them, few or none entertain them with that respect they ought to do, yet this wisdom will not want advocates.

[2.] The thing spoken of, *wisdom*. By wisdom is meant the doctrine of the gospel, called elsewhere the counsel of God, as appeareth by the parallel place, Luke vii. 29, 30, 'And all the people that heard him justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves.' The gospel method of salvation is there called the counsel of God, because it is the counsel he giveth men for their good; as here wisdom, because it is the result of God's eternal wisdom and decrees. And elsewhere the doctrine of Christ crucified is called 'the wisdom of God;' and again, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 'the wisdom of God in a mystery.'

[3.] What is said of it, or how it is used; it is *justified*. Justification is a relative word: as it is opposed to crimination, so to justify is the work of an advocate; as to condemnation, so it is the work of a judge. The children of wisdom discharge both parts, chiefly the first; they bear witness to their faith, or the doctrine of God concerning salvation by Christ, by their profession and godly life and ready obedience, and exalt it so much as others decry it, and every way manifest they hold it for good and right; only, this pleading is real, not by word but deed: *Sapientia non querit vocis, testimonium sed operum*, saith Hierom. Divine wisdom is justified more by works than by a verbal plea. Wisdom's children bear her instructions, follow her directions and institutes, and with diligence observe the way of salvation prescribed by God, though others slight it; and so justify it against the exceptions and reproaches of the carnal world.

[4.] Of whom: *of her children*. The children of wisdom are the professors of it; those who are begotten by God by the word of truth, James i. 18, and are willing to attain the end by the ways and means wherein God affordeth it. These are Wisdom's children, begotten, bred up, and instructed by her; it is an Hebraism, as 'children of wrath,' 'children of light,' 'children of this world,' and the like; the professors and followers of the gospel.

The point that I shall insist on is this:—

That the wisdom of God, leading men to salvation, in the ways and means pointed out in the gospel, is and should be justified of all the sincere professors of it.

In managing this point, I shall show you:—

*First*, What is the wisdom of God in the way of salvation prescribed by the gospel.

*Secondly*, That this wisdom is despised, slighted, and contradicted by the carnal world, and why.

*Thirdly*, How and why it must be justified by the sincere professors of the gospel.

*First*, What is the wisdom of God in the way of salvation prescribed by the gospel? The sum of the gospel is this: that all those who, by true repentance and faith, do forsake the flesh, the world, and the devil, and give themselves up to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as their creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, shall find God as a father, taking them for his reconciled children, and for Christ's sake pardoning their sins, and by his Spirit giving them his grace; and, if they per-

severe in this course, will finally glorify them, and bestow upon them everlasting happiness ; but will condemn the unbelievers, impenitent, and ungodly to everlasting punishment. That this is the sum of the gospel appeareth by Mark xvi. 15, 16 : 'Go, preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned ;'—where you have all the Christian religion laid before you in one short view and prospect. It concerneth either the end or the means.

1. The end. The apostle telleth you that God 'hath brought life and immortality to light in the gospel,' 2 Tim. i. 10 ; or clearly discovered a happiness and a misery in the world to come.

2. The means. He hath pointed out a sure way for obtaining the one and avoiding the other. As to the means, Christian religion is considerable, either as to the entrance or the progress of it. Our Lord telleth us, Mat. vii. 14, 'Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.' He speaketh of a gate and a way. The gate noteth the entrance ; the way, the progress therein. In other scriptures we read of making covenant with God, and keeping covenant with God : the covenant must not only be made, but kept. So again we read of dedication and use ; of devotedness to God, and faithfulness to him ; of our purpose and progress, choice and course ; all which expressions tend to the same effect.

[1.] As to the way of entering into covenant with God, there is required :—

(1.) True repentance and faith : 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,' Acts xx. 21. Repentance respects God as our end, and faith respects Christ as Mediator, as the only way of returning to God, from whom we have strayed by our own folly and sin.

(2.) In the exercise of this repentance and faith, there must be a forsaking the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a giving up ourselves to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. For the former, there are three great enemies to God and us—the devil, the world, and the flesh ; reckoned up, Eph. ii. 2, 3, 'In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, after the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience : among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' There all your enemies appear abreast : the devil as the grand deceiver and principle of all wickedness ; the world with its pleasures, honours, and profits, as the bait by which the devil would deceive us, and steal away our hearts from God, and divert us from looking after the one thing necessary ; the flesh, as the corrupt inclination in us, which entertaineth and closeth with these temptations, to the neglect of God, and wrong of our own souls. This is importunate to be pleased, and is the proper internal cause of all our mischief ; for every man is enticed and drawn away by his own lusts. Now these must be renounced before we can return to God by Jesus Christ ; for, as Joshua told the Israelites, so must we say to all of you : Josh. xxiv. 23, 'Put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.'

First, There must be a renouncing of our idols before our hearts can incline unto the true God. We must be turned from Satan to God, Acts xx. 18. And the world must be renounced, Titus ii. 12: 'Denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts.' And we must not look upon ourselves as debtors to the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, Rom. viii. 10. God will have no copartners and competitors in our hearts.

And then the second part, in exercising of our faith and repentance, is giving up ourselves to God the Father, Son, and Spirit, as our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. And therefore in baptism, which is our first entrance and initiation into the Christian religion, we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Mat. xxviii. 19, which implieth a dedication and giving up ourselves to them, according to their personal relations. To the Father, as our creator, to love him, obey him, and depend upon him, and be happy in his love as dear children. To Christ as our Redeemer, to free us from the guilt of sin and the wrath of God. To the Holy Ghost, to guide and sanctify us, and comfort us with the sense of our present interest in God's love, and the hopes of future glory.

[2.] As to our progress and perseverance, which is our walking in the narrow way, three things are required; and that—

(1.) As to the enemies of God and our souls. As there is a renouncing required at first, so at length there is requisite an overcoming the devil, the world, and the flesh: Rev. ii. 7, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' We overcome the devil when we keep up our resistance, and stand out against his batteries and assaults: 1 Peter v. 8, 9, 'Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist stedfast in the faith.' We overcome the world when the terrors and allurements of it have less force and influence upon us: 1 John v. 4, 5, 'Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith: who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' and Gal. vi. 14, 'But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' We overcome and subdue the flesh when we have 'crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,' Gal. v. 24; when we get the mastery over the passions and affections thereof; and though we be sometimes foiled, yet the drift and bent of our lives is for God and our salvation.

(2.) As to God, to whom we have devoted ourselves. We must love him above all, and not put him off with what the flesh can spare, or the world will allow, or the devil will suffer us to go on contentedly with; but we must serve him sincerely, 'in holiness and righteousness all our days,' Luke i. 75. The love and patient service of our Creator is our great and daily work.

(3.) As to our end. We must live in the hope of the coming of Christ and our everlasting glory: Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,' and Jude, ver. 21, 'Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.'



Well, then, as we did at first thankfully accept of our recovery by Christ, and did at first renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and consented to follow his direction, and use his means in order to our final happiness, so we must still persevere in this mind and resolution, till our glory come in hand. This is God's wisdom.

*Secondly*, Let us now see how this counsel of God is entertained by the carnal world. It is there despised, slighted, and contradicted. The world is a distracted world ; some neglect God's counsel and never lay it to heart : Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ?' and Mat. xxii. 5, 'But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.' Some laugh at these things, and make a holy and heavenly life the matter of their scorn and derision : Luke xvi. 14, 'The pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him ;' and Acts xvii. 32, 'Some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter ; howbeit, certain men clave unto him and believed.' There are others who fasten odious reproaches on the godly. And though the Christian religion be so holy and innocent in its design, so agreeable to the nature of God and man, so well contrived to remedy our miseries, and to secure our true and proper happiness, yet the strictness of it is distasted by the world. By the profane, who have nothing to excuse their wickedness, it is counted hypocrisy : 'As deceivers, yet true,' 2 Cor. vi. 8 ; because they cannot condemn the life, they judge the heart. By them who affect the vanities of the world, and have a passionate love for the pleasures and honours thereof ; because the generality of the world are of that mind, they brand it with the imputation of foolish singularity. And the carnal politicians, because it was never yet so well with the world, but some things which God requireth are discountenanced, they tax it of disobedience, and they counted Paul as a mover of sedition, Acts xxv. 5 ; and because the operations of grace are above the line of nature, others tax it of fanaticism and enthusiasm. Atheists, who are all for demonstrations of sense, sight, and present things, because Christianity mainly inviteth to things spiritual and heavenly, and to live upon the hopes of an unseen world that is yet to come, they judge it to be a foppery, or mere imposture, or needless superstition. Though both the hopes and precepts of religion carry a marvellous compliance with right reason, yet none of these things move them. Lastly, There are others that malign, oppose, and oppugn holiness. There is an everlasting enmity between the two seeds, as between the wolf and the lamb, the raven and the dove ; the world will love its own, and hate those that go a contrary course, John xv. 19 ; 'And as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now,' Gal. iv. 29 ; and so it will be to the end of the world. When the powers of the world give any rest, yet the carnal seed will be mocking and scoffing, and bringing God's holy ways into contempt, branding them with censures and calumnies. The reasons of this are partly because men are drunk with the delusions of the flesh, and so cannot judge of spiritual things ; partly to excuse themselves. Men will be quarrelling at religion when they have no mind to practise it, and dispute away duties when they are unwilling to perform them ; partly, they take occasion from the failings of God's



people, though there is no reason why they should do so. An art should not be condemned for the workman's want of skill ; but they do so. If Christians be serious to any degree of sadness, then religion is counted an uncomfortable thing, it mopeeth them. If there be any differences among God's people, because of their several degrees of light, oh, then there are so many sects, and factions, and controversies about religion, they suspect all, and are true to none. If any creep into the holy profession, and pollute it with their scandals, then all strictness in religion is but a pretence and imposture. If men be strict, and would avoid every ordinary failing incident to mankind, then they are more nice than wise, and this is preciseness and indiscretion. It were endless to rake in this puddle, and to reckon up all the cavils and exceptions which naughty men commence against the ways of God.

*Thirdly*, How and why it must be justified by the sincere professors of the gospel.

1. How?

I answer—Three ways :—

[1.] It must be approved and received by themselves. It is wisdom's children that can only justify wisdom ; they that have entertained it, felt the power and force of it in their own hearts ; yea, their very receiving is a justifying ; they show the clamourings of the world do not move them : therefore it must be approved by us before it can be recommended to others, and approved, not speculatively only, but practically, so as to resolve to follow after salvation in this way. Speculatively, they may approve it that have but *μόρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως*, Rom. ii. 18, 20 ; a form of knowledge, and dishonour it in their practices, as ver. 23, 24. Men may justify religion in word, by a bare naked approbation, and soundly vindicate it from the cavils and exceptions of men ; but godly men have eyes to see the beauty and excellence of it, and have sincerely accepted it : Acts ii. 41, 'They received the word gladly.' It is good news to a poor guilty conscience to hear of a pardoning God and a merciful and faithful Redeemer, the promise of eternal life, and a sure way how to come to it. They are said to justify God that accepted his counsel, Luke vii. 29, 30. The hearts of God's children are thoroughly possessed with the reality, excellency, and blessedness of this religion ; they know and believe the infinite consequence of these things ; their faith is a kind of justifying : John iii. 33, 'He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.'

[2.] It must be professed and owned when it is vilified and in contempt and disgrace in the world. We must stand to Christ and his ways, though we stand alone, as Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 10, and not be ashamed of holiness, notwithstanding trouble and contradiction. Christ will be confessed before men, and will be ashamed before God and angels of them who are ashamed of him in the world, and refuse to own him and his ways and truths, only because they are despised and contradicted and discountenanced in the world. Pleading for religion is one of the professing acts : 2 Cor. iv. 13, 'We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken ; we also believe, and therefore speak.' As David, when sore afflicted, did confess and avow his confidence in God, so we,

heartily believing and approving the gospel, must make a bold profession of it. The sacraments were ordained for this purpose, for badges of profession. Baptism is a visible entering into covenant with God : Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; and he that believeth not shall be damned ;' where not only belief is required, but open profession. Baptism is a badge and a bond ; a badge to distinguish the worshippers of Christ from others, and a bond to bind us to open profession of the name of Christ. The Lord's Supper it is a profession of communion : 1 Cor. x. 16, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?' and ver. 18, 'Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar ?' They that did any part of the sacrifices did eat and drink with God at the altar ; and ver. 20, 21, 'I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils ; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils.' Professing communicating with Christ is not consistent with professing communicating with devils. So prayer and praise is a part of confessing : Rom. x. 10, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' The first is proved ver. 11, 'For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed ;' the second, ver. 13, 'For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Calling upon the name of the Lord in prayer and praise, it is an open professing act, by which we own God in Christ for our God. So the assembling ourselves together for public worship is a part of this profession, and must not be omitted for fear : Heb. x. 23, with 25, 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.' How ? ver. 25, 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.' These assemblies were instituted for public converse with God, testifying their union and agreement in the same faith and worship. Indeed, in lesser truths, that fall within the latitude of allowable differences in the church, profession is not always a duty, for in some cases we may have faith to ourselves ; but a denying of God, or being ashamed of him, is always a sin. When called to give an account, we are with boldness to own our profession : Acts iv. 10, 'Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole ;' and Dan. iii. 17, 18, 'If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king ; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'

[3.] This profession must be honoured, and recommended to others, by a holy conversation. But now, what kind of conversation honoureth religion ?

(1.) Such as is carried on with diligence and seriousness. As Noah, Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house ; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' They behaved themselves as those that in

earnest believed a flood, when they made such thorough preparation, which was a just reproof to the security and incredulity of the carnal world: when we do as we say, in good earnest make preparation for another world, otherwise religion is but suspected as a vain pretence and empty talk. Then we look after heaven indeed, then we believe it when we do the things that belief bindeth us unto. A carnal man that is all talk and no practice, he doth not religion so much honour in his words as he doth dishonour it in his works. He liveth down his profession, while he seemeth to cry it up: Titus i. 16, 'They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.' Contrary motions are an implicit denial of the faith, 1 Tim. v. 8; but laziness and negligence do also foment and breed atheism; and we carry on the life of godliness coldly and faintly, and so our conversations, which should be a confirmation of the gospel, prove a confutation rather. Those that are disciples in name only, the word of God cometh to them in word only. The careless practiser is as bad as he that is haunted with actual doubts about the truth of Christianity. The troubled doubter mindeth his business, but these never regard it, and do in effect say that Christ and his salvation is not worth the looking after. As it is said of the Israelites, Ps. cvi. 24, 'They despised the good land, they believed not his word.' Those that resolved to give over the pursuit of Canaan are said to doubt of his promise. So they that neglect salvation do not believe the truth of it, Heb. ii. 3, 4; and though they talk high, they secretly propagate their infidelity. The strength of our faith should appear by the diligence of our lives, the seriousness of our endeavours, and the fervour of our duties. Practices do more express the image of our minds than words. The faith that issueth out into works doth most commend itself to others: 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, 'That you may fulfil the work of faith with power; that Christ Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him.' Then is Christ glorified, when you live answerably to your profession, and do by the power of God carry on a holy life upon the encouragements of the promises of the gospel.

(2.) Such as is governed by the respects of the other world. When we are patient and joyful under the cross, and full of hope and comfort in great straits, and delight in our work, which the world hateth and discountenanceth, and hope against hope, and live in the promises: Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' Then we justify wisdom, and commend our faith to others. God was angry with Moses and Aaron: Num. xx. 12, 'Because ye believed not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel.' We are not only firmly to believe ourselves, but to sanctify him in the eyes of others; and that is done by the labour of our faith, the patience of our hope, our joyfulness and delight in God when we have but little in hand, and the readiness of our obedience even under deep sufferings. When the Thessalonians had received the word in much assurance and much affliction, and much joy in the Holy Ghost, the apostle telleth, 1 Thes. i. 5-7, They were 'ensamples to all that believed in Achaia and Macedonia,' and from them 'sounded out the word of God to other places.'

Thus we propagate our faith, and commend the truth of God to others. The life of faith is a glorious thing, but the life of sense or reason hath no glory in it, or a life carried on merely upon external probabilities. When we can condemn this world, both the good and evil things of it, in hopes of a better, and part with all that is dear to us in this world upon the conscience of our duty, then we justify wisdom.

(3.) By an exact purity and holiness, or a full conformity to all God's precepts and institutes, and by a faithful discharging all duties to God and men. Every true Christian should be a transcript of his religion: 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit.' An epistle is that wherein a man hath written his mind; our conversations should be religion exemplified, a real sermon: Phil. ii. 16, 'Holding forth the word of life.' The wax hath an impression and stamp left upon it according to what is engraven upon the seal. Then we honour religion when the impression and print of it is left upon our hearts and lives, and we are cast into this mould. More particularly, duties of relations, which are visible and easily observed, justify and honour religion: Titus ii. 10, and 1 Peter ii. 15, 'So is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' These conduce to the good of human societies, are most regarded, and make the ways of God amiable. Thus how wisdom is to be justified.

I now come to show you—

## 2. Why.

[1.] Because of the charge that is put upon us to testify for God, and justify his ways: Isa. xliii. 10, 'Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord.' They that are most acquainted with God can most witness for him. So wisdom's children can most justify her. They are acquainted with her promises and precepts, and have experience of the virtue and power of them in comforting and changing the heart. A report of a report is a cold thing; they that have felt somewhat in their hearts, that which they have seen and felt they can speak of. The world needeth some witnesses for God, some testimony and preparative inducement to invite them to embrace the ways of God. Miracles served for that use heretofore: Acts v. 32, 'And we are his witnesses of those things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.' And in the place of miracles, there succeeded good conversation, or the wonderful effects of his Spirit. Grace in the heart and lives of his children, this is apt to beget wonder, as miracles did, 1 Peter iv. 4. When they can renounce the lusts which most are mastered by, and grow dead to worldly interests, live in the world above the world, in the flesh contrary to the flesh. A miracle strikes a little wonderment at first, but this sinketh and soaketh to the heart. When men are so strictly holy, so ravishingly heavenly, and bear up upon the hopes and encouragements of the other world, and are so conscientious in all duties to God and man, you show that religion is not a notion or an imagination.

[2.] Wisdom deserveth to be justified by us. What is there in all the Christian religion but what is justifiable, or that we should be ashamed of? Is it the hopes of it? The hopes of it are such as are



fit to be propounded to man, sought after by all the world, but nowhere discovered with such certainty and distinctness as in the gospel. Nothing doth refine and ennoble the heart so much as these hopes. The heavenly spirit, that can support itself with the hopes of an unseen glory, is the only true sublime spirit; an earthly spirit is a base spirit, so a sensual, the dregs of mankind. Amongst men, the ambitious, who aspire to crowns and kingdoms, and aim at perpetual fame by their heroic virtues and exploits, are judged persons of far greater gallantry than covetous muckworms or brutish epicures; yet they are poor, base-spirited people in their highest thoughts and designs to that noble and divine spirit which worketh in the breast of those who sincerely and heartily seek heavenly things. For what is the honour of the world to approbation with God, temporal trifles to an everlasting kingdom? Is it the way and means, the first, the terms of settling our souls in the way of faith and repentance? What more rational? Should we return to our creator's service without acknowledging our offence in straying, or humbling ourselves for our errors, and purposing for the future to live in his love and obedience? Or can we expect mercy without returning? Reason will say our case is not compassionate. Or should God quit his law without satisfaction? Or should we not own our benefactor, the person satisfying? Certainly there is nothing more reasonable. So also for new obedience. Therefore wisdom deserveth to be justified by us.

[3.] Those that condemn wisdom, yet do in some measure at the same time justify it. They condemn it with their tongues, but justify it with their consciences: they hate and fear strictness: Mark vi. 20, 'Herod feared John, because he was a just man and a holy, and observed him.' They scoff at it with their tongues, but have a fear of it in their consciences: they revile at it while they live, but what mind are they of when they come to die? Then all will speak well of a holy life, and the strictest obedience to the laws of God: Num. xxiii. 10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;' and Mat. xxv. 8, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.' Oh that they had a little of that holiness and strictness which they scoffed at, whilst they were pursuing their lusts! How will they desire to die? As carnal and careless sinners, or as mortified saints? They approve it *in thesi*, and condemn it *in hypothesi*. All the opposers and scoffers at godliness, within the pale of the visible church, have the same Bible, baptism, creed, and pretend to believe in the same God and Christ, which they own with those whom they oppose. All the difference is, the one are real Christians, the other are nominal; some profess at large, others practise what they profess; the one have a religion to talk of, the other to live by; they approve it in the form, but hate it in the power. A picture of Christ that is drawn by a painter they like, and the forbidden image of God made by a carver they will reverence and honour, and be zealous for; but the image of God framed by the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful, and described in the lives of the heavenly and the sanctified, this they scorn and scoff at.

[4.] If we do not justify religion, we justify the world. It must needs be so, for these two are opposites, the carnal world and wisdom:



the carnal world must be condemned, and religion justified, or religion will be condemned and the world justified. Some condemn the world: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' Some justify the world, as Israel justified Sodom: Ezek. xvi. 51, 'But thou hast multiplied thy abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.' Their sin seemeth more excusable; you either upbraid their security and carelessness, or countenance it by your own practice; your seriousness is a real rebuke to the carnal world; your working out your salvation in fear and trembling upbraideth their security and carelessness; your rejoicing in God condemneth their carnal delight. When you are troubled about a vain thought, and are watchful against a light word, you condemn them for their looseness and wallowing in all filthiness: but if not, you justify the world, and harden the wicked in their prejudices, and cause them to hold up their course with the greater pretence. When you are wrathful, proud, sensual, turbulent, self-seeking, you are an occasion of stumbling unto them. Cyprian, in his book *DE DUPLICI MARTYRIO*, bringeth in the heathens thus speaking:—*Ecce qui jactant se redemptos à tyrannide Sathane, qui prædicant se mortuos mundo, nihilo minus vincuntur à cupiditatibus suis, quam nos quos dicunt teneri sub regno Sathane. Quid prodest illis baptismus, quid prodest Spiritus Sanctus, cujus arbitrio dicunt se temperari?* &c.—'Behold those that boast themselves to be redeemed from the tyranny of the devil, to be dead to the world, to have crucified the flesh: they are overcome by their base and brutish lusts, even as we are, whom they account to be still under the kingdom of the devil. What doth their baptism profit them? what the Holy Ghost, whose direction they profess to live by? Why should we trouble ourselves about changing our course, which is as good as theirs?' So in Salvian's time, the heathens were wont to upbraid the Christians thus: *Ubi est Catholica lex quam credunt? Ubi sunt pietatis, et castitatis exempla quæ discunt? Evangelia legunt et impudici sunt. Apostolos audiunt, et inebriantur, Christum sequuntur, et capiunt, &c.*—'They talk of a holy Christ, and yet are unjust, unclean, wrathful, covetous; of a meek patient Christ, and yet are rapacious and violent; of holy apostles, and yet are impure in their conversations.' Our author goeth on thus: *Sancta à Christianis fierent, si Sancta Christus docuisset; æstimari à cultoribus potest iste qui colitur, quomodo bonus magister, cujus tam malos esse videmus discipulos?*—'If their Christ were a holy, meek Christ, they would be better,' &c. And as carnal men now speak, For all their godliness and religion that they talk of, our life, and course, and dealings are as good, and honest, and justifiable as theirs.' Thus the wicked are justified in their way.

[5.] Christ will one day justify all his sincere followers before men, and angels, and devils: Luke xii. 8, 'Whosoever shall confess me, him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God.' Let us justify his ways, and he will justify us, and our faith at length shall be found to praise, and glory, and honour. Christ will then wipe off

all the aspersions which be cast upon the children of wisdom for godliness-sake, as faction, pride, singularity, hypocrisy; and that which was branded with such ignominious titles, will then be found to be the very wisdom of God.

[6.] Because of the necessity of justifying wisdom in the times we live in. It is said, 2 Peter iii. 3, 'In the last time there shall come scoffers and mockers, walking after their own lusts.' The last days shall be full of these profane scoffers. While truths were new, and the exercises of the Christian religion lovely, there was great concord and seriousness amongst the professors of the gospel, and then profane scoffers were rare and unfrequent. Before men's senses were benumbed with the customary use of religious duties, the notions of God were fresh and lively upon their hearts; but afterwards, when the profession of Christianity grew into a form and national interest, and men were rather made Christians by the chance of their birth than choice and rational convictions, then the church was much pestered with this kind of cattle. Especially now are they rife among us, who live in the dregs of Christianity, when men are grown weary of the name of Christ, and the ancient severity and strictness is much lost, and the memory of those miracles and wonderful effects by which our religion was confirmed is almost worn out, or else questioned by men of subtle wits and a prostituted conscience. Therefore now mockers and men of atheistical spirits swarm everywhere, and it concerneth wisdom's children to justify it, and to maintain its former vigour and power.

The use that we may make is double:—

1. To the enemies of wisdom. Judge not of a holy life, and those that profess it, at a distance and by hearsay, but try. We are not afraid to come to the bar with our enemies: John vii. 24, 'Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.' If men would not be blinded with visible appearance, and the mask of passion, prejudice, and interest, and condemn the people of God as they are represented in a false mirror; judge and spare not, and where you find the true spirit of Christianity, take all leave, we desire no other trial; but speak not against things you know not. Try, and judge as you find, where is the deepest sense of the other world, where the most careful preparation to get thither, the joy of faith, the love of holiness. If Christianity will allow that worldly pomp, that vanity and liberty, which others take, then judge the servants of the Lord as guilty of a foolish niceness, preciseness, and singularity; but if we be baptized into these things, and unquestionably and indispensably bound to them, either renounce your baptism, or forbear your censures, or rather choose this clear and pure way to everlasting glory. If you will not stand to God's word, stand to your own sober moods. We will make you yourselves judges, when you are serious and best able to judge of things, not in your passion, when lusts are stirring. When you are entering the confines of eternity, when conscience is likely to speak truth to you, you will wish then you were one of those poor godly men whom now you count proud, humorous, and factious.

2. To the children of wisdom. Do not scandalise the holy ways of God, but justify them; be neither ashamed of them, nor a shame to them; till the ancient strictness be revived, wisdom will never be justified.

## THE FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST MUST EXPECT TROUBLES IN THIS WORLD.

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*And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto them, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.—LUKE IX. 57–62.*

HERE are three stories put together by the evangelist, to teach us in what manner we should address ourselves to follow Christ.

The first is of a scribe that came uncalled, but his heart was not right with God, having a temporal bias upon it.

The second is of one called, ver. 59. Christ saith, ‘Follow me.’ But he would first cherish, then bury, his dying father. But Christ would have no delays, but presently sets him about his ministry and service in the gospel. This, upon the authority of Clemens Alexandrinus, who received it upon ancient tradition, is supposed to be Philip.

A third offereth himself to follow Christ; but first he would take his farewell at home, and compose matters in his family. But when we set our faces Godward, there is no looking back; there must be no more consulting with flesh and blood; the divine instinct must be obeyed speedily, and wholly, and Christ followed without reserves and conditions.

Of these in their order.

I begin with the first: ‘And it came to pass, as they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,’ &c.

In which words observe:—

1. The time: ‘It came to pass, as they went on the way, a certain man said to him.’

2. A resolution professed: *Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

3. Christ's reply: *And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

1. The time. In Mat. viii. 19, it is when Christ had a mind to retire, and had declared his purpose to go into the desert; in Luke, when he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. Both may agree; the one more immediately, the other more remotely; first to the desert, then to Jerusalem. About that time, a certain man, seeing Christ about to remove from the place where he then was, offereth himself to be one of his disciples. This certain man is by St Matthew said to be a scribe. Men of that rank and order had usually a male talent<sup>1</sup> against the gospel, and are frequently coupled with the pharisees, men covetous and of a bitter spirit. This man seeing Christ did great miracles, and hoping that he would set up a temporal kingdom, he puts in for a place betimes that he might share in the honours of it.

2. Here is a resolution professed: 'Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.' Where take notice—

[1.] Of the ready forwardness of the scribe. He was not called by Christ, but offered himself of his own accord.

[2.] Observe the largeness of the offer, and unboundedness of it, 'whithersoever;' as indeed it is our duty to follow Christ through thick and thin. In the Revelation, Christ's undefiled company are described to be such as 'follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,' Rev. xiv. 4; that is, obeyed him, though to their great peril and loss. Well, then, here is readiness, here is largeness; it is well if all be sincere. Therefore let us see—

3. Christ's answer and reply: 'And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' By the tenor of Christ's answer, you may know what ails him, and on what foot he limped; for this is spoken either by way of preparation to enable him to keep his resolution, or rather by way of probation, to try the truth and strength of it; whether it were sincere and sound; yea or nay: as the young man was tried, Mark x. 21, 'One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, and take up thy cross, and follow me. But he went away sad at that saying.' So here, we hear no more of this scribe; our Lord knew how to discover hypocrites. Two things were defective in this resolution:—

[1.] It was sudden and rash, not weighing the difficulties. They that rashly leap into a profession, usually fall back at the first trial. Therefore we must sit down and count the charges, Luke xiv. 28.

[2.] There was a carnal aim in it. He minded his own profit and honour; therefore Christ in effect telleth him, You had best consider what you do, for following of me will be far from advancing any temporal interest of yours. The scribe was leavened with a conceit of a worldly kingdom, and had an eye to some temporal advantage;

<sup>1</sup> See note on page 90.—Ed.



therefore Christ telleth him plainly, There was no worldly ease and riches to be expected from him; and so, *Non repulit volentem; sed fingentem prodidit*—‘He did not discourage a willing follower, but discover a worldly hypocrite,’ saith Chrysologus.

The doctrine we learn from hence is this:—

They that will sincerely follow Christ, must not look for any great matters in the world, but rather prepare themselves to run all hazards with him.

This is evident:—

1. From Christ's own example; and the same mind should be in all his followers: John xvii. 16, ‘They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.’ Our estranging of our hearts from the world is an evidence of our conformity to Christ. Christ passed through the world to sanctify it as a place of service; but his constant residence was not here, to fix it as a place of rest: and all that are Christ's are alike affected. We pass through as strangers, but are not at home as inhabitants or dwellers; and if we have little of the world's favour, it is enough if any degree of service for God.

2. From the nature of his kingdom. His kingdom is not of this world, John xviii. 3, 6. It is not a kingdom of pomp, but a kingdom of patience. Here we suffer with Christ, hereafter we reign with him. The comforts are not earthly, or the good things of this world, but heavenly—the good things of the world to come. This was the scribe's mistake.

3. From the spirit of Christ. His spirit is given us to draw us off from this world to that which is to come: 1 Cor. ii. 12, ‘Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which are given us of God.’ The spirit of the world is that which possesseth and governeth worldly men, and inclineth them to a worldly happiness; this is in all men naturally. Corrupt nature doth sufficiently prompt and incline men to look after the honours, and pleasures, and profits of this world. James iii. 15, the apostle, when he would describe the wisdom which is not from above, he saith, that it is ‘earthly, sensual, devilish; this wisdom cometh not from above.’ Present things are known by sense, and known easily, and known by all. But there is a divine Spirit put into Christians, which inclineth them to things to come, and worketh graces suitable: some of which give us a sight of the truth of those things, as faith; some, a taste or an esteem of them, as love; some an earnest desire, as hope. This Spirit cometh from God and Christ, Eph. i. 17, 18. And without these graces we can have no sight nor desire of heavenly things: 1 Cor. ii. 14, ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ They think it is folly to hazard present conveniencies for future rewards, and the truest wisdom to live in ease, plenty, and honour. On the contrary, the divine Spirit convinceth us that there is no such business of importance as looking after eternal life; that all the gay things of sense are but so many May-games to heaven's happiness; the terrible things of the world are but as a flea-biting to hell torments; and the pudder and business of the world but as a little childish sport in



comparison of working out our salvation with fear and trembling. This Spirit helpeth us to overcome the world, and grow dead to the world, that we may be alive to God; to look for no great things here, but in the world to come. This Spirit is that which we should all labour after.

4. From the covenant of Christ. It is one thing implied in the gospel covenant, when our Lord Jesus sets down the terms: Mat. xvi. 24, he saith, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me;' that is, we must so believe in Christ, and be persuaded of the truth of his heavenly doctrine, that we are willing to deny our wit and will, natural interests and affections, and to lose all rather than lose our souls, or miss of the happiness he offereth us. Nay, taking up the cross is so considerable a part of our resignation to Christ and trust in him, that in Luke it is said, chap. ix. 23, let him 'take up his cross daily.' How daily? There are fair days as well as foul, and the face of heaven doth not always look sad and lowering. What is the meaning, then, of that, 'Let him take up his cross *daily*'? I answer first, it must be meant of daily expectation. The first day that we begin to think of being serious Christians we must reckon of the cross, we know not how soon it may come. If God seeth fit to spare you, yet you must be prepared for it; stand ready, as porters in the streets, to take up the burden which you must carry. Daily inure your thoughts to the cross, that the grievousness and bitterness of it may be somewhat allayed. St Paul saith, Acts xxi. 13, 'I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;' and Eph. vi. 15, one great piece of the spiritual armour is, 'the preparation of the gospel of peace;' and 1 Peter iii. 15, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:' be ready in point of courage. Now this is necessary, because we are so apt to promise great things to ourselves, and indulge the security of the flesh by putting off the thoughts of the cross; but evils familiarised are the less burdensome, and by renewing our resolution daily, we are the more fortified. Secondly, to show the continuance of our conflicts, as if every day there were some new exercise for our faith and patience. We are not to prescribe to God how long he shall afflict us, nor with how much affliction he shall exercise us; no, though it were all the days of our lives, we must be content; it is but a moment to eternity. We must take up our cross till God remove it. Some promise fair to be contented with a naked Christ though they run all hazards, because they hope God will not take them at their words; but as soon as the cross cometh, wriggle, shift, and distinguish themselves out of their duty; or else, if it be long and frequently return, quite tire and are faint. So that 'Take it up daily,' is as much as 'Let patience have its perfect work,' James i. 4. If day after day we must be troubled, we must be content to be troubled. If God send it daily, we must take it up daily. Well, then, in the new covenant we undertook this; the new covenant doth comprise this as a clear branch and part of it. Christ telleth us the worst at first; the devil showeth us the bait but hideth the hook. The world useth to invite its followers with promises of honour and riches, but Christ telleth us of the cross, and that partly

to discourage hypocrites, who cheapen and taste, but will not buy, and also to prepare sound believers for the nature and temper of his kingdom, which lieth in another world. But here by the way we are to undergo several trials, and therefore we should be armed with a mind to endure them, whether they come or no. God never intended Isaac should be sacrificed, but yet he will have Abraham tried.

*Use 1.* Is information. With what thoughts we should take up the stricter profession of Christianity—namely, with expectations of the cross. Christ will try us, and the world will hate us; therefore let us not flatter ourselves with an easy passage to heaven. Many think they may be good Christians, yet live a life of pomp, and ease, and pleasure, free from all trouble and molestation. This is all one as if a soldier going to the wars should promise himself a continual peace or truce with the enemy, or as a mariner undertaking a long voyage should only think of fair weather and a calm sea, without waves and storms; so irrational is it for a Christian to look for nothing but rest and peace here upon earth. No; a Christian had need think of this to a double end, that he may be a mortified and a resolute man. If he be not mortified and dead to the world, he can never undergo the variety of conditions which his religion will expose him unto, and say with the apostle, Phil. iv. 13, 14, ‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me; notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction.’ And there is usually in us a propensity and inclination either to honours, riches, or pleasures, and the devil will work upon that weakness, Heb. xii. 13. That which is lame is soon turned out of the way. If we have any weak part in our souls, there the assault will be most strong and fierce. A garrison that looketh to be besieged, will take care to fortify the weak places where there is any suspicion of an attack; so should a Christian mortify every corrupt inclination lest it betray him, be it love of honour, pleasure, or profit. He had need be also a well resolved man, well shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, or else in hard way he will soon founder and halt. If you be Christians indeed, you will soon see the necessity of it. Pure nature itself is against bearing the cross. Christ showed the innocent affections of human nature in his own person; it recoiled a little at the thought of the dreadful cup: Heb. v. 7, ‘Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplication, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.’ And to us it is much more grievous to suffer: Heb. xii. 11, ‘Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.’ But corrupt nature will certainly draw back, unless we be armed with great resolution; for after we have launched out into the deep with Christ, we shall be ready to run ashore again upon every storm, unless we be resolved; therefore you need to think of the cross to breed this resolution. If Christians be not mortified, they trip up their own heels; if they be not resolved and prepared for all weathers, they take up religion rather as a walk for recreation than as a journey or serious passage to heaven. Therefore we must all of us prepare for sufferings in this world, looking

for no great matters here. We must expect persecutions, crosses, losses, wants, defamation, injuries; and we must get that furniture of heart and mind which may support and comfort us in such a day of trial.

2. It informeth us what fools they are that take up religion upon a carnal design of ease and plenty, and will follow Christ to grow rich in the world; as this scribe thought to make a market of the gospel, as Simon Magus did, Acts viii. 19, 20; he thought to make a gain by the power of miracles. There are conveniences which religion affordeth in peaceable times, but the very profession at other times will engage us in great troubles; and therefore men do but make way for the shame of a change and other mischiefs, that hope for temporal commodities by the profession of the gospel. There are few that are willing to follow a naked Christ upon unseen encouragements, but this must be; for they that aim to seek the world in and by their religion are disclaimed by our Lord as unfit to be his servants, and indeed sorry servants they are who cannot live without honour, ease, and plenty; therefore turn and wind to shift the cross, put many a fallacy upon their own souls: Gal. vi. 12, 'As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, compel you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.' If that be their only motive, they are apt to desert or pervert Christ's cause. Again, the apostle telleth us of some 'who are enemies to the cross of Christ, whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things,' Phil. iii. 18, 19. Men that have no love to God, but only serve their fleshly appetites, and look no higher than honours, riches, pleasures, and applause with men, will never be faithful to Christ. They are such as study to save themselves not from sin, but from danger, and accordingly accommodate themselves to every interest. As the men of Keilah dealt with David,—entertained him for a while, but when Saul pursued him were resolved to betray him; they would come into no danger for David's sake. So they deal with Christ and religion. They profess Christ's name, but will suffer nothing for him. If they may enjoy him and his ways with peace, and quietness, and conveniency, and commodity to themselves, well and good; but if troubles arise for the gospel's sake, immediately they fall off; not only these summer-friends of the gospel, but the most, yea, the best, have a secret lothness and unwillingness to condescend to a condition of trouble or distress. This is a point of hard digestion, and most stomachs will not bear it.

3. It informs us what an unlikely design they have in hand who would bring the world and Christ fairly to agree, or reconcile their worldly advantages and the profession of the gospel. And when they cannot frame the world and their conveniences to the gospel, do fashion the gospel to the world, and the carnal courses of it. It is pity these men had not been of the Lord's council when he first contrived and preached the gospel, that they might have helped him to some discreet and middle courses, that might have served turn for heaven and earth too. But do they what they will or can, the way is narrow that leadeth to life, and they must take Christ's yoke upon them if they would find rest for their souls. They will find that pure and strict religion will be displeasing to the ungodly and the carnal; that the enmity between the two seeds will remain, and the flesh and the world must not always be

pleased ; that there is more danger of the world smiling than frowning. As to the church in general (in Constantine's time), *Ecclesia facta est opibus major, virtutibus minor* ; so to believers in particular, that the heart is corrupted by the love of the world, and men never grow so dull and careless of their souls as when they have most of the world at will ; and that we are more awakened, and have a more lively sense of eternal life, when under the cross, than when we live in the greatest ease and pomp ; that Christ permitteth troubles, not for want of love to his people, or want of power to secure their peace, but for holy and wise ends to promote their good.

*Use 2.* Is instruction. When you come to enter into covenant with Christ, consider—

1. Christ knoweth what motives do induce you : John ii. 25, ' He needeth not that any should testify of man, for he knoweth what is in man.' Some believed, but Jesus committed not himself unto them ; he knoweth whether there be a real bent or carnal bias upon the heart.

2. If the heart be false in making the covenant, it will never hold good. An error in the first concoction will never be mended in the second : Deut. v. 29, ' Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.' So Matt. xiii. 21 ; ' The stony ground received the word with joy, ' Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth but for a while ; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.' Some temporal thing sitteth too near and close to the heart ; you are never upright with God till a relation to God and a right to heaven do incomparably weigh down all temporal troubles, and you can rejoice more in the testimonies of God, fatherly love, and right to eternal life, than in outward things : Ps. iv. 6, 7, ' There be many that say, Who will show us any good ? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' David speaks in his own name, and in the name of all those that were alike minded with himself. And Luke x. 20, ' Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.'

3. That Christ cannot but take it ill that we are so delicate and tender of our interests, and so impatient under the cross, when he endured so willingly such great things for our sakes. We cannot lose for him so much as he hath done for us ; and if he had been unwilling to suffer for us, what had been our state and condition to all eternity ? We should have suffered eternal misery. If you would not have Christ of another mind, why will you be of another mind ? 1 Peter iv. 1, ' Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind ; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.'

4. If you be not dead to the things of the world, you are not acquainted with the virtue and power of Christ's cross, and have not a true sense of Christianity, cannot glory in it as the most excellent profession in the world : Gal. vi. 14, ' God forbid that I should glory,



save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' You are in a dangerous temptation to atheism.

5. We are gainers by Christ if we part with all the world for his sake, Mark x. 29, 30 ; therefore no loss should seem too great in obeying his will. Certainly a man cannot be a loser by God.

6. All worldly things were confiscated by the fall, and we can have no spiritual right to them till we receive a new grant by Jesus Christ, who is the heir of all things. *Dominium politicum fundatur in providentia, evangelicum in gratia* : 1 Cor. iii. 23, 'All things are yours, because you are Christ's, and Christ is God's;' and 1 Tim. iv. 3, 'God hath made them to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.' So that what we enjoy is by the mere favour of the Redeemer, and should be parted with again when he calleth for it.

Thus much for the first point.

A second doctrine or point here offered is :—

The great poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beasts and fowls have places to shelter themselves in, but Christ had no certain place of residence or dwelling wherein to rest. He doth not say kings have palaces, but I have none ; rich men have houses and lands, but I have none. But he saith, 'Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.'

The reasons of this are these following :—

1. To increase the value and merit of his satisfaction. Our sins did deserve this, his whole humiliation, and every degree of it ; and Christ was content to suffer it for the ransom of our souls. It is clear this, that all his condescension conduced to make up the remedy more full ; and it is evident by the apostle that it giveth us a right to a larger allowance of grace : 2 Cor. viii. 9, 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.'

2. Christ came to offer the kingdom of heaven, and the good things of the other world, and to draw men's minds and hearts thither. And, therefore, that he might appear a fit teacher of the world, by his own example, he taught us contempt of outward things. If he had preached up heavenly-mindedness, and lived himself in pomp and fulness, the people would not have regarded his words. 'Alexander, when his army grew sluggish, because laden with the spoils of their enemies ; to free them from this incumbrance, commanded all his own carriages to be set on fire ; that when they saw the king himself devote his rich treasures to the flame, they might not murmur if their mite and pittance were consumed also.' So if Christ had taught us contempt of the world, and had not given us an instance of it in his person, his doctrine had been less powerful and effectual.

3. To season and sanctify a mean estate and degree of life, when we are called to it by God's providence. Christ's own poverty teacheth us to bear a mean condition well : Mat. x. 25, 'It is enough for a disciple that he be as his master, and a servant as his lord.' Uriah would not give way to any softness, while Joab his general was in the



field: 2 Sam. xi. 11, 'The ark and Israel are in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are in the open fields; shall I go into my house and eat and drink?' &c. We must be contented to fare as Christ did; we cannot be poorer than Christ, as poor as we are; for the poorest have some place of shelter, but he had none whereon to lay his head.

1. Let this, then, enforce the former lesson, and teach us contempt of the world, and the riches and greatness thereof. It is some argument that the vilest are capable thereof, as well as the most generous and best deserving, and oftener it happeneth to be so. But this is the argument of arguments,—That the Lord Jesus, when he came to instruct the world by his example, he was not one of the rich and voluptuous, but chose a mean estate, as most conducive to his ends.

2. If you be rich, yet be poor in spirit: Mat. v. 3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Let us possess all things as if we possessed them not, 1 Cor. vii. 31. And so James i. 9, 10, 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.' We should be as having nothing, sitting loose from earthly things, considering that shortly we shall be as poor as the poorest, for we can carry nothing away with us.

3. Let us prepare ourselves to entertain poverty; and if it be already come upon us, and God hath reduced us to a mean inferior life, let us have our hearts reconciled and suited to a low estate, so it may be a help to heaven, so we may have the true riches, and may learn to live by faith, though God feedeth us from hand to mouth; so we may imitate Christ and follow him into glory, it is enough for us.

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## NO EXCUSE AGAINST A SPEEDY OBEYING CHRIST'S CALL.

WE have done with the first instance, of a scribe that came uncalled; we come now to another. This man offereth not himself, but is called by Christ. 'And he said unto another, Follow me,' &c. He was already a disciple at large; for in Matthew it is said, chap. viii. 21, 'Another of his disciples said unto him, Suffer me first to go and bury my father.' He was now called to a nearer and constant attendance on Christ. Clemens Alexandrinus, from an ancient tradition, telleth us this was Philip. But before he complied with this call, he desireth a little delay and respite, until his aged father were dead and buried. Whether his father were already dead, and he would do this last office to see him decently interred, or whether his father were yet living, but not likely long to continue, and he would attend him till his death and funeral, and then follow Christ, as Theophilact thinketh, it is not much material. Clear it is he putteth off the matter with an excuse. Even the elect do not at first so readily obey the heavenly calling; some of them may put off Christ, but when he intendeth to have

them, he will not be put off so, the importunity of his grace overcoming their unwillingness.

But what was Christ's answer? 'Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God;' that is, leave that office to others who are not designed for this divine and holy employment. It seemeth hard to many that Christ should deny him to do this little office of love to his father, and they know not the meaning of that expression, 'Let the dead bury their dead.' Therefore—

1. Let us open the expression.

2. Show you what Christ teacheth us by this refusal.

1. For the expression. It may be used either proverbially or allusively. Proverbially; let one dead man bury another—that is, let them lie unburied rather than my service be neglected; or, there will not want others that will remove the dead out of their sight: and it is our wisdom to let go things unnecessary, and mind the main. Or else it is used allusively to the law of the Nazarites and the priests of the Old Testament. The law of the Nazarites is in Num. vi. 6-8, 'All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord;' that is, he must rather follow his vow in honouring the Lord, than to follow natural duty in honouring his dead parents. Now, those whom Christ called especially to follow him were consecrated to that service, as the Nazarite unto the Lord during the days of his separation. And as they might not meddle even with the interment of their parents, so this excuse was frivolous. Or else the allusion might be to the high priests, of whom we read, Deut. xxxiii. 9, 'Who said to his father and his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children.' Some think this hath reference to the Levites' fact, who, being commanded by Moses, killed every man his brother, neighbour, friend, and son, that had sinned in making or worshipping the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 26-29. Rather it is meant of the priest's continual duty, who, by the law, if his father, mother, brother, or child did die, he might not mourn for them, but carry himself as if he did not respect or know them; for God would have them more regard their function or duty in his service than any natural affection whatsoever. The law is, Lev. xxi. 11, 12, 'He shall not go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father or his mother; neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him.' Now Christ alludeth to the law to show the urgency of this present service and employment to which he was consecrated, and the burial of the dead might be left to persons less sacred or more at leisure.

2. The reasons of Christ's refusal. Christ would show hereby—(1.) That all human offices and duties must give place to the duty we owe to God. Duty to parents must be observed, but duty to God must be preferred before that or anything whatsoever. A truth justified by Christ's own example. He began betimes, at twelve years old, when he was dis-

putting with the doctors, and his parents sought for him: Luke ii. 49, 'He said unto them, How is it that you sought me? Wist you not that I must be about my Father's business?' So Mat. xii. 47, 48, when his mother and kindred waited for him, desiring to speak with him, 'He answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?' Obedience to God, and declaring his Father's will, was dearer to him than all relations. Natural and secular respects swayed not with him in comparison of gaining proselytes to heaven; his mother's conference with him was nothing to his Father's service, and teaching the people a more acceptable work than paying a civility to his natural relations. So John ii. 4, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.' His office to which he was sent by God was a matter in which she, though his earthly parent, was not to interpose; God's work must be done in God's own way, time, and method: God hath greater authority over you than all the men in the world. (2.) He would teach us hereby that the ministry requires the whole man, even sometimes the omission of necessary works, much more superfluous: 'Give thyself wholly to these things,' 1 Tim. iv. 15.

The words are now explained; the practical notes are these two:—

First, That nothing in the world is a matter of such great weight as to be a sufficient excuse for not following of Christ.

Secondly, That those who are called to follow Christ should follow him speedily, without interposing any delays.

For the first point, that nothing in the world is a matter of such great weight as to be a sufficient excuse for not following of Christ, I will illustrate it by these considerations:—

1. There are two sorts of men. Some understand not their Lord's will, others have no mind to do it, Luke xii. 47, 48. Some understand not the terms of the gospel; they think to have Christ, and the pleasures of the flesh and the world too. But there are others who understand Christ's terms, but are loth to become Christ's disciples; they know their master's will, but they do not prepare themselves to do it; that is, they do not presently set upon the work, but make so many delays that it plainly appeareth that they are loth to yield to Christ's terms; that is, to turn their backs upon the vanities of the world, and renounce their most pleasing sins, and to take the word for their rule, the Spirit for their guide, and eternal life for their felicity and happiness: to such we now speak.

2. They that have no mind to follow Christ put off the matter with dilatory shifts and excuses. To refuse altogether is more heinous, and therefore they shift it off for a time. *Non vacat* is the pretence—I am not at leisure. *Non placet*, I like it not, is the real interpretation, disposition, and inclination of their hearts, for excuses are always a sign of an unwilling and backward heart. When they should serve God there is still something in the way, some danger, or some difficulty which they are loth to encounter with. As Prov. xxvi. 13, 'The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way, there is a lion in the streets.' Palestine was a land infested with lions, because of the many deserts and thickets that were in it, but being well peopled, they did rarely appear. Now the sluggard taketh this pretence from

thence. If his business lay in the fields, there was a lion in the way ; if his business lay in the towns and cities, there is a lion in the streets, as sometimes, though but rarely, they came into places inhabited and of great resort. Now, if he should go about his business too early, he might meet with a lion in his range and walk before they were retired into their dens. Thus do men alarm themselves with their own foolish fears to excuse their idleness and negligence. So again Prov. xv. 19, 'The way of the slothful is as an hedge of thorns, but the way of the righteous is made plain.' They imagine difficulties and intolerable hardships in a course of godliness : but it is their cowardice and pusillanimous negligence which maketh the ways of God seem hard : they are all comfortable, plain, and easy to the pure and upright heart and willing mind. Come we to the New Testament : Luke xiv. 18-20, 'They all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said, I have bought me a piece of ground, and I must go to see it ; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them ; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and cannot come.' The meaning is, many were invited to everlasting happiness, but they preferred their designs of worldly advantages. Mark, they do not absolutely deny, but make excuse. Excuses are the fruit of the quarrel between conviction and corruption. They are convinced of better things, but being prepossessed and biassed with worldly inclinations, they dare not fully yield nor flatly deny, therefore they choose a middle course, to make excuses. Doing is safe, or preparing ourselves to do, but excusing is but a patch upon a filthy sore, or a poor covering of fig-leaves for a naughty heart.

3. The usual excuses which sinners may, and usually do allege, are these four :—The difficulty of religion, the danger that attendeth it, want of time, and that they have no power or strength to do good.

[1.] For the first. It is troublesome and tedious to flesh and blood to be held to so much duty, and to wean our hearts from things we so dearly love ; and the world thinketh that we are too nice and precise to urge men to such a strict and holy and heavenly life, and less ado will serve the turn.

To this I answer :—

(1.) Diligence is certainly necessary to all that will be saved : Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ;' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.' And, therefore, if you cannot deny the ease and sloth of the flesh, you are wholly unfit for the work of godliness.

(2.) This diligence is no more than needeth, whatever the carnal world thinketh, who leave the boat to the stream, and hope to be accepted with God for a few cold and drowsy devotions, or some superficial righteousness. A painter-stainer will think a painter-limner too curious, because his own work is but a little daubing. The broad way pleaseth the world best, but the narrow way leadeth to life.

(3.) This diligence may be well afforded, considering that eternal life and death is in the case. Life! will you stop a journey for your lives because it is a little tedious, or there is dirt in the way, or the wind bloweth on you, and the like? Since it is for God and heaven, we



should not grudge at a little labour : 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Therefore be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' There is also death in the case. Now, which is better, to take a little profitable pains in godliness, or to endure everlasting torments ? To save a little labour or diligence in the holy life, and run the hazard of being miserable for ever. Which is worst ? The trouble of physis, or the danger of a mortal disease ?

[2.] Another excuse is the danger which attendeth it. It may expose you to great troubles to own God and religion heartily ; and if there be peace abroad, and magistrates countenance religion, yet many times at home a man's greatest foes may be those of his own household, Mat. x. 36. But for the pleasing or displeasing of your relations you must not neglect your duty to God ; as Jerom to Heliodorus, *per calcatum perge patrem*—if thy father lie in the way, tread upon his bowels rather than not come unto Christ. Our Lord hath expressly told us, Mat. x. 37, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' Neither favour nor disfavour of our friends is a just let or impediment to our duty. The advantages we can or are likely to receive from parents are not worthy to be compared with those we expect from God, nor is their authority over us so great as God's is : Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father or mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Though Christianity doth not discharge us from obedience to parents, yet the higher duty must be preferred, namely, obedience to Christ, and loving less is hating.

[3.] Another excuse is, I have no time to mind soul affairs. My distractions in the world are so great, and my course of life is such, that I have no leisure. I answer—Will you neglect God and salvation because you have worldly things to mind ? Whatever your business be, you have a time to eat, and drink, and sleep ; and have you no time to be saved ? Better encroach upon other things than that religion should be cast to the walls or jostled out of your thoughts. David was a king, and he had more distracting cares than most of us have or can have, yet he saith, Ps. cxix. 147, 148, 'I prevented the dawning of the morning ; and cried ; I hoped in thy word. Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I may meditate in thy word ;' and ver. 164, 'Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments.' Do you spend no time in idleness, vain talking, and carnal sports ? and might not this be better employed about heavenly things ? Eph. v. 15, 16, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.' *Vitam non accepimus brevem, sed fecimus, nec inopes temporis, sed prodigi sumus*. God hath not set you about work that he alloweth you no time for, but we waste our time, and then God is straitened. Many poorer than you have time, because they have a heart and will to improve it.

[4.] I have no power or strength to do good. And what will you have us do ? This is the excuse of the idle and naughty servant : Mat. xxv. 24, 'I knew that thou wert a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.' God sets you about work, but giveth you no strength, is your excuse ; but certainly



you can do more than you do, but you will not make trial. God may be more ready with the assistances of his grace than you can imagine. The tired man may complain of the length of the way, but not the lazy, who will not stir a foot. If you did make trial, you would not complain of God, but yourselves, and beg grace more feelingly. In short, you are not able, because you are not willing. And your impotency is increased by evil habits contracted, and long custom in sin.

I now proceed to the fourth consideration.

4. None of these excuses are sufficient for not following of Christ. And that—

[1.] Because of his authority. Who requireth this duty from us, or imposeth it on us? It is the Lord Jesus Christ, to whose sentence we must stand or fall. When he biddeth us follow him, and follow him speedily, to excuse ourselves is to countermand and contradict his authority: it is flat disobedience, though we do not deny the duty, but only shift off and excuse our present compliance; for he is as peremptory for the time and season as for the duty. ‘Now while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts,’ Heb. iii. 7, 8. God standeth upon his authority, and will have a present answer. If he say, *To-day*, it is flat disobedience for us to say, *To-morrow*; or Suffer me first to do this and that business.

[2.] It appeareth from his charge to his messengers. Nothing can take off a minister of the gospel from seeking the conversion and salvation of souls. We cannot plead anything to exempt us from this work. To plead that the people’s hearts are hard, and that the work is difficult and full of danger, will not serve the turn. No; ‘Their blood will I require at thy hands.’ Therefore, all excuses set aside, we must address ourselves to our work. Acts xx. 23, 24: Paul went bound in the spirit, and the Holy Ghost had told him that in every city bonds and afflictions did abide and wait for him; but, saith he, ‘None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so as I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of my Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.’ He was willing and ready to endure what should befall him at Jerusalem, and reckoned nothing of it, nor of loss of life, if he might successfully preach the gospel, and serve Christ faithfully in the office of the ministry. If nothing be an excuse to us, can anything be an excuse to you? Should your souls be nearer and dearer to us than to yourselves?

[3.] It appeareth from the matter of the duty imposed on you, if you consider the excellency and the necessity of it.

To begin first: The excellency. All excuses against obedience to God’s call are drawn from the world and the things that are in the world. Now there is no comparison between the things of the world and following Christ’s counsel, that we may be everlastingly happy. The question will soon be reduced to this, Which is most to be regarded, God or the creature, the body or the soul, eternity or time? The excuses are for the body, for time, for the creature; but the injunctions of duty are for God, for the soul, and for eternity. Sense saith, Favour the flesh: faith saith, Save thy soul; the one is of everlasting consequence, and conduceth to a happiness that hath no end;

the other only for a time: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen. but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' One turn of the hand of God separateth the neglected soul from the pampered body, and then whose are all these things?

The necessity: that we may please God and enjoy him for ever. We can never plead for a necessity of sinning; for a man is never driven to those straits, whether he shall sin more or less; but sometimes duties come in competition—duty to a father, and a special injunction of Christ's to follow him; one must be subordinated to the other, and the most necessary must take place; the less give place to the greater. Now, this is much more true of those things which are usually pleaded by way of hesitancy, or as a bar to our duty, as our worldly and carnal satisfactions. But you will say, we must avoid poverty and shame. But it is more necessary to avoid damnation; not to preserve our temporal interests, but to seek after eternal life: Luke x. 42, 'One thing is necessary.'

[4.] It appeareth from the nature of the work. To follow Christ is not to give to him as much as the flesh can spare, but wholly to devote yourselves to his service, to sell all for the pearl of great price, Mat. xiii. 46. And you are obliged to walk so, that all may give way to the glory of God, and the service of your redeemer. If He will employ us thus and thus, we must not contradict it, or plead anything by way of excuse.

*Use.* Do not neglect your duty for vain excuses. The excusing humour is very rife and very prejudicial to us, for the sluggard hath a high conceit of his own allegations: Prov. xxvi. 16, 'The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.' In the Eastern countries their council usually consisted of seven, as we read of the seven princes of Media and Persia, Esther i. 14. Therefore let us a little disprove this vain conceit. The sluggard thinketh himself so wise that all others are but giddy and crazy-brained people, that are too nice and scrupulous, and make more ado with religion than needeth. But can a man do too much for God and heaven? 1 Thes. ii. 12. The sluggard thinketh it is a venture, and he may venture on one side as well as the other; but it is a thousand to one against him in the eye of reason, put aside faith: in doubtful cases, the surest way is to be taken. But to draw it to a more certain determination.

1. Nothing is a reasonable excuse which God's word disproveth, for the scriptures were penned to discover the vain sophisms which are in the hearts of men: Heb. iv. 12, 'For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;' to discover the affections of a sensual heart, however palliated with the pretences of a crafty understanding. Certainly, our private conceits must not be lifted up against the wisdom of God, nor can a creature be justified in going against his maker's will. Nothing can be reason which the God of wisdom contradicts and calleth folly: Jer. viii. 9, 'Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?'

2. Nothing can be pleaded as a reasonable excuse which your consciences are not satisfied is reason. Men consult with their affections rather than with their consciences. Conscience would draw other conclusions, therefore our excuses are usually our aggravations: Luke xix. 22, 'Out of thy own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.' The master expected increase, therefore he should have done what he could: Job xv. 6, 'Thine own mouth condemneth thee; yea, thine own lips testify against thee.' That is the strongest conviction which ariseth from a man's own bosom; that is the reason why there are so many appeals to conscience in scripture: 1 Cor. x. 15, 'I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.' Your own hearts tell you ye ought to be better, to mind God more, and the world less, to be more serious in preparing for your eternal estate.

3. Nothing can be a reasonable excuse which reflects upon God, as if he had made a hard law which none can keep, especially if urged against the law of grace; this is to say, the ways of God are not equal, therefore there can be no excuse for the total omission of necessary duties.

4. No excuse can be reasonable, but what you dare plead at the bar of Christ; for that is reason which will go for reason at last. Then the weight of all pleas will be considered, and all negligent persons that have not improved the light of nature, or have not obeyed the gospel, will be left without excuse. What doth it avail prisoners to set up a mock sessions among themselves to acquit one and condemn another? He is in a good condition that shall be excused in the last judgment, and in a bad condition that shall be condemned then.

I now proceed to the second point.

Secondly, That those who are called to follow Christ, should follow him speedily, without interposing any delays.

Consider—

1. Ready obedience is a good evidence of a sound impression of grace left upon our hearts. There is a slighter conviction which breedeth a sense of our duty, but doth not so strongly urge us to the performance of it. And there is a more sound conviction, which is accompanied with a prevailing efficacy, and then all excuses and delays are laid aside, and men kindly comply with God's call: Cant. i. 4, 'Draw me, I will run after thee.' *Run*; it noteth an earnest and speedy motion; the fruit of the powerful attraction of the Spirit: Mat. iv. 20, 'They straightway left their nets and followed him.' The scoffing atheistical world thinketh it easiness and fond credulity, but it argueth a sound impression. The impulsions of the Holy Spirit work in an instant, for they carry their own evidence with them: Gal. i. 16, 'Immediately I consulted not with flesh and blood.' *In divinis, non est deliberandum*. When our call is clear, there needeth no debate or demurring upon the matter.

2. The work goeth on the more kindly when we speedily obey the sanctifying motions of the Spirit, and the present influence and impulsion of his grace. You have not such an advantage of a warm conviction afterward: when the waters are stirred then we must put in for a cure, John v. 4. To adjourn and put it off, as Felix did, Acts xxiv. 25, doth damp and cool the work—you quench this holy fire; or

to stand hucking with God, as Pharaoh did, the work dieth on your hand.

3. There is hazard in delaying and putting off such a business of concernment as conversion to God. Certainly this is a business of the greatest concernment, and the greatest work should be first thought of : Mat. vi. 33, ' Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof ; ' and most thought of : ' Ps. xxvii. 4, ' One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord.' Now, if we delay, it is left upon great hazards. Life is uncertain, for you know not what a day may bring forth : Prov. xxvii. 1, ' Boast not thyself of to-morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' If God had given leave (as princes sometimes in a proclamation, for all to come in within a certain day) ; so if God had said, Whosoever doth not repent till thirty or forty years be out, there were no great hazard till the time were expired, we might entertain sin a little while longer. But we know not the day of our death, therefore we should get God to bless us ere we die. A new call is uncertain, 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. It may be he will treat with us no more in such a warm and affectionate manner. If he call, yet not vouchsafe such assistances of his grace, ' if, peradventure, God will give them repentance unto life,' 2 Tim. ii. 25. It is a hazard or uncertain if the Spirit of God will put another thought of turning into your hearts, when former grace is despised : Isa. lv. 6, ' Call upon the Lord while he is near, and seek him while he may be found.'

4. Consider the mischiefs of delaying. Every day we contract a greater indisposition of embracing God's call. We complain now it is hard ; if it be hard to-day, it will be harder to-morrow, when God is more provoked, and sin more strengthened, Jer. xiii. 23. Yea, it may be, our natural faculties are decayed, the vigour of our youth exhausted. When the tackling is spoiled and the ship rotten, it is an ill time to put to sea : Eccles. xii. 1, ' Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth.' And besides, consider the suspicion that is upon a late repentance. The most profane would have God for their portion at last.

5. The reasons for delay are inconsiderable. Suppose it be our satisfaction in our present estate. The pleasures of sin are sweet, and we are loth to forego them ; but those pleasures must one day be renounced, or you are for ever miserable. Why not now ? Sin will be as sweet to the carnal appetite hereafter as now it is ; and salvation is dispensed upon the same terms. You cannot be saved hereafter with less ado, or bring down Christ and heaven to a lower rate. If this be a reason now, it will for ever lie as a reason against Christ, and against conversion. The laws of Christianity are unalterable, always the same, and your hearts not like to be better. Or is it that you are willing now, but you have no leisure ? when such encumbrances are over, you shall get your hearts into better posture. Oh no ; it is hypocrisy to think you are willing when you delay. Nothing now hindereth but a want of will ; and when God treateth with thee about thine eternal peace, it is the best time ; but God always cometh to the sinner unseasonably in his own account. But consider, it was the devil that said, Mat. viii. 29, ' Art thou come hither to torment us before the time ? '



The use is, to reprove that dallying with God in the work of conversion, which is so common and so natural to us.

The causes of it are:—

1. Unbelief, or want of a due sense and sight of things to come. If men were persuaded of eternal life and eternal death, they would not stand hovering between heaven and hell, but presently engage their hearts to draw nigh to God. But we cannot see afar off: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.'

2. Another cause is security. They do not take these things into their serious thoughts. Faith showeth it is sure, and consideration bringeth it near: Amos vi. 3, 'Ye put far away the evil day.' Things at a distance do not move us. We should pray, and preach, and practise as if death were at our backs, and remember that all our security dependeth upon the slender thread of a frail life.

3. Another cause is averseness of heart; they have no mind to these things: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.' The heart is inclined to worldly vanities, set against God and godliness. Now let us consider the heinousness of this sin. It is ingratitude and unthankfulness for God's eternal love: Ps. ciii. 17, 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.' It is also disingenuity; we would be heard presently: Ps. cii. 2, 'Lord, hear me speedily.' To-day is the season of mercy, to-morrow of duty. We are always in haste, would have the Lord to tarry for our sinful leisure, when we will not tarry his holy leisure. It is also base self-love; we can be content to dishonour God longer, provided at length we may be saved. Lastly, it is great injustice to keep God out of his right; he hath been long enough kept out of his right already: 1 Peter iv. 3, 'The time past of our life may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles.' Therefore, let us no longer delay, but speedily address ourselves to entertain the motions of the Holy Spirit.

### LOOKING BACK ILL BECOMES THOSE THAT HAVE SET THEIR FACE HEAVENWARD.

We are now come to the third instance, wherein we are instructed how to avoid miscarriages in following Christ.

The first instance teaches us to beware of hasty and hypocritical profession, which is the fruit of resolution without deliberation, or sitting down and counting the charges; this was the fault of the scribe.

The second instance cautioneth us against dilatory shifts and excuses. The most necessary business must not be put off upon any pretence whatsoever.

The third instance forbiddeth all thoughts of compounding, or hopes to have Christ and the world too; as this man hoped first to secure his worldly interest, and then to follow Christ at leisure. Whether this man were called, or uncalled, it appeareth not. It is



only said in the text, 'Another also said:' the middle person was only called by Christ; the other two offered themselves. The first was forward, upon a mistaken ground, to share the honours of the kingdom of the Messiah, which he supposed to be temporal. This last offereth himself, but his heart was not sufficiently loosened from the world. From both we see that 'it is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but God that showeth mercy,' Rom. ix. 16; for neither of those that offered themselves are accepted.

In the words you may observe:—

1. His request.

2. Christ's answer.

1. His request. This third offereth himself to be a disciple of Christ, but with an exception—that he might take his farewell at home, and dispose of his estate there, and so secure his worldly interests: 'I will follow thee, but let me bid those farewell which are at home in my house.' You will say, What harm in this request? Elijah granted it to Elisha, 1 Kings xix. 21. When he had laid his mantle on him, thereby investing him in the office of a prophet, Elisha said, 'Let me, I pray thee, go and kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee:' which the prophet granteth, and gave way to Elisha to go home and salute his friends.

I answer—

[1.] The evangelical ministry exceedeth the prophetical, both as to excellency and necessity, and must be gone about speedily without any delay. The harvest was great, and such an extraordinary work was not to be delayed nor interrupted.

[2.] If two men do the same thing, it followeth not that they do it with the same mind. Things may be the same as to the substance or matter of the action, yet circumstances may be different. Christ knew this man's heart, and could interpret the meaning of his desire to go home first. He might make it a pretence to depart clean away from Christ. We cannot distinguish between the look of Abraham and the look of Lot. One is allowed, the other forbidden. Abraham is allowed to look towards Sodom: Gen. xix. 28, 'And Abraham got up early in the morning, and looked towards Sodom, and behold the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.' Yet Lot and his family are forbidden to look that way: Gen. xix. 17, 'Look not behind thee.' We cannot distinguish between the laughter of Abraham and the laughter of Sarah: Gen. xvii. 17, 'And Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born to him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?' Now compare Gen. xviii. 12; it is said, 'And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure, my lord also being old?' Yet she is reproved, 'For the Lord said, Wherefore did Sarah laugh?' The one was joy and reverence, the other unbelief and contempt. We cannot distinguish between the Virgin Mary's question, Luke i. 34, 'How can this be?' and the question of Zachary, John's father, Luke i. 18, 'How shall I know this, for I am an old man?' Mary was not reproved, but he was struck dumb for that speech. But though we cannot distinguish, God, that knoweth the secrets of all hearts, can distinguish.

[3.] Those that followed Christ on these extraordinary calls were to leave all things they had, without any further care about them : Mat. xix. 21, 'Sell all that thou hast, and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' So Mat. iv. 19, 20, 'He saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men : and they straightway left their nets and followed him.' So Mat. ix. 9, 'As Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom : and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.' Therefore it was preposterous for this man to desire to go home to order and dispose of his estate and family, before he complied with his call.

[4.] In resolution, estimation, and vow, the same is required of all Christians, when Christ's work calleth for it : Luke xiv. 33, 'So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.'

2. Christ's answer, which consists of a similitude, and its interpretation joined together.

[1.] The metaphor or similitude. Taken from ploughmen, who cannot make straight furrows if they look back. So, to look back, after we have undertaken Christ's yoke and service, rendereth us unfit for the kingdom of God. Putting our hands to the plough is to undertake Christ's work, or to resolve to be his disciples. Looking back, noteth an hankering of mind after the world, and also a return to the worldly life. For, first, we look back, and then we go back. First, we have an over-valuing of the world, and then we return to the worldly life.

*Doct.* That looking back will not become those who have set their faces heavenward.

We have an instance in the text of a man which pretended to follow Christ, which is to set our faces heavenward (for we follow Christ, first in labour and patience, and then into glory). But he would look back, and had many thoughts of what he had left at home. And he is pronounced unfit for the kingdom of God, that is, to be a disciple of Christ. And we have another instance, recommended to our observation by our Lord himself : Luke xvii. 32, 'Remember Lot's wife;' that is, remember her sin, and remember her punishment. Both are taken notice of, Gen. xix. 26, 'But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.' There was a hankering of mind after what she had left in Sodom. She looked back, because she had left her heart behind her ; there were her kindred, her friends, and her country, and pleasant place of abode. That look was a kind of repenting that she had come out of Sodom. And what was her punishment ? She that looked back perished as well as they that never came out. Yea, she is set up as a monument or spectacle of public shame and dishonour, to warn the rest of the world to obey God, and trust themselves with his providence.

In handling this point I shall show you :—

1. Upon what occasions we may be said to look back.

2. How ill this becomes those that have put their hands to the plough.

1. Upon what occasions we may be said to look back. A double pair I shall mention.

The first sort of those :—

[1.] That pretend to follow Christ, and yet their hearts hanker after the world, the cares, pleasures, and vain pomp thereof. Certainly all that would follow Christ must renounce their worldly affections and inclinations, or else they can make no work of Christianity. I prove it from the nature of conversion, which is a turning from the creature to God, from self to Christ, and from sin to holiness. The first is proper to our case. As our degeneration was a falling from God to the creature, Jer. ii. 13, so our regeneration is a turning from the creature to God. If we leave the world unwillingly, our dedication will soon come to nothing, for then our hearts are false with God in the very making of the covenant. If we engaged ourselves to God before the fleshly mind and interest were never well conquered, as we were not well loosened from the world, so not firmly engaged to God, and therefore, when our interest requires it, we shall soon forsake God.

[2.] When men are discouraged in his service by troubles and difficulties, and so, after a forward profession, all cometh to nothing: Heb. x. 38, 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' The former is looking back, and this is drawing back. The one ariseth out of the other: all their former zeal and courage is lost, they are affrighted and driven out of their profession, and relapse into the errors they have escaped. This is the first pair. Once more, the other pair is this :—

There is a looking back with respect to mortification, and a looking back with respect to vivification.

(1.) With respect to mortification, which is the first part of conversion. So we must not look back, or mind anything behind us, which may turn us back, and stop us in our course. The world and the flesh are the things behind us; we turned our back upon them in conversion, when we turned to God. Grace 'teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,' Titus ii. 12. It is the world that doth call back our thoughts, and corrupt our affections—the world, that is an enemy to God, and our religion, James iv. 4. Therefore, the world must be renounced, and we must grow dead to the world, that we may be alive to God. There is no halting between both.

(2.) With respect to vivification, or progress in the duties of the holy and heavenly life. So the apostle telleth us, Phil. iii. 13, 'But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,' &c. Farther progress in holiness is the one thing that we should mind, and that above all other things. This is the *unum necessarium*, Luke x. 42; the *primum* or *principium*, the one thing, that is, the main thing: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.' But how should we mind it? Not looking to the things which are behind, but looking to the things which are before. The things behind are our imperfect beginnings, or so much of the race as we have overcome and got through. It is the sluggard's trick to consider how much of the journey is past, or how far the rest of the racers are behind him. But he that sets heartily to his business considers how much is before, that he may get through the remainder of his race, and so obtain the prize. The things which are before us are God and heaven, and the

remaining duties of the holy life. These we should mind, and not look back, as satisfying ourselves with what we have attained to already.

2. How ill it becometh those that have put their hands to the spiritual plough.

[1.] In respect of the covenant into which they enter, or the manner of entrance into it, which is by a fixed unbounded resignation of themselves unto God. Till this be done, we are but half Christians. As suppose we desire privileges, would have God to be our God, but neglect duties, and are loth to become his people; or suppose we see a necessity of that, and so are in some measure willing to give up ourselves to him, yet if our resolution be not fixed, or be not unbounded, without reserves, and against all reserves, the covenant is not condescended unto. We do nothing unless we do that which is further required of us.

(1.) If it be not fixed, but wavering, we do but treat; we do not conclude, and come to a full agreement with God: Acts xi. 23, 'He exhorted them all, that, with full purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.' It implieth such a resolution as carrieth the force of a principle. Agrippa was almost a Christian, had some enamouring and uncertain inclinations: Acts xxvi. 28, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' Christ is resolved to stick to his servants, and therefore he expects that they should be resolved to stick to him.

(2.) If it be not unbounded, reserving nothing, but leaving all to Christ, to be disposed of at his will. Except but one thing, and the covenant is not fully concluded; it sticketh at that article; it is but hucking with God, not agreeing with God. Resolving with reserves is no resolution at all. It is but dealing like Ananias and Sapphira, giving something, and keeping back the rest, Acts v. Christ will have no disciples which will not part with all. Nothing must be reserved, neither credit, nor life, nor estate, Luke xiv. 28. Now, none of this can be as long as you look back, or allow that that will tempt you to look back; that is, till you be thoroughly loosened from the world; for whilst the heart cleaveth to any earthly thing, your resolution is unfixed. They that only take Christ upon liking, will soon be tempted to mislike him and his ways; and your resolution is not unbounded, whilst you set upon the profession of religion, and yet keep the world, or something of the world: your heart will ever and anon be seeking occasions to withdraw; for you were false at heart at your first setting out, and treacherous in the very making of your covenant.

[2.] With respect to the duties of Christianity, or that part of the kingdom of God which concerneth your obedience to him, you are never fit for these while the heart cleaveth to earthly things, and you are still hankering after the world.

A threefold defect there will be in our duties:—

(1.) They will be unpleasant.

(2.) They will be inconstant.

(3.) Imperfect in such a degree as to want sincerity.

(1.) Your duty will be unpleasant to you, so far as you are worldly and carnal, so that you can never yield cheerful and ready obedience to God.



Certain it is that we must serve God, and serve him with delight. His commandments should be kept, and they should not be grievous to us, 1 John v. 3. Now, what is the great impediment? Worldly lusts are not thoroughly purged out of the heart; for presently he addeth this reason, 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.' It is a hard heart maketh our work hard; and the heart is hard and unpersuadable when our affections are engaged elsewhere. The readiness of our obedience dependeth on the fervency of our love; the fervency of our love on our victory over the world; our victory over the world on the strength of our faith; the strength of our faith on the certainty we have of the principal object of our faith; the principal object of our faith is, that Jesus is the Son of God, whose counsel we must take, if we will be happy. And the evidence of that principle is the double testimony or attestation given to him from heaven, or in the heart of a believer. Once settle in that, that you can entirely trust yourselves and all your interests in the hands of Christ, and all duties will be easy.

(2.) You will be inconstant in it, and apt to be ensnared again, when you meet with occasions and temptations that suit with your heart's lusts. As the Israelites were drawn out of Egypt against their wills, the flesh-pots of Egypt were still in their minds, and, therefore, were ready to make themselves a captain and return again, Num. xiv. 4; and James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in his ways.' Nothing will hold an unwilling heart. Demas had not quitted this hankering mind after the world, and therefore it prevented him doing his duty: 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' He left the work of the gospel to mind his own private affairs. The love of riches, pleasure, ease, and safety, if they be not thoroughly renounced, will tempt us to a like revolt and neglect of God. Therefore, to prevent it, when we first put our hands to the plough, we must resolve to renounce the world: Ps. xlv. 10, 'Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.' Look back no more. As long as we are entangled in our lusts and enticements of the world, we are unmeet to serve God. Paul counted those things that were gain to him to be loss for Christ: Phil. iii. 7, 8, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that I may win Christ.' Paul repented not of his choice, but sheweth his perseverance in the contempt of the world,—I have counted, and do count. He seeth no cause to recede from his choice. Many affect novelties, are transported at their first change, but repent at leisure.

(3.) We are imperfect in it; I mean, to such a degree as to want sincerity, for they bring nothing to perfection, Luke viii. 14. Their fruit never groweth ripe or sound, for religion is an underling. Some good inclinations they have to heavenly things, but their worldly affections are greater, and overtop them so, that though they do not plainly revolt from their profession, yet their duties want that life and power which is necessary, so that they bring little honour to Christ by being Christians.

[3.] In respect of the hurt that cometh from their looking back, both to themselves and to religion.



(1.) To themselves : 2 Peter ii. 20, 21, 'For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, their latter end is worse with them than their beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.' Many have so much of the knowledge of Christ as to cleanse their external conversation; but sin and the world were never so effectually cast out but they are in secret league with them still; and, therefore, they are first entangled, and then overcome; first enticed by some pleasure or profit, and then carried away with the temptation. But what cometh of this? 'Their latter end is worse than their beginning.' Their sin is greater, since they sin against light and taste; their judgment is greater, both spiritual and eternal; as God giveth them over to brutish lusts, and to the power of Satan. And this will be a cutting thought to them to all eternity, to remember how they lost their acquaintance with, and benefit by, Christ, by looking back to the world, and deserting that good way wherein they found so much sweetness in Christ.

(2.) The mischief which is done to religion. They wonderfully dishonour God, and bring contempt upon the ways of godliness, when, after they have made trial of it, they prefer sin before it, as if God had wearied them, Micah vi. 3. Therefore it is just with God to vindicate his honour. And Satan, after he seemeth to be for a while rejected, taketh a more durable possession of them, Luke xi. 26. Oh, think of this often!—to look back after we seemed to escape doth involve us in the greater sin and misery. Better never to have yielded to God so far, than to retract at last, partly because their sins are sins against knowledge: Luke xii. 47, 'That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' Partly because they are unthankful for so much deliverance, by the knowledge of Christ, as they received, and that is an heinous aggravation of their offence. Partly because their sin is treachery and breach of vows, for they turned the back upon the world and all the allurements thereof, when they consented to the covenant, and resolved to follow Christ in all conditions, till he should bring them into a place of rest and safety. Partly because they sin against experience, after they have had some relish and taste of better things, Heb. vi. 4. Partly because their conversion again is the more difficult, the devil having a greater hold of them, Mat. xii. 44.

[4.] With respect to the disproportion that is between the things that tempt us to look back, and those things that are set before us.

(1.) The things that tempt us to look back are the pleasures of sin and the profits of the world. Both are but a temporary enjoyment: Heb. xi. 25, 'The pleasures of sin, which are but for a season.' The pleasures of sin are base and brutish, which captivate and bring a slavery on the soul, Titus iii. 3. The enjoyments of the world cannot last long; your gust and relish of them, within a little while will be gone, 1 John ii. 17; yet these are the things that tempt you to forget and draw you off from God. And will you marry your souls again to those sins from which they were once divorced, and for such paltry vanities repent of your obedience to God, even after you have made

trial of him? Are these things grown better, or God grown worse, that you should turn your hearts from him to them?

(2.) The things that are before you are God and heaven; reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory.

Reconciliation with God, with the consequent benefits; communion with God now, peace of conscience, the gift of the Spirit, and the hopes of glory. If there were no more than these, shall we look back? Can we find better things in the world? Alas! there is nothing here but fears and snares, a vexatious uncertainty, and polluting enjoyments, such as may easily make us worse, but cannot make us better. What is this but to forsake the cold flowing waters for a dirty puddle? Jer. xviii. 14, our own mercies for lying vanities, Jonah ii. 8.

The everlasting fruition of him in glory. Shall we look back that are striving for a crown of endless glory, as if we were weary of the pursuit, and give it over as a hopeless or fruitless business? If Christ will lead us to this glory, let us follow him, and go on in what is well begun without looking back. Never let us leave a crown of glory for a crown of thorns.

*Use.* Is for instruction, to teach us what to do if we would set about the strict practice of religion.

1. See that your worldly love be well mortified, for till you be dead to the world God cannot recover his interest in your souls, nor the divine nature be set up there with any life and power, 2 Peter i. 4; see also 1 John ii. 15, and 1 John v. 4. Till this be done, God and glory cannot be your ultimate end, nor the main design of your life; for the world will turn your hearts another way, and will have the principal ruling and disposing of your lives: the world will have that love, trust, care, and service that belongeth to God, and be a great hindrance to you in the way to heaven, and you will never have peace. The world doth first delude you, and then disquiet you, and if you cleave to it as your portion, you must look for no more. Well, then, mortified it must be; for how can you renounce the world as an enemy if your hearts be not weaned from it so far that it is a more indifferent thing to you to have it or want it, and that you be not so eager for it, or so careful about it?

2. Let not the world steal into your hearts again, nor seem so sweet to you, for then you are under a temptation. It is our remaining folly and backsliding nature that is ever looking to the world which we have forsaken. Now, when you find this, whenever the world hath insinuated into your affections, and chilled and cooled them to God and heaven, see that the distemper be presently expelled. Pray, as David, Ps. cxix. 36, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness.' Be sure to be more fruitful in good works: Luke xi. 41, 'Give alms of such things as you have, and behold all things are clean unto you.' We renounced the world in our baptismal vow, we overcame the world in our whole after course. It is not so got out of any but that we still need an holy jealousy and watchfulness over ourselves. Now, that we may do both of these, I shall give you some directions.

[1.] Fix your end and scope, which is to be everlastingly happy in the enjoyment of God. The more you do so, the less in danger you

will be of looking back. We are often pressed to lay up treasures in heaven, Mat. vi. 20; and, as those that are 'risen with Christ,' to 'seek the things which are above,' Col. iii. 1. Our Lord himself saith to the young man, Mark x. 21, 'Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven.' If your life and business be for heaven, and your mind be kept intent on the greater matters of everlasting life, nothing will divert you therefrom; you will almost be ready to forget earth, because you have higher and better things to mind. It is not barely thinking of the troubles of the world, or confessing its vanities, will cure your distempers, but the true sight of a better happiness. A little in hand is better, you will think, than uncertain hopes; but a sound belief, which is 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,' that openeth heaven to you, and will soon make you of another mind.

[2.] Entirely trust yourself, and all your concerns, in the hand of God. Christ expected from all those whom he called in an extraordinary manner, that they should leave all without any thought or solicitude about it, trusting in him not only for their eternal reward, but for their provision and protection by the way during their service. And the same in effect is required of all Christians; not to leave our estates or neglect our calling, but renouncing the world, and resolving to take such a lot in good part as he shall carve out to them. All that enter into covenant with God must believe him to be 'God all-sufficient,' Gen. xvii. 1. The apostle, when he dissuadeth from worldliness, he produceth a promise of God's not forsaking us and leaving us utterly destitute: Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' On the other side, certainly, it is unbelief that is the cause of apostasy, or falling back from God: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.' Certainly, when we have resigned up ourselves to Christ to do his work, we may trust him boldly, and serve him cheerfully; we need not look back to shift for ourselves. If you are willing to be his people, he will be your God and your Saviour, and then you may conclude that 'God, even our God, shall bless us,' Ps. lxxvii. 6. He will not be wanting to those that unreservedly yield up themselves to his obedience.

[3.] Consider that they are deluded hypocrites that will meddle no farther with religion than they can reconcile it with their worldly happiness. Whatever glorious notions they have of God, or pretences of admiring free grace, it is self-denial that Christ calleth for; and taking up our cross is the first lesson in his school. And true conversion is a turning from the creature to God, and beginneth in mortification; and baptism implieth a renunciation of the devil, the world, and the flesh. Therefore those that will save their worldly state, and launch out no further in the cause of religion than they may easily get ashore again when a storm cometh, and love and serve God no further than will stand with the contentment of the flesh, and divide their hearts between God and the world, give God but half, and the worst half; surely these were never sincere with God. It is an impossible

design they drive on, to serve two masters, Mat. vi. 24. You must let go Christ and glory, if you be so earnest after the world, and so indulgent to the flesh.

[4.] Consider how much it is your business to observe what maketh you fit or unfit for the kingdom of God. The aptitude or inaptitude of means is to be judged with respect to the end, as they help or hinder the attainment of your great end; for *finis est mensura mediorum*: Mat. vi. 22, 'The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.' Now our great end is to enjoy God for ever. And what fitteth you for this,—looking back, or keeping the heart in heaven? Experience will show. The observant and watchful Christian will soon find where his great hindrance lieth. How much he findeth his heart down by minding the world, and how he needeth to wind it up again by faith and love: Ps. xxv. 1, 'Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.' The world is the great impediment that keepeth him from God, and indisposeth him for his service, dampeth his love, and quencheth his zeal, and abateth his diligence; he will soon find how much more he might do for God if he could draw off his heart more from those inferior objects. This is the weight that presseth us down, and maketh us so cold and cursory in God's service.

[5.] Consider, in the text, here is the kingdom of God, which is double—the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory. The one is called, 'The kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,' Rev. i. 9; the other is called, 'His kingdom and glory,' 1 Thes. ii. 12. By the first we are prepared for the second; and the second is the great encouragement. Now they that look back are unfit for either the duties of Christians or the reward of Christians; he flincheth from his duty here, and shall be shut out of heaven at last: 2 Thes. i. 5, 'That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.' They are only counted worthy who constantly and patiently look for it, and venture something on it.

[6.] Consider the great loss you will incur by looking back after you have put your hand to the plough. You will lose all that you have wrought, and all that you have suffered.

What you have wrought: 2 John 8, 'Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.' You forfeit the reward of your good beginnings. A partial reward they may have in this life, while they continue their well-doing (for no man is a loser by God), but not a complete and full reward till the life to come. Some overflowings of God's temporal bounty they may have, but not the crown of life and glory. So Ezek. xviii. 24, 'All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned.' All is obliterated and forgotten and made void, as to any interest in the great reward. This was represented in the type of the Nazarite: Num. vi. 12, 'The days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.' He was to begin all anew. All that you have suffered, as a man may make some petty losses for Jesus Christ: Gal. iii. 4, 'Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.' This maketh all the cost and expense that you have been at to be to no purpose.



## THE EXCELLENCY OF SAVING FAITH.

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*But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*—HEB. X. 39.

IN the verse immediately preceding there is a dreadful doom pronounced on apostates, that God will take no pleasure in them. Now lest they should be much affrighted with the terror of it, and suppose that he had too hard an opinion of them, he showeth, that though he did warn them, he did not suspect them, presuming other things of them, according to their profession: *But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

In the words two things are observable:—

1. The denial of the suspicion of their apostasy.
2. An assertion of the truth and constancy of their faith.

That clause I shall insist upon, *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς*. Where, first, take notice of their faith, *ἐκ πίστεως*; secondly, their perseverance, *εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς*. The word signifieth their purchasing, acquiring, obtaining, finding the soul; meaning thereby, that though they lost other things, they did not lose their souls.

*Doct.* That a true and sound faith will cause us to save the soul, though with the loss of other things.

1 Peter i. 5, 'Ye are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' It is the power of God indeed that keepeth. He that reserveth heaven for us reserveth and keepeth us for heaven. But by what instrument or means? By faith. To depend upon an invisible God for a happiness that lieth in an invisible world, when in the meantime he permitteth us to be harassed with difficulties and troubles, requireth faith; and by faith alone can the heart be upheld, till we obtain this salvation. So ver. 9, 'Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.' It is faith maketh us row against the stream of flesh and blood, and deny its cravings, that we may obtain eternal salvation at length. The flesh is for sparing and favouring the body; but faith is for saving the soul. That is the end and aim of faith.

To make this evident to you:—

1. I shall prove that all other things must be hazarded for the saving of the soul.



2. That nothing will make us hazard all things for the purchasing or acquiring the salvation of the soul but only faith.

1. That all other things must be hazarded for the saving of the soul: Mat. x. 39, 'He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' So it is repeated again upon the occasion of the doctrine of self-denial, Mat. xvi. 25, 26. The saving of the soul is more than the getting and keeping or having of all the world; for the world concerneth only the body and bodily life, but the saving of the soul concerneth eternal life. If life be lost temporally, it is secured to eternity, when we shall have a life which no man can take from us. And the case standeth thus: that either we must bring eternal perdition upon ourselves, or else obtain eternal salvation. They that are thirsty of life bodily, and the comforts and interests of it, are certainly prodigal of their salvation. But on the other side, if we are willing to venture life temporal, and all the interests thereof, for the saving of the soul, we make a good bargain: that which is left for a while is preserved to us for ever. In short, so much as God is to be preferred before the creature, heaven before the world, the soul before the body, eternity before time, so much doth it concern us to have the better part safe. And as men in a great fire and general conflagration will hazard their lumber to preserve their treasure, their money, or their jewels, so should we take care, that if we must lose one or other, that the better part be out of hazard; and whatever we lose by the way, we may be sure to come well to the end of our journey.

2. That nothing will make us hazard all things for the purchasing or acquiring the salvation of the soul, but only faith. The flesh is importunate to be pleased. Sense saith to us, Favour thyself, that is, spare the flesh; but faith saith, Save thy soul. Faith, which apprehendeth things future and invisible, will teach us to value all things according to their worth, and to lose some present satisfaction for that future and eternal gain which the promises of God do offer to us. Now faith doth this two ways: by convincing us of the *worth* and of the *truth* of things promised by God through Christ. The apostle, when he bloweth his trumpet, and summoneth our reverence and attentive regard to the gospel, in that preface, 1 Tim. i. 15, he saith, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' Salvation by Christ is worthy to be regarded above all things; and if it be true, all things should give place unto it. Now faith convinceth us of the worth and truth, and maketh us to take the thing promised for all our treasure and happiness, and the promise itself, or the word of God, for our whole security.

(1.) It maketh us to take the thing promised for all our treasure and happiness: Mat. vi. 19-21, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' It highly concerneth us to consider what we make our treasure. Worldly things are subject to many accidents, and deserve not

our love nor esteem. Only heavenly things deserve to be our treasure. If our hearts be set upon these things, it is a sign we value what Christ hath offered. So 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' We make these things our end, and scope, and happiness. It is easy to prove the worth of these things in the general, as it is easy to prove that eternity is better than time; that things incorruptible are better than those which are subject to corruption; that things exempted from casualty are better than those things which are liable to casualty, and are not out of the reach of robbery and violence. But to creatures wedded to sense and present enjoyment, it is difficult and hard to cause them to set their hearts on another world, and to lay up their hopes in heaven, and to part with all things which they see and love and find comfortable to their senses, for that God and glory which they never saw. This is the business of faith, or the work of the Spirit of illumination changing their hearts and minds. This general truth all will determine, as that things eternal are better than things temporal. But we undervalue these gracious promises, whose accomplishment must with patience be expected, whilst their future goodness cometh in actual competition with these bodily delights which we must forego, and those grievous bodily afflictions which we must endure, out of sincere respect to Christ and his ways. Therefore, before there can be any true self-denial, faith must incline us to this offered benefit, as our true treasure and happiness, whatever we forego or undergo to attain it.

(2.) For the truth of it the word of God must be our whole security, as being enough to support our hearts in waiting for it, however God cover himself with frowns and an appearance of anger in those afflictions which befall us in the way thither. The word of God is all in all to his people: 'Thy testimonies have I taken as my heritage for ever; they are the rejoicing of my soul,' Ps. cxix. 111. If a man hath little ready money, yet if he have a heritage to live upon, or sure bonds, he is well paid. So is a believer rich in promises, which being the promises of the almighty and immutable God, and built upon the everlasting merit of Christ, are as good to him as performances, and therefore cause joy in some proportion as if the things were in hand: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them;' and Ps. lvi. 4, 'In God will I praise his word, in God have I put my trust; I will not fear what man can do unto me.' Faith resteth upon God's word, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to him by Christ.

*Use 1.* Is information concerning a weighty truth, namely, what the faith is by which the just do live. It is such a trust or confidence in God's promises of eternal life through Jesus Christ as that we forsake all other hopes and happiness whatsoever that we may obtain it.

To make good this description to you, let me observe:—

1. That faith looketh mainly to heaven, or the saving of the soul, as the prime benefit offered to us by Jesus Christ. For all attend to this: 1 Tim. i. 16, 'For a pattern to them who should hereafter be—'

lieve on him to life everlasting.' This was that they chiefly aimed at, and therefore called 'the end of our faith,' 1 Peter i. 9. For this end were the scriptures written: John xx. 31, 'These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.' The scriptures are written to direct us to know Christ aright, who is the kernel and marrow of all the scriptures, who is the great subject of the gospel; and that the chief benefit we have by him is eternal life, by which all our pains and losses for Christ are recompensed, and from whence we fetch our comfort all along during the course of our pilgrimage, and upon the hopes of which the life of grace is carried on, and the temptations of sense are defeated, so that this is the main blessing which faith aimeth at.

2. That the sure grounds which faith goeth upon is God's promise through Jesus Christ; and so it implieth:—

[1.] That there is a God, who is 'a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;' for the apostle, pursuing this discourse, telleth us, Heb. xi. 6, that a man must believe God's being and bounty before he can do anything to the purpose for him.

[2.] That this God hath revealed himself in Jesus Christ as willing to accept poor creatures who refuse not his new covenant and remedying grace, to pardon and life; for the guilty creature would stand at a distance, and not receive his offers with any comfort and satisfaction, had not God been 'in Christ reconciling the world to himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19. But now they may be invited to come to him with hope, ver. 20. And his gracious promises, standing upon such a bottom and foundation, are the sooner believed: 2 Cor. i. 20, 'For the promises of God are in him, yea, and in him, amen, to the glory of God by us;' that is, the promises of God propounded in Christ's name are undoubtedly true; they are not yea and nay, but yea and amen. They do not say yea to-day, and nay to-morrow; but always yea, so it is, and amen, so it shall be, because they stand upon an immutable foundation, the everlasting merit and redemption of Christ.

[3.] It implieth that the scriptures which contain these offers and promises are the word of God. For though God's veracity be unquestionable, how shall we know that we have his word? It is laid at pledge with us in the scriptures, which are the declaration of the mind of the eternal God. The promises are a part of those sacred scriptures which were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and sealed with a multitude of miracles, and bear the very image and superscription of God (as everything which hath passed his hand hath his signature upon it, even to a gnat or pile of grass), and have been received and preserved by the church as the certain oracles of God, and blessed by him throughout all generations and successions of ages, to the convincing, converting, sanctifying, and comforting of many souls, and carry their own light, evidence, and recommendation to the consciences of all those who are not strangely perverted by their brutish lusts, and blinded by their worldly affections. For the apostle saith, 'By the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience. For if our gospel be hid, it is hid to those who are lost: the god of this world having blinded their eyes, lest

the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them,' 2 Cor. iv. 2-4. Upon these grounds doth faith proceed, which I have mentioned the more distinctly that you might know how to excite faith; for besides praying for the Spirit of wisdom and illumination to open our eyes, we must use the means both as rational creatures and new creatures. And what means are more effectual than those mentioned?

Is there not a God? If there be not a God, how did we come to be? Thou wert not made by chance; and when thou wert not, thou couldst not make thyself. Look upon thy body, so curiously framed, whose workmanship could this be but of a wise God? Upon thy soul, whose image and superscription doth it bear? 'Give unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's.' Nay, look upward, downward, within thee, without thee, what dost thou see, hear, and feel, but the products and effects of an eternal power, wisdom, and goodness? Thou canst not open thine eyes, but the heavens are ready to say to thy conscience, Man, there is a God, an infinite eternal being, who made us and all things else.

Now for the second: Hath not this God revealed himself gracious in Christ? Nature declareth there is a God, and scripture that there is a Christ. As there is one God, the first cause of all, infinitely powerful, wise, and good, therefore it is but reasonable that he should be served, and according to his own will. But we have faulted in our duty to our creator, and therefore are in dread of his justice. Certainly reasonable creatures have immortal souls, and so die not as the beasts; therefore there is no true happiness in these things wherein men ordinarily seek it. Is it not then a blessed discovery that God hath brought life and immortality to light by Jesus Christ; that he sent him into the world to be a propitiation, and to satisfy his justice, and to redeem us from our guilty fears? And shall we neglect this great salvation brought to us by Jesus Christ, or coldly seek after it? Surely God is willing to be reconciled to man, or else he would presently have plunged us into our eternal state, as he did the angels upon their first sinning. But he waiteth, and beareth with many inconveniences; he beseecheth us, and prayeth us to be reconciled. And 'how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which was first spoken by the Lord, and then confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?' Heb. 2-4. Would holy men cheat the world with an imposture, or would God be accessory in lending his power to do such marvellous things? It cannot be.

And then for the third: Is not this a part of the word of God, which holy men have written to consign it to the use of the church in all ages? 1 John ii. 25, 'This is the promise which he hath promised us, eternal life.' Is not this God's promise? And will not God be mindful and regardful of his word? He was wont to be tender of it: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;' above all that is named, or famed, or spoken and believed of God. His truth and trustiness is most conspicuous. In the new covenant he hath given his solemn oath, as well as his word, that the heirs of promise 'might have strong consolation,' Heb. vi. 18. What



is the matter that my belief of these things is so cold and ineffectual? If this be God's promise, and he hath put in no exception against me to exclude me from the benefit of this promise, what is the reason why I can no more encourage myself in the Lord to seek after this salvation, but am disturbed so often by distracting fears and cares, and so easily misled by vain delights? Thus should we excite our faith.

But I digress too long.

3. The nature of this faith I express by a trust and confidence. There is in faith an assent, which is sufficient when the object requireth no more. As there are some speculative principles which are merely to be believed, as they lead on to other things, Heb. xi. 3, there an intellectual assent sufficeth. But there are other things which are propounded, not only as true, but good. There, not only an intellectual assent is required, but a practical assent, or such as is joined with consent and affiance; as suppose when Christ promiseth eternal life to the serious Christian or mortified believer; there must be not only an assent, or a believing that this proposal and offer is Christ's, and that it is true; but there must be a consent to choose it for my portion and happiness, and then a confidence and dependence upon Christ for it, though it lie out of sight, and in the meantime I be exercised with sundry difficulties and temptations. Trust is not a bare opinion of Christ's fidelity, but a dependence upon his word. I do believe there is a God, and that there is a Christ, I do well. I do believe that this God in Christ hath brought life and immortality to light, I do well still; but I must do more. I believe that he hath assured his disciples and followers, that if they continue faithful with him, they shall have eternal life: John v. 24, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.' I know that Christ hath fidelity and sufficiency enough to make good his word. This is well, but I must go farther; that is to say, I must choose this eternal life that is offered to me for my felicity and portion; this is consent: and I must continue with patience in well-doing, depending upon his faithful word whilst I am in the pursuit of it; this is trust or confidence. As this world is vanity, and hath nothing in it worthy to be compared with the hopes which Christ hath given me of a better life, so I choose it for my happiness. But as I judge him faithful that hath promised, and depend upon him that he will make good his word, though this happiness be future, and lieth in another, an unseen, an unknown world, to which there is no coming but by faith, this is the trust, and by that name it is often expressed in scripture. It is nothing else but a sure and comfortable dependence upon God through Jesus Christ, in the way of well-doing, for the gift of eternal life: Ps. cxii. 7, 'His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' So Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou keepest him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' The New Testament also useth this term, 2 Cor. iii. 4, 'Such trust have we through Christ to Godward;' and 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.' Well, then, this trust is more than an assent or bare persuasion of the mind that the promises are true; yea, it is more than a motion of the



will towards them as good and satisfying; for it noteth a quiet repose of the heart on the fidelity and mercy of God in Christ, that he will give this blessedness, if we do in the first place seek after it. The more we cherish this confidence, the more sure we are of our interest, both in Christ and the promise: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence, and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;' and ver. 14, 'We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;' and Heb. x. 35, a little before the text, 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' In all which places confidence noteth our resolute engaging in the heavenly life, because we depend upon Christ's rewards in another world. In our passage to heaven we meet with manifold temptations; we are assaulted both on the right hand and on the left with the terrors of sense, which are a discouragement to us, and the delights of sense, which are a snare to us. Confidence or trust fortifieth us against both these temptations, the difficulties, dangers, and sufferings which we meet with in our passage to heaven, yea, though it should be death itself; for faith seeth the end glorious, and that the salvation of our souls is sure and near if we continue faithful with Christ. On the other side, affiance or trust draweth the heart to better things, and we can easily want or miss the contentments of the flesh, the pomp, and ease, and pleasure of the present life, because our hearts are in heaven, and we have more excellent things in view and pursuit. 'This breedeth a weanedness from the baits of the flesh, and a rejection and contempt of what would take us off from the pursuit of eternal life: 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27, 'I run not as one that is uncertain;' as if he had said, I am confident, therefore I am mortified to the world.

4. The immediate fruit and effect of it is a forsaking all other hopes and happiness for Christ's sake, and for the blessedness which he offereth. That forsaking all belongeth to this affiance and trust is plain, because I can neither trust God nor be true to him till I can venture all my happiness upon this security; and if God calleth me to it, actually forsake all upon these hopes. This will appear to you by these arguments:—

[1.] By the doctrinal descriptions of the gospel-faith. Our Lord hath told us that the kingdom of heaven is like a merchantman: Mat. xiii. 45, 46, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.' And certainly he knew the nature of that faith better than we do. Many cheapen the pearl of price, but they do not go through with the bargain, because they do not sell all to purchase it. No; you must have such a sense of the excellency and truth of salvation by Christ, that you must choose it, and let go all that is inconsistent with this choice and trust. You must be resolved to let go all your sinful pleasures, profit, and reputation, and your life itself, rather than forfeit these hopes. So Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come unto me, and hate not father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple.' So ver. 33, 'Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple.'

After such express declarations of the will of Christ, why should we think of going to heaven at a cheaper rate, and that the covenant will be modelled and brought down to our humours? Christ's service will bring trouble with it. All that is precious in the world must be renounced, or else we shall not be able to hold out. The same is inferred out of the doctrine of self-denial, Mat. xvi. 24. It is the immediate fruit, yea, the principal act of our trust; for if God be trusted as our felicity, he must be loved above all, and all things must give way to God. The same is inferred out of the baptismal covenant, which is a renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a giving up ourselves to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our God. This renouncing implies a venturing of all, that we may obtain this blessedness, or eternal life.

[2.] By all the extraordinary calls and trials that are propounded as a pattern to us. Faith was ever a venturing all, and a forsaking all, upon the belief of God's veracity. Let us see Noah's faith: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, prepared an ark for the saving of his house.' That warning that God gave him of the flood was extraordinary, but they were 'of things not seen as yet;' whilst these things were in the mind of God, no man or angel could know them; and after God revealed them, there was nothing but his bare word for it. But Noah believed, and what then? At God's prescription, with vast expense, he prepareth an ark, and that was selling all. He was of a vast estate, or else he could not have prepared such a fabric, so many years in building, and so furnished; but this was the prescribed means to save his household. In the next place, let us consider Abraham's trial, who was the 'father of the faithful.' His first trial was, Heb. xi. 8, 'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out to a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed, not knowing whither he went.' Here was trusting and venturing all upon God's call. He forsook his kindred, and father's house, and all, to seek an abode he knew not where. Therefore we must forsake the world, and all things therein, yea, life itself, having our thoughts and affections fixed on heaven. There must be a total resignation of heart and will to God. We owe God blind obedience. To forsake our country, kindred, friends, inheritance, is a sore trial; yet this was done by him, and must be done by all that will be saved: we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and forsake father and mother, wife and children, all relations. All this he did for a land which he neither knew where it was nor the way to it. Our God hath told us, he will bring us into the heavenly Canaan. His second trial you have recorded, ver. 17, 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that received the promises offered up his only son.' God would try Abraham, that he might be an example of faith to all future generations, whether Abraham loved God or his son Isaac more. But he did not shrink upon trial; he offered him up; that is, in his heart he had parted with him and given him wholly unto God, and made all ready for the offering, being assured of God's fidelity; even Isaac, upon whom the promises were settled, must be offered. Children, dear children, everything must be given up to God. In the next place, consider we the Israelites in the Red Sea;

Heb. xi. 29, 'By faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land.' God commands Moses, when in straits, to strike the sea with his rod, and Israel to pass forward, and expect the salvation of God, promising to deliver them. They did so, and the sea was divided, and the waters stood like walls and mountains, as if they had been congealed and turned to ice, and the bottom, which never saw sun before, is made like firm ground, without mud and quicksands. Thus entirely will God be trusted by his people, and they must put their all into his hands. If God will have it so, faith must find a way through the great deep. No dangers so great that we must decline. Come we now to the New Testament; Christ's trial of the young man: 'Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven,' Mark x. 21. But he could not venture on Christ's command, and went away sad. The promise of eternal life and treasure in heaven could not part the young man and his great estate, and therefore he continued incapable of eternal bliss. This young man is set forth in the Gospel as a warning to others. So in Peter's trial, Mat. xiv. 29, 30. If Christ bid Peter come to him upon the waters, Peter must come, though the storm continueth, and he be ready to sink at every step.

[3.] By all the instances of faith in the ordinary and common case of salvation. Moses had faith, therefore he forsook all honours, pleasures, and treasures, for he trusted God, and waited for the recompense of reward, Heb. xi. 24-26. It is endless in instancing in all: take these, Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have a better and more enduring substance.' They were not discouraged, but took this rapine joyfully, which argued a lively faith in Christ, and a sincere love to him. It goeth near to the hearts of worldlings to part with these things; but they valued Christ as infinitely more precious than all the wealth of the world. If they lost their goods, yet if they lost not Christ, they were happy enough; for then they still kept the title to the enduring substance. Thus you see what is faith; such a trusting in God for eternal life as maketh us willing to forsake all, rather than be unfaithful to Christ. Others may delude you, enchant your souls asleep with fine strains of ill-understood and abused grace. But if you would not be deceived, take the faith and Christianity of Christ's recommendation, which is the faith now described. Are we in the place of God, that we can make heaven narrower or broader for you? Surely it is grace, rich grace, that God will pardon us, and call us to eternal life by Jesus Christ. Now, if you will have it, you must believe to the salvation of the soul, so believe, as to quit all other things to obtain it.

*Use 2.* Is for examination. Let us examine our spiritual condition, whether it be good or bad, whether our faith be sincere, our profession real, whether we tend to perdition or to salvation, whether we believe to the saving of the soul; that is, if we care not what we lose, so we may obtain the heavenly inheritance. Have you such a trust as that you can venture the loss of something which is dear to you for this trust; yea, not only something, but all things? Certainly we have not a true belief of the promise of eternal life if we can venture no-

thing upon it, hazard nothing for it. Now we venture things upon the account of God's promise four ways:—

[1.] In a way of mortification.

[2.] In a way of self-denial.

[3.] In a way of charity.

[4.] In a way of submission to providence.

[1.] In a way of mortification. Denying ourselves the sinful pleasures of the senses. Our sins were never worth the keeping; these must always be parted with, other things but at times; therefore I can venture but little upon the security of eternal life, if I cannot deny my fleshly and worldly lusts, and a little vain pleasure, for that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand for evermore. I have God's word for it, that if I mortify the deeds of the body I shall live, Rom. viii. 13. It is yet hard to abjure accustomed delights; and to hearts pleasantly set, the strictness of a holy life seemeth grim and severe; but a believer, that hath a prospect into eternity, knoweth that it is better to deny the flesh than to displease God—to take a little pains in rectifying our disordered hearts and distempered souls, than to endure pains for evermore; and that a little momentary delight is bought too dear, if it be bought with the loss of eternal joys. No; let me lose my lusts rather than lose my soul, saith he. Every man's heart cleaveth to those things which he judgeth best, and the more it cleaveth to better things, the more it is withdrawn from other things. Therefore faith, showing us the truth and worth of heavenly things, and taking God's word for its security, it mastereth our desires and carnal affections. It is the 'stranger and pilgrim' (whose mind is persuaded of things to come, and whose heart is set upon them) that 'abstaineth from fleshly lusts,' 1 Peter ii. 11. Upon the assurance of God's word he is taking his journey into another world. Though the flesh will rebel, yet he counterbalanceth the good and evil which the flesh proposeth, with the good and evil of the other world which the word of God proposeth, and so learneth more and more to condemn the pleasures of sin and curb his unruly passions. 'Mortify your members upon earth, for your life is hid with Christ in God,' Col. iii. 3-5. And they that look for a life of glory hereafter will choose a life of purity here upon earth. It is the unbeliever findeth such an impotency in resisting present temptations; he hath not any sense, or not a deep sense, of the world to come.

[2.] In a way of self-denial. What! can you venture and forego that way upon the security of God's promise? Mortification concerneth our lusts, and self-denial our interests. What interest can you venture upon the warrant of the promise? Christ saith, 'He that denieth me before men, I will deny him before my Father in heaven,' Luke xii. 9; and again, 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it,' &c., Luke ix. 24; and once more, ver. 26, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in his glory.' Now urge the soul with the promises. Am I willing to hazard my temporal conveniences for the enduring substance? to incur shame and blame with men, that I may be faithful with God, and own his interest in the world? and do I so when it actually cometh to a trial? The heart is deceitful, and a temptation in conceit and imagination is nothing to a temptation in act and deed.



Therefore, when your resolutions are assaulted by temptations of any considerable strength, do you acquit yourself with good fidelity? Can you trust God when he trieth your trust in some necessary point of confession, which may expose you to some loss, shame, and hazard in the world?

[3.] In a way of charity and doing good with your estates. That religion is worth nothing that costs nothing; and when all is laid out upon pomp and pleasure and worldly ends, as the advancing of your families and relations, and little or nothing for God upon the security of his promise, or only so much as the flesh can spare, to hide your self-pleasing and self-seeking in other things. Can you practise upon that promise, and try your faith: Luke xii. 33, 'Sell that you have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.' What have you ventured in this kind? Do you believe that 'he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord'? and that he will be your paymaster? Do you look upon no estate so sure as that which is trusted in Christ's hands? And are you content to be at some considerable cost for eternal life? Most men love a cheap gospel, and the flesh engrosseth all. Faith gets little from them to be laid out for God. Do not these men run a fearful hazard? And while they are so over-careful to preserve their estates to themselves and families, do they believe to the saving of their souls? Or if they do not preserve their estates, but waste them, and are at great costs for their lusts, they do nothing considerably or proportionably for God. This is saving to the flesh, and they shall 'of the flesh reap corruption.'

[4.] In a way of submission to providence. Whether you will or no, you are at God's disposal, and cannot shift yourselves out of his hands, either here or hereafter. But yet it is a part of your duty voluntarily to surrender yourselves to be disposed of and ordered by God according to his pleasure: to be content to be what he will have you to be, and to do what he will have you to do and suffer, is included in selling all. You must submit to be at God's finding, which is that poverty of spirit spoken of Mat. v. 3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit;' such whose minds and spirits are subdued, and brought under obedience to God. You must be content to enjoy what God will have you to enjoy, and to want what he will have you want, and to lose what he will have you lose: 2 Sam. xv. 26, 27, and Job i. 21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Many seem to resign all—goods, life, and all—to the will of God. But it is because they secretly think in their hearts that God will never put them to the trial, or take from them what they resign to him; but they are not prepared for a submission to all events. Like those that make large promises to others, when they think they will not take them at their words. So their hearts secretly except, and reserve much of that they resign to God. But this is false-dealing, and is shown in part in murmuring when God taketh anything from us.



## THE EXCELLENCY OF SAVING FAITH.

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*Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.—*  
1 PET. I. 9.

THE apostle here giveth a reason why believers rejoice in the midst of afflictions; they are qualified thereby to receive salvation, yea, in part have it already, 'Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.'

In which words observe :—

1. The benefit : *the salvation of our souls.*

2. The grace which qualificeth us for that benefit : *faith.*

3. The respect between the benefit and the grace; it is τέλος, the end, or reward.

1. The benefit, which may be considered as consummated, or as begun; and accordingly the word Κομιζόμενοι must be interpreted. If you consider it as to consummation and actual possession, so we receive it at death, when our self-denying obedience is ended; and for the present we are said to receive it, because we are sure to receive it at the close of our days. We believe now that we shall at length have it, and therefore rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

(2.) If you consider it with respect to inchoation or begun possession, we have an undoubted right now, and some beginnings of it in the consolations of the Spirit. Now we receive it in the promises; we receive it in the first-fruits, which are some forerunning beams of the daylight of eternal glory.

2. The grace which qualificeth and giveth us a title to this benefit is faith. The word *faith* is taken in scripture sometimes for *fides quæ creditur*; sometimes for *fides quâ creditur*, for the doctrine or grace of faith. The first acceptation will make a good sense here, namely, that the whole tenor of Christian doctrine leadeth us to the expectation of, and diligent pursuit after, eternal salvation. It is the whole drift of the Christian religion. But I take it rather for the grace. This is the prime benefit which faith aimeth at, as I shall show you by and by.

3. The respect between faith and salvation. It is τέλος, the end; or the word signifieth the fruit and the reward. As τέλος is taken for an end and scope, the scripture favoureth that notion: κατα σκοπόν διώκω, I press towards the mark or scope, Phil. iii. 14. And 2 Cor. iv. 18, σκοποῦντες, the salvation of our souls is the prime

benefit which faith is not only allowed, but required to aim at. A believer levelleth and directeth all his actions to this end, that at length he may obtain eternal life. Sometimes it is put for the fruit or reward: Rom. vi. 22, 'Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.' The issue of all, the final result, was your salvation.

The point that I shall insist on is this:—

*Doct.* That the end and reward of faith is the salvation of our souls.

I shall open the point by explicating three questions:—

1. What is this salvation of our souls?

2. What right the believer hath to it?

3. What is that saving faith which giveth us a title to it? The last is most important.

1. What is the salvation of the soul? It is not meant of temporal deliverance, or an escape from danger, as some would affix that sense upon it, but of eternal life, or our happy estate in heaven. This belongeth to our whole man, the body as well as the soul; but the soul is the chief part of man, and that which is first glorified. When men come first into the world, first the body is framed, and then the soul cometh after; as we see in the creation of Adam, first his body was organised, and then God breathed into him the spirit of life. And we see it in common generation, when the body is first framed in the womb, then it is quickened by a living soul. This lower region of the world is properly the place of bodies, therefore reason requires that the body, which is a citizen of the world, should first be framed, that it may be a receptacle for the soul, which is a stranger, and cometh from the region of spirits that is above. But when we must remove into these heavenly habitations, then it is quite otherwise; for then the soul, as a native of that place, is presently admitted, but the body, as a stranger, is forced to reside in the grave till the day of judgment; and then, for the sake of the soul, our bodies also are admitted into heaven. This is the ordinary law for all private persons. Christ, indeed, who is the head of the church, and the prince of this world and that which is to come, his body as well as his human spirit was made a denizen of heaven as soon as he ascended. He entered into heaven not as a private citizen, but as king and lord of the heavenly Jerusalem, and therefore carried both body and soul along with him. But as to us, first the soul goeth there, as into his ancient seat and proper habitation, and afterwards the body followeth.

Well, then—[1.] At death our souls go to Christ, and enter into a state of happiness: Phil. i. 23, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.' The soul is not annihilated after death, nor doth it sleep till the resurrection, nor is it detained by the way from immediate passing into glory; but if it be the soul of a believer, as soon as it is loosed from the body it is with Christ: Luke xxiii. 43, 'Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' He asked to be remembered when Christ came into his kingdom; and Christ assureth him of a reception there that day, as soon as he should expire.

[2.] In due time the body is raised and united to the soul, and then

Christ will be 'glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe,' 2 Thes. i. 10. Such glory and honour will be put upon those who are but newly crept out of dust and rottenness; the saints themselves, and all the spectators, shall wonder at it.

[3.] There is another period in this happiness, our everlasting habitation in heaven, near unto the throne of God, and in the presence of his glory: John xiv. 2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions.' There we shall also have the company of angels and blessed spirits, and make up one society with them: Heb. xii. 23, 'To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.' This is the sum of the salvation which we expect, or our everlasting happiness with God in heaven.

2. What is the right of believers, or the interest of faith in this great benefit?

I answer—

[1.] It doth not merit this reward, for it is not a reward of due debt by virtue of any intrinsic righteousness in us, or anything that we can do and suffer, but of mere grace and favour: Eph. ii. 8, 'For by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' The apostle is very tender of the honour of grace, and the interest of grace in our salvation. From the first step to the last period, all is of grace; and this glory of his free grace God must not be robbed of, neither in whole nor in part. We have all from his elective love, we have all from the merit and righteousness of Christ, and all from the almighty operation of the sanctifying Spirit. Faith itself is a gift and fruit of God's grace in us: 'To you it is given to believe,' Phil. i. 29. Therefore surely it is God's free grace, favour, and good-will which doth freely bestow that salvation on the elect, which Christ by his merit hath purchased; and that very faith by which we apply and make out our actual claim and title is wrought in us by the Spirit; so that there is nothing in the persons to whom all this is given to induce God to confer so great benefit on us.

[2.] Though it be an undeserved favour, upon which our works have no meritorious influence, yet believers have an undoubted right by the grant and promise of God, wherein they may comfort themselves, and which they may plead before God: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have life everlastingly;' and John v. 24, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my words, and believeth in him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' And in many places where the believer is qualified as the heir of glory. He that entertaineth Christ's doctrine, and receiveth and owneth him as the true Messiah and Saviour of the world, and dependeth upon him, and obeyeth him, this man hath a full right and new-covenant title to eternal life.

[3.] He hath not only a new-covenant right, but a begun possession. We have some small beginnings, earnestness, and foretastes of it in this life; partly in the graces, partly in the comforts of the Spirit.

(1.) In the graces of the Holy Spirit. For salvation is begun in our

new birth, Titus iii. 5 ; and therefore sanctifying grace is called ' immortal,' or ' incorruptible seed,' 1 Peter i. 23. There is an eternal principle put into them which carrieth them to eternal ends. The life is begun in all that shall be saved, and it is still working towards its final perfection. The apostle telleth us, that ' he that hateth his brother hath not eternal life abiding in him,' 1 John iii. 15 ; whereby he implieth that he that loveth his brother, or hath any saving grace, he hath eternal life begun in him.

(2.) As to comforts, so they have some foretastes of that sweetness which is in heaven by the life and exercise of faith, which is followed with peace and joy, Rom. xv. 13 ; or in their approaches to God in the word and prayer, where God most familiarly manifests himself unto his people, 1 Peter i. 3 ; or upon some apprehensions of his favour, or the exercise of hope and love, 2 Peter i. 8. By these or the like ways, the Spirit of God giveth us the foretaste. Surely such an author, such an object, must needs put ravishing and heavenly joy into the heart of a believer.

(3.) They are also made meet to partake of the heavenly inheritance, Col. i. 12. There is *jus hereditarium*, and *jus aptitudinale*. The difference is as between an heir grown and in his nonage, when a child in the cradle. As their natures are more renewed and purified, and their souls weaned from the delights of sense, they are changed into the divine nature.

3. What is that saving faith which giveth us a title to it ? This deserveth to be cleared, that we may not deceive ourselves with a false claim.

Saving faith is such a believing in Christ, for reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory, as maketh us to forsake all things in the world, and give up ourselves to the conduct of the word and Spirit for the obtaining of it.

[1.] The general nature of it I express by believing. There is in it *assent*, *consent*, and *affiance*.

(1.) *Assent*. That leadeth on the rest, when we believe the truth of God's word, Acts xxiv. 14, 15, especially those practical truths which do most nearly concern our recovery to God ; as concerning man's sin and misery, that we have broken his laws, and are obnoxious to his justice, and have deserved punishment for our sins, Rom. iii. 23. And concerning Christ, his person and office, that he is the Son of God, and that he came from God, to bring home sinners to God, and what he hath done to reconcile us to him : 1 Peter iii. 18, ' For Christ also hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.' And also concerning your duty and happiness, the end and the way. There is no other end and happiness but God, no other way but the Mediator, and the means appointed by him, John xiv. 6. Now these and such like truths must be believed—that is, in the sense we are now upon, assented unto as faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptation and regard.

(2.) There is a *consent* in faith, whether you apply it to the word or Christ. If Christ be propounded as the object of it, it is called a receiving : John i. 12, ' But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' So the word : Acts ii. 41,



'They gladly received his word;' that is, embraced the gospel covenant, being really affected with what he had spoken concerning their sin and their duty. Without this, the assent is but intellectual and speculative, not practical; an opinion, not an act or motion of the new nature. I am to receive the Christ offered, to embrace the covenant propounded, to accept of the blessings offered for my happiness, and to resolve upon the duties required as my work. This is consent, or a hearty accepting of Christ, or the covenant of grace offered to us in his name.

(3.) There is *affiance, trust, dependence, or confidence*, which is a quiet repose of heart in the mercy of God or fidelity of Christ, that he will give me pardon and life, if I seek after it in the way that he hath appointed. This cometh in upon the former; for when I consent to seek my happiness in God, through Christ, I depend upon the security of his word, that so doing I shall obtain it. This entitleth us to the reward: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence, and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;' and ver. 14, 'For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;' and Heb. x. 35, 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' The happiness which Christ promiseth us is spiritual, and for the most part future, and lieth in an unseen and unknown world; but whilst we are engaged in the pursuit of it, we must depend upon his faithful word. That must be security enough to us, to engage us to continue with patience in the midst of manifold temptations, till we obtain what he offereth to us. These three must be often renewed—assent, consent, and *affiance*.

[2.] It is a believing in Christ. I make Christ the special object of this belief, not as exclusive of the Father or the Spirit, but because of the peculiar reference which this grace hath to the Mediator in this new and gospel dispensation, which was appointed for the remedy of the collapsed estate of mankind. So Acts xx. 21, 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' He speaks of repentance as respecting God, and faith as respecting Christ. These are the two recovering graces: repentance is necessary because of the duty we owe to our Creator and supreme Lord; and faith respects our Redeemer, who principally undertook our recovery to God. Christ is believed in, in order to the salvation of our souls.

(1.) Because he purchased and procured this salvation for us as mediator of the new testament: Heb. ix. 15, 'He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.' By the intervention of his death sins are expiated, that penitent believers might have everlasting life.

(2.) Because it is by him promised, or in his name: 1 John ii. 25, 'This is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life.' Christ's great business as a prophet is to discover with certainty and clearness such a blessed estate that it may be commodious for our acceptance, laid at our doors; if we will take it, well and good. He is 'Amen, the faithful witness,' Rev. iii. 14, who came with a commis-



sion from heaven to assure the world of it; and to confirm his message, he wrought miracles, died, and rose again, and entered into that happiness which he spake of, 'that our faith and hope might be in God,' 1 Peter i. 21. Guilty man is fallen under the power and fear of death, and strangely haunted with doubts about the other world. Now, he that came to save us and heal us, did himself in our nature rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven, that he might give a visible demonstration, both of the resurrection and life to come, which he hath promised to us. And when he sent abroad messengers in his name to assure the world of it, their testimony was accompanied with divers signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, Heb. ii. 3, 4, that the stupid world might be alarmed to regard the offer, and by this evidence be assured of the truth of it; therefore still it is a believing in Christ.

(3.) Because as king he doth administer and dispense the blessings of the new covenant; and among them, as the chief and principal, this salvation unto all those who are qualified. And therefore it is said, Heb. v. 9, 'Being made perfect through sufferings, he is become the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.' Every effect must have some cause; and this noble and glorious effect of eternal salvation could have no other cause but Christ; and he, as perfected and consecrated, is the author and efficient cause of it. For as king, he sendeth down the Holy Ghost to reveal the gospel, and work faith in the hearts of men, to qualify them for pardon and salvation; and all those that sue for pardon and salvation in his name, by the plea of his blood before the throne of God, and promise obedience to his laws and institutes, he actually bestoweth pardon and eternal salvation upon them. There be many other ministerial and adjutant causes, which conduce to this effect. But he is the principal; and the word *αἴτιος*, which signifieth a *cause* in general, is fitly by our translation termed the *author* of eternal salvation. So that still you see a new reason why saving faith should be described to be a believing in Christ.

[3.] The prime benefits which faith respecteth I make to be two—reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory.

(1.) Reconciliation is necessarily eyed and regarded by the guilty soul.

*First*, Because there hath been a breach by which we have lost God's favour and happiness. We have to do with a God whose nature engageth him to hate sin, and whose justice engageth him to punish it. And before we can be induced to treat with him, such a reconciliation is necessary for all mankind as that he should be willing to deal with them upon the term of a new covenant, wherein pardon and life might be offered to penitent believers. This reconciliation is spoken of, 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses: and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;' that is, upon the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, ransom, and satisfaction, there was so much done towards an actual reconciliation with God, that he offered a conditional covenant to as many as were willing to enter into his peace. He provided a sufficient remedy for the pardon of sin, if men would as heartily accept of it as it was freely given them; and the office of ambassadors was appointed

to beseech men so to do. And unless this had been done, a guilty soul could never be brought to love a holy, sin-hating God, engaged by justice to damn the sinner. But it must be a loving, reconciled God, that is willing to forgive, that can be propounded as an object of faith and love, or as an amiable God to us: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'

*Secondly*, Reconciliation is necessarily eyed by the penitent believer, because this reconciliation and recovery by Christ consists both in the pardon of sin and the gift of the sanctifying Spirit.

1st, One branch of the actual restitution of God's favour to us is the pardon of sin, without which we are not capable of life and happiness, Eph. i. 7. The possible conditional reconciliation consists in the offer of pardon, and the actual reconciliation in the actual pardon and forgiveness of our transgressions, and then the man beginneth to be in a blessed estate, Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

2dly, The other branch is the gift of the sanctifying Spirit, which is the great testimony and pledge of his love; then is our pardon executed, or actually applied to us, and we receive the atonement, Rom. v. 11; and 2 Cor. v. 18, 'All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;' that is, all things which belong to the new creature, ver. 17. And that is the reason why God is said to sanctify as a God of peace, that is, as reconciled to us in Christ: see 1 Thes. v. 23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;' and Heb. xiii. 20, 21, 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will,' &c. And in all God's internal government with the saints, he showeth his pleasure or displeasure with the saints by giving or withholding and withdrawing the Spirit, as it were easy to prove to you. Well, then, you see the reasons why, in believing in Christ, we reflect the eye of our faith on reconciliation, as the prime initial benefit.

(2.) The next great consummating benefit is the everlasting fruition of God in glory; for Christ's office is to recover us to God, and bring us to God, which is never fully and completely done till we come to heaven. Therefore the saving of the soul is the prime benefit offered to us by Jesus Christ, to which all other tend, as justification and sanctification, and by which all our pains and losses for Christ are recompensed, and from which we fetch our comfort all along the course of our pilgrimage, and upon the hopes of which the life of grace is carried on, and the temptations of sense are defeated. So that this is the main blessing which faith aimeth at: see the scriptures, 1 Tim. i. 16, 'For a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life.' Wherefore do men believe in Christ, but for this end, that they may obtain everlasting life? Wherefore were the scriptures written? John xx. 31, 'These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.' The scriptures are written that we might know Christ aright, who is the kernel and marrow of them; and the chief benefit we have by him is life, or the salvation of our souls; and therefore well may it be called in the text 'the end of our faith.'

[4.] In the next place, I add the immediate acts and effects of it:—

(1.) Such as maketh us to forsake all things in this world; and—

(2.) Give up ourselves to the conduct of the word and Spirit, for the obtaining this happiness.

(1.) To forsake all things in this world. As soon as we address ourselves seriously to believe, we turn our backs upon them—namely, upon the pleasures, and honours, and profits of this world. We forsake them in vow and resolution when we are converted and begin to believe, for conversion is a turning from the creature to God. As soon as we firmly believe, and hope for the fruition of God in glory, as purchased and promised by Christ, our hearts are weaned and withdrawn from the false happiness, not perfectly, but yet sincerely. And we actually renounce and forsake them at the call of God's providence, when they are inconsistent with our fidelity to Christ, and the hopes of that happiness which his promises offer to us. Now that our faith must be expressed by forsaking all, yea, that it is essential to faith, and nothing else is saving faith but this, as appeareth—

*First*, By the doctrinal descriptions of it in the gospel (which I shall describe to you according to my usual method). Our Lord hath told us, Mat. xiii. 45, 46, that 'the kingdom of heaven is like a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.' And surely he knew the nature of faith better than we do. Many cheapen the pearl of price, but they do not go through with the bargain, because they do not sell all to purchase it. Faith implieth such a sense of the excellency and truth of salvation by Christ that you must choose it, and let go all which is inconsistent with this choice and trust. All your sinful pleasures, profit, reputation, and life itself, rather than forfeit these hopes: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not father and mother, and brother and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple;' and ver. 33, 'Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' After such express declarations of the will of Christ, why should we think of going to heaven at a cheaper rate? Christ must be preferred above all that is nearest or dearest, or else he will not be for our turn, nor we for his. The same is inferred out of the doctrine of self-denial: Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' For self-denial hath a greater relation to faith, and is nearer of kin to faith, than the world imagineth; it is the immediate fruit of our trust. If God be trusted as our supreme felicity, he must be loved above all things, and all things must give way to God. If Christ be trusted as the way to the Father, all things must be counted dung and loss that we may gain Christ, Phil. iii. 8. The same is inferred out of the baptismal covenant, which is a renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a choosing Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for our God. If there be a choosing, there must be a renouncing. The devil by the world tempts our flesh from the Christian hope; therefore idols must be renounced before we can have the true God for our God: Josh. xxiv. 23, 'Put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.' Naturally our god is our

belly while carnal, Phil. iii. 19. Mammon is our god, Mat. vi. 24. The devil is our god, Col. i. 13; and Eph. ii. 2, 3, 'Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' Besides the nature of the thing, baptism implieth this renunciation, 1 Peter iii. 21; and this renunciation is nothing else but a forsaking all that we may have eternal life by Christ.

*Secondly*, It appeareth by reasons:—

First, For faith cannot be without this forsaking.

Secondly, Nor this forsaking without faith.

First, Faith cannot be without this forsaking; for faith implieth a sight of the truth and worth of those blessed things which are to come, and so to take the thing promised for our happiness, and the promise for our security. (1.) There is no true sound faith till we take the everlasting fruition of God in glory for our whole felicity; till our hearts be set upon it, and we do desire it, intend it, wait for it, as the chief good and blessedness. The upright heart is known by its treasure: Mat. vi. 20, 21, 'Lay up treasure in heaven; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' Now, if this be so, other things will be lessened; all other hopes and happiness is nothing worth, and will appear so if compared with this better part, with what we account our treasure; you will see all this world is vanity, and hath nothing in it worthy to be compared with the salvation of our souls. (2.) There is no true faith where the word and promise of God is not taken for our security, so as our trust in his word may quiet and embolden us against temptations, and give us stronger consolation than all the visible things on earth, Ps. cxix. 111, and Heb. vi. 18. We should do more and go farther upon such a promise, than for all that man can give unto us. Earthly pleasures and possessions should be small things in regard to the promise of God. This should make us row against the stream of the flesh, and cross its desires and appetites, and deny the conveniences of the world, and all because we have God's promise of better things.

Secondly, This forsaking cannot be without faith; because the flesh is importunate to be pleased with present satisfactions, and loth to part with things which we see and love for that God and glory which we never saw, to quit what is present for what is future, and with patience to be expected. The flesh is for pleasing the body, but faith is for saving the soul: Heb. x. 39, *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς*: purchasing the soul with the loss of other things. So that this is faith, nothing but faith, and other faith is not true and sound.

(2.) It maketh us to give up ourselves to the conduct of the word and Spirit for obtaining this happiness. I add this, because the word is our rule, Gal. vi. 16; and the Spirit our guide, Rom. viii. 14. And faith is not only an apprehension of privileges, but a consent of subjection. And the sound believer devoteth himself to the love, fear, service, and obedience of God, 2 Cor. viii. 5: 'They first gave up themselves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God;' that is, to the



apostles as Christ's messengers, to be directed in the way to heaven : Ps. cxix. 38, 'Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.' This now is saving faith.

The use is, to exhort you to believe to the saving of the soul.

To this end :—

1. Because faith is the gift of God, beg 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that your eyes may be opened, that you may see what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,' &c., Eph. i. 17, 18. That you may be convinced of the truth and worth of the blessedness promised, and know and see it, not by a traditional report, but in the lively light of the Spirit, such as may affect and engage your hearts. Naturally we are purblind, 2 Peter i. 9 ; have no acute discerning, but in back and belly concerns. We know what is noxious or comfortable to the present life, pleasing or displeasing to the flesh ; but are little affected with the danger of perishing for ever, the need of Christ, or the worth of salvation. And till God make a change, how slight and sensual are we !

2. Think often and seriously how much the saving of the soul is better than the saving, or getting, or keeping all the world : Mat. xvi. 26, 'What will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?' So much as God is to be preferred before the creature, heaven before the world, eternity before time, the soul before the body ; so much must this business of saving the soul have the pre-eminence, and be preferred before the interests of the body and the bodily life. But, alas ! what poor things divert us from this happiness ; the satisfying of the flesh, the pleasures of sin for a season ; a little ease, or profit, or vainglory—this is all for which we slight heaven and our own salvation.

3. Put yourselves into the way of salvation, by seeking reconciliation with God by Christ. You are invited in the universal conditional offer, John iii. 16. It is offered to all that will repent and believe, and there is no exception put in against you to exclude you ; why then will you exclude yourself ? Therefore, come forward in the way of faith, and God will help you.

4. Mind often the genuine effect of the true faith. It makes you forsake all, that you may be obedient to Christ, and resolved upon it.

Therefore consider—(1.) The necessity of it. You can neither trust God nor be true to him till your heart be loosened from the pleasures and profits and honours in the world, and you can venture all upon the security of his promise. Other hopes and happiness will divert us from the true happiness, and the good seed will be choked by the cares of this world and voluptuous living, that you can bring nothing to perfection. Either you will turn aside by open defection or apostasy, or else be a dwarf and cripple in religion all your days. Either in mortification, in denying the sinful pleasures of the senses, you will slight the fulness of joy at God's right hand for a little vain pleasure, which, when it is gone, it as is a thing of nought—(it is the pilgrim abstaineth from fleshly lusts—he that runneth not as uncertain, that keepeth down his body, 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27)—or in a way of self-denial, run few hazards for Christ. It may be they may make some petty losses, but do not



sell all for the pearl of great price ; or, in a way of charity. How else can you lend to the Lord upon his bond, or the security of his promise ? Prov. xix. 17, 'He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again.'

(2.) Consider the profit. Whatever a believer loseth by the way, he is sure to have it at the end of his journey : Mat. xix. 28, 'Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' You will be no losers by God at the last.

## A WEDDING SERMON.

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*And brought her unto the man.*—GEN. II. 22.

THE words belong to the story of the first marriage that ever was celebrated in the world, between the first man and the first woman; a marriage made by God himself in paradise, who, when he built the rib taken from Adam into a woman, from a builder becometh her bringer: *He brought her unto the man*, saith the text.

God's bringing Eve to Adam implieth five things:—

1. His permission, allowance, and grant; for that Adam might thankfully acknowledge the benefit as coming from God, God himself brought her; whether in a visible shape, as prefiguring Christ's incarnation, and with what ceremony he brought her—since the Holy Ghost hath not expressed it, I shall not now inquire; it is enough that God brought her to give her to him as his inseparable companion and meet-helper. This bringing was the full bestowing her upon him, that they should live together as man and wife.

2. His institution and appointment of marriage as the means of propagating mankind. God's *adduxit* is, by our Saviour's interpretation, *conjunxit*: Mat. xix. 6, 'Those whom God hath joined together,' &c. Otherwise what need this bringing, for she was created just by him in paradise, when Adam was fallen into a deep sleep; not in another place; which sheweth that marriage is an honourable estate. God was the first author of it; his act hath the force of an institution.

3. For the greater solemnity and comely order of marriage. Adam did not take her of his own head, but God brought her to him. When we dispose of ourselves at our own wills and pleasures, being led thereunto by our own choice, without consulting with God, or upon carnal reasons, without the conduct of God's providence, we transgress the order which God hath set in the first precedent of marriage, and cannot expect that our coming together should be comfortable. Much more doth it condemn the unnatural filthiness of whoredom, whereby men and women join and mingle themselves together without God, the devil and their inordinate lusts leading them. God would not put Adam and Eve together without some regard, as he did the brutish and unreasonable creatures; but doth solemnly, as it were, bring the manness by the hand to the man, and deliver her into his hands, having a more honourable regard and care of them. God cannot abide that brutish coming together as the horses do, neighing, in the rage of unbridled lusts, upon their mates, Jer. v. 8. No; Adam stayeth till

she is brought to him. This honour and special favour God vouchsafeth mankind above all other creatures; he himself, in his own person, maketh the match, and bringeth them together.

4. To dispense his blessing to them. The woman was created on the sixth day, as appeareth Gen. i.; and it is said that when he had 'created them male and female, he blessed them,' ver. 28. He doth enlarge things here, and explaineth what there he had touched briefly. When he had made the woman, he brought her to the man, and blessed them both together; showing thereby that when any enter into this estate, they should take God's blessing along with them, upon whose favour the comfort of this relation doth wholly depend. Those whom God bringeth into it are likely to fare best, and they that resign themselves up into his hands, to be disposed of by him, surely take the readiest way to obtain the happiness they expect.

5. For a pattern of providence in all after-times. It is worth the observing, that Christ reasoning against polygamy, from ver. 24, compared with Mat. xix. God having abundance of the spirit, as the prophet speaks, Mal. ii. 15, brought the woman to one man, though there was more cause of giving Adam many wives for the speedier peopling of the world, than there could be to any of his posterity. As Christ observeth the number, so we may observe the thing itself. It is God's work still to give every one his marriage companion; he bringeth the woman to the husband, and every husband to his wife, that meet as they ought to do. His providence doth mightily and evidently govern all circumstances that concern this affair, as we shall show you by and by.

The point which I shall insist on is this :—

*Doct.* That marriages are then holily entered into, when the parties take one another out of God's hands.

I. I will show you in what sense they are said to take one another out of God's hands.

II. Why this is so necessary to be observed.

I. For the first, they take one another out of God's hands two ways.

1. When his directions are observed.

2. When his providence is owned and acknowledged.

1. When his directions in his word are observed; and so—

[1.] As to the choice of parties. When a man seeketh out a helpmeet for himself, he should in the first place seek out a helpmeet for himself in the best things; for in all our deliberate and serious consultations, religion must have the first place: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof,' &c. A man's chief end should be discovered in all his actions, as it must guide me in my meat, and drink, and recreations, and the ordinary refreshments of the natural life, or else I do not act as a Christian. So much more in my most important and serious affairs, such as marriage is, and upon which my content and welfare so much dependeth. Certainly, he that would take God's blessing along with him, should make choice, in God's family, of one with whom he may converse as an heir with him of the grace of life. A Christian, saith the apostle, is at liberty to marry, *ἀλλὰ μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ*, 'but only in the Lord,' 1 Cor

vii. 39; he is at liberty to rejoice, but in the Lord; to eat, and drink and trade, but in the Lord; so to marry, but in the Lord. Religion must appear uppermost in all his actions, and guide him throughout. The mischiefs that have come by a carnal choice should be sufficient warning to Christians: Gen. vi. 2, 'The sons of God went in unto the daughters of men, and took them wives, because they were fair.' They were swayed by carnal motives (or because rich, or nobly descended, it is all one), and what was the issue of it? There came of them a mongrel race of giants, that rose up against God and his interest in the world. Many times, by a carnal choice, all the good that is gotten into a family is eaten out, and within a little while religion is cast out of doors: Ps. cvi. 35, 'They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works;' Neh. xiii. 25, 26, 'I contended with them, and made them swear by God, Ye shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons;' 2 Kings viii. 18, 'He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife.' Valens, the emperor, married with an Arian lady, and so was ensnared so far as to become a persecutor of the orthodox. The wife of the bosom hath great advantages, either to the perverting or the converting a man's heart to God; or else, if they should not prevail so far, what dissonancy and jarrings are there in a family when people are unequally yoked, the wife and husband drawing several ways!

[2.] As to consent of parents. God here in the text, as the common parent, taketh himself to have the greatest hand in the bestowing of his own children. He brought her unto the man; and ordinary parents are his deputies, which must bring and give us in marriage, especially when young, and under their power. The scripture is express for this: Exod. xxii. 17, 'If her father wholly refuse to give her unto him,' &c.; 1 Cor. vii. 38, 'He that giveth her in marriage,' &c.

[3.] As to the manner of procuring it, that they labour to gain one another by warrantable, yea, religious ways, that we may lay the foundation of this relation in the fear of God; not by stealth, or carnal allurements, or violent importunities, or deceitful proposals, but by such ways and means as will become the gravity of religion; that weanedness and sobriety that should be in the hearts of believers; that deliberation which a business of such weight calls for; and that reverence of God, and justice that we owe to all; that seriousness of spirit, and that respect to the glory of God with which all such actions should be undertaken: Col. iii. 17, 'Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.' When this is observed, we are said to take one another out of God's hands.

[4.] Especially clearing up our right and title by Christ. Meats, drinks, marriage, they are all sanctified by the word and prayer, and appointed to be received by thanksgiving of them that believe and receive the truth, 1 Tim. iv. 3-5. There is a twofold right—*dominium politicum et evangelicum*; *dominium politicum fundatur in providentiâ, evangelicum in gratiâ*—political right is founded in God's providence, evangelical right in grace. We have a civil right to all that cometh to us by honest labour, lawful purchase, or inheritance, and fair and comely means used; which giveth us a right not only be-

fore men, but before God ; not by virtue of their laws, but his grant. By a providential right, all wicked men possess all outward things, which they enjoy as the fruits and gifts of his common bounty, it is their portion, Ps. xvii. 14. Whatever falleth to their share in the course of God's providence, they are not usurpers merely for possessing what they have, but for abusing what they have. They have not only a civil right to prevent the encroachments of others by the laws of men, but a providential right before God, and are not simply responsible for the possession, but the use. But then there is an evangelical or new-covenant right. So believers have a right to their creature comforts by God's special conveyance, that sweeteneth every mercy, that it comes wrapt in the bowels of Christ. 'The little which the righteous hath is better than the treasures of many wicked ;' as the mean fare of a poor subject is better than the dainties of a condemned traitor. And this we have by Christ, as the heir of all things, and we by him, 1 Cor. iii. latter end. So all those things do belong to them that believe, as gifts of his fatherly love and goodness to us in Christ. As we take our bread out of Christ's hands, so we must be married to Christ before married to one another ; the marriage covenant should be begun and concluded between Christ and you.

[5.] For the end. The general and last end of this, as of every action, must be God's glory, 1 Cor. x. 31, and Col. iii. 17. A Christian's second-table duties and first-table duties should have on them HOLINESS TO THE LORD. All the vessels of Jerusalem must have God's impress. More particularly our increase in godliness, and the propagation of the holy seed must be aimed at. Where one person is a believer, much more where both, they beget sons and daughters to God ; 'but now are they holy,' 1 Cor. vii. 14. But those out of the church beget sons and daughters to men, merely to people the world. Seth's children are called 'sons of God,' Gen. vi. 1, 2. In the careful education of children, the church is upheld.

2. When his providence is owned and acknowledged. It is the duty of them that fear God to own him upon all occasions, especially in such a business. Heathens would not begin such a business without a sacrifice. There is a special providence about marriages. God claimeth the power of match-making to himself, more than he doth of ordering any other affairs of men : Prov. xix. 14, 'Riches and honours are an inheritance from our fathers ; but a good wife is from the Lord.' Inheritances pass by the laws of men, though not without the intervention of God's providence, who determineth to every man the time of his service, and the bounds of his habitation, where every man shall live, and what he shall enjoy. The land of Canaan was divided by lot ; but marriage is by the special destination of his providence, either for a punishment to men, or for a comfort and a blessing. Here providence is more immediate, by its influence upon the hearts of men ; here providence is more strange and remarkable, in casting all circumstances and passages that did concern it. Estates fall to us by more easy and obvious means, and, therefore, though nothing be exempted from dominion of providence, yet a good wife is especially said to be of the Lord. So also Prov. xviii. 22, 'Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.' A wife,



that is a wife indeed—one that deserveth that name—he that findeth her, it is a chance to him, but an ordered thing by God. He hath not only experience of God's care, but his goodness and free grace to him in that particular. Well, then, God must be owned, sought, glorified, in this particular. The husband, in the catalogue and inventory of his mercies, must not forget to bless God for this, and the wife for the husband. The Lord was gracious in providing for me a good companion; I obtained favour from the Lord. God is concerned in this whole affair, he brought the woman to the man; he giveth the portion, which is not so much the dowry given by the parents, which is little worth, unless his blessing be added with it, as all the graces and abilities by which all married persons are made helpful one to another. He giveth the children, Ps. cxxvii. 3, 'Lo, children are an heritage from the Lord;' their conception and formation in the womb is from God. Parents know not whether it be male or female, beautiful or deformed. They know not the number of the bones, and veins, and arteries. He giveth them life; a sentence of death waylayeth them as soon as they come into the world. He giveth them comfort; there is a great deal of pride, and arrogance, and self-willedness in all the sons and daughters of Adam, which makes them uncomfortable in their relations. A wife would soon prove a Jezebel, and not an Abigail, and a husband a Nabal, and not a David, by Satan's malice and our own corruption; a help would soon become a snare. They that would perform the duties of this relation need strongly to be supported with the assistance of God's Spirit. 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,' Eph. vi. 10. So that, since God giveth all, surely his providence must be owned and acknowledged; and you ought to say, this is the wife God hath chosen for me, and this is the husband God hath chosen for me.

II. Why is this so necessary a duty? It doth in a great measure appear from what is said already. But farther—

1. It will be a great engagement upon us to give God all the glory of the comfort we have in such a relation, when you do more sensibly and explicitly take one another out of God's hands. We are apt to look to second causes; he that sendeth the present is the giver, not he that bringeth it to us. The Romans were wont once a year to cast garlands into their fountains, by that superstition owning the benefit they had by them. However, it hath a good moral to us in the bosom of it, that we should own the fountain of our blessings, and not ascribe them to our own wisdom and foresight, but the grace and favour of God, who, in the mere lottery and chance of human affairs, was pleased to choose so well for us. Jacob owned his fountain when he was become two bands, Gen. xxxii. 10. So should we; *of him, through him, to him*, do mutually infer one another. What we have from God, must be used for God. God is very jealous that we will not look to the original and first cause of our mercies: Hosea ii. 8, 'She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold; and therefore will I return, and take away my corn, and wine, and oil, and flax,' &c. It is the way to lose our comforts, when we do not own and acknowledge God's hand in them. We are drowned in sense, inured and accustomed to second causes, so that

God's hand is invisible and little regarded, we know it not, or heed it not. Now that we may look up and own the first cause, and give him his due honour, it is good to have explicit and actual thoughts in the receiving of our mercies, so as to take them out of God's hand; to draw aside the veil and covering of the creature, that you may remember the giver.

2. That we may carry ourselves more holily in our relations, it is good to see God's hand in them. Every relation is a new talent wherewith God intrusteth us to trade for his glory; and to that end we must make conscience to use it. In Mat. xxv., the master delivered to every one his goods apart, and they that had the benefit received the charge. We are often pressed to do things, as in and to the Lord, upon religious and gracious reasons. It hath been the credit of religion, *Dent tales mercatores, tales maritos, tales exactores fisci*, &c.—Let history show such husbands, such wives, &c. The Christian religion maketh a man conscientiously careful and tender of his duty to man, not from a natural principle, or from our own ease, peace and credit, but from the conscience of our duty to God. Now it must not lose this credit by you. God puts us into relations to see how we will glorify him in them; there is something more required of you than as single Christians. God that puts a man into the ministry, requireth that he should honour him, not only as a Christian, but as a minister. And God that calleth a man into the magistracy, requireth that he should honour him as a magistrate. So to be a master of a family, and a wife or husband, there is another talent to be accounted for. An ambassador that is sent into a foreign country about special business, must give an account, not only as a traveller, but as an ambassador, of the business he was intrusted with. God will have honour by you as a wife, or as a husband; you have a new opportunity to make religion amiable, that the unbelieving world may see how profitable the heavenly life is to human society.

3. That we may more patiently bear the crosses incident to this state of life if God call us to them. They that launch forth into the world, sail in a troublesome and tempestuous sea, and cannot expect but to meet with a storm before they come to the end of their voyage. The married life hath its comforts, and also its encumbrances and sorrows. Now it will sweeten all our crosses incident to this condition, when we remember we did not rashly enter into it by our own choice, but were led by the fair directure and fair invitation of God's providence; we need not much be troubled at what overtaketh us in the way of our duty, and the relations to which we are called. That hand that sent the trouble will sanctify it, or he will overrule things so that they shall work for our good. If God call us into this estate, he will support us in it. It is a great satisfaction to you that you are acting that part in the world which God would have you act; that you can say, I am there where God hath set me, and therefore will bear the troubles that attend that state and condition of life. If a man run on his own head, and inconveniences arise, they are more uncomfortably borne. It is true, that God doth fetch off his people from the afflictions they have brought upon themselves by their sin and folly, such is the indulgence of his grace; yet those sufferings are the more

uncomfortable that take us out of the way of our duty ; and God hath undertaken only to keep us in all our ways, but not out of our duty, Ps. xci. 11. The promises are not to foster men in their running after folly, but to encourage them in their several callings and state of life wherein God hath set them ; there we may abide with comfort, and expectation either of God's blessing or his support. We tempt God when we venture upon a state of life which he hath not called us to, and have not his warrant ; but when it is not good for us to be alone, and the Lord sends an helpmate for us, he will not forsake us.

4. We may with the more confidence apply ourselves to God, and depend on him for a blessing upon a wife of God's choosing, or a husband of God's choosing. We have access to the throne of grace with more hope, because we have given up ourselves to his direction : Prov. iii. 6, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' God will order things for the best, when we do not lead, but follow him, we still consult with God, and dare not undertake anything but what is agreeable to his will. And will God mislead us and direct us amiss, or turn us into a by-way or crooked path ? It is said, Ps. xxxvii. 23, 24, 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he (that is the Lord) delighteth in his way ; though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.' It is a blessed thing to be under God's conduct, to be led on or led off by so wise, and powerful, and all-sufficient a guide ; for such he delights to do them good, and taketh pleasure in his resolutions to prosper them. Sometimes they shall have a taste of the evils of the world, but they shall not be ruined by them. They may fall, but they shall not be dashed in pieces ; it is an allusion to a vessel that gets a knock, but is not broken by the fall.

5. It is an help to make us more ready to part with one another when God willeth it. All temporal things, we receive them from God, upon this condition, to yield them up to God again, when he calls for them. The law concerning all created enjoyments is, 'The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh,' Job i. 21. We make a snare for ourselves, and receive them not in a right notion, if we do not receive them as mortal and perishing comforts, which God may demand at pleasure, and so keep the soul loose, and in a posture of submission, if God should cross us and disappoint us in them. Thus must we use all outward comforts with that weanedness and moderation as to children, estates, and all temporal blessings, &c., that will become a sense of the frailty that is in them, and the wheelings and turnings of an uncertain world. It is the apostle's direction : 1 Cor. vii. 29, 'The time is short, it remains that those that have wives be as though they had none ;'—not as to be defective in our love to them and care over them ; no, there is rather to be an excess than a defect here : Prov. v. 19, 'Be thou ravished always with her love ;'—but as to a preparation of heart to keep or lose, if God should see fit, to be contented to part with a dear yoke-fellow, or at least with an humble submission and acquiescence, when God's will is declared ; and somewhat of this must be mingled with all our rejoicings, some thoughts of the vanity of the creature. Leavened bread was to be eaten with

the thank-offerings in the feast of tabernacles, when the barns were full. 'Man at his best estate is vanity,' Ps. xxxix. 5. Now, to help us to do this, it is good to consider he that hath the right to give hath also the right of taking away; and as you must not be overjoyed with the receiving, so not be over-sad with parting.

### APPLICATION.

*Use 1.* Let us seek God by earnest prayer when any such matter is in hand. Marriages, we say, are made in heaven before they are made on earth. Pagans, before the awe of religion was extinguished, would begin with their gods in any weighty enterprise. *A Jove principium* was an honest principle among the heathens. Laban consults with his teraphim; Balak sendeth for Balaam to give him counsel; heathens had their sybils, and oracles at Delphos. So far as any nation was touched with a sense of a divine power, they would never venture upon any weighty thing without asking the leave or the blessing of what they supposed to be God. So for God's children, it was their constant practice; they durst not resolve upon any course till they had asked counsel of God. David always ran to the oracle of the ephod: 'Shall I go up to Hebron?' Jacob in his journey would neither go to Laban nor come from him without a warrant. Jehoshaphat, when the business of Ramoth Gilead was afoot, doth not lead forth the captains of the army but he sends for the prophets of the Lord: 1 Kings xxii. 4, 5, 'Inquire, I pray thee, of the word of the Lord this day.' So Judges i. 1, 'Who shall go up and fight against the Canaanites?' It is a contempt of God, and a kind of laying him aside, when we dare undertake anything without his leave, counsel, and blessing; and these are the things we are to seek in prayer.

1. His leave. God is the absolute Lord of all things, both in heaven and earth, and whatsoever is possessed by any creature is by his indulgence. Whatever store and plenty we have by us, our Saviour teacheth us to beg our allowance, or leave to use so much as is necessary for us, or the portion of every day: 'Give us, *σήμερον, this day* our daily bread.' It is a piece of religious manners to acknowledge God's right and sovereignty. It is robbery to make use of a man's goods, and to waste them and consume them, without his leave. All that we have or use is God's, who reserveth the property of all to himself. In distributing to the creatures, he never intended to divest himself of his right; as a husbandman, by sowing his corn in the field, is not dispossessed of a right to it. God hath *dominium*; we have *dispensationem* of life, and all the comforts that belong to it. Life is his; man is a *custos*, a guardian of it for God. Gold and silver is his; man is a steward to improve it for God. Adam had no interest in Eve till God brought her to him, and bestowed her on him. Every one of us must get a grant of God of all that he hath; the Lord he possesseth the house that we dwell in, the clothes we wear, the food we eat; and so, in the use of all other comforts, we must have a license from God, and take his leave. God is said to have given David the wives that he had into his bosom.



2. His counsel and direction when the case is doubtful and our thoughts are uncertain: Prov. iii. 5, 'Lean not to thy own understanding.' We scarce know duties, certainly we cannot foresee events; therefore a man that maketh his bosom his oracle, his wit his counsellor, will choose a mischief to himself, instead of a comfort and a blessing. Therefore we ought chiefly, and first of all, to consult with God, and seek his direction, for he seeth the heart, and foreseeth events. We can only look upon what is present, and there upon the outward appearance. Therefore God can best direct us in our choice, he knoweth the fittest matches and consorts for every one; who hath a prospect of all things in one moment of time, and by one act of the understanding, and so can best dispose of human affairs for the profit and comfort of the creature: Jer. x. 23, 'O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: nor is it in the sons of men to direct their steps;' that is, to order their affairs so as they may have felicity and comfort in them. So Prov. xx. 24, 'Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?' We cannot foresee the event of things, what is expedient, what not. Man would fain work out his happiness like a spider, climb up by a thread of his own spinning. But alas! all our devices and fine contrivances are gone with the turn of a besom. He that will be his own carver, seldom carveth out a good portion to himself. They intrench upon God's prerogative, and take the work out of his hands; and therefore no wonder if their wisdom be turned into folly.

3. We ask his blessing. God doth not only foresee the event, but order it; by his wisdom he foreseeth it, and by his powerful providence he bringeth it to pass. Therefore God, that hath the disposal of all events, when our direction is over, is to be sought unto for a blessing; for every comfort cometh the sooner when it is sought in prayer; and whatever God's purposes be, that is our duty: Jer. xxix. 11, 12, 'I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you;' Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 'I will for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' So in this case we read, John ii. 2, when there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, 'both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage.' Married persons do need, and therefore should seek, Christ's presence to their marriage, that he would vouchsafe his presence and countenance. Be sure to invite him, and take him along with you, that he may strengthen you by his grace, and dispose all providences about you for your comfort. He puts the greatest honour upon the marriage when he doth enable you to carry yourselves graciously in that relation, and to God's glory; and he hath the power of all providences put into his hand, as well as all grace.

*Use 2.* Is advice to persons that are entering into this relation.

1. Negatively. See that God be no loser by the marriage.

2. Positively. Be sure that God be a gainer.

These are the two proffers I have to make to you.

1. Negatively. Let not God be a loser; he never intended to give you gifts to his own wrong.



Now that will be :—

[1.] If he be not the only one, and the lovely one of your souls. God must not have an image of jealousy set up; he must still be owned as the chiefest good. A wife is the delight of the eyes, but not the idol of the heart. Still you must be sure that his place be not invaded, that you may say, Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom do I desire on earth in comparison of thee?' Carnal complacency must not weaken your delight in God; it is apt to do so. The excuse of one of those that was invited to the marriage-feast was, 'I have married a wife, and I cannot come,' Mat. xxii. Surely Christ would teach us thereby that this relation may become a snare, and encroach upon the prerogatives of God; he may be jostled out of the heart by the intrusion of some earthly comfort.

[2.] If you be diverted from the earnest pursuit of heavenly things, either by carnal complacency or distracting cares and worldly encumbrances. There will be a time when we shall 'neither marry nor be given in marriage,' Luke xx. 35. And that is our happiest time; present contentments must not weaken the lively expectation of it, and steal away the heart into a mindlessness of it. Would God bring you to one another, think you, to turn off your thoughts and hopes for this blessed time when he shall be all in all? No; your comforts by the way in your pilgrimage must not hinder your delight in your comforts at home and in your country; this would be like a great heir in travel that should guzzle in an alehouse, and never think of returning to his inheritance.

[3.] God would be a loser if you be less resolute in owning God's truth than you were before. Oh, take heed of daubing in religion! We must hate all for Christ, Luke xiv. 26. We must be as true still to make good our engagement to him. Wife and children must be undervalued for the gospel; we may be put to the trial whether we will cleave to them or Christ, who is our choice husband. The bond of religion is above all bonds; all bonds between husband and wife, father and children, end in death, but the bond of Christ is eternal: your children will not lose by your faithfulness to God.

2. Positively. Let God be a gainer.

[1.] By your daily praises, and blessing God for his providence, that hath brought you into this relation: 'I obtained favour from the Lord.'

[2.] By living to God in this relation, performing the duties thereof so as your converse may be some lively resemblance of the communion between Christ and his church: Eph. v. 25-30, 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.'

[3.] By being mutual helps to one another in the best things, by

the advancement of piety and godliness. The love of Christ doth not only enforce the husband's duty as an argument, but points forth the right manner of it as a pattern. Christ's love is sanctifying love: so should theirs be, such a love as showeth itself by sincere and real endeavours to bring about one another's spiritual and eternal good. Love one another, 'as heirs together of the grace of life,' 1 Peter iii. 7.

TWENTY SERMONS.



## PREFACE.

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It may seem a just discouragement from publishing more sermons at this time, when there are such numbers abroad in the hands of all; for the abundance of things useful is fatal to their value, and the rareness exceedingly enhances their price. If men were truly wise, spiritual treasures should be excepted from this common law, yet plenty even of them causeth satiety. But the following sermons have that peculiar excellence that will make them very valuable to all that have discerning minds, and such a tincture of religion as makes them capable of tasting the goodness of divine things.

I shall say nothing particularly here of the intellectual endowments of the author, in which he appeared eminent among the first, nor of his graces to adorn his memory; for a saint that is ascended into heaven, and crowned with eternal glory by the righteous Judge, needs not the weak, fading testimony of praise from men. Besides, that universal esteem he had from those who knew his ability, diligence, and fidelity in the work of God, makes it unnecessary for them who were his admirers and friends. And for those who are unacquainted with his worth, if they take a view of his works formerly printed, or the present sermons, that deserve equal approbation, they will have the same opinion with others. I will give some account of the sermons themselves.

The main design of them is to represent the inseparable connection between Christian duties and privileges, wherein the essence of our religion consists. The gospel is not a naked, unconditionate offer of pardon and eternal life in favour of sinners, but upon most convenient terms, for the glory of God and the good of men, and enforced by the strongest obligations upon them to receive humbly and thankfully those benefits. The promises are attended with commands to repent, believe, and persevere in the uniform practice of obedience. The Son of God came into the world, not to make God less holy, but to make us holy, that we might please and enjoy him; not to vacate our duty, and free us from the law as the rule of obedience, for that is both impossible and would be most infamous and reproachful to our Saviour. To challenge such an exemption in point of right, is to make ourselves gods; to usurp it in point of fact is to make ourselves devils. But his end was to enable and induce us to return to God, as our rightful Lord and proper felicity, from whom we rebelliously and miserably fell by our disobedience, in seeking for happiness out of him. Accordingly the gospel is called 'the law of faith,' as it commands those duties upon the motives of eternal hopes



and fears, and as it will justify or condemn men with respect to their obedience or disobedience, which is the proper character of a law. These things are managed in the following sermons in that convincing, persuasive manner as makes them very necessary for these times, when some that aspired to an extraordinary height in religion, and esteemed themselves the favourites of heaven, yet woefully neglected the duties of the lower hemisphere, as righteousness, truth, and honesty; and when carnal Christians are so numerous, that despise serious godliness as solemn hypocrisy, and live in an open violation of Christ's precepts, yet presume to be saved by him. Though no age has been more enlightened with the knowledge of holy truths, yet none was ever more averse from obeying them.

I shall only add further, that they commend to our ardent affections and endeavours true holiness, as distinguished from the most refined unregenerate morality. The doctor saw the absolute necessity of this, and speaks with great jealousy of those who seem in their discourses to make it their highest aim to improve and cultivate some moral virtues, as justice, temperance, benignity, &c., by philosophic helps, representing them as becoming the dignity of the human nature, as agreeable to reason, as beneficial to societies, and but transiently speak of the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, that is as requisite to free the soul from the chains of sin as to release the body at the last day from the bands of death; that seldom preach of evangelical graces, faith in the Redeemer, love to God for his admirable mercy in our salvation, zeal for his glory, humility in ascribing all that we can return in grateful obedience to the most free and powerful grace of God in Christ, which are the vital principles of good works, and derive the noblest forms to all virtues. Indeed, men may be composed and considerate in their words and actions, may abstain from gross enormities, and do many praiseworthy actions by the rules of moral prudence; yet, without the infusion of divine grace to cleanse their stained natures, to renew them according to the image of God shining in the gospel, to act them from motives superior to all that moral wisdom propounds, all their virtues, of what elevation soever, though in a heroic degree, cannot make them real saints. As the plant animal has a faint resemblance of the sensitive life, but remains in the lower rank of vegetables, so these have a shadow, an appearance of the life of God, but continue in the corrupt state of nature. And the difference is greater between sanctifying saving graces wrought by the special power of the Spirit, with the holy operations flowing from them, and the virtuous habits and actions that are the effects of moral counsel and constancy, than between true pearls produced by the celestial beams of the sun, and counterfeit ones formed by the smoky heat of the fire. In short, the Lord Jesus, our Saviour and Judge, who purchased the heavenly glory, and has sole power to give the actual possession of it, assures us that 'unless a man be born of the Spirit, he can never enter into the kingdom of God.' The supernatural birth entitles to the supernatural inheritance. Without this, how fair and specious soever the conversation of men appears, they must expect no other privilege at last but a cooler place in hell; and the coolest there is intolerable.

W. BATES.

## SERMON I.

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.  
Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no guile.*—Ps. XXXII. 1, 2.

THE title of this psalm is ‘A psalm of instruction,’ and so called because David was willing to show them the way to happiness from his own experience. Surely no lesson is so needful to be learned as this. We all would be happy: the good and bad, that do so seldom agree in anything, yet agree in this, a desire to be happy. Now, happy we cannot be but in God, who is the only, immutable, eternal, and all-sufficient good, which satisfies and fills up all the capacities and desires of our souls. And we are debarred from access to him by sin, which hath made a breach and separation between him and us, and till that be taken away there can be no converse, and sin can only be taken away by God’s pardon upon Christ’s satisfaction. God’s pardon is clearly asserted in my text, but Christ’s satisfaction and righteousness must be supplied out of other scriptures, as that 2 Cor. v. 19, ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.’ Where the apostle clearly shows that not imputing transgressions is the effect of God’s grace in Christ. And we do no wrong to this text to take it in here; for the apostle, citing this scripture Rom. iv. 6, 7, tells us, that ‘David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, when he saith, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.’

In the words you have:—

1. An emphatical setting forth of a great and blessed privilege; that is, pardon of sin.

2. A description of the persons who shall enjoy it: *in whose spirit there is no guile.*

The privilege is that I shall confine my thoughts to; it is set forth in three expressions: *forgiving transgression, covering of sin, and not imputing iniquity.* The manner of speech is warm and vehement, and it is repeated over again: *blessed is the man.*

I shall show what these three expressions import, and why the prophet doth use such vehemency and emphatical inculcation in setting forth this privilege.

1. *Whose transgression is forgiven*, or who is eased of his transgression; where sin is compared to a burden too heavy for us to bear, as also it is in other scriptures: Mat. xi. 28, ‘Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden.’

2. *Whose sin is covered*; alluding to the covering of filth, or the

removing of that which is offensive out of sight. As the Israelites were to march with a paddle tied to their arms, that when they went to ease themselves they might dig, and cover that which came from them: Deut. xxiii., you have the law there, and the reason of it, ver. 14, 'For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp; therefore shall thy camp be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.'

And then the third expression is, *to whom the Lord imputeth no sin*; that is, doth not put sin to their account. Where sin is compared to a debt, as it is also in the Lord's Prayer: Mat. vi. 12, 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.' Thus is the act set forth.

The object of pardon about which it is conversant is set forth under divers expressions—iniquity, transgression, and sin; as in law many words of like import and signification are heaped up and put together, to make the deed and legal instrument more comprehensive and effectual. I observe it the rather because, when God proclaims his name, the same words are used: Exod. xxxiv. 7, 'Taking away iniquity, transgression, and sin.' Well, we have seen the meaning of the expression. Why doth the holy man of God use such vigour and vehemency of inculcation—'Blessed is the man,' and again 'Blessed is the man'? Partly with respect to his own case. David knew how sweet it was to have sin pardoned; he had felt the bitterness of sin in his own soul, to the drying up of his blood, and therefore he doth express his sense of pardon in the most lively terms—'Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven,' &c. And then partly too with respect to those for whose use this instruction was written, that they might not look upon it as a light and trivial thing, but be thoroughly apprehensive of the worth of so great a privilege. Blessed, happy, thrice happy, they who have obtained pardon of their sins, and justification by Jesus Christ.

The doctrine, then, which I shall insist upon is this:—That it is a great degree and step towards, yea, a considerable part of our blessedness, to obtain the pardon of our sins by Christ Jesus. I shall evidence it to you by these three considerations:—

1. I shall show what necessity lies upon us to seek after this pardon.

2. Our misery without it.

3. I shall speak of the annexed benefits, and our happiness if once we attain it.

1. The necessity that lies upon us, being all guilty before God, to seek after our justification, and the pardon of our sins by Christ. That it may sink the deeper into your minds, I shall do it in this scheme or method:—First, A reasonable nature implies a conscience; a conscience implies a law; a law implies a sanction; a sanction implies a judge, and a judgment-day (when all shall be called to account for breaking the law); and this judgment-day infers a condemnation upon all mankind unavoidably, unless the Lord will compromise the matter, and find out some way in the chancery of the gospel wherein we may be relieved. This way God hath found out in Christ, and being brought about by such a mysterious contrivance, we ought to be deeply and thankfully apprehensive of it, and humbly and broken-heartedly to

quit the one covenant, and accept of the grace provided for us in the other.

[1.] A reasonable nature implies a conscience ; for man can reflect upon his own actions, and hath that in him to acquit or condemn him accordingly as he doth good or evil, 1 John iii. 20, 21. Conscience is nothing but the judgment a man makes upon his actions morally considered, the good or the evil, the rectitude or obliquity, that is in them with respect to rewards or punishment. As a man acts, so he is a party ; but as he reviews and censures his actions, so he is a judge. Let us take notice only of the condemning part, for that is proper to our case. After the fact, the force of conscience is usually felt more than before or in the fact ; because before, through the treachery of the senses, and the revolt of the passions, the judgment of reason is not so clear. I say, our passions and affections raise clouds and mists which darken the mind, and do incline the will by a pleasing violence ; but after the evil action is done, when the affection ceaseth, then guilt flasheth in the face of conscience. As Judas, whose heart lay asleep all the while he was going on in his villainy, but afterwards it fell upon him. 'Thou hast 'sinned in betraying innocent blood.' When the affections are satisfied, and give place to reason, that was before condemned, and reason takes the throne again, it hath the more force to affect us with grief and fear, whilst it strikes through the heart of a man with a sharp sentence of reproof for obeying appetite before reason. Now this conscience of sin may be choked and smothered for a while, but the flame will break forth, and our hidden fears are easily revived and awakened, except we get our pardon and discharge. A reasonable nature implies a conscience.

[2.] A conscience implies a law, by which good and evil are distinguished ; for if we make conscience of anything, it must be by virtue of some law or obligation from God, who is our maker and governor, and unto whom we are accountable, and whose authority giveth a force and warrant to the warnings and checks of conscience, without which they would be weak and ineffectual, and all the hopes and fears they stir up in us would be vain fancies and fond surmises. I need not insist upon this, a conscience implies a law. The heathens had a law, because they had a conscience : Rom. ii. 15, 'Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.' They have a conscience doth accuse or excuse, doth require according to the tenor of the law. So when the apostle speaks of those stings of conscience that are revived in us by the approach of death, he saith, 1 Cor. xv. 56, 'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.' Those stings which men feel in a death-threatening sickness, are not the fruits of their disease, but, justified by the highest reason ; they come from a sense of sin, and this sense is strengthened and increased in us by the law of God, from whence conscience receives all its force.

[3.] A law implies a sanction, or a confirmation by penalties and rewards ; for otherwise it is but an arbitrary rule or direction, which we might slight or disregard without any great loss or danger. No ; the law is armed with a dreadful curse against all those that disobey



it. There is no dallying with God, he hath set life and death before us ; life and good, death and evil, Deut. xxx. 15. Now the precept, *that* is the rule of our duty, and the sanction is the rule of God's process, what God will do, or might do, and what we have deserved should be done to us. The one shows what is due from us to God, and the other what may justly be expected at God's hands ; therefore, before the penalty be executed, it concerns us to get a pardon. The scripture represents God as 'angry with the wicked every day,' standing continually with his bow ready, with his arrow upon the string, as ready to let fly, with his sword not only drawn but whetted, as if he were just about to strike, if we turn not, Ps. vii. 11-13.

[4.] A sanction implies a judge, who will take cognisance of the keeping or breaking of this law ; for otherwise the sanction or penalty were but a vain scarecrow, if there were no person to look after it. God, that is our maker and governor, is our judge. Would he appoint penalties for the breach of his law, and never reckon with us for our offences, is a thought so unreasonable, so much against the sense of conscience, against God's daily providence, against scripture, which everywhere (in order to this, to quicken us to seek forgiveness of sins) represents God as a judge. Conscience is afraid of an invisible judge, who will call us to account for what we have done. The apostle tells us, Rom. i. 32, the heathen 'knew the judgment of God, and that they that have done such things as they have done are worthy of death.' And providence shows us there is such a judge that looks after the keeping and breaking of his law, hath owned every part of it from heaven by the judgments he executes : Rom. i. 18, 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ;' hath owned either table, by punishing sometimes the ungodliness, and sometimes the unrighteousness of the world ; nay, every notable breach by way of omission or commission. The apostle saith, 'every transgression,' and 'every disobedience.' These two words signify sins of omission or commission : it hath been punished, and God hath owned his law, that it is a firm authentic rule. And the scripture also usually makes use of this notion or argument of a judge to quicken us to look after the pardon of our sins : Acts x. 42, 43, 'And he hath commanded us to preach and testify to the people, that it is he that was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.' So Acts iii. 19-21. Surely we that are to appear before the bar of an impartial judge, being so obnoxious to him for the breach of his holy law, what have we to do but to make supplication to our judge, and prevent execution by a submissive asking of a pardon, and accepting the grace God hath provided ?

[5.] A judge implies a judgment-day, or some time when his justice must have a solemn trial, when he will reckon with the lapsed world. He reckons sometimes with nations now, for ungodliness and unrighteousness, by wars, and pestilence, and famine. He reckons with particular persons at their death, and when their work is done he pays them their wages : Heb. ix. 27, 'It is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment.' But there is a more general and final judgment, when his justice must have a solemn trial, which is in



part evident in nature; for the apostles did slide in the Christian doctrine mostly by this means into the hearts of those to whom they preached: Acts xxiv. 25, 'He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.' The particularity of it belongs to the gospel revelation, but nature hath some kind of sense of it in itself, and they are urged to repent, 'because God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead,' Acts xvii. 31. God judgeth the world in patience now, but then in righteousness, when all things shall be reviewed, and everything restored; virtue to its public honour, and vice to its due shame.

[6.] If there be a solemn judgment-day, when every one must receive his final doom, this judgment certainly infers a condemnation to a fallen creature, unless God set up another court for his relief; for now man is utterly disenabled by sin to fulfil the law, and can by no means avoid the punishment that is due to his transgression. I shall prove this by three reasons:—The law to fallen man is impossible; the penalty is intolerable; and the punishment, for aught that yet appears, if God do not take another course, is unavoidable.

(1.) The duty of the law is impossible. The apostle tells us 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the weakness of our flesh.' It could not justify us before God, it could not furnish us with any answer to his demands, when he shall call us to an account. Man is mightily addicted to the legal covenant, therefore it is one part of a gospel minister's work to represent the impossibility of ever obtaining grace or life by that covenant. Man would stick to the law as long as he can, and will patch up a sorry righteousness of his own, some few superficial things. He makes a short exposition of the law, that he may cherish a large opinion of his own righteousness; and curtails the law of God, that the ell may be no longer than the cloth, and brings it down to a poor contemptible thing, requiring a few external superficial duties of men. We read often of being 'dead to sin,' and 'to the world;' it is as certainly true we must be 'dead to the law.' Now how are we dead to the law? The scripture tells us in one place, that 'through the law we are dead to the law;' and in another place, that we are 'dead to the law through the body of Christ.' The first place is Gal. ii. 19, 'Through the law I am dead to the law.' Men are apt to stand to the legal covenant, and have their confidence in the flesh, to place their hopes of acceptance with God in some few external things, which they make their false righteousness. For the carnal world, as it cries up a false happiness as its God, so men have a false righteousness which is their Christ. Now through the law they are dead to it. How? The law supposeth us as innocent, and requires us to continue so: 'Cursed is every one that continues not in every thing,' &c. Suppose a man should exactly fulfil it afterwards, yet the paying of new debts will not quit old scores. And then we are 'dead to the law by the body of Christ,' Rom. vii. 4; by the crucified body of Christ, by which he hath merited and purchased a better hope and grace for us. Well, the duty is impossible.

(2.) The penalty is intolerable, for who can stand when God is

angry? Ezek. xxii. 14, 'Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee?' We that cannot endure the pain of the gout or stone, how shall we endure the eternal wrath of God? It is surely a very 'dreadful thing to fall into the hands of that living God,' that lives for ever to punish the transgressors of his law.

(3.) The punishment is unavoidable, unless sin be pardoned, and you submit to God's way: for I would ask you, what hope can you have in God, whose nature engageth him to hate sin, and whose justice obligeth him to punish it?

(1st.) Whose nature engageth him to hate sin and sinners: Hab. i. 13, 'He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.' I urge this for a double reason: partly because I have observed that all the security of sinners, and their neglect of seeking after pardon by Jesus Christ, it comes from their lessening thoughts of God's holiness; and if their hearts were sufficiently possessed with an awe of God's unspotted purity and holiness, they would more look after the terms of grace God hath provided: Ps. l. 21, 'Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself.' Why do men live securely in their sins, and do not break off their evil course? They think God is not so severe and harsh, and so all their confidence is grounded upon a mistake of God's nature, and such a dreadful mistake as amounts to a blasphemy: 'Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself.' The other reason is this, particularly because I observe the bottom reason of all the fear that is in the hearts of men is God's holiness; 1 Sam. vi. 20, 'Who is able to stand before this holy God?' and 'Who would not fear thee? for thou art holy,' Rev. xv. 4. We fear his power; why? because it is set on work by his wrath. We fear his wrath; why? because it is kindled by his justice and righteousness. We fear his righteousness, because it is bottomed and grounded upon his holiness, and upon the purity of his nature.

(2dly.) His justice obligeth him to punish sin, that the law might not seem to be made in vain. It concerns the universal judge to maintain the reputation of his justice in reference to men, and to appear to them still as a righteous God: Gen. xviii. 25, 'Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?' and Rom. iii. 5, 6, 'Is God unrighteous to take vengeance? how then shall he judge the world?' These scriptures imply, that if there were the least blemish, if you could suppose he should fail in point of righteousness, this were to be denied, that God should be the judge of the world. Therefore God's righteousness and justice, which gives to every one their due, must shine in its proper place; he will give vengeance to whom vengeance is due, and blessing to whom blessing belongs. In our case punishment belongs to us, and what can we expect from this God but wrath and eternal destruction? Therefore if all this be so, if a conscience suppose a law, a law a sanction, a sanction a judge—a judge some time when his justice must have a solemn trial, and this will necessarily infer condemnation to a fallen creature—what then shall we do?

[7.] From this condemnation there is no escape, unless God set up another court and chancery of the gospel, where condemned sinners may be taken to mercy, and their sins forgiven, and they justified and

accepted unto grace and life, upon terms that may save God's honour and government over mankind. There is a great deal of difference between the forgiving private wrongs and injuries, and the pardoning of public offences; between the pardon of a magistrate, and the pardon of a private person. When equals fall out among themselves, they may end their differences in charity, and in such ways as best please themselves, by a mere forgiving, by acquitting the sense of the wrong done, or a bare submission of the party offending. But the case is different here: God is not reconciled to us merely as the party offended, but as the governor of the world; the case lies between the judge of the world and sinning mankind; therefore it must not be ended by mere compromise and agreement, but by satisfaction, that his law may be satisfied, and the honour of his justice secured. Therefore to make the pardon of man a thing convenient to the righteous and holy judge to bestow, without any impeachment to the honour of his justice and authority of his law, the Lord finds out this great mystery, 'God manifested in our flesh.' Jesus Christ is 'made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law,' Gal. iv. 5; and is 'become a propitiation to satisfy God's justice,' Rom. iii. 25, 26. And so God shows mercy to his creatures, and yet the awe of his government is kept up, and a full demonstration of his righteousness is given to the world.

[8.] This being done conveniently to God's honour, we must sue out our pardon with respect to both the covenants, both that which we have broken, the law of nature, and that which is made in Christ, and is to be accepted by us as our sanctuary and sure refuge.

(1.) We must have a broken-hearted sense of sin, and of the curse due to the first covenant; for it is the disease brings us to the physician; the curse drives us to the promise, and the tribunal of justice to the throne of grace; and the avenger of blood at our heels, that causeth us to fly to our proper city of refuge, and to take sanctuary at the Lord's grace, Heb. vi. 18. So that if you mince and extenuate sin, you seem to hold to the first covenant, and had rather plead innocent than guilty. No; if you would have this favour, you must confess your sins: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' You must confess your sins, and with that remorse that will become offences done to so great a God. And there must not only be a sense of sin, but of the curse and merit of sin also; for we must not only accuse, but judge ourselves, that God may not judge and condemn us, 1 Cor. xi. 31. Self-accusing respects sin, and is acted in confession; self-judging respects the curse or punishment that is due to us for sin, and it is a person's pronouncing upon himself according to the tenor of the law what is his due, acknowledging his guilt, and this with much brokenness of heart before God, when he hath involved himself in God's eternal wrath and displeasure. I observe, that the law-covenant is in the scripture compared to a prison, wherein God hath shut up guilty souls, Rom. xi. 32, 'He hath concluded or shut them up, that he may have mercy upon them;' Gal. iii. 21, 'He hath shut them up under sin.' The law is God's prison, and no offenders can get out of it till they have God's leave; and from him they have none, till they are sensible of the justice and righteousness of that first dispensation,

confess their sins with brokenness of heart, and that it may be just with God to condemn them for ever.

(2.) We must thankfully accept the Lord's grace, that offers pardon to us. For since God is pleased to try us a second time, and set us up with a new stock of grace, and that brought about in such a wonderful way, that he may recover the lost creation to himself, surely if we shall despise our remedy, after we have rendered ourselves incapable of our duty, no condemnation is bad enough for us, John iii. 18, 19. Therefore we should admire the mercy of God in Christ, and have such a deep sense of it, that it may check our sinful self-love, which hath been our bane and ruin. And since God showed himself willing to be reconciled, we must enter into his peace, not look upon ourselves in a hopeless and desperate condition, but depend upon the merit, sacrifice, and intercession of Christ, and be encouraged by his gracious promise and covenant to 'come with boldness, that we may find grace and mercy to help in a time of need,' Heb. iv. 16. Thus you see the need we have to look after this pardon of sin.

2. Secondly, I must show our misery without this; and this will be best done by considering the notions here in the text. Here is filth to be covered, a burden of which we must be eased; and here is a debt that must be cancelled: and unless this be, what a miserable condition are we in!

[1.] What a heavy burden is sin, where it is not pardoned! Carnal men feel it not for the present: elements are not burdensome in their own place; but how soon may they feel it! Two sorts of consciences feel the burden of sin—a tender conscience, and a wounded conscience. It is grievous to a tender heart, that values the love of God, to lie under the guilt of sin, and to be obnoxious to his wrath and displeasure: Ps. xxxviii. 4, 'Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as a burden too heavy for me.' Broken bones are sensible of the least weight; certainly a broken heart cannot make light of sin. What kind of hearts are those that sin securely, and without remorse, and are never troubled? Go to wounded consciences, and ask of them what sin is: Gen. iv. 13, 'Mine iniquity is greater than I can bear;' Prov. xviii. 14, 'A wounded spirit, who can bear?' As long as the evil lies without us, it is tolerable, the natural courage of a man may bear up under it; but when the spirit itself is wounded with the sense of sin, who can bear it? If a spark of God's wrath light upon the conscience, how soon do men become a burden to themselves; and some have chosen strangling rather than life. Ask Cain, ask Judas, what it is to feel the burden of sin. Sinners are 'all their lifetime subject to this bondage;' it is not always felt, but soon awakened: it may be done by a pressing exhortation at a sermon; it may be done by some notable misery that befalls us in the world; it may be done by a scandalous sin; it may be done by a grievous sickness, or worldly disappointment. All these things and many more may easily revive it in us. There needs not much ado to put a sinner in the stocks of conscience. Therefore do but consider to be eased of this burden; oh the blessedness of it!

[2.] It is filth to be covered, which renders us odious in the sight of God. It is said, Prov. xiii. 5, that 'a sinner is loathsome.' To



whom? To God. Certainly he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. To good men. 'The wicked is an abomination to the righteous;' the new nature hath an aversion to it. Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day with the conversation of the wicked. A wicked man hates a godly man with a hatred of enmity and abomination; but a godly man doth not hate a wicked man with a hatred of enmity—that is opposite to good-will—but with that of abomination, which is opposite to complacency. It is loathsome to an indifferent man, for holiness darts an awe and reverence into the conscience. 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' and a wicked person is a vile person in the common esteem of the world: horrible profaneness will not easily down. Nay, it is loathsome to other wicked men. I do not know whether I expound that scripture rightly, but it looks somewhat so, 'Hateful and hating one another.' We hate sin in another, though we will not take notice of it in ourselves. The sensuality and pride and vanity of one wicked man is hated by another; nay, he is loathsome to himself. Why? because he cannot endure to look into himself. We cannot endure ourselves when we are serious. 'They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd.' And we are shy of God's presence; we are sensible we have something makes us offensive to him, and we hang off from him when we have sinned against him; as it was David's experience, Ps. xxxii. 3. That was the cause of his silence: he kept off from God, having sinned against him, and had not a heart to go home and sue out his pardon. Oh, what a mercy is it, then, to have this filth covered, that we may be freed from this bashful inconfidence, and not be ashamed to look God in the face, and may come with a holy boldness into the presence of the blessed God! Oh, the blessedness of the man whose sin is covered!

[3.] It is a debt that binds the soul to everlasting punishment; and if it be not pardoned, the judge will give us over to the jailer, and the jailer cast us into prison, 'till we have paid the uttermost farthing,' Luke xii. 59. To have so vast a debt lying upon us, what a misery is that! Augustus bought that man's bed who could sleep soundly when he was in debt so many hundred of sesterces. Certainly it is a strange security that possesseth the hearts of men, when we are obliged to suffer the vengeance of the wrath of the eternal God by our many sins, and yet can sleep quietly. Body and soul will be taken away in execution; the day of payment is set, and may come much sooner than you think for; you must get a discharge, or else you are undone for ever. Our debt comes to millions of millions; well, if the Lord will forgive so great a debt, oh, the blessedness of that man, &c. Put altogether now; certainly if you have ever been in bondage, if you have felt the sting of death and curse of the law, or been scorched by the wrath of God, or knew the horror of those upon whom God hath exacted this debt in hell, certainly you would be more and more affected with this wonderful grace. 'Oh, the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his transgressions!'

Thirdly, The consequent benefits. I will name three:—

[1.] It restores the creature to God, and puts us in joint again, in a capacity to serve, and please, and glorify God: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is



forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Forgiveness invites us to return to God, obliges us to return to God, and take it as God dispenseth it; it inclines us to return to God, and encourages us to live in a state of anity and holy friendship with God, pleasing and serving him in righteousness and holiness all our days. Certainly it invites us to return to God. Man stands aloof from a condemning God, but may be induced to submit to a pardoning God. And it obligeth us to return to God, to serve, and love, and please him who will forgive so great a debt, and discharge us from all our sins; for she loved much to whom much was forgiven. It inclines us to serve and please God; for where God pardons he renews, he puts a new life into us that inclines us to God: Col. ii. 13, 'He hath quickened you together with Christ, having forgiven all your trespasses.' And it encourages us to serve and please God: Heb. ix. 14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your consciences from dead works, that ye may serve the living God?' and that in a suitable manner, that you may serve God in a lively, cheerful manner. A poor creature bound to his law, and conscious of his own disobedience, and obnoxious to wrath and punishment, is mightily clogged, and drives on heavily; but when the conscience is purged from dead works, we serve the living God in a lively manner; and this begets a holy cheerfulness in the soul, and we are freed from that bondage that otherwise would clog us in our duty to God.

[2.] It lays the foundation for solid comfort and peace in our own souls, for till sin be pardoned you have no true comfort; because the justice of the supreme governor of the world will still be dreadful to us, whose laws we have broken, whose wrath we have justly deserved, and whom we still apprehend as offended with us, and provoked by us. We may lull the soul asleep with carnal delights, but the virtue of that opium will be soon spent. All those joys are but stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret, a poor, sorry peace, that dares not come to the light and endure the trial,—a sorry peace, that is soon disturbed by a few serious and sober thoughts of God and the world to come; but when once sin is pardoned, then you have true joy indeed. 'Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee,' Mat. ix. 2. Then misery is plucked up by the roots: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.' Why? 'Her iniquity is forgiven,' Isa. xl. 1, 2; 'And we joy in God as those that have received the atonement,' Rom. v. 11. The Lord Jesus hath made the atonement; but when we have received the atonement, then we joy in God, then there is matter for abundant delight, when 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.'

[3.] When we are pardoned, then we are capable of eternal happiness. Pardon of sin is *gratia removens prohibens*, that grace that removes the impediment, that takes the make-bate out of the way, removes that that hinders our entrance into heaven. Sanctification is the beginning; but till we are pardoned, there can be no entrance into heaven: now this removes the incapacity. I observe remission of sins is put for all the privilege part, as repentance for the duties: Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted to give repentance and remission of sins.' There are two initial benefits—repentance, as the foundation

of the new life; and remission of sins, as the foundation of all our future mercies. There are two chief blessings offered in the new covenant, pardon and life, reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory; and the one makes way for the other: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among the saints.' When we are pardoned, then we are capable to look for the blessed inheritance; the impediment is taken out of the way that excludes from it.

And thus you see 'the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose filth is covered, and unto whom the Lord will not impute his sin.'

### A WORD OF APPLICATION.

1. Let us bless God for the Christian religion, where this privilege is discovered to us in all its glory, and that upon very commodious terms, fit to gain the heart of man, and to reduce him to God: Micah vii. 18, 'Who is a God like unto thee among all the gods, pardoning the transgressions of thine heritage?' The business of religion is to provide sufficiently for two things, which have much troubled the considering part of the world;—a suitable happiness for mankind, and suitable means for the expiation of sin. Happiness is our great desire, and sin is our great burden and trouble. Now these are fully made known and discovered to us by the Christian faith. The last is that we are upon,—the way how the grand scruple of the world may be satisfied, and their guilty fears appeased; and that we may see the excellency of the Christian religion above all religions in the world, it offers pardon upon such terms as are most commodious to the honour of God, and most satisfactory to our souls; that is, upon the account of Christ's satisfaction and our own repentance, without which our case is not compassionate. The first I will chiefly insist on. The heathens were mightily perplexed about the way how God could dispense with the honour of his justice in the pardon of sin. That man is God's creature, and therefore his subject; that he hath exceedingly failed and faulted in his duty and subjection to him, and is therefore obnoxious to God's just wrath and vengeance, are truths evident in the light of nature and common experience; and therefore the heathens had some convictions of this, and saw a need that God should be atoned and propitiated by some sacrifices of expiation; and the nearer they lived to the original of this tradition and institution, the more burdened and pressing were their conceits and apprehensions thereof. But in all their cruel superstitions there was no rest of soul; they knew not the true God, nor the proper ransom, nor had any sure way to convey pardon to them, but were still left to the puzzle and distraction of their own thoughts, and could not make God merciful without some diminution of his holiness and justice, nor make him just without some diminution of his mercy. Somewhat they conceived of the goodness of God by his continuing forfeited benefits so long: 'God left them not without a witness;' but yet they could not reconcile it to his justice or will to punish sinners; and all their apprehensions of the pardon of sin were but probabilities, and what was

wrought to procure merit was ridiculous, or else barbarous and unnatural, giving 'their first-born for the sin of their soul,' Micah vi. 7. And all those notions they had about this apprehended expiation were too weak to change the heart or life of man, or to reduce him to God. Come we now to the Jews. The Jews had many sacrifices of God's own institution, but such as 'did not make the comers thereunto perfect, as pertaining to the conscience,' Heb. ix. 9; and the ransom that was to be given to provoked justice was known but to a few. They saw much of the patience and forbearance of God, but little of the righteousness of God, and which was the great propitiation. Till 'God set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus,' Rom. iii. 25, 26. Their ordinances and sacrifices were rather a bond acknowledging the debt, or pre-signifying the ransom that was to be paid, and their sacrifices did rather breed bondage; and their ordinances were called 'an handwriting of ordinances that were against them.' The redemption of souls was then spoken of as a great mystery, but sparingly revealed: Ps. xlix. 3, 4, 'My mouth shall speak of wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline mine ear to a parable, I will open my dark sayings upon the harp.' What was that wisdom? What was that dark saying? 'The redemption of souls is precious; it ceaseth for ever.' As it lies upon mere man's hand, 'none can give a ransom for his brother.' Eternal redemption by Christ was a dark saying in those days, only they knew no mere man could do it. And in more early times, in Job's time, he was 'an interpreter, one of a thousand,' that could bring this message to a distressed sinner, that God had found out a ransom. This atonement, then, that lies at the bottom of pardon of sin, was a rare thing in those days. Let us bless God for the clear and open discovery of this truth, and free offer of grace by Jesus Christ.

The second use is to quicken us to put in for a share in this blessed privilege. I have spent my time in presenting to you what a blessed thing it is to have our sins pardoned. Christians, a man that flows in wealth and honour, till he be pardoned, is not a happy man. A man that lives afflicted, contemned, not taken notice of in the world, if he be a pardoned sinner, oh, the blessedness of that man! They are not happy that have least trouble, but they that have least cause; not they that have a benumbed conscience, but they that have a conscience sound, established, and settled in the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and bottomed upon his holy covenant, and that peace and grace he offers to us; this is the happy man. By these and such like arguments I would have you put in for a share of this privilege. But what must be required? I would fain send you away with some directions.

Let me entreat you, if this be such a blessed thing, to make it your daily, your earnest, your hearty prayer to God, that your sins may be pardoned, Mat. vi. 12. Our Lord hath taught us to pray (for we make but too much work for pardoning mercy every day), 'Every day forgive us our trespasses.' *To-day*, in one of the petitions, is common

to all that follow; as we beg daily bread, we must beg daily pardon, daily grace against temptations. Under the law, they had a lamb every morning and every evening offered to God for a daily sacrifice, Num. xxviii. 4-6. We are all invited to look to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Surely we have as much need as they—more cause than they; because now all is clear, and openly made known unto us. God came to Adam in the cool of the day; he would not let him sleep in his sins: before night came, he comes and rouseth his conscience, and then gives out the promise of the seed of the woman that should break the serpent's head. In reconciliation with God, let not the sun go down upon God's wrath, Eph. iv. 26. A man should not sleep in his anger, nor out of charity with man; surely we should make our peace with God every day. If a man, under the law, had contracted any uncleanness, he was to wash his clothes before evening, that he might not lie a night in his uncleanness. We should daily earnestly come to God with this request, Lord, pardon our sins. But what! must those that are already adopted into God's family, and taken into his grace and favour, daily pray for pardon of sin? Though upon our first faith our state be changed, and we are indeed made children of God, and heirs of eternal life by faith in Christ Jesus; yet he that is clean, need wash his feet. We contract a great deal of sinful defilement and pollution by walking up and down here in a dirty world; and we must every day be cleansing our consciences before God, and begging that we may be made partakers of this benefit. The Lord may, for our unthankfulness, our negligence, our stupid security, revive the memory of old sins, and make us look into the debt-book (that hath been cancelled) with horror, and make us 'possess the sins of our youth.' An old bruise is felt upon every change of weather. When we prove unthankful, and careless, and stupid, and negligent, and do not keep our watch, the Lord may suffer these things to return upon our consciences with great amazement. Guilt raked out of its grave is more frightful than a ghost, or one risen from the dead. Few believers have, upon right terms, the assurance of their own sincerity; and though God may blot sins out of the book of his remembrance, yet he will not blot them out of our consciences. The worm of conscience is killed still by the application of the blood of Christ and the Spirit. This short exhortation I would give you, the other would take up too much time.

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## SERMON II.

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.  
Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no guile.—Ps. XXXII. 1, 2.*

IN this text I observed, that it is a great degree and step towards, yea, a considerable part of our blessedness, to obtain pardon of our sins upon the account of Christ's righteousness. I showed the



necessity which lies upon men, who are all become guilty before God, to look after this pardon; and thereupon took occasion to represent the excellency of the Christian religion, that hath provided a salve for the great sore that runs upon all mankind, above that of the pagans, and also that of the Jews, to whom this mystery was but darkly revealed. To proceed to another use, to exhort you to put in for a share in this blessedness, to persuade you to it, let me use a few motives.

1. Till you are pardoned you are never blessed; there is an obstacle and impediment in the way hinders your blessedness. What though you flow in wealth, ease, and plenty; yet as long as this black storm hangs over your head, and you know not how soon it will drop upon you, you cannot be accounted happy men. Do you account him a happy man who is condemned to die, because he hath a plentiful allowance till his execution? or him a happy man that makes a fair show abroad, and puts a good face upon his ruinous and breaking condition, but at home is pinched with want and misery, which is ready to come upon him like an armed man? or him a happy man that revels it out in all manner of pleasure, but is to die at night? Then those that remain in the guilt of their sins may be happy. But now, on the other side, a pardoned sinner is blessed whatever befalls him. If he be afflicted, the sting of his affliction is gone, that is sin; if he be prosperous, the curse of his blessings is taken away; the wrath of God is appeased, and so every condition is made tolerable or comfortable to him.

2. Nothing less than a pardon will serve the turn. Not forbearance on God's side, nor forgetfulness on ours.

[1.] It is not a forbearance of the punishment on God's part, but a dissolving the obligation to the punishment. God may be angry with us when he doth not actually strike us: as the psalmist says, Ps. vii. 11-13, 'God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.' In the day of his patience he doth for a while spare; but God is ready to deal with them hand to hand, for he is sharpening his sword at a distance; he is bending his bow: the arrow is upon the string, and how soon God may let it fly we cannot tell; therefore we are never safe till we turn to God, and enter into his peace. Wherever there is sin there is guilt, and wherever there is guilt there will be punishment. If we dance about the brink of hell, and go merrily to execution, it argues not our sin,<sup>1</sup> but stupidity and folly.

[2.] On our part, our senseless forgetfulness will do us no good. Carnal men mind not the happiness of an immortal soul, and they are not troubled because they consider not their condition; but they are not happy that feel least trouble, but those that have least cause. A benumbed conscience cannot challenge this blessedness; they only put off that which they cannot put away, which God hath neither forgiven nor covered. They do but skin the wound till it fester and rankle into a dangerous sore. God is the wronged party, and supreme

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'the pardon of our sin'?—E.D.



judge, to whose sentence we must stand or fall. If he justifies, then who will condemn? We may lay ourselves asleep, and sing peace to ourselves; but it is not what we say, but what God saith: 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.'

3. A pardon is surely a great blessing, if we consider, first, the evils we are freed from; and, secondly, the good depending upon it.

[1.] The evils we are freed from. Guilt is the obligation to punishment, and pardon is the dissolving or loosing that obligation. Now, the punishment is exceeding great, no less than hell and damnation; and hell is no vain scarecrow, nor is heaven a May-game. Eternity makes everything truly great. Look at the loss—an eternal separation from the comfortable presence of God: Mat. xxv. 41, 'Go, ye cursed,' &c.; and Luke xiii. 27, 'Depart, ye workers of iniquity.' When God turned Adam out of paradise, his case was very sad, but God took care of him, made him coats of skins to clothe him, gave him a day of patience, afterwards promised the seed of the woman, who should recover the lapsed state of mankind, and so intimated hopes of a better paradise. That exile, therefore, is nothing comparable to this; for now man is stript of all his comfort, sent into an endless state of misery, where there shall be no hope of ever changing his condition. Now, to be delivered from this that is so great an evil, what a blessedness is it! For the *pœna sensus*, the pain as well as the loss, our Lord sets it forth by two notions: Mark ix. 44, 'The worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched.' The scripture speaks of the soul with allusion to the state of the body after death. In the body worms breed usually, and many times they were burnt with fire. Accordingly, our state in the world to come is set forth by a worm and a fire. The worm implies the worm of conscience—a reflection upon our past folly and disobedience to God, and the remembrance of all the affronts we have put upon Christ. Here men may run from the rebukes of conscience by many shifts, sports, distracting their minds with a clatter of business; but then there is not a thought free, but the damned are always thinking of slighted means, abused comforts, wasted time, the offences done to a merciful God, and the curse wherein they have involved themselves by their own folly. The fire that shall never be quenched notes the wrath of God, or those unknown pains that shall be inflicted upon the body and soul; which must needs be great, because God himself will take the sinful creature into his own hands to punish him, and will show forth the glory of his wrath and power upon him. When God punisheth us by a creature, the creature is not a vessel capacious enough to convey the power of his wrath; as when a giant strikes with a straw, that cannot convey his strength. But when God falls upon us himself, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' How dreadful is that! Is it not a blessedness to be freed from so great an evil? Then a little mitigation, a drop to cool your tongue, would be accounted a great mercy.

[2.] If we consider the good depending on it. You are not capable of enjoying God, and being happy for evermore, till his wrath be appeased, and your sins forgiven; but when that is once done, then you may have sure hope of being admitted into his presence: Rom. v. 10,

‘If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by his death, much more being now reconciled shall we be saved by his life;’ that is to say, it is far more credible that a reconciled man should be glorified, than that a sinner and rebel should be reconciled. If you can pass over this difficulty, and once get into God’s peace, then what may you not expect from God? The first favour to such as have been rebels against him facilitates the belief of all acts of grace.

Now, what must we do that we may be capable of this blessed privilege, that our sins may be pardoned, and our filth covered, and our debt may be forgiven? I shall give my answer in three branches:—

I. I will show you what is to be done as to your first entrance into the evangelic state.

II. What is to be done as to your continuance therein, and that you may still enjoy this privilege; and—

III. What is to be done as to your recovery out of grievous lapses, and falls, and wounds, as are more troublesome to the conscience, for which a particular and express repentance is required.

I. As to our first entrance into the evangelic state; that is by faith and repentance: both are necessary to pardon, Acts x. 43, ‘To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.’ There remission of sins is granted to a believer. Now repentance is full out as necessary, Acts ii. 38, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;’ Luke xxiv. 47, ‘And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ What is in another evangelist, ‘to preach the gospel to every creature,’ in this is, ‘that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name.’ And this is preaching the gospel; for the gospel is nothing else but a doctrine of repentance and remission of sins. So if we will not hearken to the vain fancies of men who have perverted the scripture, but stand to the plain gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; these two duties are necessary to pardon. Christ’s satisfaction is not imputed to us, but upon terms agreed on in the covenant of redemption. As to the impetration there is required the intervention of Christ’s merit, so to the application faith and repentance, without which we are not pardoned. These two graces have a distinct reference, and it is intimated by that passage of Paul, for he gives this account of his ministry, Acts xx. 21, ‘Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Here, in short, repentance respects God, *to* whom we return, and faith Jesus Christ, *by* whom we return. From God we fell, to God we must return; we fell from him as we withdrew our allegiance, and sought our happiness elsewhere; and we return to him as our rightful Lord and our proper happiness. And then faith in Christ is necessary, because the Lord Jesus is the only remedy for our misery, who opened the way to God by his merit and satisfaction, and doth also bring us to walk in his ways by his renewing first, and then reconciling grace; and faith is that that respects him. Who will take physic of a physician whose art he does not trust, or go to sea with a pilot whose skill he questions? Who will venture his eternal interest in Christ’s hands, if he be not per-

suaded of his ability and fidelity, as one that is able to make our peace with God, and bring us to the enjoyment of him? But I would not lightly mention it, but bring it to a distinct issue.

1. I will show you it is for the glory of God and comfort of the creature that there should be a stated course of entering into God's peace, or applying the gospel; for we must not so look to the impetration, or merit and righteousness of Christ, as not to consider the application, and how we come to have a title to these things.

2. I will show that these two graces and duties are faith and repentance, which do in many things agree, and in other respects differ.

3. I will show you that they, differing in their use, are required for distinct reasons and ends.

4. The use of these graces will plainly discover their nature to you, so that a poor Christian, that would settle his soul upon Christ's terms, and this blessed gospel made known to us, need not any longer debate what is repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. It is for the glory of God and the comfort of the creature that there should be a stated course of applying the privileges of the gospel, or of entering into God's peace.

[1.] It is certainly for the glory of God. It is not meet that pardon and life should be prostituted to every one that will hastily challenge these privileges. Pardon we are upon; our case is not compassionable till we relent and submit to God's terms. I would appeal to your own consciences: surely it is more suitable to the wisdom of God that a penitent sinner should have pardon rather than an impenitent, or one that securely continues in his sins, and despiseth both the curse of the law and the grace of the gospel. It is not agreeable to the honour of God, and the wisdom of his transactions with man, that such should have benefit by him. Again, for faith: it is not meet we should have benefit by one we know not and trust not. Whatever be God's mercy to infants, who are not in a capacity to know and trust him, yet, in adult and grown persons, it is necessary we should not have such great privileges settled upon us without our knowledge, or besides and against our wills. God will have our consent in a humble and solemn way, that we may come and thankfully accept what he hath provided for us. So this is very much for the glory of God.

[2.] And then for our comfort, that we may make our claim, that we may state our interest with the greater certainty and assurance; for when great privileges are conditionally propounded, as they are in the new covenant, our right is suspended till the conditions be performed; and certainly our comfort is suspended till we know they be performed, till we know ourselves to be such as have an interest in the promises of the gospel. I have told you, Blessed are they whose sins are pardoned. But, saith the soul, if I knew my sins were pardoned I should think myself a blessed creature indeed. What would you reply to this anxious and serious soul? God hath made a promise, an offer of pardon by Christ: the offer of pardon is the invitation to use the means that we may be possessed of it. But then the serious anxious soul replies still, To whom is this promise made? How

shall I come to know that I am thus blessed and accepted by God, and that my sins are pardoned? What is to be replied here? Look to whom the promise is made. Certainly it is made to some, or to all. If you say the promise is to all, you deceive the most; if to some, you must say, from scripture, to them that repent and believe—to the penitent believer. Here is the shortest way to bring the debate to an issue, wherein our comfort is so much concerned, to see we be penitent believers. For thus the application is stated, and the fixing these conditions is the more for the glory of God, and the comfort of the creature.

2. The two graces or duties upon which it is fixed—faith and repentance—do in many things agree, in other respects differ.

[1.] They both agree in this, that they are both necessary to the fallen creature, and do concern our recovery to God, and so are proper to the gospel, which is provided for the restoration of lapsed mankind. The gospel is a healing remedy, and therefore is Christ so often set forth by the term of a physician. The law was a stranger to both these duties; it knew no such thing as repentance and faith in Christ; for, according to the tenor of it, once a sinner, and for ever miserable. But the gospel is a plank cast out after shipwreck, whereby we may escape and come safe to shore.

Again, they both agree in this, that they concern our entrance and first recovery out of the defection and apostasy of mankind, for afterwards there are other things required; but as to our first entrance into the evangelic state, both these graces are required, and the acts of them so interwoven, that we can hardly distinguish them.

Again, they both agree in this, that they have a continual influence upon our whole new obedience. For the secondary conditions of the covenant do grow out of the first, and these two graces run throughout our whole life. Repentance, mortifying sin, is not a work of a day, but of our whole lives, and the like is faith.

Again, they agree in that both are effected and wrought in us by the Holy Spirit; that God, who requires these things, gives them.

Lastly, they agree in this, that the one cannot be without the other, neither repentance without faith, nor faith without repentance; partly, because there is no use of faith without repentance. Christ as mediator is the means; now the means are of no use without respect to the end. Now Christ and the whole gospel grace is the means to come to God. Besides, these things cannot be graces but in a concomitancy. Repentance without faith, what would it be? When we see our sins, and bewail them, despair would make us sit down and die, if there were not a Saviour to heal our natures and convert our souls. Neither can faith be without repentance; for unless there be a confession of past sins, with a resolution of future obedience, we continue in our obstinacy and stubbornness, and so we are incapable of mercy, our case is not compassionate.

In short, repentance without faith would degenerate into the horror of the damned, and our sorrow for sin would be tormenting rather curing to us. And then faith would be a licentious and presumptuous confidence without repentance: unless it be accompanied with this hearty consent of living in the love, obedience, and service of God, with



a detestation of our former ways, it would be a turning the grace of God into wantonness. Therefore these two always go together. Which is the first, I will not enter upon ; but the one cannot be without the other.

[2.] Let me show you wherein they differ : the one respects God, the other Christ.

(1.) Repentance towards God. While we live in sin, we are not only out of our way, but out of our wits. 'We were sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures,' Titus iii. 3. We live in rebellion against him against whom we cannot make our party good ; and withal contenting ourselves with a false transitory happiness instead of a solid and eternal one, we never come to our wits again till we think of returning to God. As the prodigal, when 'he came to himself,' he thought of returning to his father ; and Ps. xxii. 27, 'They shall remember, and turn to the Lord.' So long as we lie in our sins, we are like men in a dream, we consider not from whence we are, nor whither we are going, nor what shall become of us to all eternity ; but go on against all reason and conscience, provoking God, and destroying our own souls. Man is never in his true posture again, till he returns to God as his sovereign Lord and chief happiness : as our sovereign Lord, that we may perform our duty to him ; and our felicity and chief good, that we may seek all our happiness in him. And none do repent but those that give up themselves to obey God and to do his will, as he is the sovereign Lord : 1 Peter iv. 2, 'That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God ;' and look upon him as their chief happiness, and prefer his favour above all the sensual pleasures of the world, that they may be able in truth to say, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee,' Ps. lxxiii. 25. This is repentance towards God.

(2.) There is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This grace is necessary, that we may own our Redeemer, and be thankful to him, as the author of our deliverance : Rom. vii. 25, 'O wretched man that I am ! But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' And also faith is necessary, that we may trust ourselves in his hands. We are to take Christ as our prophet, priest, and king ; to hear him as our prophet : Mat. xvii. 5, 'This is my beloved Son, hear him.' We are to receive him as our Lord and King : Col. ii. 6, 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.' We are to consider him as the great high priest of our confession : Heb. iii. 1, 'Let us consider the Lord Jesus, the great apostle and high priest of our confession.' Hear him we must as a prophet, that we may form our hopes by his covenant, and frame our lives by his holy and pure doctrine. Receive him we must as a king, that we may obey him in all things. Consider him as a priest, that we may depend upon the merit and value of his sacrifice and intercession, and may the more confidently plead his covenant and promises to God. Now without this there can be no commerce between us and Christ. Who will learn of him as a prophet, whom he takes to be a deceiver ? obey him as a king, who doth not believe his power ? or depend upon him with any confidence or hopes of mercy, if he doth not believe the value of his merit and



sacrifice? Herein these things differ—repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; the one respects the end, God; the other the means, Christ. Repentance more especially respects our duty; faith, our comfort. Repentance, newness of life for the future, and returning to the primitive duty, the love of God, and obeying his will; faith, pardon of what is past, and hope of mercy to come. In short, to God we give up ourselves as our supreme Lord; to Christ as Mediator, who alone can bring us to God: to God, as taking his will for the rule of our lives and actions, and preferring his love above all that is dear in the world; to Christ as our Lord and Saviour, who makes our peace with God, and gives the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, that we may for ever live upon him as our life, hope, and strength. Thus I have briefly showed you how repentance respects God, and faith our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. That these graces having their peculiar reference, are required in order to pardon, for distinct reasons and ends.

First, Repentance is required for these reasons:—

[1.] Because otherwise God cannot have his end in pardon, which is to recover the lost creation, that we may again live in his love and obedience. Surely Christ came to seek and save that which was lost. Now, to be lost, in the first and primitive sense, was to be lost to God. Take the lost sheep or groat, it was lost to the owner, the son to the father; and so, if Christ came to save that which was lost, he came to recover us to God, therefore said to redeem us to God.

[2.] Neither can the Redeemer do his work for which God hath appointed him: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' We accept him in all his offices for this end: 'I am the way, truth, and life; no man comes to the Father but by me.' Therefore, whole Christianity, from the beginning to the end, a short description of it is this,—a coming to God by Christ: Heb. vii. 25, 'He is able to save to the uttermost' Whom?—'all those that come to God by him.'

[3.] Without it we should not have our happiness. It is our happiness to please and enjoy God. We are not in a capacity to please and enjoy God till we are returned to him: 'They that are in the flesh cannot please the Lord;' nor to enjoy him here, for here 'we see his face in righteousness,' nor hereafter, for 'without holiness no man shall see God.'

Secondly, But why is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ required, and so much spoken of in scripture? I will content myself but with two reasons at this time:—

[1.] Faith in Christ is most fitted for the acceptance of God's free gift. Faith and grace do always go together, and are put as opposite to law and works: Rom. iv. 16, 'It is of faith that it may be of grace.' Eph. ii. 8, 'For by grace ye are saved through faith, and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.' Faith establishes and keeps up the interest and honour of grace; for it is the free grace and favour of God to condescend to the rebel world, so far as he hath done in the new covenant. We present ourselves before him as those that stand wholly to his mercy, have nothing to plead for ourselves but the righteousness and merit of our Re-

deemer, by virtue of which we humbly beg pardon and life to be begun in us by his Spirit, and perfected in glory.

[2.] Why faith in Christ? Because the way of our recovery is so strange and wonderful. It can only be received by faith; sense cannot convey it to us, reason will not, and nothing is reserved for the entertainment of this glorious mystery, pardon, and salvation by our Redeemer, but faith alone. If I should deduce this argument at large, I would show you nothing but faith, or the belief of God's testimony concerning his Son, can support us in these transactions with God. The comfort of the promise is so rich and glorious, sense and reason cannot inform us of it: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, the things God hath prepared for them that love him,' 1 Cor. ii. 9. It is not meant only of heaven, but of the whole preparations and rich provisions God hath made for us in the gospel. It is not a thing can come to us by eye or ear, or the conceiving of man's heart; we only believe and entertain it by faith. And then, the persons upon whom it is bestowed are so unworthy, that certainly it cannot enter into the heart of man that God will be so good, and do so much good to such. Adam, when he had sinned, grew shy of God, and ran away from him. Besides, the way God hath taken for our deliverance is so supernatural: 'God so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' That God should become man, that he should submit to such an accursed death for our sakes, is so high and glorious, it can only be entertained by faith. Besides, our chief blessedness lies in another world: 'He that lacketh faith is blind, and cannot see afar off.' Here in this lower world, where our God is unseen, and our great hopes are to come, where the flesh is so importunate to be pleased, where our temptations and trials are so many, and difficulties so great, we are apt to question all, and we can never keep waiting upon God, were it not for faith, and a steady belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. For these reasons (if you look into the scriptures), it is why faith is so much insisted upon, that we may keep up the honour of God's grace, and because this grace of the Redeemer is so mysterious and wonderful.

4. The use of these two graces discovers their nature. What is faith and repentance? Repentance towards God is a turning from sin to God. The *terminus a quo* of repentance is our begun recovery from sin, and therefore called, 'Repentance from dead works,' Heb. vi. 1. The *terminus ad quem*, to which we return, is God, and our being devoted to God in obedience and love. God never hath our hearts till he hath our love and delight, till we return to a love of his blessed majesty, and delight in his ways. This is called in scripture sometimes a turning to God, in many other places a seeking after God, a giving up ourselves to God: 2 Cor. viii. 5, 'They gave up themselves to the Lord.' This is the repentance by which we enter into the gospel state. Now what is faith? Besides an assent to the gospel, which is at the bottom of it, it is a serious, thankful, broken-hearted acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may be to every one of us what God hath appointed him to be, and do for every one of us what God hath appointed him to do for poor sinners; it is serious and

broken-hearted, done by a creature in misery, and thankful for such a wonderful benefit, a trusting to this Redeemer, that he may do the work of a redeemer in our hearts, to save us from the evil of, and after, sin.

And thus I have briefly opened this necessary doctrine, as clearly laid in the scripture. And this is your entrance in the evangelic state.

II. For our continuance therein; for we must not only mind our entrance, but our continuance. Our Lord Jesus tells us of a gate and a way: the gate signifies the entrance, and the way our continuance. And we read of making and keeping covenant with God; we read of union with Christ, that is our first entrance. For this faith is the closing act, and expressed sometimes by a being married to Christ. But there is not only an union with Christ, but an abiding in him: 'Abide in me, and I will abide in you.' Now as for our continuance, I would show you that the first works are gone over and over again, faith and repentance are still necessary: 'For the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.' And repentance is still necessary. But I shall only press two things—first, new obedience; secondly, daily prayer.

1. New obedience is required: 1 John i. 7, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' Holy walking is necessary to the continuance of our being cleansed from sin, and therefore mercy is promised to the forsaking of our sins: Prov. xxviii. 13, 'He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy;' Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Our hearts were not sound with God in the first covenanting if we undo what was done: 'If we build again the things we have destroyed, then we are found transgressors,' Gal. ii. 18. Well, then, a man that seeks after pardon, seeks after it with the ruin and destruction of sin. Sin was the greatest burden that lay upon his conscience, the grievance from whence he sought ease, the wound pained him at heart, the disease his soul was sick of. And was all this anguish real? And shall a man come to delight in his sores again, and take up the burden he groaned under, and tear open the wound that was in a fair way of healing, and willingly relapse into the sickness he was almost recovered from with so much ado? Sure this shows our first consent was not real and sincere. And then Christ will be no advocate for them that continue in their sins. 'Our God is a God of salvation,' we cannot enough speak of his saving mercy; but 'he will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses,' Ps. lxxviii. 20, 21.

2. Daily prayer. [This was spoken unto at the close of the first sermon.] Mat. vi. 12. Our Lord hath taught us to pray (for we make but too much work for pardoning mercy every day), 'Every day forgive us our trespasses.' *To-day* in one of the petitions, is common to all that follow; as we beg daily bread, we must beg daily pardon, daily grace against temptations. Under the law they had a lamb every

morning and every evening offered to God for a daily sacrifice, Num. xxviii. 4-6. We are all invited to look to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Surely we have as much need as they—more cause than they, because now all is clear and openly made known unto us. God came to Adam in the cool of the day; he would not let him sleep in his sins: before night came he comes and rouseth his conscience, and then gives out the promise of the seed of the woman that should break the serpent's head. In reconciliation with God let not the sun go down upon God's wrath, Eph. iv. 26. A man should not sleep in his anger, nor out of charity with man; surely we should make our peace with God every day. If a man under the law had contracted any uncleanness, he was to wash his clothes before evening, that he might not lie a night in his uncleanness. We should daily, earnestly, come to God with this request, Lord, pardon our sins. But what! must those that are already adopted into God's family, and taken into his grace and favour, daily pray for pardon of sin? Though upon our first faith our state be changed, and we are indeed made children of God, and heirs of eternal life by faith in Christ Jesus, yet he that is clean need wash his feet. We contract a great deal of sinful defilement and pollution by walking up and down here in a dirty world, and we must every day be cleansing our consciences before God, and begging that we may be made partakers of this benefit.

III. The third thing is our recovery out of grievous lapses and falls. In them there is required a particular and express repentance; and repentance and faith must be carried with respect to those four things that are in sin: *culpa*, the fault, *reatus*, the guilt, *macula*, the stain and blot, and *pœna*, the punishment. You know the law supposeth a righteous nature that God gives to man, therefore in sin there is a stain or blot, defacing God's image. The precepts of the law require duty, so it is *culpa*, a criminal act; the sanction of the law as threatened makes way for guilt, as executed calls for punishment; you see how it ariseth.

1. For the fault in the transgression of the law, or the criminal action. See that the fault be not continued; relapses are very dangerous. A bone often broken in the same place is hardly set again. God's children are in danger of this before the breach be well made up, or the orifice of the wound be soundly closed; as Lot doubled his incest, and Samson goes in again and again to Delilah. But in wicked men frequently, as that king sent fifty after fifty, and nothing would stop him. There is an express forsaking of sin required of us, otherwise it would abolish all the difference between the renewed and the carnal.

2. The guilt continues till serious and solemn repentance, and humiliation before God, and suing out our pardon in Christ's name. 1 John i. 9, he speaks of believers: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' There must be a solemn humbling for the sin, and then God will forgive us. Suppose a man forbore the act, and never commit it more (as Judah forbore the act, after he had committed incest with Tamar, but it seems he repented not till she showed him the bracelets and the staff); yet with serious remorse we must beg our peace humbly upon the account of our Mediator. Therefore something must be done to take away the guilt.



3. There is the blot or evil inclination to sin again. The blot of sin in general is the defacing of God's image, but in particular sins it is some weakening of the reverence of God. A man cannot venture to act a grievous wilful sin, but there is a violent obstruction of the fear of God. A brand that hath been in the fire is more apt to take fire again; the evil influences of the sin continue. Now the root of sin must be mortified, it is not enough to forbear or confess a sin, but we must pull out the core of the distemper before all will be well. As Jonah, he repented of his tergiversation and forsaking his call. The fault was not repeated: he goes to Nineveh and does his duty. Yet the core of the distemper was not taken away; for you read of him, Jonah iv. 2, 'Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew thou wert a gracious God, and repentest thee of the evil.' On the contrary, Peter fell into a grievous sin, denying his Lord and Master with oaths and execrations; but afterwards, John xxi. 15, Christ tries him: Jesus saith to Simon Peter, 'Lovest thou me more than these?' pointing to the rest of his disciples. Peter had been bragging, Mat. xxvi. 33, 'Though all men forsake thee, yet I will not forsake thee.' Now when he was foiled, though he had wept bitterly for his fault, Christ tries if the cause be removed: 'Lord, saith he, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' But he doth not say now, 'more than these.' The root of the distemper was gone; Peter is grown more modest now than to make comparisons.

4. There is the punishment. Now we must deprecate eternal punishment, and bless God for Jesus Christ, 'who hath delivered us from wrath to come.' But as to temporal evils, God hath reserved a liberty in the covenant to his wisdom and fatherly justice, to inflict temporal punishments as he shall see good. 'If they break his statutes, and keep not his commandments; then will he visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness I will not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail,' Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33. If 'judgment begin at the house of God,' what shall become of the sinner and ungodly? The righteous are recompensed upon earth, partly to increase their repentance, that when they smart under the fruit of sin, they may best judge of the evil of it. God doth in effect say, 'Now know it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against me.' God doth not do it to complete their justification, but to promote their sanctification, and to make us warnings to others, that they may not displease God as we do. Now for these reasons the Lord, though he doth forgive the sin and release the eternal punishment, yet he reserves a liberty to chastise us in our persons, families, and relations. Therefore what is our business? Humbly deprecate this temporal judgment: 'Lord, correct me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure.' We should be instant with God to get it stopped or mitigated; but if the Lord see it fit it shall come, patiently submit to him, and say, as the church, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.' These afflictive evils, some of them belong to God's external government, and some to his internal. Some to his external government, as when many are sick, and weak, and fallen asleep: 'When we are



judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.' A rod dipped in guilt may smart sore upon the back of God's children, if they will play the wantons and rebels with God. Eli broke his neck, his sons were killed in battle, the ark taken. But then there are some other things belonging to his internal government, as the withdrawing the comforts of his Spirit, or the lively influences of his grace; for this was the evil David feared when he had gone into wilful sins: Ps. li. 11, 12, 'Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not away thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.' When God's children fall into sin, though the Lord doth not utterly take away his loving-kindness from them, he may abate the influences of his grace so far as they may never recover the like measure again as long as they live.

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### SERMON III.

*Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.—ACTS III. 26.*

THESE words are the conclusion of the second sermon that was preached after the pouring out of the Spirit, and in them you may observe three things:—

I. The parties concerned: *unto you first.*

II. The benefit offered: *God, having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you.*

III. The blessing interpreted, or what kind of blessing it is we shall have by the Mediator: *he hath sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities.*

Let me a little open these, before I come to observe anything.

I. For the parties concerned: *unto you first.* Why was the first offer of Christ made unto the people of the Jews? For sundry reasons. Partly:—

1. Because they were the only church of God for that time, and the people that were in visible communion with him. And God hath so much respect for the church, that they shall have the refusal and the morning-market of the gospel. And whatsoever dispensations of grace are set on foot shall be first brought to them: 'He hath showed his statutes unto Jacob: he hath not dealt so with other nations,' Ps. cxlvii. 19.

2. They were the children of the covenant: 'Ye are the children of the covenant,' therefore 'unto you first.' God was in covenant with their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and God follows a covenant people with more offers of grace than he doth vouchsafe unto others, and bears with sin after sin till he can bear no longer. And when the branches of the covenant-stock run quite wild, then they are cut off, Rom. xi. 20.

3. Christ came of them after the flesh, and was of their seed, Rom.

ix. 5; to teach us first to seek the salvation of our kindred, and countrymen, and near relations: those that are nearer to us lie next our work and service. Therefore, *to you first*.

4. That he might magnify his grace and faithfulness, not only in the matter of the gospel, but even in the first offer of it. He doth magnify his faithfulness herein, for it is said, 'Christ is the minister of the circumcision to confirm the truth to their fathers,' Rom. xv. 8. God had promised their fathers that he would raise up a Saviour, therefore he must be first discovered here; and he magnifies his grace, for there was Christ preached where he was crucified. They had the first handsel of this good news, and wrath came not upon them to the uttermost till they had despised the gospel, as well as killed the Lord of glory, 1 Thes. ii. 14, 15.

5. This was necessary too for the confirmation of the gospel: *to you first*. Christ did not sneak nor steal into the world clancularly and privately, but he would have his law set up where it was likely to be most questioned. They were most concerned to inquire into the truth of matters of fact upon which the credit of the gospel had depended. If he had first gone to the Gentiles, the Jews might have objected their condemning Christ as a malefactor, and that his messengers and apostles durst not set on foot the report of his miracles, life, and death in their confines. But Christ would have the gospel preached there, where, if there were any falsehood in it, it might easily be disproved; and because the main of the Jewish doctrine was adopted into the Christian, and was confirmed by the prophecies of the Old Testament, they were the only competent judges to whose cognisance these things should be first offered. Therefore he saith, 'Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you.'

6. That the ruin of that nation might be a fit document and proof of God's severity against the contemners of the new gospel, Acts xiii. 45-47. There it is showed that they were the first people to whom it was offered, and they contemned it, and therefore wrath came upon them to the uttermost. Therefore this did authorise and confirm this doctrine, wherever it should be preached and offered.

7. That the first ministers might be a pattern of obedience, to preach where God would have them, to preach in the very face and teeth of opposition. Christ appoints their station. The Jews were like to be the most virulent enemies against the gospel, because the rulers put Christ to death: Go, preach the gospel to all nations, but begin at Jerusalem, though there you meet with a great deal of spite and opposition. Now, because of these reasons, 'Unto you first, the Lord, having raised up his Son,' &c.

II. The second thing to be explained is the benefit offered: wherein is set forth the great love of God unto the people to whom the gospel comes.

1. In designing such a glorious person as Jesus Christ: *having raised up his Son Jesus*.

2. In that he gave notice, and did especially direct and send him to them: *hath sent his Son*.

3. Why he came among them in his word: it was *to bless them*.

[1.] In designing the person who should do them good, 'God hath raised up his Son Jesus.' It may seem to be meant of his resurrection from the dead; but I think rather to raise up is to exalt, to call, to authorise, to appoint to some notable work; and it is used for installing, consecrating, as in this very chapter: ver. 22, 'He shall raise up a prophet from among you;' Acts xiii. 23, 'Of this man's seed hath God raised up to Israel a Saviour;' that is, hath put authority upon him, given him commission to save sinners, raised up, designed him to this work. But then:—

[2.] The special direction of his providence: 'God having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you.' Sometimes the word is said to be sent to us: Acts xiii. 26, 'To you is this word of salvation sent.' He doth not say, We have brought this salvation to you, but 'To you it is sent.' God hath a great hand in directing the course of the gospel. And sometimes Christ is said to be sent, as here in the text; for where the gospel is preached to a people, Christ is sent to them as a token from heaven; if he be neglected, you despise the riches and bounty of God, and the best and choicest gift that ever could be bestowed upon the sons of men. Therefore he saith, 'God having raised his Son, hath sent him.' Where the gospel goes, there Christ is sent; there he comes that he may have work to do.

[3.] Here is the end and purport of his coming; not to take vengeance of the affronts and contumelies they had put upon him, but he comes to bless. For the opening of this word, you must look to the preceding verse. He speaks of the covenant made with Abraham, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' Now Jesus was sent unto them to assure this blessing. The blessing is any good that accrues and results to us from the covenant of grace, but chiefly those special blessings we have by Christ, reconciliation with God, and life eternal, those things which he minded to purchase for us, and hath dispensed to us by his gracious covenant. This is the blessing intended,—All nations are to be blessed in the seed of Abraham; now God having raised Christ of this man's seed, hath sent him to bless you.

III. Here is the blessing interpreted and restrained, and that is conversion from sin: 'In turning every one of you from his sins.' They expected a pompous Messiah, that should make them an opulent and potent nation. But Christ came upon another errand, to convert souls unto God. Only mark, when the apostle speaks this, he speaks it not of the intention of God, but the offer of his grace; otherwise every particular Jew must be converted, or God missed his end. God may send him to bless, and yet some may condemn the offer; others God prevents by the special efficacy of his grace, or else all would condemn it. They that do condemn it are justly passed by; and they that receive it, owe it to his grace, and not to themselves. It was the secret purpose of his grace to bring in many, and this brought in three thousand men. There were others refused this blessing offered from the Mediator, and they justly perish for their unbelief.

The point, though there be many, that I shall insist on, is:—

*Doct.* That a main blessing we have by Christ is to be turned from our iniquities.

I. Here I shall inquire, What it is to be turned from sin.

II. I shall show you, That certainly this is a very blessed thing.

III. That this is the great blessing of the Mediator that we have by Christ in the gospel.

IV. In what manner Christ turneth us from our iniquities.

I. What it is to be turned from sin. Take these considerations:—

1. Man fallen, lay under the power and guilt of sin: he was ‘dead in trespasses and sins, and liable to the wrath of God,’ Eph. ii. 1-3. So man was both unholy and guilty.

2. Christ came to free us from both these. The guilt: Eph. ii. 7, ‘In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins;’ and the power: Titus iii. 5, ‘He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.’ To be freed from guilt, and delivered from hell and wrath to come, is a blessing for which we can never be sufficiently thankful; but to be freed from sin, that is the greater mercy, and therefore ‘he hath sent his Son to bless you, in turning every one of you from your sins.’

3. To be turned from sin implies our whole conversion. Though one part only be mentioned, the term *from which*, yet the term to *which* is implied; that we are turned to God as well as turned from sin; to God, as our happiness, and our supreme Lord, that we may love him, and be happy in being beloved by him, Acts xxvi. 18.

4. That remission of sins is included in our conversion to God. The meaning is, that he may turn you from your unbelief and impenitency, and so make you capable of his pardon and mercy; for so it is explained, ver. 19, ‘Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,’ &c. Without sound repentance the Mediator’s blessing will not be had; and when Christ came to save us from wrath, his way was to turn us from sin. These two must not be severed: ‘God hath exalted him to be a prince and Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins,’ Acts v. 31. You see, then, what is meant by the blessing the Mediator offers,—to be turned from our sins.

II. It is a blessed thing to be made partakers of this benefit. Blessedness imports two things: negatively, a removal of evil; and positively, a fruition or enjoyment of some great good. When we are turned from our sins, there is both.

1. An immunity from, or a removal of, the great evil, and that is sin.

[1.] The great cause of offence between God and us is taken out of the way: Isa. lix. 2, ‘Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and have hidden his face from you.’ Sin makes the distance between you and God, that you cannot delight in God, nor God in you. You cannot delight in God, for your hearts are alienated from him. You are become ‘enemies in your mind by wicked works.’ Where sin reigns, man is an enemy to God; partly through carnal prepossession: there is something takes up his heart, and diverts it from God: 1 John ii. 15, ‘If any man love the world, how dwelleth the love of the Father in him?’ His heart is taken up with another love. And partly through carnal liberty: we cannot enjoy our lusts with that freedom and security, by reason of the restraints of his law,



that would curb us and cut us short of our desires ; and partly through slavish fear. We hate those whom we fear. A condemning God can never be loved by a guilty creature. We look upon him as one that will call us to an account for our sins. Now, all these reasons concur to show us, that till sin be taken away, we cannot love nor delight in God, neither can God love us and delight in us. God will not have communion with us while we are in our sins. Christ, when he came to bring us to God, he came not to make any change in God, to make God less holy, but to make us holy and amiable in his sight. The reasonable nature cannot digest this conceit, that the holy God should take sinners into his bosom without any change. Would it become the governor of the world to be indifferent to good and bad, the holy God to be a friend to sinners ? The new nature in us sheweth the contrary ; for that causes an abomination and abhorrence both of impurity and the impure ; as Lot's righteous soul was vexed with the Sodomites. And we are told, Prov. xxix. 27, 'An unjust man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.' If a man be sanctified but in part, he cannot delight in the wicked freely to converse with them. He hath a hatred, not of enmity so as to seek their destruction, not a hatred opposite to good-will—that is contrary to the nature of grace, which is made up of love—but a hatred of abomination, which is contrary to the love of complacency ; he cannot take any delight in him. Now, then, without a manifest reproach to the holy God, we cannot imagine he should admit sinners into an intimate communion with him : 'Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity,' Ps. v. 5. God said to the prophet, Jer. xv. 19, 'Let them return unto thee, but return not thou to them.' God will not return to us in our sins, but we must come off from our sins to him.

[2.] We are freed from the great blemish of our natures. Sin defaced the image of God in us : Rom. iii. 23, 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' We lost not only the favour of God, but the image of God ; the great excellency of our nature was eclipsed and defaced. Now the plaster will not be as broad as the sore, nor our reparation by Christ correspondent to our loss by Adam, if our nature be not healed, and the image of God restored in us. If Adam had only left us guilty, the pardon of sin had been enough ; but he conveyed an evil nature, and therefore we must be turned from our sins, as well as pardoned, otherwise Christ would not restore all that Adam took away, Ps. lxix. 4. Is he a good physician that takes away the pain, and leaves the great disease uncured ? But Christ has procured the favour of God for us, and repaired the image of God in us, and therefore certainly put us into a way of blessedness again. Holiness was our primitive excellency and amiableness.

[3.] We are freed from that that is the great burden of the creature, as well as his blemish. Whatever it be to the common sinner, that is no matter ; he hath no right thoughts of things, and is besotted with his carnal choice ; for sin is an evil, whether it be felt or no. But the awakened sinner is sensible not only of the guilt of sin, but it is his greatest burden that he should have a nature inclines him to grieve and dishonour God. Pharaoh could say, 'Take away this



plague.' But a penitent, broken-hearted sinner cries, 'Take away all iniquity.' They desire a change of this state by regeneration. Therefore the promises of the gospel, considering a penitent soul under such a distress, are suited to the case: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' If you know what sin is, and penitently bemoan yourselves to God, you will be troubled with the power and pollution of it, as well as the guilt: Micah vii. 18, 19, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He will turn again, he will have compassion, he will subdue our iniquities.' A heart truly affected doth not only desire pardon and ease, but power against sin. A man that hath his leg broken would not only desire ease of his pain, but to have his leg set right again. A leprous condemned malefactor desires not only to be freed from the sentence of condemnation, but to be cured, or his pardon will do him no good. Now, surely, it is a great blessing to be turned from our sins, to be freed from that a penitent soul finds to be so great a burden; and the Mediator gives us a notable proof of his love in it.

[4.] Being turned from our sins, we are freed from the great bane of our persons and all our happiness. Sin is a cursed inmate, it fires the lodging where it is entertained and harboured, unless speedily cast out of doors; it involves us in the curse of the law, 'The wages of sin is death;' therefore Christ, that he might free us from misery, doth first free us from sin. If pardon of sin be a blessing, certainly to be turned from sin is a blessing (for the one cannot be had without the other); till you are turned from sin you cannot be pardoned, not justified till you are sanctified: Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, 'Blessed is the man whose sin is forgiven, and whose iniquity is covered, and unto whom the Lord will not impute his sin, in whose spirit there is no guile.' When God hath given us a holy sincere heart, and turned us from our sins, then we have the blessedness of pardon: 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit,' Rom. viii. 1. We are freed from the condemning power of the law when freed from sin, and all that woe and wrath that belongs to every soul that doth evil.

By all these considerations it appears how great a blessing the turning us from sin is in the privative notion, that is, the removal of so great an evil.

2. Take blessedness in the positive notion, that is, to enjoy a great good; and it will appear it is a blessed thing to be turned from our sins.

[1.] Because this is the matter of our serenity, comfort, and peace here, and the pledge and beginning of our eternal felicity hereafter. The soul can never be settled in a holy peace till it be turned from its sins; we can never find rest till we get out of Satan's yoke and get into Christ's blessed liberty: 'The fruit of righteousness is peace,' Isa. xxxii. 17. We are freed from those unquiet and troublesome thoughts wherewith others are haunted. A wicked man's soul is in a mutiny, one affection wars against another, and all against the conscience, and the conscience against all; but where the heart is framed

to the obedience of God's will, there is peace. *Pax est tranquillitas ordinis*, when all things keep their place, as in an accurate orderly life they do: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and the whole Israel of God.' There is peace, for there is a harmonious accord between God and them, and between them and themselves: Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they that love thy law;' not only peace, but great peace, 'a peace that passeth all understanding.' Whilst we are in our sins, there is ever a fear of the war which is between God and us, and there is a war in ourselves, conscience disallowing our practices, and our practices disliking the conduct of conscience, so that there is no peace to the wicked. But when the Lord Jesus hath taken us in hand, and begun to cure us, and frame us aright, and show us his wonderful grace in turning us from our sins, here is matter provided for serenity and peace.

[2.] It is the pledge of our eternal felicity hereafter; for heaven is the perfection of holiness, or the full fruition of God in glory. Now, when the Mediator begins to take away sin, he blesses you; for the life is then begun which shall be perfected in heaven. Unless it be begun here, it will never be perfected there: for 'without holiness no man shall see God,' Heb. xii. 14. But if it be begun, it will surely be perfected there; for 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' The vision and fruition of God is begun here, the spirit of holiness is the earnest of our inheritance, Eph. i. 13, 14. Oh, what blessedness is it then to have the new heart planted into us by Christ, and to live the new life! It is the beast about you that delights in the momentary, base, dreggy pleasures of sin. But when Christ hath turned you from your sins, you are blessed indeed, you are in the way to blessedness, and you shall be blessed for ever; he gives peace as a pledge of happiness and eternal glory.

III. I shall prove that this is the Mediator's blessing.

1. Let me lay down this, that those blessings that are most proper to the Mediator are spiritual blessings. We forfeited all by sin, but especially the grace of the Spirit, whereby we might be made serviceable to God. Other mercies run in the channel of common providence, but spiritual blessings are the discriminating graces and favours that are given us by the Mediator: Eph. i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.' Christ came not to distribute honours, and greatness, and worldly riches to his followers, but to turn away every one of us from our sins, to reduce us to God, that we may love him, and be beloved of him. He came as a spiritual Saviour, to give us grace rather than temporal happiness. Most men have a carnal, Jewish notion of Christ, they would have a temporal safety and happiness, they would have deliverance from affliction, rather than deliverance from sin. To be 'delivered from every evil work' is more than to be 'delivered from the mouth of the lion.' This is most proper to the Mediator, 2 Tim. iv. 18. A sanctified use of troubles is more than an exemption from them; a carnal man may have exemption from them, but not a sanctified use of them. Poverty, lameness, blindness, are not as bad as ignorance, unruly lusts, and want of grace.

Moral evils are worse than natural. Daniel was cast into a lion's den, you would think that was a misery; but it was a greater misery when Nebuchadnezzar was thrust out among the beasts, being given up to a brutish heart. Exemption from trouble may be hurtful to us, but deliverance from sin is never hurtful to us.

Among the spiritual blessings we have by the Mediator, conversion from sin to God is the chiefest we have on this side heaven. That it was the main part of Christ's undertaking, I shall prove by scripture and reason. For scripture, the text is clear for it; for thus the apostle interprets the covenant-blessing, 'In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed,' namely, 'God hath sent him to bless you.' Wherein? 'In turning every one of you from your sins.' 'He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins,' Mat. i. 21; not only from the guilt, but the power of sin; not only from the evil *after* sin, but the evil *of* sin itself. *Denominatio est a majori*—the name is taken from what is chiefest. And so when he is promised to the Jews, 'The Redeemer shall come out of Sion, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' There is his principal work: 1 John iii. 5, Christ came 'to take away sin, and in him is no sin.' He means not only the condemning power, but the power of it in the heart; for he is pleading arguments for holiness, why believers should not run into sin, which is 'a transgression of the law.' One is from the undertaking of Christ, he came 'to take away sin;' and from the example of Christ, 'in him is no sin.' He plainly means the power of sin.

2. Now, to give you some reasons why this is the chief benefit, most eyed by Christ, and should be most regarded by us.

[1.] Christ's undertaking was principally for the glory of God: 'All the promises are in him, yea and amen, to the glory of God;' and it should not be a question which should have the precedence, the glory of God or our good. Christ came to promote God's glory, and that must have the precedence of our benefit. Now, then, the abolishing the guilt of sin doth more directly respect our interest and good; but the abolishing the power of sin, or the turning and cleansing the heart from it, doth more immediately respect the glory of God, and our subjection to God. Therefore Christ would not only pacify the wrath of God, but his chief work, that doth mostly concern the glory of God, was to heal our evil natures, and prevent sin for the time to come.

[2.] To be turned from sin is to be freed from the greatest evil; for pardon gives us an exemption from punishment, which is a natural evil, but conversion gives us freedom from our naughty hearts, which is a moral evil; and, certainly, vice is worse than pain, and sin than misery. Besides, sin is the cause of all evil, and the taking away the cause is more than ceasing the effect.

[3.] This hath nearer connection with the life of glory. Pardon only removes the impediment, but the sanctifying and healing of our natures is the beginning of the life of glory, and introduction into it. Pardon removes our guilt, which hinders our happiness; therefore, divines say, justification is *gratia removens prohibens*, that that removes the impediment; but the sanctifying the heart is an introduction into our glorious state, and the more sanctified the more meet to be partakers thereof, Col. i. 12. Now that which doth positively make

us capable of glory and happiness is a greater privilege than that which only removes the impediment.

[4.] That is the greatest benefit which makes us more amiable in the sight of God, and is the object of his delight. Now he delights in us as sanctified rather than pardoned. We love him, indeed, for pardoning and forgiving so great a debt: 'She loved much, because much was forgiven her;' but God delighteth in holiness, and the reflection and impress of his own image upon us: Prov. xi. 20, 'The upright in the way are his delight.' When the Spirit hath renewed us according to the image and nature of God, that makes us amiable in his sight, and an object of divine complacency; therefore, surely this is the great privilege and blessing we have by the Mediator here in this world. I come to the fourth thing.

IV. In what way doth Christ turn us from our iniquities?

1. He doth purchase this grace for us; and—

2. He works it in us.

1. He purchaseth this grace for us that we may be turned: 1 Peter ii. 24, 'He bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness.' That was his end, not only to lay the obligation upon us, but to procure the grace whereby we may be enabled to do so. This sacrifice was a truly propitiatory sacrifice, whereby God was appeased, and forfeited blessings restored. The loss of God's image was a great part of our punishment, and it is a part of our deliverance that Christ hath purchased this grace as well as pardon. He hath given himself for us, that he might cleanse us, and sanctify us, and make us a pure and holy people unto God, Eph. v. 25, 26.

2. As he hath purchased it for us, so he works it in us, partly by the power of his internal grace, and partly by blessing and sanctifying external means and helps for such an end and purpose.

First, I say, by the power of his internal grace changing our hearts and minds: Titus iii. 5, 6, 'He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;' and he acteth in us as Christ's Spirit, and as we are members of Christ. It is the Spirit enlightens the mind, so that we begin to see the evil that is in sin, the necessity to get rid of it: 'After I was instructed, I smote upon the thigh;' and also to overcome the obstinate heart of man and turn it to God, and to fix the inclination of the soul against sin. In short, by his preventing grace he doth convert us, by his exciting grace sanctify us, by his assisting grace he makes us persevere, in turning us more and more from sin to holiness.

Secondly, He sanctifies and blesses external helps and means. I shall instance in two—ordinances and providences.

[1.] Ordinances, such as the word and sacraments: John xvii. 19, 'I sanctified myself, that they might be sanctified by the truth,' that is, the preaching of the word. 'He gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word.' Mark these and other places of scripture, and you will find the merit of Christ doth reach the ordinances, that by them grace may be conveyed, and sin might be mortified and subdued in us. The word



calls us to excite our resolutions against sin, and strengthen them to avoid occasions to cut off the provisions of the flesh, to make it our daily task to war and strive against it; and none conscientiously wait upon the word but something by every attendance is given out for the weakening of sin and setting them afresh against it. And then the sacrament, that represents the death of Christ as the price of our dying to sin; and it represents him as the pattern according to which we must be conformed, that we may know that our old man is crucified, and that we may renew our covenant with God, and our resolutions, and bind ourselves to more serious endeavours against sin. The Lord Jesus, after he had procured the Spirit, and this wonderful grace to turn us from our sins, hath appointed congruous and fit ordinances, whereby he may dispense this grace to us more and more. And as he sanctifies ordinances, so—

[2.] Providences; for we are threshed, that our husks may fly off. Wherefore doth he chasten us sometimes, and very sorely, but to make us out of love with sin: 'The fruit of all shall be to take away sin,' Isa. xxvii. 9; and 'He chastens us verily for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness,' Heb. xii. 10. By all these means we are sanctified, by ordinances and providences, and by the all-powerful grace of this Holy Spirit.

Thus I have opened the fourth thing, how the Lord Jesus doth turn us from our sins.

The uses we may make of this point are:—

I. Of information. It informs us:—

1. Of the vain hopes of the carnal, and such as yet live in their sins; for at present they have no interest in him, and so living and dying will find him rather a judge than a Saviour, for the greatest part of their work is undone. We must be saved from the guilt and power of sin, and the latter is the proper sign of our recovery. We are 'justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified also in the Spirit of our God.' Christ did not purchase our salvation by piecemeal, nor can we receive it by piecemeal; a whole Saviour we must have, or no Saviour. She was the true mother that pleaded against the dividing of the infant. They are true Christians, I am sure, who would have Christ undivided, who would have him 'wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;' for if you take him in one respect and neglect him in another, especially the chief thing you should make use of him for, you do not take him at all. Therefore the carnal, that live in their sins, are at present excluded from all claim to Christ.

2. It shows us what we should mainly seek in our prayers. Leave not the Redeemer till he hath blessed you with his principal blessing. Our prayers for temporal happiness are not so welcome to Christ as our prayers for sanctifying grace and power against sin. Natural sense will put us upon asking corn and wine and oil; but the new creature saith, Lord, take away iniquity. Every man hath a sense of outward evils, and would fain be at ease; but every man hath not a sense of sin, and an hunger and thirst after righteousness. Self-love will prompt us to beg exemption from trouble, but sin is the worst burden to a tender heart. When your children ask you for apples and plums, and such things as are pleasing to their childish appetite, they do not



please you so much as when they desire you to teach them and instruct them in their duty, that they may not offend God and you. When you ask temporal things of God, you do not sin, for God hath given a liberty to ask daily bread; but when you ask grace, that you may be free from sin, that you may not offend God, or be a scandal to the gospel, this is most pleasing to God. When Solomon had asked wisdom, and not riches and honours, the thing pleased the Lord. These prayers are most acceptable to God, they will bring their answers with them; then you set your Redeemer about his proper work, for God 'sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your sins.' Nay; if you beg only for pardon, and do not mind the destruction of sin, you are no more willing to be saved than the devils are. Certainly the devils are willing to be saved from the wrath of God. Every creature seeks its own ease, and they would be eased of their torments. Every one would have eternal life: 'Evermore give us this bread.' But you are unwilling to be saved upon Christ's terms, if you will not let him mortify your lusts, and submit to his healing.

3. If this be the Mediator's great blessing, to turn you from your sins, then it follows that those who have their corruptions most mortified are the best Christians. The Redeemer hath been at work in their hearts, and they have most of the Mediator's blessing. He is not the best Christian that hath the most plausible gifts, that can with art and parts best perform outward duties, that hath the strongest memory, clearest apprehension, readiest elocution; but he that hath a humble, mortified, holy, pure, and self-denying spirit; for this is a more weighty point of Christ's undertaking, to make you holy, humble, and meek, than to furnish you with gifts, and make you free in speech. Again, he is not the best Christian that hath most fanatical raptures of joy, or pretended admirations of grace; but he that is crucified to the world, and hath felt the power of Christ's death. Many who are not careful, watchful, and exact in their conversations, yet will pretend to live upon Christ, and think they need not be so scrupulous to be troubled about their sins. These neglect the main end of Christ's coming, which was to turn every one of us from our iniquities.

4. It shows the necessity and excellency of holiness. The necessity of it will appear thus:—It is not only an evidence of our interest in the relative privileges, such as pardon, adoption, and the like; not only necessary by way of gratitude for salvation received, but it is necessary as a part of salvation itself. This is the salvation, the blessing of the Redeemer, this is the thing wherein he hath showed his free grace, in that he hath purchased the Spirit to heal our natures, and restore the image of God to us which was defaced by sin. Herein is Christ a Saviour, in saving his people from their sins, and 'he hath saved us by washing us in the laver of regeneration.' And once more, it is not only a main part of our salvation, but a necessary means to obtain the rest. No obtaining pardon without conversion, nor heaven till sin be quite done away. Secondly, The excellency of holiness appears. For this end we are redeemed by Christ, Luke i. 74, 75. And renewed by the Holy Ghost, Eph. iv. 24. Yea, our everlasting blessedness consists in the perfection of holiness, Eph. v. 27.

It informs us how much Christians are to blame, that they im-

prove their Christianity no more to get power and strength against sin. Christ, consider him as a prophet, priest, or king, doth still discover himself to be one that came to take away sin. As a prophet, he hath given us such a doctrine as is fit for such a use, John xvii. 17. His word is the best glass to see corruption. The highest motives in the world are propounded to purge it out. His calls, promises, and threats are all to take away sin; and as a priest, he hath paid the price that was necessary to preserve the honour of God's justice, that there might be no stop in the way of that abundant grace, and that we may have the gift of the Spirit, 1 John i. 7. Because his blood was that meritorious price that was shed, that we might be turned from sin, and this blood is pleaded before God, 'He lives for ever to make intercession for you,' that in all your conflicts and temptations you may have necessary strength against sin. As a king, he doth powerfully by his Spirit maintain his interest against the devil, world, and flesh, and helps you to overcome sin. He is 'the captain of your salvation.' Yet lamentable it is to see what a poor cowardly spirit is in most Christians, how soon captivated with every slender assault and petty temptation, and their resolutions so soon shaken, not so much for want of strength, as sluggishness and cowardice, and want of care. Men spare their pains, and then cry out they are impotent, when there is such grace provided in the Redeemer. Like lazy beggars that personate and act diseases because they would not work, they are not able to stand before the slightest motions of sin, because they do not stir up themselves and improve the grace they have, or might have by Christ. Certainly idle complaints of sin will not become those that profess an interest in Christ, for his main great undertaking, which is by all methods carried on still, is the taking away sin. So much for the information.

II. Take home with you this truth in your hearts, that Christ's work is to turn you from sin, and it is the great blessing we have from him in the new covenant. Then do not neglect this work, nor contemn this blessing. You know the fault of those, they made light of these things. Especially do not resist this work, nor grieve the Holy Spirit of Christ which would work it in you, and quench not his sanctifying motions; rather deliver up yourselves to all his healing methods, and be so far from resisting, that you should improve the power of his grace every day. He turns us indeed by way of efficiency, but we turn ourselves by submission to his blessed motions. He draws, and we run after him. Therefore, every time Christ offers this saving help, thou art put to thy choice, whether thou wilt have Christ or sin to reign over thee. Christ, that doeth it for thee, must do it in thee. Christ is the author that turns, but the sinner is the subject, and he first works upon you, and afterwards he works by you. He converts you to God by the victorious impressions of his grace, and afterwards, 'ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body.' We cannot do it; Christ must do it, but he will do it in his own way. He hath sanctified ordinances to convey this to you. Now, wilt thou wait diligently till it be accomplished? The physician cures the disease, but the patient must take the appointed medicine. You must not expect he should cure it, and thou feel it not, as it were by spells and charms without

thee, without putting thee to the trouble of physic. Take up a resolution to look after the cure of thy soul, and observe the whole progress of the work, and what a wound is given to sin in every ordinance: what in the word, what in the Lord's Supper; how thy resolution is strengthened against it; how the carnal nature wears off every day. The work is not perfect in an instant, but he is still turning; therefore when thou beginnest to be dead to sin, die more. Ye are dead, therefore mortify. Christ hath perfectly bought off all sin in every kind and degree; should not we strive to have all that he hath purchased? At least do not strengthen thy bonds, the sin thou canst not avoid hate it, and keep up the lively resistance still. Hear diligently, pray earnestly, watch narrowly, and keep thyself from thy sin: do not only pare the nails of it, but cut off thy very right hand, and mortify and subdue it yet more and more, that Christ may have his conquest in thy soul.

#### SERMON IV.

*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.—2 PET. I. 4.*

In these words the apostle extolleth the grace of God towards us in the gospel. In them take notice of:—

First, The means.

Secondly, The end and use of them.

Thirdly, The method and order in which this effect is wrought in us.

*First*, The means whereby God conveys his grace to us, viz., the promises of the gospel, which are set forth:—

1. By their excellency: *exceeding great and precious promises.*

2. Their freeness: *are given to us.*

1. Their excellency is set forth by two adjuncts. They are 'exceeding great and precious': τὰ μέγιστα καὶ τίμια ἐπαγγέλματα. The one noteth their intrinsic worth and value; they are 'exceeding great.' The other, our esteem of them; they deserve to be 'precious' to us.

[1.] Τὰ μέγιστα, so called from the matter of them, which are great and precious gifts, such as pardon, and life begun in sanctification and perfected in glory.

[2.] Τὰ τίμια ἐπαγγέλματα, precious, deserving and challenging our esteem, being so suitable to our necessities and desires. Our necessity ariseth from the fears of misery so justly deserved. Our desires are after a proper happiness, which is only offered to us in the promises of God, not only as probable, but as certain to be ours, if duly qualified. Now these promises, being so great and precious, should attract us to all purity and holiness; for what is greater, and

deserveth to be more esteemed by us, than remission of sins, and an inheritance among the sanctified?

2. Their freeness: *given*, made freely, made good freely.

*Secondly*, The end and use of them: *that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.*

By the *divine nature* is not meant here the essence of God, but his communicable excellencies, or such divine properties as can be imparted to the creature, and these not considered in their absolute perfection, but as they are agreeable to our present state and capacity. These are sometimes called 'the image of God:' Col. iii. 10, 'The new man, which is renewed in holiness after the image of him that created him;' because they imply a likeness to him. And sometimes 'the life of God:' Eph. iv. 18, 'Being alienated from the life of God,' because it is a vital principle. And here 'the divine nature,' and that for two reasons:—

1. Because these are communicated to us by God; they are created in us by his divine power, and therefore the word *created* is so often used on this occasion: Eph. ii. 10, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus;' 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' Creation is proper to God. We have them by virtue of our communion with him. They flow from God, as the light doth from the sun.

2. Because by these perfections we somewhat resemble God. Therefore it is said, 1 Peter ii. 9, 'We show forth his praises:' τὰς ἀρετάς, his virtues or divine attributes, his 'wisdom, goodness, bounty, holiness;' for in these we most resemble him. If you take in his power, there is some resemblance of that too, as to the moral exercise in taming our own flesh, mastering our inordinate lusts and passions, and vanquishing all temptations. This is a spiritual power, and so spoken of Prov. xvi. 32, 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.' And πάντα ῥυθύνω, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me,' Phil. iv. 13. To live above the hopes and fears of the world is a great ability and power. And vanquishing the world is made the fruit of the new birth: 1 John v. 4, 'That which is born of God overcometh the world.' And in that place where the spirit of a Christian is described, it is said to be 'a spirit of love, power, and of a sound mind,' 2 Tim. i. 7. We conceive God to be a spiritual being, of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. To his wisdom answereth the spirit of a sound mind; to his goodness, a spirit of love; and what is the original and pattern of the spirit of power, the very name discovereth, namely, God's own power. So all his attributes leave their impress upon us.

*Thirdly*, The way, method, and order how we receive this benefit of the divine nature. 'Having first escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' As we die to sin, the divine nature increaseth in us. There is a putting off before there can be a putting on: Eph. iv. 22-24, 'We put off the old man, which is corrupt by its deceitful lusts.' We begin the work of sanctification with mortification in the first place, and then proceed to the positive duties of a new life; for the plants of righteousness will not thrive in an impenitent



and unmortified heart. As the corruption of sin is driven out and expelled, so the divine nature succeedeth. *Intus existens prohibet alienum*, these things are not consistent, cannot be joined together. The corruption that is in the world and the divine nature can no more agree than darkness and light, Rom. xiii. 12. But let us see how this mortification is expressed.

1. What is to be avoided.

2. The manner of shunning it.

1. What is to be avoided: 'The corruption that is in the world through lust.' Observe, sin is called *corruption*, as often in scripture, because it is a blasting of our primitive excellency and purity; Gen. vi. 12, 'All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth;' Ps. xiv. 1, 'They are all corrupt and abominable;' that is, degenerated, fallen from their pristine or former purity. Observe, the seat of this corruption is said to be in the world, where lust and all uncleanness reigneth; therefore called *μιάσματα κόσμου*, 'the pollutions of the world,' 2 Peter ii. 20. The generality of men are defiled with them, corrupted in their faith, worship, and manners; therefore conversion is called for under these terms: Acts ii. 40, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation.' Conversion to God implies a renouncing or an escaping the evil fashions and corruptions of the world, or 'having no fellowship with them,' with their sins, but 'reproving them rather.' So that the question is, whether we will conform ourselves to God or the world? whether we will have fellowship with the corruptions of the world, or be partakers of the divine nature? We must avoid the one to obtain the other. Lastly, observe, that this corruption is said to reign in the world 'through lust.' Besides the bait there is the appetite; it is our naughty affections that make our abode in the world unsafe and dangerous. If it were not for lust, neither the baits nor the examples of the world would pervert or hurt. Mortify the lust, and you have pulled up the temptations by the roots.

2. The manner of shunning, in the word *escaping*. There is a flying away required, and that quickly, as in the plague, *cito longe*; or from a fire which hath almost burned us, or a flood that breaketh in upon us. We cannot soon enough escape from sin: Mat. iii. 7, 'Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come;' Heb. vi. 18, 'Who have fled for refuge,' &c. No motion but flight becomes us in this case.

*Doct.* That the great end and effect of the promises of the gospel is, to make us partakers of the divine nature.

I. Let us consider the effect or end.

II. The means appointed to attain it.

III. The influence of the one on the other.

I. For the effect or end. There observe:—

1. That it is a natural, not a transient effect. There may be such a sense of the goodness, wisdom, and power of God as may produce a sudden passion; as suppose of fear or love. It may only affect us for the present, but inferreth no change of heart and life. There is an impression we cannot deny, and an impression suitable to those apprehensions that we have of God; but it is not a constant principle of holy spiritual operation. But the promises of the gospel are to breed



in us such a temper of heart as may be a second nature to us, a habit or constitution of soul that may incline us to live to God. A habit serveth for this use, *ut quis facile, jucunde et constanter agat*, that a man may act easily, pleasantly, and constantly. (1.) To act easily. There is an inclination and propensity to holiness. God created all things with an inclination to their proper operations, as air to ascend, and water to descend. So the new creature hath a tendency to those actions that are proper to it. Their hearts are bent to please God and serve him, and do whatever they do with a kind of naturalness, because of this bent and inclination. They act not only or barely as enjoined, but as inclined. The law of God is in their hearts, Heb. viii. 10. So act not by constraint, but with a ready mind. (2.) To act pleasantly. They have not only a new bent, bias, and tendency, but it is a delight to do what is holy, Ps. xl. 8, as being in their element when they are thus employed. What is against nature is ingrate and harsh, but what is with nature is sweet and pleasant. It is hard, a kind of force, to bring them to do the contrary, 1 John iii. 9. There needeth some kind of violence to bring a good man to sin, as also a naughty man to do good. (3.) It is a constant principle of holy operations, so that a man doth not only obey God easily, but evenly, and without such frequent interruptions of the holy life. Many do that which is good, or forbear evil, uneasily, because of the restraints of providence or dictates of conscience, and unevenly by fits and starts: Ps. cvi. 3, 'Blessed is he that keepeth judgment, and doth righteousness at all times.' They are continually exercising of all duties of godliness, righteousness and mercy; for the operations of nature are constant, however impeded, obstructed, or diverted at certain times. This we are to look after, that the sanctifying grace we have received become a new nature; that the soul have a tendency and delight as to spiritual objects, and be constantly and easily carried to them, and this should be the whole frame and drift of our lives.

2. It is a divine nature; that is, not only such as floweth from God, but may carry some resemblance with him or to him. It floweth from God, for we are 'partakers;' it is but a ray from his excellency, and it carrieth a likeness to him, or cometh nearer to the nature of God himself, than anything that a man is capable of. Now this is said for two reasons:—

[1.] To show the dignity of it. Nothing known to man is so like God as a sanctified soul. The saints have their Maker's express image; therefore if God be excellent and holy, they are so. The image and picture of God and Christ is in them, not made by a painter or carver, but by the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. iii. 18. This is not a forbidden image, which may pollute and stain our minds, or form in us ill thoughts and conceptions of God, but raise our hearts to him. Natural conscience doth homage to the image of God shining in the saints: Mark vi. 20, 'Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy.' So of Moses it is said, Exod. xi. 3, 'Moses was a great man in the land of Egypt, and in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of all people.' His person and presence was awful to them, as having something rare in it. There is a secret

sentiment of the excellency of holiness that draweth eyes after it, and maketh wicked and carnal men wonder at it, stand in awe of those in whom it is eminent, and extorteth a reverence from them. But especially when they come to die they have a sense of this excellency; all then approve a sober, righteous, and godly life, and disallow that which is dissolute and carnal. Then all things appear in their own colours, and the fumes of lust being dissipated, they begin more clearly to discern the happiness of those who are made like God. Then those that would live with the carnal would fain die with the righteous: Num. xxiii. 10, 'Let my last end be like his.' When entering on the confines of eternity they grow wiser.

[2.] To show the quality and condition of it. You must have a new nature, and such a nature as may be a divine nature. If you have nothing above natural men or corrupt nature, you are strangers to the promises of the gospel. It is a thought that possesseth many when they are pressed to Christian duties, they will say, we are not saints or angels, and therefore cannot abstain from such sins, or attain unto a heavenly life. But do you mark what is said here: Christians must be partakers of a divine nature; and not only they are cut off from any privilege by Christ 'who corrupt themselves as brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed,' Jude 10—that is, against the light of nature ingulf themselves in all manner of dissoluteness and sensuality; but also they that walk as men, only according to the rule of men, who mind nothing beyond the present world: 1 Cor. iii. 3, 'Are not ye carnal, and walk as men?'—that is, they are not raised above the pitch of mere men, and have nothing of the Spirit of God in them.

[3.] This divine nature may be considered three ways. Either—

(1.) As begun; when we are first 'renewed in the spirit of our minds,' and regenerated 'according to the image of God,' Eph. iv. 23, 24. There is a wonderful change wrought in sinners by reason of the divine qualities impressed on them; so that the creature beginneth to look like God himself: their nature is altered, their course of life is altered, and their designs and actions have something divine in them.

(2.) As increased; when more like God in a conspicuous degree. At first the impression is but weak, and this glory is darkened by remaining imperfections; and we show forth much of Adam upon all occasions, as well as somewhat of Christ. But where any are sincere and diligent, the old nature is more suppressed and curbed, and the divine nature doth more eminently appear: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We are changed from glory to glory.' It is a work capable of spiritual progress. We should grow more like God, and come nearer to the nature of God every day; and it is a shame we are not, having been so long acquainted with the word.

(3.) As it is perfected in heaven; for there we have the nearest communion with God, and so the highest conformity to him that we are capable of: 1 John iii. 2, 'We shall see God as he is, and be like him.' Perfectly like him; for the being of sin is then utterly abolished: there is not the least stain or blemish upon a glorified soul. Besides, then we are like him, not only in point of holiness,

but in point of happiness and felicity; for God is a holy and happy being. Here we resemble God more in holiness and purity; for many times the most eminent and exemplary holiness may be accompanied with remarkable afflictions; at least, sanctifying grace doth not exempt us from them. But there, as our holiness is exact, our felicity is complete also. First we are made holy, and then immortal, and in both like God. Well, then, this is the effect, 'partakers of a divine nature;' so that when you come among the people of God, and you be asked what kind of men do you find them to be, as Gideon, in another case, asked Zeba and Zalmunnah concerning his brethren, who answered, 'Each one resembled the children of a king,' Judges viii. 18,—they were godly<sup>1</sup> and majestic persons,—so it will be said concerning the saints, who are really and eminently partakers of the grace of the gospel: they are all children of the most high God; as like God as mortal men can be,—bear his image, and express resemblance of the grace of the gospel.

II. Let us now see the means by which God doth accomplish this effect: 'To us are given great and precious promises.'

1. It is an instance of God's love, that he will deal with us in the way of promises. The world is depraved by sin, and sunk into fears and despair of any good from God, whom we have so highly provoked. Therefore God invites and allures us to himself by promises; for promises and<sup>2</sup> declarations of God's will in the gospel, whereby he signifies what good he will freely bestow us, if we will look after it. These advantages we have by them:—(1.) A promise is more than a purpose; for the purpose and intention of a man is secret and hidden in his own bosom, but a promise is open and manifest. Thereby we get the knowledge of the good intended to us. If God had only purposed to bestow all his grace upon us, we could not have known his intention and purpose till it were manifested in the effect; it would have been as a hidden treasure or sealed fountain, of no comfort and encouragement to us till we had found it. But now the word is gone out of his lips, we may know how we shall speed, if we will hearken to his counsel. God's promises are, on his part, the eruption or overflow of his love. His heart is so big with thoughts of good to us, that his love cannot stay till the accomplishment of things, but he must tell us aforehand: Isa. xlii. 9, 'Before they spring forth, I tell you of them.' He might have done us good, and given us no notice; but that would not satisfy him. It is an obligation God takes upon himself, *promittendo, se debitorem fecit*. God's purposes are unchangeable, but promises are a security put into our hands, not only give us notice, but assurance that thus it shall be. We have the greater holdfast upon him, and may put his bond in suit: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' (2.) It is more than a doctrinal declaration. It is one thing to reveal a doctrine, another to promise a benefit; that maketh a thing known, this maketh a thing sure, and upon certain terms; that gives us notice, but this gives us interest. If 'life and immortality' had been only 'brought to light in the gospel,' 2 Tim. i. 10, which was only obscurely known to the heathens, it were a great mercy that we were

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'goodly'?—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Qu. 'are'?—ED.

not left to blind guesses and dark conjectures. That eternal life is set before us, a thing real and excellent, is a great matter. But God hath put it into a covenant form and promise, 1 John ii. 25, that we may make our title and our claim. Surely that is matter of great comfort to us: Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' (3.) It is more than a prophecy or simple prediction. Scripture prophecies will be fulfilled because of God's veracity; but scripture promises will be fulfilled, not only because of God's veracity, but also his fidelity and justice; for by God's promise man cometh to have a right to the thing promised. It was his mercy and goodness to make the promise, but his justice and fidelity bindeth him to make it good: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;' 2 Tim. iv. 8. Divines say, of all lies, a promissory lie is the worst; for this is not only against truth, but right, even though that right entirely accrue from your own free promise.

2. The promises of the new covenant are of a most glorious and valuable nature. They are not about small things, or things of little moment, but about worthy and dear-bought blessings. They contain spiritual and eternal riches; such as the healing of our nature, the pardon of our sins, a safe conduct unto eternal happiness; the glorifying of our souls, the resurrection of our bodies, and then life everlasting, or an unchangeable state of happiness. These are the greatest things indeed, in comparison of which all the things of the world are but as a May-game, vain and empty, or the smallest matters, as the apostle calleth them, 1 Cor. vi. 2. Reconciliation with God is our privilege here; and is it a light thing to be at peace with the living God? to enjoy his amity and love? to study and fit ourselves to do his will? to live in constant communion with him now? to have access to him at all times? to obtain from him whatever in reason and righteousness we can ask? A Christian is never upbraided with the perpetuity of addresses, never denied audience, never has cause to doubt of success, has more familiarity with God, and a surer interest in his love, than the greatest favourites have in any prince or potentate upon earth. But then the eternal enjoyment of God hereafter: Phil. iii. 14, 'I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling in God in Christ Jesus.' It is a high prize that is set before us; then we shall have a larger capacity to know God, and enjoy him, and receive his benefits: Ps. xvii. 15, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' Oh! cry out: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.'

3. They are precious promises, worthy of our esteem; for they are not about things that we have nothing to do with, but such wherein we are deeply and intimately concerned. In God's promises there is due provision made for the desires, necessities, and wants of mankind. Let me instance in pardon and life, the first inviting benefits, Acts xxvi. 18. Pardon answereth the fears, and life those desires of happiness which are so natural to us.

[1.] The consciousness of sin, and the fear of God's wrath and dis-



pleasure, should make offers of pardon acceptable to us. The great scruple of the guilty creature is how sin shall be expiated and God appeased, Micah vi. 6, 7. We fear punishment from a holy and just God, and cannot get rid of bondage till sin be forgiven. The justice of the supreme governor of the world will be ever dreadful to us. The gospel serveth for this use, to give us the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, Luke i. 77.

[2.] The other great privilege is eternal life. Corrupt nature is not against the offers of felicity. There was never a creature heard of that would not be happy, for there was never a creature but loved himself. Therefore what more powerful inducement to bring us into the way of holiness than this blessed hope set before us, that we may see God, and live for ever? Titus ii. 12, 13. It is true, we are greatly enchanted with false happiness, but shall not such an offer be precious to us? John vi. 34, 'Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.'

4. All this is given to us wretched men without any desert of ours; nay, we had deserved the contrary. Without our asking or thinking, the covenant was framed and modelled to our hands, and in the frame and contexture of it we may see a constant strain of covenant grace, in the richness of the benefits, the graciousness of the donor, the seasonableness of the offer, the readiness of the help, when once we set ourselves to seek after God, and please and serve him; and, lastly, in the sureness of the reward, notwithstanding frailties and imperfections.

III. The influence of the one upon the other; or, how do these promises promote the divine nature?

1. From their drift, which is, to draw us from the creature to God, and the world to heaven; to mortify the esteem of the false happiness which tainteth and corrupteth our natures; and to raise us to those noble objects and ends which dignify and adorn the soul, and make it in a sort divine. It breedeth an excellent spirit in us, which is carried above the world, and the hopes and fears of it, 1 Cor. ii. 12. Alas! what a mean spirit have they that drive no higher trade than providing for the flesh, or accommodating a life which must shortly expire! Like foolish birds who, with great art and contrivance, feather a nest, which within a little while they leave. But how divine and god-like are they who look to higher things, to please God, enjoy communion with him, and live with him for ever!

2. The matter of the promises. Many of which concern the change of our hearts, the cleansing or healing of our natures: Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people;' Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh;' Jer. xxxiii. 8, 'And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity.' All which are encouragements of prayer to God for this benefit. If God doth not exclude us, we should not exclude ourselves.



3. The conditions or terms on which our right is suspended. Not pardon without repentance : Acts iii. 19, 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins might be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord ; Acts ii. 38, 39, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,' &c. Not heaven or eternal life without holiness : Heb. xii. 14, 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ;' 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' Mat. v. 8.

4. The power with which the promises are accompanied : 2 Peter i. 3, 'According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.' He gives us life temporal and spiritual, and that immutable life of felicity hereafter. The divine nature is communicated to us by virtue of the promises ; for the Spirit is our sanctifier, and he works by congruous means.

*Use 1.* Believe the promises, for they are most sure and certain. God's testimony of the good things he will bestow upon us cannot deceive us, or beget a vain and uncertain hope. His promise is a testimony of his will, and against his power nothing can stand. 'There shall be a performance of those things spoken of by the Lord,' Luke i. 45.

2. Esteem them : Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' We can never embrace them till we are persuaded of their truth. But then consider their worth. Great is the stupidity of those who are nothing taken with these things. If a great man engages himself any way, we make great reckoning of his word ; and shall we not make great matter of the word of God, and esteem his promises ? Esteem them so as to get them at any price, Mat. xiii. 46. Sell all for the pearl of price. Esteem them so as to be contented with a mean condition in the world. Though God keeps us low, it is enough to be 'made partakers of his holiness :' Heb. xii. 10, 'For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Esteem them so as to perform the duties required, Ps. cxix. 14 ; esteem them so as to keep up your rejoicing in Christ : Phil. iii. 8-10, 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ;' and ver. 3, 'We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'

3. Labour to improve the belief of every promise for the increase of holiness, that we may be like God, pure and holy as he is : 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'

## SERMON V.

*For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.*—MARK IX. 49.

IN the context you have a caution which our Lord gives against scandals and offences given to others, either by defection from the truth, or by a sinful conversation. And—

1. He intimates the cause of these scandals, which is some beloved lust; and that is better mortified than satisfied. There is something precious, profitable, and pleasant in our opinion, estimation, and affection, that calls us from God, and the duties we owe to him, and apprehended by us as so necessary for us, that we can no more spare it than a right eye, a right hand, or a right foot.

2. Our Lord compares the loss of satisfaction in such lusts with the danger of perishing for ever; and shows that (all things considered) it were better to be deprived of this profit, pleasure, or honour, than to lose eternal life, and run the hazard of eternal death. Either that pleasure or lust must be denied, or we perish for ever. The right hand must be cut off, or else we shall be cast into hell-fire.

3. Our Lord shows the danger of perishing for ever, amplified by a notable description, 'Their worm never dies, and their fire shall never be quenched.' The scripture lisps to us in our own dialect, and speaks in such notions we can best understand, and therefore represents the state of the damned by what is terrible to sense. By the worm is meant the anguish of conscience, by fire the wrath of God. *Memoria præteritorum, sensus presentium, metus futurorum.* The torment of the wicked arises partly from their own consciences. There is a vexing remembrance of what is past, their folly in the neglect of grace; and there is a bitter sense of that doleful state into which they have now plunged themselves, and a fear of what is yet to come. Now, beside this remorse for their folly, there is also a 'fire that shall never be quenched,' or the sharp torments that are prepared for the wicked.

4. Here is a collation or comparison of opposites—the pains of hell, with the trouble of mortification. First or last we must endure troubles and difficulties. Now it is much more eligible to take pains in the mortifying of sin, than to bear eternal pains in the punishment of it. This is that which is expressed in the text, 'For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.' In the words—

1. Observe, a double salting, either *with fire* or *with salt*; the one referring to one sort of people, and the other to the other. They agree in the common nature: for salt is of a fiery nature, and apt to consume; but they differ in the matter to be consumed, Salt consumes the superfluous moisture, which is apt to cause putrefaction; but the fire consumes the substance itself; so that to be salted with fire is to be given up to everlasting destruction. Fire consumeth all things; and God is called 'a consuming fire' to the wicked, Heb. xii. 29.

2. Here is also an allusion to sacrifices; for every man that lives in the world must be a sacrifice to God. The wicked are a sacrifice to God's justice; but the godly are a sacrifice dedicated and offered to him, that they may be capable of his mercy. The first are a sacrifice against their wills, but the godly are a free-will offering, a sacrifice not taken but offered. Now, the law of all sacrifices was, that they were to be salted with salt: Lev. ii. 13, 'And every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat-offering; with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.' Three times it is repeated there, to show that every sacrifice must be salted. That the wicked, the objects of God's vindictive justice, are accounted sacrifices, is evident by scripture. When the destruction of Moab is spoken of: Isa. xxxiv. 6, 'The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, and with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.' So Jer. xli. 10, God threatens there that the sword shall devour, and be made drunk with their blood, 'For the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country, by the river Euphrates.' What is in these places called a slaughter is also called a sacrifice. So when God intended a great carnage of his enemies, he calls upon the fowls of heaven, Ezek. xxxix. 17, 'Assemble yourselves, and come to my sacrifice;' with an allusion to the beasts offered in sacrifice. This may be gathered from the signification of the sacrifices, the burnt-offerings especially, which signified the guilt of the sinner; the death of Christ, which is the propitiation for sin; and the obedience of the sacrificer, as devoted to God. Now the first signification took place, and had its effect upon them, if they neglected the other two meanings of the sacrifices; and therefore they were to be looked on as salted with fire; whereas the other, who were accepted, were salted with salt.

3. The third observation for the opening of this is the two references of these saltings, or the distinct and proper application of them.

[1.] To the wicked: 'For every one shall be salted with fire;' that is, every one of them spoken of before, who indulged their corrupt affections, who did not entirely and heartily keep the covenant of God, and renounce their beloved lusts.

[2.] Here is the application to the godly: 'Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt;' that is, every one that is not a sacrifice by constraint, but voluntarily surrenders and gives up himself to God, to be ordered and disposed of according to his will, he is salted, not with fire, but with salt, which every one that is devoted to God is bound to have within himself. So while some are destined to the wrath of God, and salted with fire to be consumed and destroyed, others are salted with salt, preserved and kept savoury in the profession and practice of godliness. The doctrine is this:—

*Doct.* The grace of mortification is very necessary for all those who are devoted to God.

I shall prove three things:—

I. That the true notion of a Christian is, that he is a sacrifice, or a thank-offering to God.

II. That the grace of mortification is the true salt, whereby this offering and sacrifice should be seasoned.

III. I shall show you the necessity of this salt, that we may keep right with God in the duties of the covenant.

I. The true notion of a Christian is, that he is a sacrifice to God. This is evident by Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;' that is, the reasonable part, which was figured by the sacrifices and oblations of the law: and so Isa. lxvi. 20, 'They shall bring your brethren for an offering unto the Lord.' Under the law, beasts were offered to God, but in the gospel men are offered to him; not as beasts were to be destroyed, slain, and burnt in the fire, but to be preserved for God's use and service. In offering anything to God, two things were of consideration; there was a separation from a common, and a dedication to a holy use, and they both take place in the present matter.

1. There is a separation of ourselves from a common use. The beast was separated from the flock or herd for this special purpose, to be given to God. Thus we are separated and set apart from the rest of the world, that we may be a people to God. We are 'no more our own,' 1 Cor. vi. 19; and we are 'no more to live to ourselves, but to him that died for us,' 2 Cor. v. 15. We are not to live to the world, to the flesh, or to such things as the natural heart craves; we have no right in ourselves to dispose of ourselves, of our time, of our interest, of our strength, but must wholly give up ourselves to God, to be disposed, ordered, governed by him at his own will and pleasure.

2. There is a dedication of ourselves to God, to serve, please, honour, and glorify him.

[1.] The manner of dedicating ourselves to God is to be considered. It is usually done with grief, shame, and indignation at ourselves, that God hath been so long kept out of his right, with a full purpose to restore it to him with advantage: 1 Pet. iv. 3, 'The time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh, and of man;' it is high time to give up ourselves to the will of God; we have been long enough, too long, dishonouring God, destroying our souls, pleasing the flesh, living according to the flesh and the course of the world; therefore they desire to make restitution: Rom. vi. 19, 'For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.' Their forepast neglects of God and duty to him fill their hearts with shame, therefore they resolve to double their diligence, and to be as eminent in holiness as before they were in vanity and sin.

[2.] It is with a deep sense of the Lord's love in Christ; for we give up ourselves to God, not as a sin-offering, but as a thank-offering: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you by the mercies of the Lord;' and 2 Cor. v. 14, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.' They are ravished with an admiration of God's goodness in Christ, and so give up themselves to him.



[3.] They do entirely give up themselves to God, not to be his in a few things, but in all, to serve him with all their faculties: 'You are not your own, but are bought with a price; therefore glorify God both with your bodies and souls, which are God's,' 1 Cor. vi. 20; and to serve him in all conditions: Rom. xiv. 8, 'Whether we live, we live unto God, or whether we die, we die unto God; for living or dying we are the Lord's.' They are willing to be used for his glory, not only as active instruments; but as passive objects, they give up themselves to obey his governing will, and to submit to his disposing will, to be what he would have them to be, as well as to do what he would have them to do: Phil. i. 20, 'According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.' Thus with all their faculties, in every condition of life, are they to be devoted to God in all actions. It is said, Zech. xiv. 20, 21, that 'holiness to the Lord shall be written,' not only 'upon the bowels of the altar and the pots of the Lord's house,' but also 'upon all the pots of Jerusalem;' not only upon the vessels of the temple, but upon common utensils; that is, translate it into a gospel phrase, that not only in our sacred, but even in our common and civil actions, &c., we should live as a people that are offered up to God.

[4.] The end why we give up ourselves to God is to serve, please, and glorify him: Acts xxvii. 23, 'His I am, and him I serve;' to please him by the obedience of his will: Rom. xii. 1, 2, 'Ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God;' Col. i. 10, 'That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.' And also to glorify him is their end and use. Phil. i. 21, 1 Cor. x. 31. This is the dedication by which a Christian becomes a spiritual and a holy sacrifice unto God. Now we must be sincere and real in this, partly—

(1.) Because the truth of our dedication will be known by our use: many give up themselves to God, but in the use of themselves there is no such matter; they carry it as though their tongues were their own, and had no Lord over them, Ps. xii. 4. They speak what they please; they use their hearts as their own, to think and covet what they please; their hands as their own, to do what they please; their bodies as their own, to prostitute them to all excess and filthiness; and their wealth and strength and time as their own, either to spare it, or lavish it according as their lusts guide and incline them. No, no; a sincere Christian makes conscience of his dedication to God, the reality and sincerity of it is seen in the use of themselves, and if he be tempted to do anything contrary to this vow and dedication, his heart riseth against the temptation: 1 Cor. vi. 15, 'Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.' In point of fidelity to God, as we are in covenant with him, we must be careful that we employ and use what is God's for the glory of God; we must make conscience of alienating that that is sacred,



that that is the Lord's: your thoughts, your affections, your time, your strength, do all belong to him.

(2.) Because God will one day call us to an account: Luke xix. 23, 'He will demand his own with usury.' We shall be called to a reckoning, what we have done for God, what part and portion he hath had in our time, our strength, our parts, our interest; therefore every prudent and wise Christian should himself keep a faithful and constant reckoning how he lays out himself for God, for he must have a share in all things that we have or do.

(3.) We must be very sincere in this, because we are under the eye and inspection of God, who considers whose business we do, his or our own: Luke i. 75, 'That we should serve him in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' We are ever before him, and though he doth not presently call us to an account, yet many times now he punisheth us for our neglect and mindlessness of his interest: Ezek. xvi. 8, 'Ye entered into a covenant with me, and became mine.' That was the reason of his judgments against them. When those that are his do not carry themselves as his, when that that is sacred is profaned by a common use, then a judgment is coming upon a nation, if dedicated to God, and it warps from him, or upon a person, if his ways be not upright with him.

II. The next thing I am to do is to prove that the grace of mortification is the true salt wherewith this offering and sacrifice should be seasoned. There is some dispute what is meant by the salt which Christ recommends to his disciples, and what was figured by the salt in the sacrifice, whether wisdom or zeal. In general, it is the grace of the Holy Spirit, by which sin is subdued and prevented; and the meaning suits exactly with the emblem and representation: for—

1. Salt preserves flesh from putrefaction by consuming that superfluous and excrementitious moisture, which otherwise would soon corrupt; and so the salt of the covenant doth prevent and subdue those lusts which would cause us to deal unfaithfully with God. Alas! meat is not so apt to be tainted as we are to be corrupted and weakened in our resolutions to God, without the mortifying grace of the Spirit. 'That which is lame is soon turned out of the way, unless it be healed,' Heb. xii. 13. And nothing is so unstable and mutable as an unmortified soul; therefore we can never behave ourselves as a sacrifice and an offering to God, unless we 'mortify our members which are upon earth, inordinate affections, covetousness, and the like,' Col. iii. 5. In short, the flesh is that which is apt to be corrupted, and therefore the grace that doth preserve us must be something that doth wean us from the interests of the flesh, and what is that but the mortifying grace of the Holy Spirit? The apostle saith, Eph. vi. 24, 'Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity,' or 'in incorruption.' There are many crooked lusts which are apt to corrupt us and withdraw our love to other things, but when these are mortified and subdued, that we may have a greater amplitude of affection towards God and Christ, then we are said to love him in sincerity and in incorruption.

2. Salt hath an acrimony, and doth inacerate things and pierce into them; and so the grace of mortification is painful and troublesome to the carnal nature. How healthful and useful soever it be to the soul,

no question it is distasteful to curb our affections, and govern our hearts in the fear of God, and to row against the stream of flesh and blood ; but yet it is wholesome, it is a crucifying of the flesh, to handle it as Christ suffered on the cross, to give it vinegar and gall ; but yet this is necessary ; this is the thing which our Lord intends here in the context, that the sacrifice must be consumed or macerated ; we either must suffer the pains of hell or the pains of mortification ; we must be salted with fire or salted with salt. It is better to pass to heaven with difficulty and austerity, than to avoid these difficulties and run into sin, and so be in danger of eternal fire. The strictness of Christianity is nothing so grievous as the punishment of sin. The philosophers, when they speak of the nature of man, observe that in the concupiscible part, τὸ ὑγρὸν, something like moisture inclines to pleasure, in the irascible, τὸ ψυχρὸν, something like cold inclines to fear. This salt is to fetch out both, by checking our sensual inclination and also our worldly fears. We must crucify the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof ; they that are Christ's have done so, Gal. v. 24. We should rather displease ourselves and displease all the world than displease God, or be unfaithful in our duty to Christ. No profit, no pleasure, or secular concernment is so necessary, so comfortable, so useful to us as salvation.

3. Salt makes things savoury, so grace makes us savoury ; which may be interpreted with respect either to God or man.

[1.] Acceptable to God when seasoned with this salt, for God would accept of no sacrifice without it. Not that he tasted of their meat-offerings, or did eat the fat or flesh of bulls and goats, and drink their blood, and so would have it seasoned for his palate and appetite ; it is not so to be understood ; but in types as well as in similitudes there is a condescension to our sense and apprehension of things. That that is salted is savoury, therefore God would note his acceptation of our persons and services this way. By nature we are all odious, unsavoury, and distasteful to God by reason of sin: Ps. xiv. 3, 'They are all become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one:' in the Hebrew, it is putrified, stinking like corrupt and rotten flesh. We must be salted and seasoned by the grace of Christ, and so we become amiable and acceptable in the sight of God. The more upright we are, the more he delighteth in us.

[2.] To men: the more we are thus salted and mortified, the more shall we do good to others. Our Lord tells his disciples, Mat. v. 13, 'Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.' This is spoken to the disciples as disciples, not as apostles and public persons. It is a mistake to think that only ministers are the light of the world and the salt of the world. No ; all Christians must shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation ; all Christians must be as the salt of the earth. Christ's whole sermon contains general duties, and the disciples were not yet sent abroad as apostles, nor ever heard of such a commission, or that their master would send them abroad for the proselyting the world to the kingdom of God: that was done afterwards, chap. x., and therefore here he speaks to Christians as Christians. Now, they are said to be salt, even as they season all those among whom

they live. A Christian is never savoury in his conversation with others till he hath salt in himself; then all his actions are seasoned with grace, and beget a remembrance of God; then his words are seasoned with grace, and do good to others. The apostle saith, Eph. iv. 29, 'Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth;' that rotten and corrupt communication which vents itself in slandering, railing, ribaldry, foolish jesting at holy things, lies, cursing, and the like: all these come from a corrupt heart, as a stinking breath argues rotten lungs. These want the grace of mortification: so are all sapless spirits, that cannot speak anything of God seriously, but in their most serious discourse are as fresh as water. But go among the mortified, and you receive the savour of good things from them; you have not only savoury prayers and savoury sermons, but savoury conferences and discourses: Col. iv. 6, 'Let your speech be alway powdered with salt;' that is, do not speak idly, much less profanely, but in an edifying manner. Now, Christians ought to take heed they do not lose their savouriness, for then they do not please God nor profit man, and are fit for nothing but the dunghill. Thus I have proved the second thing, that the grace of mortification is the true salt that seasons Christians.

III. There is a necessity of this salt in all those that have entered into covenant with God, and have dedicated and devoted themselves to him.

1. By our covenant vow we are bound to the strictest duties, and that upon the highest penalties. The duty to which we are bound is very strict. We have answered God in all the demands of his covenant: 1 Peter iii. 21, 'For baptism saveth as the answer of a good conscience towards God.' The Lord demands and puts in effect this question, Will you die unto sin and live unto righteousness? This is the tenor of the baptismal covenant that is so often, so solemnly, renewed at the Lord's Supper; and you are to 'reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness, through Christ Jesus our Lord,' Rom. vi. 11; reckon yourselves, that is, in vow and obligation. And the penalty is very high if we sin wilfully, Heb. x. 26; so that our admission into Christ's family will be in vain, yea, to our further ruin if you do not stand to the covenant, if you keep sin still alive, and add fuel to the flames.

2. The abundance of sin that yet remains in us, and the marvellous activity of it in our souls. We cannot get rid of this cursed inmate till our tabernacle be dissolved, and this house of clay tumbled into the dust. Paul groaned sorely under it: 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. vii. 24. And it is called 'sin that doth easily beset us,' Heb. xii. 1. Well, then, since sin is not nullified, it must be mortified. It works, it wars, there is a marvellous activity in it, it is very active and restless: Rom. vii. 8, 'Sin wrought in me all manner of concupiscence;' he means sinful nature. And the apostle James tells us, chap. iv. 5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' There is not a sleepy, but a stirring principle always inclining us to evil, and hindering that which is good. Sin doth not only make us a little flexible and yielding to temptations, but doth hurry us and impel us thereunto. It is 'a law warring in our members, that brings us into captivity to sin,' Rom.

vii. 23. Corrupt nature is not a tame thing, that works not till it be irritated by the suggestions of Satan or temptations of the world, but is like a living spring, that pours out water of its own accord ; it will not let us alone. The heart of man is evil continually, and so it always hinders us from that that is good : Rom. vii. 21, 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.' It blunts the edge of our affections, it seeks to weaken our purposes by unbelieving thoughts, or drawing us away from God by the lure of some sensitive delight ; in stealing our hearts from him in the very duties and solemn addresses we make to him ; distracting our minds with thoughts of the world, and the pomp and glory thereof ; and so turns our very duties into sin, and makes us lose the comfort and sweetness of them : it blasts and perverts our most sincere endeavours. Well, then, without this salt of the covenant, if this be so, what shall we do ? Have we not need to keep humble and watchful ? If sin be stirring, we must be stirring against it, and improve the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the account of Christ's death, and use all good means that it may be subdued in us.

3. Consider the sad consequences of letting sin alone, both either as to further sin or punishment.

[1.] As to further sin. For Christ speaks here of scandals. If lust be not mortified, it grows outrageous ; it has foiled us before God, men, and angels, and exposed us to an open shame, or hardens us in a dead, careless course. Lusts let alone end in gross sins, and gross sins in final apostasy. Love of pleasure will end in drunkenness, or adultery, or the rage of unclean desires, or else in such a vain, light, frothy spirit, which is no way fit for religion. Envy will end in mischief and violence, if not in murder. Judas, by his covetousness, was brought to betray his master. Gehazi was first surprised with covetousness, then blasted with leprosy, and then became a shame and burthen to himself. The devil trieth by lust to bring us to sin, and by sin to shame, and by shame to horror and despair. But do the children of God run into such notable excesses and disorders ? Yes ; when they let sin alone, discontinue the exercise of mortification ; when they do not remember the sacrifice must be salted with salt. Witness David, who ran into lust and blood. Witness Peter, who ran into denying Christ with oaths and execrations. Witness Solomon, who ran into sensuality and idolatry. And in all of us, old sins, long since laid asleep, may awake again and hurry us into spiritual mischiefs and inconveniences, if we make not use of this holy salt.

[2.] As to punishment. Sins prove mortal if they be not modified. Either sin must die or the sinner. There is an evil *in* sin, and there is an evil *after* sin. The evil in sin is the violation of God's righteous law ; the evil after sin is the just punishment of it, eternal death and damnation. Now, those that are not sensible, or will not be sensible, of the evil that is in sin, they shall be made sensible of the evil that comes after sin. The unmortified person spares the sin and destroys his own soul ; the sin lives, but he dies. In the prophet's parable to the king of Israel, when he had let go the Syrian, saith he, 'Thy life shall go for his life ;' so our lives shall go for the life of our sin. 'The end of these things is death,' Rom. vi. 21 ; and 'The wages of sin is death,' ver. 23.



But you will say, What is this to a justified person? 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.'

I answer—You must take in all. Those 'who are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit,' they have the salt of the covenant. But if you can suppose a justified person to live after the flesh, you may suppose also a justified person shall be condemned. Eternal death may be considered two ways—either as to the merit, or as to the event. As to the merit, as an evil which God hath appointed to be the fruit of sin; or as to the event, an evil that will certainly befall us. A justified person, one that is really so, may, must fear it in the first sense. There is such a connection between living in sin and eternal punishment, that he ought to represent the danger to his soul of living willingly and allowedly in his sins, that he may eschew it; for this is nothing but a holy making use of the threatenings, or considering the merit of sin. But as to the actual event, and perplexing trouble that ariseth from the apprehension of it; if his sincerity be clear and unquestionable, he must not fear it.

Now to make application.

I. For the reproof of those that cannot abide to hear of mortification. The unwillingness and impatience of this doctrine may arise from several causes.

1. From sottish atheism and unbelief. They despise all sober spiritual counsel, they make no conscience of yielding obedience to God. Solomon tells us, Prov. xix. 16, 'He that keepeth the commandments keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his way shall die.' There are the different issues of a strict obedience, and a slight vain conversation. And mark the opposition of the two tempers—*he that keeps the commandments*, and *he that despiseth his own ways*; that is, takes no heed to his life and actions, to order them according to the will of God; he cares not whether he please or displease, whether he honour or dishonour God, but leaves the boat to the stream, lives as his brutish lusts incline him, come of it what will come. He despiseth his own ways, and so runs into vanity, luxury, riot, fraud, injustice, and all manner of licentiousness. Now, no man thus despiseth his own ways but he despiseth other things which should be very sacred and of great regard and esteem with him. He despiseth God, and the word of God, and his own soul: Prov. xiv. 2, 'He that walketh in his uprightness, fears God; but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.' He that makes conscience of his duty hath a high esteem of God, he looks on his authority as supreme, his powers as infinite, his knowledge of all things exact, his truth in promises and threatenings as unquestionable, his holiness as immaculate, his justice as impartial, and his goodness exercised to us in sundry benefits as rich and every way glorious. Therefore he dare not but please God; he hath such a deep reverence for him, that he is always saying within himself, What will the holy and all-seeing God have done? Or, 'How can I do this wickedness and sin against God?' But now the careless and slight person that takes no care to govern his actions according to the will of God, hath contemptuous and slight thoughts of God, as if he were a senseless idol that took no notice of human affairs, that sees not, or would not punish the breaches of



his laws. They also despise the word of God : Prov. xiii. 13, 'He that despiseth the word shall be destroyed ; but he that fears the commandment shall be rewarded.' There are some gracious hearts that stand in awe of the word, and though their minds be never so much set upon a thing, yet if a commandment stand in the way, it is more than if an angel with a drawn sword stood in the way to keep them back ; they dare not break through God's hedge. But now a carnal, careless, and unbelieving wretch sets at nought all the precepts, promises, and threatenings of God, and can break with him for a trifle, for a little vain delight and profit. Nay, further, he despiseth his own soul : Prov. xv. 32, 'He that refuseth instruction, despiseth his his own soul.' He only cares for the body, but neglects his soul, scarce ever considers whether he has a soul to save or a soul to lose, as if he counted all fabulous which is spoken of God and immortality, of the day of judgment, or of heaven and hell. Now it is in vain to speak to these to renounce and mortify their pleasing lusts till their atheism and carelessness be cured. And their case is the more desperate because the disease doth not lie in their minds, but in their hearts, and comes not so much from opinion as inclination. A settled opinion must be vanquished by reason, but a brutish inclination must be weakened by almighty grace.

2. It may come from libertinism. And these harden their hearts in sinning by a mistaking the gospel.

[1.] Some vainly imagine as if God by Jesus Christ were made more reconcilable to sin, that it needs not so much to be stood upon, nor need we to be so exact, to keep such ado to mortify and subdue the inclinations that lead to it. They altogether run to the comforts of the gospel and neglect the duties thereof. Christ died for sinners, therefore we need not to be troubled about it. Some actually speak out these things as if all the mortification required were but to quell the sense of sin in the conscience, not to destroy the power of sin in their hearts, and if they can but believe strongly they are pardoned, all is well. If this were true, then in the hardest heart would be the best faith, for they have the least trouble about sin, and least conscience of sin. This is to cry up the merit of Christ, to exclude the work and discipline of this spirit,<sup>1</sup> yea to set the merit of his death against the end of it, and so to set Christ against Christ. He bore our sins : 'He bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we might be dead to sin, and alive to righteousness,' to promote this mortification that we speak of.

[2.] Another sort think such discourses may be well spared among a company of believers, and they need not this watchfulness and holy care, especially against grievous sins ; that they have such good command of themselves that they can keep within compass well enough. It is well if you be come to this height of Christian perfection, that temptations make none, or no considerable impression upon you. But we must warn you, and that of the most gross sins. Christ thought fit to warn his disciples : Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life.' And the apostle everywhere warns Christians of malice,

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'the Spirit' ?—Ed.

of hypocrisy, of envy, of lying, of evil speaking: 1 Thes. iv. 6, 'Take heed that you do not overreach and defraud one another, for God is the avenger of all such.' But these men would be fed with refined strains of contemplative divinity, and have no sins reprov'd, but such kind of sins as would seem a credit rather than a disgrace; like those diseases that are incident only to the best complexions and constitutions. If you speak against something that may rather argue their excellency than shame them of their sin, you shall be welcome. This over-spiritual preaching ends in an airy religion. Is sin grown less dangerous, or men more skilful to avoid it than heretofore? Certainly, he that considers how many scandalous professors there are, that would be accounted the people of God, hath no cause to think so. If Paul saw need of mortification, 1 Cor. ix. 27, we are not more strong, but more foolhardy.

[3.] A third sort are such as think believers are not to be scared with threatenings, but only oiled with grace. But then consider, the words of Christ were to his disciples. And to whom did the apostle Paul write? To believers questionless: 'If you live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live,' Rom. viii. 13. No part of the Spirit's discipline must be omitted. If one end of Christ's coming was to verify God's threatenings, and that the curse of the law should not fall to the ground, surely there is use of threatenings still.

3. It may arise from another cause, that is, the passionateness of carnal affections. Men are so wedded to their lusts, they cannot leave them, and so strangely besotted, they are even ready to sit down and say they will venture their souls rather than live a strict life. Is the pleasing of the flesh so sweet to you? or hell so slight a matter? And will the day of judgment be so slubbered over? There is a raging despair, and there is a sottish despair. The raging despair of a Cain, Gen. iv. 13, 'My evil is greater than can be borne!'—when we are ready to sink under the burden of our sins; and a sottish despair, when we are not sound with God, and loth to improve the grace of the Redeemer, but say, There is no hope; we will go on in the imaginations of our own heart, Jer. ii. 25. There is no hope; it is an evil, and I must bear it. If I be damned, I cannot help it, I must bear it as well as I can. What! will you bear the loss of heaven, the wrath of the almighty and eternal God? Surely you know not what eternity means, what hell and heaven means. You will know, when the eyes that are now blinded by the delusions of the flesh shall be opened, when you shall see others 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and you shall be shut out.' Canst thou bear this? If Rachel could not endure the want of children, and Jacob the supposed loss of Joseph, when all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him; if Ahitophel could not endure the loss of his credit in counsel, how wilt thou endure the loss of thy soul and the glory of the blessed to all eternity? When thou hast nothing to beguile thy mind, and thou art divested of all other comforts, and thou must feed upon this for ever. So for the pains of hell. Thou that canst not endure to be scorched a day or two in feverish flames, or the pain of the stone or gout, when God arms the humours of thine own body

against thee, and canst not endure the torment of an aching tooth, how canst thou endure the wrath of an eternal God? 'Can your hearts endure, or your hands be made strong in the day that I will deal with you?' saith the Lord.'

*Use 2.* Is to persuade you not to neglect the salt of the covenant. It may be fretting, but it is healthful; as the most salutary medicines are usually most troublesome. To help you to improve this kind of argument, which our Lord here useth—

1. Consider, there are but two sorts of men in the world, and you are one of them. There is no neutral, no middle state; there are but two principles that men are influenced by, the flesh and the spirit; and there are but two ends men propound to themselves, either the pleasing of the flesh upon earth, or the enjoyment of God in heaven; and two places they issue into, heaven or hell. The scripture is peremptory, and tells you who shall go to heaven, and who shall go to hell: Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;' Gal. vi. 8, 'He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.' Or consider that, Prov. xiv. 14, 'The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways, and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.' There are two different persons commencing and setting forth in the pursuit of happiness, the backslider in heart and the good man. The backslider in heart is one that continues in the apostasy and defection of mankind, that indulgeth his lusts and vain pleasures, and for a seeming good leaves God, who is the chief good. But the good men are those who make it their business to keep their hearts chaste and loyal to God. They both desire to be filled and to be satisfied. The one takes his own way, and the other God's counsel; and in the event both are filled. The backslider in heart hath enough of his own ways when they have brought him to hell; and the good man hath enough when he comes to the enjoyment of the blessed God. And there is one truth more there, they are both filled from themselves, their own ways. The backslider shall have the fruit of his own choice, and a good man is satisfied with that course of godliness that he hath chosen, Prov. i. 31. Those that turn away from God, it is said, 'They shall eat of their own ways, and be filled with the fruit of their own devices;' and Isa. iii. 10, 'Say unto the righteous, it shall be well with him, for he shall eat of the fruit of his own doings.'

2. Consider the doleful condition of those that indulge their carnal affections; and that either threatened by God, or executed upon the wicked.

[1.] Consider it as it is threatened by God. If God threaten so great a misery, it is for our profit, that we may take heed and escape it. There is mercy in the severest threatenings, that we may avoid the bait when we see the hook, that we may digest the strictness of a holy life, rather than venture upon such dreadful evils. Why did our Lord repeat it three times, 'Where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched'? but that we may have it often in our thoughts, that we may not buy the pleasures of sin at so dear a rate—so hard a price as the loss of our precious souls.

[2.] Consider the punishment as executed upon the wicked. How many are now burning in hell for those sins which you are ready to commit? The serious consideration of it will check the fervour of your lusts, that you may not easily venture upon an everlasting hell.

[3.] Consider which trouble is most intolerable—to be salted with salt, or to be salted with fire; with unpleasing mortification, or the pains of hell; the trouble of physic, or the danger of a mortal disease. Surely to preserve the life of the body, men will endure the bitterest pill, take the most loathsome potion. Why? their lives lie on it. And shall we be unwilling to such a necessary strictness, to these wholesome severities, which conduce to save you with an everlasting salvation? There is no remedy; trouble must be undergone. Surely a strict diet is better than a speedy death; and the pricking of a vein by a chirurgeon is not so bad as a stab at the heart by an enemy. Better be macerated by repentance, than broken in hell by torments. Which is worse, discipline or execution? Here the question is put: you must be troubled first or last. Would you have a sorrow mixed with love and hope, or else mixed with desperation? Would you have a drop or an ocean? Would you have your souls cured or tormented? Would you have trouble in the short moment of this life, or have it eternal in the world to come?

[4.] Be sure you be a sacrifice dedicated to God, really entered into covenant with God, and set apart for his use; that this may be your end, your business, your scope, to please, glorify, and enjoy him, 2 Cor. i. 9. We can the better speak to you when you are under a covenant engagement. Christ bound you to this when he died for you: he ‘sanctified himself that you might be sanctified through the truth,’ that is, dedicated to God, John xvii. 19; and ‘by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,’ that is, them that are consecrated to God, or entered into a holy covenant with God. Christ bound you to it, and your own gratitude will suggest it to you: ‘I beseech you, by the mercies of the Lord, present yourselves,’ &c. Nay, the new nature will incline you to it: Rom. vi. 13, ‘Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.’ The new life will presently discover itself by its tendency and end, if this be indeed your end and work to be faithful to God’s covenant.

[5.] You will see a need of denying worldly and fleshly lusts; you will see nothing can be done in the spiritual life without mortification, that being dead to all things here below, you may be alive to God. That this must be your daily work, your necessity will sufficiently show. Are there no rebellious desires to be subdued? No corrupt inclinations to be broken? Do not you feel the bias of corruption drawing you off from God? David did, therefore he saith, ‘Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.’ Do not you find the sensitive lure prevail upon you, enticing your minds, and drawing you from the purity of your hopes, and strictness of conversation? ‘Every man is drawn away, when he is enticed by his own lusts,’ James i. 14.

[6.] Consider the sad condition of a believer that is under the corrective discipline of God, though he do not vacate his justified state. A sinning believer, that hath made bold with forbidden fruit, how doth



he smart for sin? What a wound in the conscience will wilful heinous sins make? Witness David, Ps. xxxii. and li. He gives an account how uneasy his heart did sit within him, he was afraid of God, who before was his joy and delight, and speaks as one ready to be cast out of his presence.

## SERMON VI.

*And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*—2 THES. III. 5.

THERE are two things keep religion alive in the soul—a love to God, and a hearty intent upon the coming of Christ. These are the two necessary graces which the apostle prays for in the text. Here is the love of God, that is the first grace, and the earnest or patient waiting for Christ. Love respects God, because he is the chief object of it, *primum amabile*, as being the first and chiefest good; but hope or patient expectation respects Christ, who, at his glorious coming, will give us our full reward. Love is the life and soul of our present duties, and by patient expectation we wait for our future hope. The love of God urgeth us to the duties of religion, and hope strengthens us against temptations, whether they arise from the allurements of sense or the troubles of the world. Love is our breastplate that guards the vitals of Christianity, and hope is our helmet that covers our head, that we may hold up our head in the midst of all the troubles and sorrows of the present life, 1 Thes. v. 8. Both graces are necessary, therefore it will not be unprofitable to insist upon them. I begin now with the former, ‘The Lord direct your hearts to the love of God,’ where note—

1. The grace prayed for: *the love of God*.
2. The efficiency which is necessary to produce it: *the Lord direct your hearts*. The word *direct* notes sometimes conduct and guidance, and sometimes bending or setting straight the thing that is crooked. Conduct and guidance, as we guide men that they may not go wrong; Ps. cxix. 5, ‘Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.’ Ships that are best rigged need a pilot, and they that love God most need to have their love ordered and directed to the best advantage of his glory and service. This for the first signification, guidance, and direction. But at other times it signifies the bending, inclining, or making straight what is crooked, and what bends and tends another way; in this sense I take it here. Our hearts are distorted and writhed, and averse from God and all good naturally; yea, and after grace received, are apt to wander, and return to their old bent and bias again; therefore, the apostle prays that God would form and set their hearts straight, that they may be more indeclinably fixed towards God; and this prayer he makes for the Thessalonians, whose ‘work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope’ he had so much commended before, and of whose sincerity he had such great confidence; for



those he prays that their love might be directed, and their hearts more fixedly set towards God. The note then will be plain and easy.

*Doct.* That we cannot have or keep up any true love to God, unless the Lord set our hearts straight, and keep them bent towards himself. I shall inquire here:—

I. What is love to God? Love is the complacency of the soul in what is good. Love to God is the complacency and well-pleasedness of the soul in God as our all-sufficient portion. To open it to you, I shall describe it:—

I. By its radical and internal acts.

II. By its external effects.

III. A little touch upon the properties of it, and then you will see what the love of God is.

I. The radical and internal acts are two—desire and delight; desire after him and delight in him.

1. Desire after him. Love affects union with the thing beloved; and so love to God implies an earnest seeking after him, in the highest way of enjoyment that we are capable of in this world. This appears partly by the kind of mercies that we affect, and partly by the fervency of our endeavours after him.

[1.] By the kind of mercies that we affect. There are some mercies vouchsafed to the creature that lie nearer to God than others do, and do least detain us from him, as his image and favour, or his renewing and reconciling grace. When we love God, these are sought in the first place, as you shall see how the temper of the saints is described and distinguished from the temper of the brutish multitude: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'The many say, Who will show us any good? but, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, and this will put gladness into our hearts.' The many, the brutish multitude, seek an uncertain good, and they seek it from an uncertain author—'Who will show us?'—they do not acknowledge God in these common mercies; but the children of God must have his favour—'Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;' as the beams of the sun do cheer and refresh the earth, this is that that doth revive their souls. So Mat. v. 6, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.' Well, then, they that desire to be like God in purity and holiness, and to recover his favour lost by sin, do certainly more love him than those that only seek temporal mercies from him. God's sanctifying Spirit witnessing his love to us is the greatest gift can be bestowed in this life, and will more witness his love than anything else can be given us. This the saints seek after, that they may be like God, that they may be accepted and well pleasing unto God—this is all their ambition: 2 Cor. v. 9, 'Wherefore we labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of the Lord.' Other things may please the flesh, but that is not their design; those things that bring them nearer to God take up their mind and heart. Now as it appears by the mercies we affect, so it appears—

[2.] By the fervency of our endeavours after these things; for if the image of God and favour of God be sought superficially, or as things that we may be well without, and the wealth, honours, and pleasures of the world be most earnestly sought after, surely we do not

love God: Ps. lxiii. 8, 'My soul followeth hard after thee.' The whole spiritual life is but a pursuit of the soul towards God; and the more constantly and earnestly we seek him, to enjoy more of his saving graces and benefits, the more we have of the love of God in us. Therefore David expresseth this desire, as exceeding all other desires: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.' He sought not the glory of the kingdom, success in battle, victory over his enemies, in the first place, or not so much as converse with God, and attendance on his worship in the tabernacle; all was nothing to this, that he might have communion with God. Therefore this is the radical act of love—this fervent, burning desire that carries the soul through all duties, ordinances, services; they are still making their way to a nearer access to God, and larger participation of his grace, till they come eternally to enjoy him in glory.

2. There is another internal radical act of love; that is, a delight in him. Our full joy is reserved for the other world, but delighting ourselves in God is a greater duty now; for love being the complacency of the soul in God, as apprehended to be good, or a delightful adhesion to God as our all-sufficient portion and happiness, it cannot be imagined love can be without any delight in God even now. Now in this valley of tears, the hope of enjoying him hereafter is our comfort and solace in the midst of our weaknesses and afflictions, that there is a time coming when we shall more perfectly 'see him as he is,' and 'be like him,' 1 John iii. 2. The apostle tells us, 'We rejoice now in the hope of the glory of God;' that we have this in expectation, that we shall have an estate of complete felicity and excellent holiness; that we shall behold our nature united to the godhead in the glorified redeemer, and our persons admitted into the nearest intuition and fruition of God we are capable of, and live in the exercise of a constant uninterrupted love, and be perfectly capable of receiving his highest benefits. Surely this joy we have in our pilgrimage. But there is not only our hope, but our partial enjoyment of it is matter of happiness to us; his favour is as life, and his frown as death to the soul that loves him. The saints look on God reconciled as the best friend, God displeased as the most dreadful adversary; therefore if they have any taste of his love, their 'souls are filled as with marrow and fatness:' Ps. lxiii. 3-5, 'Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. I will bless thee while I live. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.' But if God hide his face; if God be altogether a stranger, then they are troubled indeed, Ps. xxx. 7. But yet we are not gone to the bottom of the matter of delighting in God. Those whose souls are possessed with the love of God, are so well pleased with him, that everything is sweet to them by the relation it hath to God. It is a delight to them to think of God: Ps. civ. 34, 'I will be glad and rejoice in him; my meditation of him shall be sweet.' It is a delight to them to speak of God: Eph. v. 4, 'Not foolish jesting, but giving of thanks.' The delight of God's children, or that which serves instead of jesting to Christians, is the grateful

remembrance of the Lord's mercies, especially of our redemption by Christ. To draw nigh to him in ordinances, there this delight is exercised again. There is prayer. A gracious soul cannot be a stranger to it, because it cannot have a greater refreshing than to be alone with God, and unbosom himself with God. The hypocrite is rejected from being capable of this character: Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' Sometimes he will call upon God, he is frightened into a little religiousness, it may be, when death is at his back, in great afflictions, or time of great judgments; but he hath no constant delight in God. The constant delight in God is that that brings the saints into his presence. So for all other Christian duties: Ps. cxii. 1, 'I was glad when they said unto me, Come, let us go into the house of the Lord.' There they entertained traffic and commerce with God about matters of the highest concernment to their precious and immortal souls. Nay, all their work, the whole course of their obedience, is sweetened to them, because it is commanded by God, and tends to the enjoyment of God: as Ps. cxii. 1, 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments;' they not only keep the commandments, but delight (and that greatly) to keep the commandments. And Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.' Delight in God is a great act of love, to which we should not be strangers, even in the house of our pilgrimage, though we have no assurance or sensible enjoyment of his favour; for it is a duty of the first commandment, that results from the owning of God as our God.

II. For the external effects of love, they are doing and suffering his will, when we are contented to do what God will have us do, and be what God will have us be.

1. For doing. If we love God, we shall be loth to offend him, we shall be desirous to please him. Faith, I do confess, is a marvellous grace, it can apprehend things strange to nature, but it can do no worthy thing for God, till it be accompanied with love, Gal. v. 6. When the apostle tells us of that faith, that carries away the prize of justification, he describes it to be a 'faith working by love.' Faith itself serves as the bellows to blow up this flame in our hearts, as the next and immediate principle of action. In short, love is the overruling bent of our souls, the weight and poize upon us that inclines us to God. And look, as all noble qualities, when restrained, cannot produce their consummate act, so love suffers a kind of imperfection, till it can thus break forth into some act of thankfulness to God; but then it is perfected: 1 John ii. 5, 'Whoso keepeth his word, in him the love of God is perfect,' that is, hath attained its consummate act, that which it aims at. No man certainly can be owned as a perfect, sincere lover of God, but he that makes conscience of doing what he commands; none but they have a deep sense of his majesty; none but they have an esteem of his favour; therefore they dare not hazard it by a breach or neglect of their duty.

2. For suffering his will. For when the apostle prays here God would direct their hearts to love him, he means that they should endure anything rather than deny the faith, and confess Christ whatever

it cost them. As obedience is virtually contained in love, so also courage and resolution. Solomon represents love as a powerful thing, as an affection that will not be bribed nor quenched: Cant. viii. 7, 'Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it: if a man would give the whole substance of his house for it, it would be utterly condemned.' It is true of love in general, much more of love to God. In carnal matters, love is a venomous poison; when it hath invaded the heart, nothing will reclaim us: but in divine matters, it is a sovereign antidote against temptations, both on the right hand and on the left. For right-hand temptations, all the riches, pleasures, honours, are condemned, they cannot bribe them over from Christ that really love him. All the floods of persecution cannot quench this holy desire. This is the genius and disposition of love, when once the bent of the heart is set towards God and heaven, they are vehemently set against anything that would turn them out of the way, and divert them from their purpose.

III. To speak of the properties; if it be sincere:—

1. It is not a speculative but practical love, not consisting in lofty airy strains of devotion too high for the common rate of us poor mortals. No; it is put upon a surer and infallible test—our obedience to God. Again, it consists not in a bold familiarity, but in a humble subjection and compliance with his will. 'He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me.' God's love is a love of bounty, but ours a love of duty; therefore we are properly said to love God when we are careful to please him, and fearful to offend him. The scripture declares both: the first, 'This is love, to keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous;' the second, Ps. xcvi. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' When we are fearful of committing or omitting anything may be a violation of his law, a grief to his Spirit, or a dishonour to his name, then we are said to love God. Whatever lofty and luscious strains of devotion we may otherwise please ourselves with, here will our trial rest. He doth not love God that can most accurately discourse of his attributes, or soar aloft in the nice speculations of contemplative divinity, or pretences of secrecy with God, but he that is most awful, serious and conscientious in his duty.

2. It is a transcendental love we owe to God; we must love him above all other things. For he must be loved as our felicity and end. He must have the chiefest place in our hearts, and our principal design must be to please, serve, and glorify him. If we seek God in order to other things, we do not love him, but our own lusts; nay, if all other things be not sought after in order to God, we do not set him up as our chief good or last end. 'He that loves father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me,' Luke xiv. 26; 'If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Many have a partial, half love to God, but a greater love to other things; then God's interest will be least minded, for there is something nearer and dearer to us than God, which will be soon preferred before the conscience of our duty to him. No; all must be subordinated to our supreme happiness and last end, or else God is not loved as God.



But now the second thing propounded is the nature of that influence upon love, which is expressed here by the apostle in the word *direct*. 'The Lord direct your hearts in the love of God.' What doth this imply?

[1.] It implies that God works upon us as rational creatures; he changeth the heart indeed, but he doth it by direction: he 'draws' us to himself, but it is 'with the cords of a man;' he teacheth while he draws: John vi. 44, 45, 'None can come unto me but those whom the Father draws;' and he proves it by this, because 'they shall be all taught of God.' God's drawing is teaching, it is both by the attractive force of the object, and the internal efficacy of his grace; the Spirit's conduct is sweet, yet powerful, accomplisheth the effect, but without offering violence to the liberty of man. We are not forced, but directed. There is not a violent compulsion, but an inclination sweetly raised in us by victorious grace, or the overpowering sweetness of his love. For 'we love him, because he loved us first,' 1 John iv. 19. And this love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who by giving us an esteem and serious remembrance of his benefits, blows up this holy flame in our hearts. We do not love God we know not why or wherefore; an account can be given of all the Spirit's operations. Look, as in an impression there must be a seal, and wax to the seal, and the hand that stamps it; so all concur here. The word doth its part, that is the seal, and the heart of man receives the impression; but to make it effectual and durable, the hand of God concurs, or the power of his Spirit. The object is the gospel, wherein God commends his love to us by the incarnation, death, and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ; as also by the new covenant, because he will work upon man after the nature of man; by love he will work upon love. Beside all this, there is an internal powerful agent, the Holy Spirit. The external objective means cannot do it without the inward cause. Though God's love doth so gloriously and resplendently shine forth in the gospel, yet the heart of man is not affected with it till it be shed abroad by the illuminating sanctifying Spirit. The heart of man is dark and dead to these things till changed by grace, and when that is once done, that impression is according to the stamp.

[2.] The inclination to God as our felicity and end, which is the fruit of this grace, is the inclination of a reasonable creature; so the inclination is necessary, but the acts are voluntary, therefore you must keep them up still. There is an inclination put by God into inanimate things, as in light and airy bodies to move upwards, and in heavy bodies to move downwards; as a stone falls to the earth, but fire and smoke ascend, they cannot do otherwise, because they have no choice. But now in man there is an inclination to God and heaven, which is the fruit of grace. The inclination is necessary. Why?—because all those whom the Spirit sanctifies, he sanctifies them not in vain, he certainly begets this tendency in them towards God: therefore so often they are said in scripture to be converted or turned to God. Their hearts were averse before, but then they tend and bend towards him; but the acts are voluntary. There is a duty lying upon us to 'stir up the gift of grace that is in us;' the word is *ἀναζωοποιεῖν*, 2 Tim. i. 6. When this holy fire is kindled in our bosoms, we must blow it up and

keep it burning. We must not be negligent and secure, for we cannot reasonably imagine the idle and diligent should fare alike, that the Holy Ghost will direct our hearts into the love of God whether we will or not; therefore, not only as we are rational agents, but as we are new creatures, we are obliged to use the means, and then expect his help and blessing. What is a prayer in the text, 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, to the patient waiting for Christ,' is an exhortation, Jude 21, 'Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto everlasting life.' There is both again; you must look to your love, that your hearts be kept straight and bent towards God, and not distracted with worldly vanities. The blessing is from God, but you must use the means; this direction is not to encourage slothfulness, but industry. We must charge it upon ourselves, as our main work and duty: the Spirit stirs and quickens, we must rouse up ourselves.

[3.] It implies there are many things would writhe, and crook, and turn our hearts another way—the devil, the world, and the flesh. The devil seeks to draw us off from God, to abate the fervour of our love towards him; therefore we are bidden 'to flee youthful lusts,' 2 Tim. ii. 22, that we may not be taken captive by him at his will and pleasure. Some tamely yield to his temptations, and he doth unto them as he listeth; but there is more tugging and drawing to get a serious Christian into his snare. Therefore, we are bidden to be 'sober and watchful, for your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour.' Sobriety is a sparing use of worldly delights, and vigilance is a serious diligence in the use of all those holy means whereby temptations may be vanquished. And as the devil, so the flesh: James i. 14, 'A man is tempted when he is drawn away by his lusts, being enticed;' that is, by seeking to please his fleshly mind and appetite. And then the world would pervert us, and offers many baits to that end and purpose: 1 John ii. 15, 16, 'Love not the world, nor the things of the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For whatsoever is in the world, is either the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life;' that is, pleasures, riches, and honours. These seem sweet baits, but there is a dangerous hook in them, and your love to God may soon be lessened. Well, then, this directing is opposed to wavering by reason of any of these temptations on the one or the other side, that the Holiest may keep in us that ardent love of God which of duty we owe to him.

[4.] *Directing* notes the orderliness of the new creature. There is not a more beautiful thing in the world when the motions thereof are directed by the Spirit, for then we are in a due posture both to God, our neighbour, and ourselves. To God, for then the creature is kept in a due subjection to him, and all our motions and actions are subordinated to his glory. When we sin we are in rebellion against God, and set up the creature against him, as if it were more amiable and fitter to content and delight the soul than God, and so disturb the order and harmony of the world, abusing both ourselves and all things within our grasp to a wrong end. Look, as in the motions of a watch, there is such a proportion in every part, that if one wheel be wrong the whole is put out of frame; so the world, that was made for us,

and we for God, is all disordered when we use the world for ourselves and not for God. So as to our neighbour. Self-lovers and self-pleasers will never heartily do good to others. The most sincere commerce in the world is among those that love God. So for ourselves. Till the love of God rule in our hearts all is out of order. Look, as in the body, if the feet were there where the head should be, the disorder and deformity would be great; so it is in the soul, when the beast rides the man, and conscience and reason are made slaves to lust and appetite. But when once a man is gained to love God, everything is in frame again, self-government is restored, due obedience to God is well provided for.

To give you some reasons to show you the necessity of this, both as to persons regenerate and unregenerate.

1. The necessity of God's direction to persons unregenerate. They cannot love God till the Lord direct and set their hearts straight. It is a hard thing to say (but we must not mince the matter), that in the carnal state we were all haters of God, Rom. i. 28. And it were well if this enmity and hatred were thoroughly got out of our hearts. How can this be? Nature tells us that he from whom we have received being, and life, and all things, deserves our love. I answer—Though men may see some reason of love to God as he is our creator and preserver, but as he is a lawgiver and a judge, so we all hate him. Three reasons there are of that natural enmity that is in the hearts of men against God. I would have you consider them seriously, that we may feelingly bewail our own aversion from God.

[1.] Our inclination to carnal things, which prepossesseth our hearts, and then there is no room for any inclination to God. Naturally men are addicted to vain and sensual delights, for 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh,' John iii. 6. Having no principle to incline them to God, they wholly seek to please the flesh. When men once lost original righteousness, they took up with what came next to hand, and so became 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,' 2 Tim. iii. 4. And this inclination we cannot divest ourselves of till it be cured by grace. Therefore the Lord promiseth this cure: Deut. xxx. 6, 'The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.' The heart must be circumcised before it can love God. Till God pare away the foreskin, and till this carnal love be mortified, there is no place for divine love to be raised and quickened in our hearts. We are entangled in the love of worldly things, and shall so remain till God bend the crooked stick the other way, and God set our hearts right to himself.

[2.] The second reason is carnal liberty, and so we hate God as a lawgiver, who would bridle our lusts. There is in the law the precept and the sanction. The precept is to our purpose, the sanction will come to be considered in the next. Because of God's restraint we cannot enjoy our lusts with that freedom and security we desire. His law is in the way, therefore the heart riseth up against God, because he hath made a law to forbid those things that we affect: Rom. viii. 7, 'The natural mind is enmity to God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be;' Col. i. 21, 'Enemies in your mind by evil works.' We love

sin, therefore we hate God, who forbids it, and makes it so penal and damnable to us.

[3.] Slavish fear is the cause of this enmity. This relates to the sanction and penalty of the law. Thus, we hate God, because we fear he will call us to account for our sins, and punish us; for a condemning God, barely apprehended under that notion, can never be loved by a guilty creature. Thus Adam, when he had sinned, ran away from God, and hid himself in the bushes, Gen. iii. 7, 10. Now it is in vain to come and tell them of the goodness of God and his perfections till he change their hearts; as you do in vain induce a guilty prisoner to love his judge, to tell him he is a discreet person, a man of solid judgment, one well skilled and versed in the law—this sticks, he is one that will condemn him. Therefore the gospel, as a means to induce us to love God, sets him forth as a sin-pardoning God: ‘There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.’

2. Come we to the regenerate. The Thessalonians did excel in all graces, and yet the apostle prays that the Lord would ‘direct their hearts to the love of God.’ Why?

[1.] Because there are many defects of love in the best. To give some instances:—

First, Love signifies a strong inclination, or an earnest bent of heart towards God, as our chief good and last end. Well, then, our end is our measure by which we judge of all means, of the aptness and fitness of what is to be avoided and embraced. The seasonableness of all means must be determined by the end, that all means that are inconsistent with and impertinent to our great end may be cut off. Now all sins are inconsistent with making God our great end, and all vain and foolish actions are impertinent thereunto. Judge you by this, if we have such a perfect love to God, if this be love, as questionless it is. But now with how many impertinent and extravagant actions do we fill up our lives? How many purposes, desires, words, and actions have we that have no respect to our great end at all? How much do we live to ourselves, and how little to God? How great a passion have we for earthly things, so that they can occupy and intercept the far greatest part of our lives? And then judge whether we had not need have the bent kept up, and the tendency towards God, as our end and happiness: Ps. lxxxvi. 11, ‘Unite my heart to the fear of thy name.’ It is the natural disease of man’s heart to be loosed from God, and to be distracted in variety of worldly objects, which obtrude themselves upon our senses, offer themselves to us daily; therefore it is not enough for a man once to resign over his heart to God, as we do in conversion, when this love was first wrought in us, but we need often to beg that God would reclaim us from this ranging after carnal vanities, that he would direct and keep us straight and true to our end, that we may love him more, and at a better rate. So, if you consider the nature of love; the thing is obvious and plain, unless the Lord maintain this love in us, and keep it up, what will become of us?

The second evidence is those slavish fears which do oppress us and hinder our delight in God and comfortable communion with him in the means of grace. Certainly the more we are under slavish fear,



the less love we have to God and thankfulness for his grace. The apostle tells you, 1 John iv. 18, 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.' Surely we should seek after such a spirit of love, that all we do for God may be done with great delight; that we may not serve him by compulsion, but by inclination; not as enjoined only, but as inclined; not as putting a force upon ourselves, but as delighting in our work. And then—

Thirdly, Another instance is our frequent preferring the profits and pleasures of the world before the service of God, and if it doth not go so far as to forfeit our right, yet how often do we expose and put our spiritual comforts to hazard for every trifle? As Esau, that sold his birthright for a morsel of meat, Heb. xii. 15, 16. The best of us show too much lothness to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye, or to do that which is signified by it. This shows a weakness of love; for where love is strong, there is a thorough inclination to God; we dare love nothing above him, or against him, or without him.

Fourthly, Our backwardness to obedience, and the tediousness we find in it, shows a great imperfection in our love. All goes on easily, sweetly, acceptably, where love is at the bottom. Gen. xxix. 20, Seven years to Jacob seemed as a few days, for the love that he had to Rachel; and so love sweetens our obedience: 'His commandments are not grievous.' But when we are wedded to worldly things, and will not be reclaimed from them, then every heavenly business is an interruption to what we would be at, what we delight in.

Fifthly, The many conflicts we have with carnal self-love, or our own foolish and hurtful lusts, show our love is not perfect; as the weakness of faith is seen and felt by the remainders of unbelief, and our frequent conflicts with doubts and fears: 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,' Mark ix. 24. So the weakness of our love is known by the opposition of carnal and inordinate self-love. The flesh will say sometimes, 'Favour thyself,' or 'What a weariness is it,' Mal. i. 13, and grudge everything that is done for God. It doth excuse us in our stragglings and deviations from our great end, and applaud us in our negligent course of living; as 'the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason,' Prov. xxvi. 16. Nay, sometimes it will urge us to please ourselves to the grief of the Spirit, and to take our fill of carnal delights. All this belongs to the first reason.

[2.] There needs much to be done about our love after it is planted in the soul; we need to get it rooted, to get it increased, to get it continually excited, and kept in act and exercise.

(1.) We need to get it rooted. Our first affection to God and heavenly things may hastily put forth itself, as the early blossoms of the spring do, but they are soon nipt; and those high tides of affections, which we find in our first acquaintance with religion, afterwards sink low enough. Love is more passionately expressed at first, partly by reason of the novelty of the things represented to us, and partly because of our great necessity, as men that are in a violent thirst take large draughts with pleasure; and because our love is not as yet dispersed into the several channels of obedience, but wholly taken up with

admiraions of grace ; but yet this may vanish and decay. Our business is to be ' rooted and grounded in love,' as the apostle saith, Eph. iii. 17, to get a more solid, durable affection to God.

(2.) After it is planted it needs to be more increased : Phil. i. 9, ' I pray God your love may abound yet more and more.' At first love is but weak ; there is fire, but it is not blown up into a flame ; afterwards God gets a greater interest in our hearts, and then the constitutions of our souls become more holy and heavenly. Love being the heart of the new creature, he that hath most love hath most grace, and is the best and strongest Christian.

(3.) After it is planted in the soul it needs to be excited and kept in act and exercise. This is mainly intended here. For—

First, All religion is in effect but love. Faith is a thankful acceptance of Christ, and thankfulness is an expression of love. Repentance is but mourning love ; as she wept much to whom much was forgiven, Luke vii. 47. Diligence in the holy life is but seeking love ; obedience is pleasing love ; self-denial is the mortification of inordinate self-love ; sobriety is a retrenching of our carnal love.

Second, If love be not acted and kept at work, carnal love will prevail. The soul of man cannot lie idle, especially our affections cannot ; either they are carried out to God, or they will leak out to worldly things. When our love ceaseth, yet concupiscence ceaseth not, and the love of the world will soon grow superior in the soul ; for the neglected principle languisheth, while the other principle gets strength, and secures its interest to God. The—

Third is the benefit we have by keeping love in act. This makes us more sincere, and to act purely for God : 2 Cor. v. 14, ' The love of Christ constrains us : for we thus judge, that they that live should no more live to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.' The constraining influence of love is that that keeps us from living to ourselves ; and this makes us more diligent. Labour and love are often coupled in the scripture : ' Knowing your labour of love, the work of faith and patience of hope ; ' ' and God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love ; ' the church of Ephesus ' lost her first love,' she ' left her first work,' Rev. ii. 4, 5.

*Use.* Oh, then, let us seek this benefit from God, that our hearts may be directed into his love.

1. The sanctifying Spirit is given us for this end, to stir up love to God : John iv. 14, ' The water I will give him shall be a well of water, always springing up unto eternal life.' It is not in the heart a dead pool, but a living spring. And the same is intimated, John vii. 38, ' He that believes in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water ; this he spake of the Spirit.'

2. The ordinances were appointed for this end. The word, to represent God amiable to us, both for the goodness in him and the goodness proceeding from him, especially in our redemption by Christ ; and also for those rich preparations of grace he hath made for us in another world to blow up this holy fire ; and this is the end of the sacrament. All the dainties that are set before us in the Lord's Supper do all taste and savour of love. Our meat is seasoned with love, and our drink flows into our cup out of the wine-press of love. Why do we eat

of the crucified body of Christ, but that we may remember Jesus 'who loved us, and gave himself for us?' Gal. ii. 20. And also the drink that is provided for us at this feast is the blood of Christ: Rev. i. 5, 'Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.'

3. All the providences of God tend to this end, that we may love God; all God's mercies are as new fuel to keep in this fire. 'I will love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication,' Ps. cxvi. 1; 'And thou shalt love the Lord, who is the strength of thy life, and the length of thy days,' Deut. xxx. 20. All the mercy we have from God is to refresh and revive our love, that it may not languish and die; nay, all the sharp corrections God sends are to recover our love to God: Isa. xxvi. 9, 'My soul hath desired thee in the night,' saith the prophet, 'and early have I sought thee.' And when was that?—'when thy judgments were abroad in the world,' when great and sharp afflictions were upon them.

## SERMON VII.

*And into the patient waiting for Christ.*—2 THES. III. 5.

THE words are a prayer; and the apostle prays here for those things which are most necessary to Christians—love to God, and patient waiting for Christ.

I come now to handle the second branch.

The point is this:—

*Doct.* That when the heart is bent by love to God, we need also the direction of his grace to keep it intent upon the coming of Christ.

Four things I must speak to:—

I. What this patient waiting for Christ is.

II. The connection between it and the love of God.

III. That it hath a great influence upon the spiritual life, or keeps religion alive in the soul.

IV. The necessity of God's concurrence hereto: 'the Lord direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Christ.'

I. What is this patient waiting for Christ? I answer—It is the grace of hope fortifying our resolutions for God and the world to come, that we may continue in our duty till our work be finished and our warfare ended. The act of hope is three ways expressed:—Sometimes by looking, which notes a certain expectation: Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour.' Sometimes by loving or longing, which notes a desirous and earnest expectation: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Not to me only, but to all that love his appearing.' Sometimes by waiting, which notes a patient expectation, 1 Thes. i. 10. He makes it there the fruit of our conversion: he saith, we are 'turned to God, that we may wait for his Son from heaven.' This last notion is expressly mentioned in the text, the others are implied; as looking, there can be no waiting for that we

do not look for; and longing, for delay is only troublesome to them that earnestly desire his coming, and build their hopes upon it. Faith adds certainty, and love earnestness; and both give strength to patience. Let us open all these things. As—

1. Looking for the coming of Christ: Phil. iii. 20, 'Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' It is not a matter of conjecture, but of faith. Reason saith, He *may* come; but faith saith, He *will* come. Nature will teach us it is very likely, for a guilty conscience fears the judge; and the course of things is so disordered in the world, that there needs a review. But scripture tells us, it is very certain that 'he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry,' Heb. x. 37. Therefore, in the eye of faith it is sure and near. As Rebecca spied Isaac at a distance, so faith looks upon Christ as if he had begun his journey, and were now upon the way, and makes the believer stand ready to meet him and welcome him. Though it come not to pass presently, the thing is promised, and the time certainly determined in God's eternal purpose, which is enough for faith.

2. There is a longing or a desirous expectation: 2 Peter iii. 12, 'Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.' It is good to observe how differently this coming of Christ is entertained in the world; it is questioned by the atheist, it is dreaded by the wicked and impenitent, but it is longingly expected by the godly.

[1.] For the first sort: 2 Peter iii. 3, 4, 'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?' They would eternally enjoy the pleasures of the present world, and therefore labour to dash all thoughts of this great day out of their hearts, and take up all obvious prejudices to smother the belief of it: they would be glad in their hearts to hear such news that Christ would never come. Now, their wishes do easily commence into opinion. Christ's coming is the burden and torment they would willingly get rid of; and men readily believe what they earnestly desire.

[2.] The second sort. It is dreaded by the wicked and impenitent. And therefore hated and abhorred by them. At the mention of it Felix trembled, Acts xxiv. 25. There is reason for it, for Christ comes to them as a terrible judge. In scripture his coming is set forth by light, and sometimes by fire. Light is comfortable, but fire dreadful: 2 Thes. i. 8, 'He shall come in flames of fire to render vengeance to them that obey not the gospel.' But—

[3.] To the godly it is not matter of terror, but delight; not like the handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar, but like comfortable tidings to one that expects news from far; they long for it, and would hasten it if they might have their desire: Cant. viii. 14, 'Make haste, my beloved, and be like a young hart or roe upon the mountains of spices.' Christ is not slack, but the church's affections are strong, therefore she saith, Make haste. So Rev. xxii. 20, Christ saith, 'I come;' and the church, like a quick echo, takes the words out of his mouth, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' Christ's voice and the church's voice are unisons. You will say this is the desire of the church in general; but doth every particular believer so desire it?



I answer—The part follows the reason of the whole, the same Spirit is in all the faithful; the Spirit in the bride says come; the Holy Ghost in necessary things works uniformly in all the saints, therefore he breeds this desire in them. The meanest, the weakest, even those that tremble at their own unpreparedness, have some inclination that way. There may be a drowsiness and indisposition, but no total extinction of the desire of meeting with Christ.

3. There is waiting; and here it is expressed by its adjunct, 'patient waiting;' for patient waiting is an act of hope, as well as longing expectation: 1 Thes. i. 3, 'Knowing,' saith he, 'your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope.' Faith, or a sound belief of things, will break out into practice; therefore the work of faith, love, will put us upon labour, and hope produces patience. There is a threefold patience spoken of in scripture; all the branches are near kin, for they are all begotten by hope.

[1.] The *bearing patience*; which is a constancy in adversity, or a perseverance in our duty notwithstanding the difficulties and trials that we meet with in our passage to heaven: Heb. vi. 12, 'Be ye followers of them who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises.' As we cannot inherit the promises without faith, so not without patience; for our obedience and fidelity to Christ requires not only labour and great pains, but courage and constancy to suffer as well as to do: Heb. x. 36, 'Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God you might inherit the promise.' A child of God cannot be without patience, because he must reckon for troubles and molestations. We have indeed our calms as well as our storms, many intermissions; but at other times God will exercise us, and show us our fidelity is not sufficiently tried in doing good, but before we go to heaven we must sometimes suffer evil. God hath something to do by us, and something to do with us: we must be prepared for both, to endure all things, and readily and willingly suffer the greatest evil, rather than commit the least sin, that so at length we may be accepted in the judgment.

[2.] There is a *waiting patience*, to wait God's leisure. The evil is present, the good is absent; now we long for the good as well as bear the evil: Rom. viii. 25, 'But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' This is the work of patience, to wait; to refer it to the good pleasure of God when our warfare shall be accomplished and our troubles at an end, and our final deliverance come about. The time cannot be long, for what are a few years to eternity? This waiting patience is delivered to us under the similitude of an husbandman, James v. 7, who 'waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, till he receive the early and the latter rain.' The husbandman, that hath laid out all his substance in seed-corn, cannot hope for a present harvest, or that he should receive the crop as soon as the seed is cast into the ground. No; it must lie a while there, it must endure all weathers before it can spring up in the blade and ear, and ripen, and be fit to be reaped. So though we venture all upon our everlasting hopes, yet we must expect our season, till we see the fruit and recompense of it. This is the waiting patience.

[3.] There is the *working patience*; which is a going on with our self-denying obedience, how tedious soever it be to the flesh. Thus we are told, the good ground bringeth forth fruit 'with patience.' They were hasty to have present satisfaction, or else grew weary of religion, and turned aside to worldly things. So the heirs of the promises are described, Rom. ii. 7, to be those that 'continued with patience in well-doing.' And to the church of Ephesus God saith, Rev. ii. 2, 'I know thy works, thy labour, and thy patience.' Religion is not an idle and sluggish profession, the work of it is carried on by diligence and faithfulness. Lusts are not easily mortified; neither do graces produce their perfect work with a little perfunctory care. Much labour and serious diligence is required of us, we have many things to conflict withal, there is the burden of a wearisome body, the seducing flesh, unruly passions, disordered thoughts, a dark mind, dead affections, and sometimes the misery of a troubled conscience that we conflict withal: and therefore we need much patience, that we may not faint, but be accepted of the Lord at his coming. Well, then, to live in this constant and patient expectation of Christ is the perpetual necessary duty of all those that love him.

II. The connection and affinity between it and the love of God; for if a man love God, he will wait for the coming of Christ. The one is inferred out of the other, 'The Lord direct your hearts to the love of God, *and* the patient waiting for Christ.'

1. They that love God level all their thoughts and desires to this, that God may be enjoyed, that God may be glorified.

[1.] That he may be enjoyed in the fullest manner and measure they are capable of. Now this full enjoyment is the fruit of Christ's coming; 'then we shall be ever with the Lord,' 1 Thes. iv. 17; 'When Christ shall appear, we shall see him as he is, and be like him;' that is, like him in holiness, and like him in happiness. Our vision will make a transformation. The desire of union, which is so intrinsic to love, is never satisfied till then. Here we have a little of God in the midst of sin and misery. Sin straitens our capacity from receiving more; and God sees fit to exercise us with misery, only affording us an intermixture of heavenly comfort. But our full joy is reserved to the day of Christ's appearing.

[2.] They that love God desire also that God may be glorified, that his truth may be vindicated, his love and justice demonstrated. His truth is vindicated because his threatenings and promises are all accomplished: sin will no more be had in honour, nor pride and sensuality bear sway. Love to the saints will be seen in their full reward, and his justice demonstrated on the wicked in their full punishment. All matters of faith shall then become matters of sense; and what is now propounded to be believed shall be felt, and God shall be glorified in all.

2. The saints love Christ as Mediator; we love him now though we see him not: 1 Peter i. 8, 'Whom having not seen, we love; and believing in him, rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' But desire to see him, as our surest and best friend. We have heard much of him, felt much of him, and tasted much of him, but we desire to see him, especially when he shall appear in all his glory:

Mat. xxv. 31, 'The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his angels with him.' All clouds about his person shall vanish, he shall appear to be what he is, the Saviour and judge of the world.

3. They have a love for the church; for the church in general shall at that day be adorned as a bride for her husband, and fully freed from all sin and trouble. It is no more eclipsed by its lamentable imperfections, corruption of worship, division of sects, or the persecutions of the world, nor polluted by the distempers of its diseased members: all is then holy and glorious. Christ will present it as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, Eph. v. 27.

4. They love themselves in God; and their own happiness is then fully to be perfected. All the desires and hopes of believers are then satisfied. They that are now scorned and persecuted shall have the reward of their love to God, be perfectly loved by him. A gladsome day it will be with God's people. 2 Thes. i. 10, it is said, 'Christ shall be admired in the saints, and glorified in all them that believe.' Glorified, not actively, but objectively. Poor creatures, that are newly crept out of the dust and rottenness, shall have so much glory put upon them, that the angels themselves shall stand wondering what Christ means to do for them. And then for all their labour they shall have rest, they shall rest from their labours; that is, all their troublesome work shall be over, for their pain and sorrow they shall have delight, 1 Peter iv. 12. For their shame they shall have glory put upon them both in body and soul. Our Lord Christ despised the shame for the glory set before him, Heb. xii. 2.

III. It hath a great influence upon the spiritual life, and keeps religion alive in our souls. That will appear if you take either word in the text, *waiting* or *patience*.

1. If you take the first notion, waiting or looking, as it draws off the mind from things present to things to come.

[1.] Looking to the end of things giveth wisdom: Deut. xxxii. 29, 'Oh, that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end.' It is not so much to be stood upon who is happy now, but who shall be happy at last. If men would frequently consider this, it would much rectify all the mistakes in the world. If we would inure our minds not to look to things as they seem at present, or relish to the flesh, or appear now to such short-sighted creatures as we are, but as they will be judged of at the last day, at Christ's appearing: how soon would this vain show be over, and the face of things changed, and what is rich, and pleasant, and honourable now, appear base and contemptible at the latter end! Then shall we see that there is an excellency in oppressed godliness, that exalted wickedness and folly is but shame and ruin. Do but translate the scene from the world's judgment to Christ's tribunal, and you will soon alter your opinions concerning wisdom and folly, misery and happiness, liberty and bondage, shame and glory; the mistaking of which notions pervert all mankind, and there is no rectifying the mistake but by carrying of our mind seriously to the last review of all things: for then we shall judge things not by what they seem now, but by what they will be hereafter. Solomon tells us, Prov. xix. 20, 'Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.' That is true wisdom, to

be found wise at last. Time will come when we shall wish and say in vain, Oh, that we had laid up treasure in heaven, that we had laboured for the meat that perisheth not, that we had esteemed despised holiness, that we had set less by all the vanities of the world, that we had imitated the strictest and most mortified believer, for those are only esteemed and have honour in that day. More particularly—

(1.) It would much quicken us to repentance: Acts iii. 19, 'Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the day of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.' All things shall be reviewed at Christ's coming, and some men's sins remain, and others are blotted out. None but those that are converted and turned to God can expect that benefit. Unless we be recovered from the devil, the world, and the flesh, and brought back again in heart and life to God, there will be no escape. Now those that wait for this day should prepare for it, that they may stand in the judgment with comfort. The wicked shall have judgment without mercy, but the believer shall be accepted upon terms of grace. Days of torment shall come to the one from the presence of the Lord, and days of refreshing shall come to the other. The state in the world of believing penitents is a time of conflict, labour, and sorrow, but this trouble and toil is then over, and they shall enjoy their rest. Consider these things, Where would you have your refreshment, and in what? Many seek their refreshing now either in brutish pleasures, and sit down under the shadow of some earthly gourd, which soon withers; but those that seek their refreshment in the enjoyment of God shall then be satisfied. Nothing certainly makes us so solicitous about a serious reconciliation with God as the consideration of this day.

(2.) It engageth us to holiness, and puts life into our obedience. We that look for such things, 'what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' 2 Peter iii. 11. Men are secure and careless, either because they do not believe this day, or do not seriously think of it. Could we bring ourselves to this, to think and speak and do as having judgment and eternity in our eye, we would be other manner of persons than ever we have been. What! believe this day, and be so careless! It cannot be. We would not beat down the price of religion to so low a rate, nor serve God so loosely, if we did wait for the coming of Christ, who will bring everything into the judgment, whether it be good or evil. We could not then satisfy ourselves in such a negligent profession and practice of godliness.

(3.) It would produce a more heavenly temper and conversation. That is evident from the apostle's words: Phil. iii. 20, 'Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour.' Looking for this salvation and this Saviour, it breeds in us the heavenly mind. He comes from heaven to bring us thither; for he comes to receive us to himself, John xiv. 3. Therefore if we be not heavenly, our practice will be a contradiction to our faith. You believe that there is a God and a Christ and a life to come; that this Christ came from God to bring us to God, that we may enjoy him in the life to come; and thereupon you renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and give up yourselves to God, believing that this Christ will come again



to lead all his sincere disciples and penitent believers into the glory and happiness of the heavenly state. If you believe this, what follows? That your conversation must be heavenly, either you must live for heaven, as seeking it with all diligence, that you may at length certainly obtain it, and not be excluded with the wicked, or live upon heaven, solacing yourselves in the foresight and hopes of it. Otherwise, to profess this faith, and yet to live as though your happiness were altogether in this world, were to go about to reconcile contradictions; to pretend you place your blessedness in heaven, and yet fly from it as a misery. You profess to look and long for that you have no mind to. The second notion is patience.

2. Patience, that also hath a great influence upon religion; for that which destroyeth all religion and godliness is making haste. Therefore it is said, Isa. xxviii. 16, 'He that believes, shall not make haste.' God's promises are not presently effected; and if we cannot tarry, but run to our own shifts, because they are next at hand, presently you run into a snare. On the other side it is said, Lam. iii. 26, 'It is good to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of God.' When we can hope and wait, it mightily secures our obedience. Sense is all for present satisfaction, but faith and hope can tarry God's leisure, till those better things which he hath promised do come in hand. Whatever our condition be, afflicted or prosperous, we are in the place and station where God hath set us, and there we must abide till he bring us to his kingdom. Impatience and precipitation is the cause of all mischief. What moved the Israelites to make a golden calf, but impatience, not waiting for Moses, who, according to their mind and fancy, remained too long with God in the mount? What made Saul force himself to offer sacrifice, but because he could not tarry an hour longer for Samuel, and so lost the kingdom? 1 Sam. xiii. 12-14. What made the bad servant, or church officer, to smite his fellow-servant, and eat and drink with the drunken, that is, to abuse church censures, countenance the profane, and smite and curb the godly, but only this? Mat. xxiv. 48, 'My Lord delays his coming.' He sees the strictest are hated in the world, and the others befriended; and honour and interest runs that way, and Christ comes not to rectify these disorders. 'My Lord delays his coming.' Hasty men are loth to be kept in suspense and long expectation, and so miscarry. Look to all sorts of sinners. The carnal and sensual, they cannot wait for the time when they shall have pleasures for evermore at God's right hand, therefore take up with present delights. Like those who cannot tarry till the grapes be ripe, therefore eat them sour and green. Solid and everlasting pleasures they cannot wait for, therefore choose the pleasures of sin, that are but for a season. A covetous man will wax rich in a day, and cannot tarry the fair leisure of providence; therefore we are told, 'He that makes haste to be rich cannot be innocent,' Prov. xxviii. 20. An ambitious man will not stay till God gives true crowns and honours in his kingdom, and therefore he must have honour and greatness here, though his climbing and affecting to be built one storey higher in the world cost him the ruin and loss of his soul. All revolt and apostasy from God proceeds from hence, because they cannot wait for God's help, and tarry his

fulfilling the promise ; but finding themselves pressed and destitute, the flesh, that is tender and delicate, grows impatient. It is tedious to suffer for a while, but they do not consider it is more tedious to suffer for evermore. Thence comes also our murmuring and distrustful repining : Ps. xxxi. 22, 'I said in my haste, I am cut off ; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication.' Just at that time when God was about to hear him. So, 'I said in my haste, All men are liars.' And thence also our unlawful attempts, and stepping out of God's way. Men fly to unwarrantable means, because they cannot depend upon God, and wait with patience. Look, as an impetuous river is always troubled and thick, so is a precipitate, impatient spirit out of order, full of distemper, a ready prey to Satan.

IV. The necessity of divine concurrence. The apostle prays here, 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ.' It concerns this clause as well as the former.

1. As to the carnal and unregenerate. Till their hearts be changed, they can never attain to this patient waiting for Christ, for two reasons:—

[1.] In the wicked there is no sound belief of these things, for they live by sense and not by faith. The apostle tells us, 'He that lacketh grace is blind, and cannot see afar off,' 2 Peter i. 9. Things of another world are too uncertain, and too far off for them to apprehend, so as to be much moved by them. They hear of the coming of Christ, and speak by rote of it after others, but they do not believe it ; therefore, till God enlighten them, how shall they be affected with this matter ?

[2.] There is an utter unsuitableness of heart to them. Things present, that suit their fancies and please their senses, carry away their hearts. Ps. xlix. 18, 'Whilst he lived he blessed his soul ; and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.' Men bless themselves, and the carnal world applauds them in a sensual course and way of living. They measure all happiness by their outward condition in the world, and please themselves with golden dreams of contentment ; and this being seconded with the flattery and applauses of the deceived world, they are fast asleep in the midst of the greatest soul-dangers, and so go down into hell before they think of it.

2. Come we now to the regenerate. Such the apostle looks upon the Thessalonians to be. They need to have their hearts directed to the patient waiting for Christ, for these reasons:—

[1.] Because we have too dim and doubtful a foresight of these things. How dark a prospect have even the best of God's children of the world to come ! We may speak of others as unbelievers, but God knows how doubtful our own thoughts are about eternity and Christ's coming ; how little we can shut the eye of sense, and open that of faith, and say truly with the apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'We look not at the things that are seen, that are temporal ; but to the things unseen, that are eternal.' Alas ! we have no through sight into another world. The best Christians have need to have their eyes anointed with spiritual eye-salve, that their sight may be more sharp and piercing ; to beg 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation, to open the eyes of their mind, that they may see what is the hope of Christ's calling,' Eph. i. 17, 18. There are too many intervening clouds between us and eternity, that darken our sight and obscure our faith.

[2.] Our thoughts of these things are strange and dull, and too rare and unfrequent. How seldom have we any serious thoughts of his coming, and how unwelcome are they to our hearts! It was a complaint against Israel, that they did put far away the evil day; but the complaint against us may be taken up thus, that we put far away the good day, when all our desires and hopes shall be accomplished and satisfied. The atheistical world deny it, and we forget it. Solomon saith to the sensual young man, 'Remember, that for all these things God shall bring thee to judgment.' Young men forget or put off these thoughts, lest, like cold water cast into a boiling pot, they should check the fervour of their lusts. But, alas! grave men, good men, forget these things. When Christ had spoken of his coming to judgment, he saith, Mark xiii. 37, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.' Watching is keeping up this attentiveness to his second coming with all Christian vigilance and endeavour. But few regard the charge: therefore 'the Lord direct your hearts,' &c.

[3.] Because our affections are so cold, and we are no more affected with it, but as if we were senseless of the weight of these things. Some dead and drowsy desires we have, but not that lively motion which will become hope and love. If nature say, 'Come not to torment us before the time,' grace should say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, oh, come quickly.' We are not only to look for his appearing, but to love his appearing. Where are these desires, that Christ would either come down to us, or take us up to himself, that we may live with him for ever?

[4.] This prayer need to be made for the renewed too, because Christians think of it with too much perplexity and fear. Is the sight of a Saviour unwelcome to you? or should the drawing nigh of your redemption be a comfort or a terror? Why do you then believe in Christ, and choose his favour for your happiness? We thought that this had been all your hope, and your desire, and your great comfort; and shall your hope be your torment, and beget horror rather than joy? Oh, beg the Lord to direct your hearts, that you may 'hope to the end for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Peter i. 13. We do not only wait for glory, but for grace; and shall not this be a comfort to you?

[5.] We need to pray this prayer, because our preparations are too slender for so great a day. Serious preparation is necessary. It is described 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless;' that is, in a state of reconciliation with God. But we live too securely and quietly, in an unprepared state. If we have the habitual preparation, we do not keep up the actual preparation by clarifying and refining our souls from the dregs of sense, by honouring God in the world with greater earnestness, that when our Lord comes, he may find us so doing. We do not stand 'with our loins girt, and our lamps burning,' that when the Lord knocks we may open to him immediately. We do not keep up the heavenly desire, the actual readiness. The return of a husband after long absence is more welcome to the wife than to a harlot; but she would have all things ready for his reception and entertainment.

[6.] Because our motions are too inconstant. We interrupt the course of our obedience frequently, faint in our afflictions, do not keep up the fervour of our affections, and follow after salvation with that industrious diligence. We need often the Christian watchword, 'The Lord is at hand.' We lose much of our first love, intermit of our first works. Therefore, 'The Lord direct your hearts to the patient waiting for Christ.'

The exhortation is to quicken you to take care of this grace, that you may be constantly exercised in it. While we are upon earth, we should continually be expecting Christ's coming from heaven. The motives may be these:—

1. Before Christ's coming in the flesh, the saints waited for him. 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord,' saith Jacob, Gen. xlix. 18. And Simeon for Christ, the Saviour of the world; for so it is explained, 'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' And our Lord tells us, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day,' John viii. 56; and it is said of Anna and others, that they 'waited for the consolation of Israel,' Luke ii. 25, 38. And after Christ was come, the disciples were commanded to 'wait for the promise of the Spirit,' Acts i. 4. So, by parity of reason, we must wait for the coming of Christ; for that is the next great promise to be accomplished, and the great thing to put life into our religion.

2. The people of God are described by this, 1 Thes. i. 10, 'Who wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.' A man would have thought, in those early days, they should have been described by their respect to what was past rather than to what was to come, which was at so great a distance: they should have been described by believing Christ was already come in the flesh, rather than waiting for his coming in glory. No; this is proposed as an evidence of their sincerity and Christianity, 'Waiting for the coming of Christ.' And so it is said, Heb. ix. 28, 'That Christ would appear unto the salvation of them that look for him.' That is the property of true believers. But they that look not for his coming, love not, and long not for his coming, cannot expect his salvation. It is an allusion to the people, who, upon the day of expiation, when the high priest went into the holiest before the mercy-seat, were waiting for his coming out, that he might solemnly bless them. So must we look for Christ's return, now he is gone within the veil of the heavenly sanctuary, that he may come out and bless us with everlasting blessings.

3. This should move us to it, the benefits that will come to us hereby; for this waiting for Christ breeds in us contempt of the world, mortification of the flesh, tolerance and enduring of the cross.

[1.] It breeds in us contempt of the world; because we look for higher and better things to be dispensed to us when Christ comes. 'Set not your affections on things on earth, but on things in heaven.' Why? 'For your life is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory,' Col. iii. 2-4. The more the heart is given to one, the other gets the less. Earthly things be little regarded in comparison of that



glorious state, both of soul and body, which we shall have at Christ's appearance.

[2.] This conduceth to the mortification of the flesh ; therefore we deny ourselves present satisfactions, that we may not be castaways, disallowed in the judgment. 'Be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the coming of Christ,' 1 Peter i. 13.

[3.] The tolerance and enduring of the cross. This gives a quiet temper in all troubles. We may suffer now, 'but when Christ shall appear, we shall rejoice with exceeding joy,' 1 Peter iv. 13. And then our reward will very much exceed the proportion of our sufferings ; they are no more to be set against them than a feather against a talent of lead. 'I reckon they are not worthy to be compared,' saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 18. It would be a disgrace to a man's reason that these things should bear any competition with our great hopes : 'these light afflictions, that are but for a moment,' with 'that exceeding weight of glory,' Christ shall bestow upon us.

For means, all I shall say is this : if you wait for Christ's coming, look upon it as sure and as near : Rev. xxii. 12, 'Behold, I come quickly, and bring my reward with me.' We have the promise of the eternal God for it, so attested, and made out to us with such evidence, that we have no reason to doubt of the recompenses of religion. But things at a distance, though never so great, will not leave a due impression upon us : therefore we must look upon this promise with a certainty of persuasion that it will not be long before its accomplishment. Thus faith lessens the distance between hope and enjoyment, and enables us comfortably to wait.

## SERMON VIII.

*Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.*

—Eph. I. 8.

IN the context the apostle speaks of the spiritual blessings we have by Christ : he considers them under a threefold reference :—(1.) As they were appointed and prepared for believers in God's decree of election. There was the first stone laid towards this building. (2.) As they were purchased by Christ in the great and wonderful work of redemption. (3.) As conveyed and applied to us in effectual calling, and so brought home to our souls. In all these God gave evident proofs of the riches of his free grace. For (1st,) If he 'chose us to be holy before the foundations of the world,' nothing anteceded his love ; not in us—for there was nothing in being then ; we were not, and so could do nothing to deserve it—nor in that prospect and foresight which God had of things ; for he could foresee nothing but what was the effect of his free grace : not because holy, but 'that we *might* be holy and without blame before him in love.' (2dly,) Consider his

purpose to bring about all this by Christ, still he showed his free grace. For when there was nothing to move him, much to hinder the design of his grace, yet he found out a way to bring this about by Christ. (3dly.) In the effectual application to us, who were ignorant, obstinate, unbelieving, his grace doth more shine forth that he would do all this for creatures so much unworthy. Now, in the application, God discovers two things:—(1.) His abundant favour, or the riches of his grace, ver. 7. That his love, so long hid in his decree, did afterwards overflow in the effects to persons so averse and unworthy. (2.) His excellent wisdom in the text, ‘Wherein he hath abounded to us in all wisdom and prudence.’

The only difficulty in the words is, What is this wisdom and prudence spoken of? Whether it imply the wisdom of God, or the wisdom wrought in us by the Spirit in conversion? Many interpreters go for the last. The former, I suppose, is here meant, which is eminently discovered in the mysteries of the gospel: Rom. xi. 33, ‘Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!’ Surely it is not meant of wisdom in us; for how little a portion have we of true and heavenly wisdom. Now, the two words used: *wisdom* noteth the sublimity of the doctrine of the gospel, and *prudence* the usefulness of it. As Prov. viii. 12, ‘I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,’ which showeth there is some distinction between those words. It was wisdom to find out a way of recovering lapsed mankind, and it was prudence to dispose it into so good and convenient order that it might be commodious for our acceptance. If any think it relateth to the effects wrought in us, I am not against it. Christ is wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 24, and ‘made wisdom’ to us, 1 Cor. i. 30. These Asiatics, to whom the apostle wrote, gloried in their secular wisdom and curious arts; now the true wisdom was found in the mysteries of the gospel.

*Doct.* That in the dispensation of grace by Christ, God hath showed great wisdom and prudence.

When his grace overflowed to us, he showed therein not only his goodness but his wisdom. Now, though we can easily yield to this assertion, yet to make it out needeth more skill. ‘The manifold wisdom of God’ is better seen to angels than to us, Eph. iii. 10. They have more orderly understandings; whereas we are confused and dark. Yet to discover it to you in a few particulars, the grace of the Redeemer may be considered three ways:—

I. As to the purchase and impetration of it by the incarnation and death of the Son of God.

II. The publication of it in the gospel or covenant of grace.

III. The application of it to particular believers. In all these God hath shown great wisdom.

I. As to the purchase and impetration of grace by the death and incarnation of the Son of God.

1. There is wisdom in this, that in our fallen estate we should not come immediately to God without a mediator and reconciler. God is out of the reach of our commerce, being at such a distance from us, and variance with us. The wise men of the world pitched on such a way, 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6. The heathens saw so far that it was an uncomfortable thing to make their immediate approaches to their

supreme God. But here is the true God and the true Mediator: 'But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.' One God, the Father, from whom we derive all graces, to whom we direct all services; one Lord, Jesus Christ, who conveyeth the graces and benefits to us, and returneth our prayers and acts of obedience to God. This is a mighty relief to our thoughts; for the apprehensions of the pure Godhead do amaze us and confound us when we come to consider of that glorious and infinite being. As heretofore, before they found out the use of the compass, they only coasted, as loth to venture themselves in the great ocean; so by Christ we come to God. He is the true Jacob's ladder, John i. 51.

2. That this Mediator is God in our nature. Therein the wisdom of God appeared, in crossing and counter-working Satan's design. Satan's great design was double—to dishonour God, and depress the nature of man. (1.) To dishonour God to man by a false representation, as if he were envious of man's happiness: Gen. iii. 5, 'God doth know in the day that ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' His first battery was against the goodness of God, to weaken the esteem thereof. Now, by the incarnation of Christ, the Lord's grace is wonderfully manifested. He is represented as lovely and amiable in our eyes, not envying our holiness and happiness, but promoting it, and that at the most costly rate, and showing love to man above all his other creatures. 'God is love,' 1 John iv. 8. It is eminently demonstrated to us in the Son of God assuming our nature and dying for us, Rom. v. 8. When Christ was incarnate, love was incarnate. Love walked up and down and healed all sicknesses and diseases, love died, and love hung on a cross, love was buried in the grave. When that ill representation was suggested to us, it was necessary there should be some eminent demonstration of the love of God to man. Especially after we had made ourselves liable to his wrath, and were conscious to ourselves that we had incurred his displeasure; and so it was necessary that we should have some notable discovery of his *philanthropy*, or love to mankind. Many believers are harassed with doubts and fears, and cannot come to be persuaded that God loves them. 'Herein is love,' and 'God commended his love to us in that his Son died for us.' (2.) The next design of Satan was to depress the nature of man, which in its innocence stood so near to God. Now that the human nature, so depressed and debased by the malicious suggestion of the tempter, should be so elevated and advanced, and set up so far above the angelical nature, and admitted to dwell with God in a personal union, it is a mighty counter-working of Satan, and sheweth the great wisdom of God. When he laboured to put God and us asunder, the Lord sent his Son, who took the unity of our nature into his own person.

3. That being in our nature, he would set us a pattern of obedience by his holy life; for he lived by the same laws that we are bound to live by. He imposed no duty upon us but what he underwent himself, that he might be an example of holiness unto us. We learn of him obedience to God at the dearest rates; contempt of the world, and contentation with a low and mean estate, and to be lowly and

meek in heart, Mat. xi. 29. Now man being so prone to imitation, it is the greatest effect of the wisdom of God thus to oblige us, unless we would be utterly unlike him whom we own as our Lord, and from whom we have all our hopes and expectations.

4. That he should die the death of the cross to expiate our sins. Gal. iii. 13, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,' &c. ; Phil. ii. 8, 'He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;' that the justice of God might be eminently demonstrated, the lawgiver vindicated, and the breach that was made in the frame of government repaired, and God might keep up his just honour without prejudice to his people's happiness, that he might be manifested to be holy, and a hater of sin, and yet the sinner saved from destruction, Rom. iii. 25, 26. An absolute pardon without satisfaction might have exposed God's laws to contempt, as if the violation of them were not much to be stood upon; therefore God dispensed his grace with all wisdom and prudence; would show eminent mercy, but withal a demonstration of his justice and holiness, that the world might still be kept in awe, and there might be a full concord and harmony between his mercy and justice.

5. That after his death he should rise from the dead and ascend into heaven, to prove the reality of the life to come, 1 Peter iii. 21. Guilty man is fallen under the power and fear of death, strangely haunted with doubts about the other world; therefore did Christ in our nature arise from the dead and ascend into heaven, that he might give a visible demonstration of the visible resurrection and life to come, which he had promised to us; and so encourage us, by a life of patience in sufferings, to follow after him into those blessed mansions. So that from first to last you see the wisdom of God.

II. The publication of it in the gospel or covenant of grace. It is 'ordered in all things and sure,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. The messengers by whom it is published are not extraordinary ones, but men of like passion with ourselves. The great thing in a minister is love to souls. Christ saith, he 'came not to be ministered unto but to minister.' In the covenant of grace, you see the wisdom of God in two things:—(1.) The privileges offered; (2.) The terms or duties required.

1. In the privileges offered to us, which are pardon and life. In these benefits, pardon and life, there is due provision made for the desires, necessities and wants of mankind. Pardon answereth the fears of the guilty creature; and life, those desires of happiness which are so natural to us, and therefore are the most powerful and inviting motives to draw our hearts to God.

[1.] The consciousness of God's displeasure, and the fear of his wrath, should make offers of pardon acceptable to us. When sin entered into the world, fear entered with sin. The grand scruple which haunteth the guilty creature is, how God shall be appeased, and the controversy taken up between us and his justice: Micah vi. 6, 7, 'Wherewith shall he be appeased, and what shall I give for the sin of my soul?' We fear death and punishment from a holy and just God, and this is the bottom cause of all our troubles. Therefore till the forgiveness of sin be procured for us, and represented to us upon



commodious terms, we know not how to get rid of this bondage, the justice of the supreme governor of the world will be ever dreadful to us. These fears may be for a while stifled in men, but they will ever and anon return upon us. Now let us admire the wisdom of God, who hath provided such a suitable remedy to our disease as reconciliation and remission of sins by Jesus Christ; and that God showed himself so ready to pardon us, who are so obnoxious to his wrath and vindictive justice.

[2.] The other great privilege offered in the covenant is eternal life, which suiteth with those desires of happiness which are so natural to us. Corrupt nature is not against the offers of felicity; we would have immunity, peace, comfort, glory; none would be against his own benefit, but every one would be willing to be freed from the curse of the law, and the flames of hell, and enjoy happiness for evermore. Though we be unwilling to deny the flesh, and renounce the credit, pleasure, and profit of sin, and grow dead to the world, and worldly things, yet never was there a creature heard of that would not be happy, for there was never a creature but loved himself. Now, the Lord in his covenant 'hath brought life and immortality to light,' settled our happiness and the way to it; he promises that which we desire, to induce us to that which we are against. As we sweeten pills to children, that they may swallow them down the better, they love the sugar though they loathe the aloes. God would invite us to our duty by our interest; he hath told us of a happiness full, sure, and near, that he may draw us off from the false happiness wherewith we are enchanted, and bring us into the way of holiness, that we may look after this blessed hope.

2. The terms he hath required of us. The terms are either for entrance, or making covenant with God; or continuance, or keeping covenant with God; for entrance, faith, and repentance are required.

[1.] Faith in Christ. The world thinks faith quits reason and introduceth fond credulity. No; there is much of the wisdom of God to be seen in it. For faith hath a special aptitude and fitness for this work:—(1.) Partly in respect of God. For he having designed to glorify his mercy and free grace, and to make our salvation from first to last a mere gift, and the fruit of his love to us, hath appointed faith for the acceptance of this gift: Rom. iv. 16, 'It is of faith, that it might be by grace.' Faith and grace go always together, and it is put in opposition to the merit of works, or the strictness of the old covenant. (2.) As it is fittest to own Christ the Redeemer, the fountain of life and happiness, and our head and husband, whom we receive, and to whom we are united and married by faith. (3.) With respect to the promises of the gospel, which offer to us a happiness and blessedness, spiritual, and for the most part future. Unseen things are properly objects of faith: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' (4.) It is fittest as to our future obedience, that it may be comfortable and willing. Now, we owning Christ in a way of subjection and dependence, and consenting to become his disciples and subjects, other duties come on the more easily, 2 Cor. viii. 5.

[2.] For repentance. This is the most lively and powerful means of

bringing men to new life and blessedness. (1.) It is most for the honour of God that we should not be pardoned without submission, without confession of past sin, and resolution of future obedience. Common reason will tell us that our case is not compassionate while we are impenitent, and hold it out against God. Who will pity those in misery who are unwilling to come out of it? Besides, it would infringe the honour of God's law and government that one continuing in his sins, and despising both the curse of the law and the grace of the gospel, should be pardoned and saved. Repentance is often called a giving glory to God: Mal. ii. 2, 'Ye will not lay it to heart, and give glory to my name;' Josh. vii. 19, 'My son, give glory to God, and make confession to him;' Rev. xvi. 9, 'They repented not to give glory to God.' Repentance restoreth God's honour to him, as it acknowledges the justice of his laws. The self-condemning sinner acknowledges that God may destroy him, and if he save him it is mere mercy. (2.) The duty of the creature is best secured, and the penitent person more bound to future obedience, by the vow itself, or the bond of the holy oath into which he is entered, and the circumstances accompanying it, which surely induce a hatred of sin and a love of holiness. There will be a hearty consent to live in the love, obedience, and service of our Creator, with a detestation of our former ways. When we feel the smart of sin, such a sense of it will ever stick by us; and when we are in the deepest and freshest sense of his pardoning mercy, when we see at how dear rates he is pleased to have us, and upon what free terms to pardon all our wrongs, we shall love much, Luke vii. 47. Surely they that are brought back from the gibbet and the very gates of hell by such an act of pardoning mercy are most likely to remember the vows of their distress, and are more engaged to love God and please him than others are. (3.) It is most for the comfort of the creature that a stated course of recovering ourselves into the peace and hope of the gospel should be appointed to us, which may leave the greatest sense upon our consciences. Now what is likely to do so much as this apparent change, whereby we renounce and utterly bewail our former folly, and solemnly devote and give up ourselves to God by Christ? Those things that are serious and advised leave a notice and impression upon the soul. This is the most important action of our lives, the settling of our pardon and eternal interest. The heart is hardly brought to this, to renounce what we dearly love; therefore it is usually rewarded with some notable tastes of God's love: Isa. lvii. 15, God delights 'to revive the hearts of his contrite ones.'

For continuance in the new covenant, and delightful obedience unto God. The remedy is not only suited to the disease, but the duty to the reward. Our duty is to know God, and to love him; and our reward is to see him, and be like him, 1 John iii. 2. There is a marvellous suitableness between the end and means, holiness and happiness, conformity to God, and our communion with him; the holiness required of us now, and the happiness we expect hereafter; perfect conformity and uninterrupted communion; and they differ only but as the bud and the flower, the river and the ocean: here it is begun, hereafter perfected.

III. In the application of his grace to particular believers, he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.

1. In the way God taketh to convert souls to himself, there is a sweet contemperation and mixture of wisdom and power. There is a proposal of truth and good to the understanding and the will, and by the secret power of his grace it is made effectual. We are taught and drawn: John vi. 44, 45, 'No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.' In the 45th verse, 'And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' There is opening of blind eyes, and the turning of a hard heart: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light,' &c.; Eph. i. 18, 'The eyes of the understanding being opened,' &c.; Col. iii. 10, 'Renewed in knowledge.' Turning the heart: Acts xvi. 14, 'God opened the heart of Lydia;' Acts xi. 21, 'The hand of the Lord was with him; and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord.' His hand implieth his power. Thus God worketh strongly, like himself; sweetly, with respect to us, that he may not oppress the liberty of our faculties. Christ comes into the heart, not by force, but by consent. We are 'transformed,' but so as we 'prove what the will of God is,' Rom. xii. 2. He draweth, we run, Cant. i. 4. The power of God and liberty of man do sweetly consist together. As God is said to 'create in us a new heart,' he is also said to 'give us a free spirit,' Ps. li. 10, 12. Eph. ii. 10, We are said to be 'his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' So he 'puts a new heart,' and we are said to 'walk in his ways.' Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 'A new heart will I also give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' Thus God sheweth forth the powerful efficacy of his grace, and doth also win the consent and good liking of the sinner; he obtaineth his effect, and yet doth preserve the liberty of man's nature and the principles thereof. It is not only *voluntas mota*, but *mutata*; the nature is changed and renewed. 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'But we all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

2. In the persuasive and moral way, the wisdom of God is seen as taking the most likely course to gain the heart of man, discovering himself to us as a God of love, kindness, and mercy. Guilty creatures stand aloof from a condemning God; our fear of his justice maketh us run from him: Gen. iii. 7, 10, Adam 'hid himself from the presence of the Lord.' So all his posterity forsake God and hate him. But God, though the superior, though the wronged party, maketh offers of peace, and sheweth how willing he is to be reconciled to us. Having first laid the foundation in the highest demonstration of goodness that ever could come to the ears of man to hear of, or enter into the heart of man to conceive; namely, in giving his Son to die for a sinful world, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. What more apt to make man relent? And

then, because man had fallen from the love of God to the creature, Jer. ii. 13, what wisdom doth God show, not only in the offers of pardon, but eternal life and blessedness, infinitely beyond the false happiness which carnal self-love inclineth us to ! that it is a shame and disgrace to our reason to think these things are worthy to be compared together. What are all the pleasures, profits, and honours we dote upon, to the pleasures at God's right hand ? the riches of the inheritance of the saints, and the glory which cometh from God. And therefore, what more powerful motive can be produced than this blessed immortality ? Indeed, God is invisible, and the glory is to come ; and sensual pleasures are at hand, ready to be enjoyed. But faith checketh sense : Heb. xi. 1, ' Faith is the evidence of things not seen.' Oh the wisdom of God in the frame of the gospel !

3. In the effect itself, the new creature, which is the wisest creature on this side heaven. To evidence this to you, I shall show you that all wisdom and prudence consisteth in three things :—(1.) In fixing a right end ; (2.) In the choice of apt and proper means ; (3.) In a dexterous effectual prosecution of the end by those means.

(1.) In fixing and propounding to ourselves a right end. A wise man doth not mind trifles, but is conversant about things of the greatest reality, necessity, and excellency : such are God and heaven. All other wisdom will prove but folly in the end. Others 'disquiet themselves about a vain show,' Ps. xxxix. 6. Poor, silly creatures cark and labour and turmoil to get together a few poor transitory enjoyments, where there is neither durable possession nor solid satisfaction. The honours, pleasures, and riches of the world are but pictures and shadows of the true honours, the true riches, and fulness of joy at God's right hand. Surely he is a wise man that chooseth God for his portion and heaven for his home : Prov. xv. 24, 'The way of life is above to the wise, to avoid hell beneath.' He is wise, and hath chosen the true sort of living, which mindeth the salvation of his soul, and looketh after eternal life. Surely this is above and beyond any wisdom man can pretend unto, to be happy, not for a while, but for ever.

(2.) In the choice of apt and proper means. A man is wise enough if he knows his duty, and the way to happiness. God hath appointed us the way wherein to walk, to fear him, and love him, and keep his commandments : Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep these statutes, for this is your wisdom ;' Job xxviii. 28, 'The fear of God, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil, that is understanding.' There is an excellency in this sort of life, Prov. xii. 26. Those applaud it that do not choose it. All are of this mind at last, and dying are sensible of the excellency of it.

(3.) A dexterous effectual prosecution of the end. This prosecution imports—First, Diligence : He is a fool that hath a price in his hand and hath not a heart to lay it out on a good purchase, Prov. xvii. 16 ; but he is a wise man that improveth his time and labour to a good purpose : 'A wise man's heart is at his right hand,' Eccles. x. 2. Secondly, This prosecution lies in caution and circumspection to keep himself from sin : Eph. v. 15, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.' Lastly, It consists in self-denial. The wise merchant sold all that he had for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 46, 47.



A wise man doth not dally with religion, but thoroughly sets himself to it.

*Use 1.* Be persuaded that serious Christianity is the true wisdom; and the wisdom of the world, which is only conversant about worldly things, from a worldly principle to a worldly end, is foolishness with God. This is wisdom, which acquainteth us more with God, and leadeth us into everlasting happiness.

2. Admire the wisdom of God in dispensing salvation by Christ, who could bring light out of darkness, and so great a demonstration of his glory out of man's sin, and vanquish Satan by the way, whereby he seemed most to prevail, and still attain his end by means seemingly contrary. There is more of divine power and wisdom showed in Christ crucified than in anything men could think of. It was a more glorious act of power to raise Christ from the dead, than in not permitting him to die. He prevailed more by laying down his life, than by being prosperous in the world and taking the lives of his enemies.

3. If God hath abounded to us in all wisdom, let us not disturb the order of this grace by asking privileges without duties, or minding duties without the help of the Spirit; or placing all in duties, so as to exclude the merit and satisfaction of the Redeemer; or to eye the ransom so as to exclude the example of Christ. All things are well ordered in God's covenant; the confusion arises from our darkness and misapprehensions.

4. There should be wisdom and prudence in us, for the impression must be according to the seal and stamp. Wisdom is a saving knowledge of divine mysteries; and prudence, to regulate and order our actions and practices, to perform our respective duties to God and man. The apostle prays for the Colossians (Col. i. 9), that they might 'be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.' All have not the same measure of saving knowledge and prudence, yet the least saint hath what is necessary to salvation. You must every day grow in those graces, for by degrees they are carried on towards perfection.

## SERMON IX.

*And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?—MAT. XXVII. 46.*

IN the history of the passion you will find that our Lord Jesus was exercised with all kind of temptations; affronted by men, assaulted by the powers of darkness, deserted by his own disciples—one of them denied him, another betrayed him, but all fled. And thus he was not only 'rejected of men,' but was stricken, and smitten, and forsaken of God. This was as gall and vinegar to his wounds, the passion of his passion. The world's cruelty and Satan's rage had been nothing, if the brightness of the divine presence had not been eclipsed. When the people were set against him—'His blood be upon us and our

children'—he complained not of that. When 'friend and lover were afar off,' he doth not complain of that. Judas, why hast thou betrayed me? Peter, why hast thou denied me? Disciples, why have ye forsaken me? But when God was withdrawn, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' This is his bitter complaint now.

The words, then, are Christ's complaint, not *of* God, but *to* God. In them observe:—

1. The circumstance of time when this complaint was made: *about the ninth hour*.

2. The matter of it: God had *forsaken* him.

3. The manner of it: with vehemency, and yet with faith. There was faith in it, for he saith, *My God*. The vehemency is seen in the extension of his voice: he *cried with a loud voice*; and by the ingemination of the name of God: *my God, my God*.

1. The circumstance of time: *about the ninth hour*. We read in the former verse, that 'from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.' At the passion of Christ the earth trembled, the sun seemed to be struck blind with astonishment, and the frame of nature to put itself into a funeral garb and habit, as if the creatures durst not show their glory while God was manifesting his anger for sin, and Christ was suffering. After three hours' darkness, he complaineth not of that, but of the sad eclipse that was upon his own spirit.

2. The matter complained of: *why hast thou forsaken me?* It is not an expostulation, so much as a representation of the heavy burden that was upon him. Questions among the Hebrews imply earnest assertions; as Ps. x. 1, 'Why standest thou afar off? Why hidest thou thyself in the time of trouble?' that is, Lord! thou hidest thyself from me. So Ps. xliii. 2, 'Why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy?' that is, I do go mourning. The case is represented in such forms of speech.

3. The vehemency.

[1.] In the extension of his voice. Great griefs express themselves by strong cries; for burdened nature would fain have vent and utterance. And the apostle taketh notice of this circumstance, *μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς*, Heb. v. 7, 'He offered prayers and tears, with strong crying.'

[2.] In the ingemination of the name of God: *My God, my God*. These possessive particles are words of faith striving against the temptation. He had great trouble of spirit, but to that he opposeth his interest: *My God, my God*. In the bitterest agonies Christ despaired not, but still had a most firm persuasion of God's love to him, and necessary support from him. But all sheweth the trouble was not light, but heavy and grievous.

*Doct.* That Christ, as suffering for our sins, was really deserted for a time, in regard of all sensible consolation.

I. What was Christ's desertion?

II. Why it befell him.

III. What use may we make of it?

I. What was Christ's desertion? I shall, for more distinctness, handle it negatively and affirmatively.

## First, Negatively.

1. It was not a desertion in appearance or conceit only, but real. We often mistake God's dispensations. God may be out of sight, and yet we not out of mind. When the dam is abroad for meat, the young brood in the nest is not forsaken. The children cry as if the mother were totally gone, when she is employed about necessary business for their welfare. 'Sion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me,' Isa. xlix. 14, 15. In the misgivings of our hearts God seems to have cast off all care and thoughts of us. God's affectionate answer sheweth that all this was but a fond surmise: 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' So we think that we are cut off when God is about to help and deliver us, Ps. xxxi. 22. Many times we think he has quite cast us off, when we are never more in his heart. Surely, when our affections towards God are seen by mourning for his absence, he is not wholly gone; his room is kept warm for him till he come again. We mistake God's dispensations when we judge that a forsaking which is but an emptying us of all carnal dependence: Ps. xciv. 18, 19, 'When I said, My foot slipped, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.' In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.' He is near many times when we think him afar off; as Christ was to his disciples when their eyes were withheld that they knew him not, but thought him yet lying in the grave, Luke xxiv. 16. But this cannot be imagined of Christ, who could not be mistaken. If he complained of a desertion, surely he felt it. It was a real desertion. He could not misinterpret the dispensation of God he was now under, for such misapprehensions are below the perfection of his nature.

2. Though it were real, the desertion must be understood so as may stand with the dignity of his person and offices. Therefore—

[1.] There was no separation of the Father from the Son; this would make a change in the unity of the divine essence: John x. 30, 'I and my Father are one'—*Ἐμπεριχώρησις*. This eternal union of the person of the Father with the person of the Son always remained; for the divine nature, though it may be distinguished into Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, yet it cannot be divided.

[2.] There was no dissolution of the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, for the human nature which was once assumed was never after dismissed or laid aside; *Ἀχωρίστως*, Christ ever remained Immanuel, God with us, or God in our nature. He was 'the Lord of glory,' even then when he was crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 8. It was the Son of God that was delivered up for us all; not a mere man suffered for our redemption, but God purchased the church 'with his blood,' Acts xx. 28. Death, that dissolved the bond and tie between soul and body, did not dissolve the union of the two natures. They resemble it by a man drawing a sword, and holding the sword in one hand and the scabbard in another; the same person holds both, though separated the one from the other.

3. The love of God to him ceased not. We read, 'The Father loved the Son, and put all things into his hand,' John iii. 35. Now, he was his dear Son, or the Son of his love, Col. i. 13; 'In whom his

soul delighted,' Isa. xlii. 1; Eph. i. 6, 'He hath made us accepted in the beloved'—*primum amabile*; He was 'the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,' Heb. i. 3. Therefore he could not but love him in every state; yea, he never more loved him as mediator then when on the cross, that being the most eminent act of his self-denial and obedience (Phil. ii. 7), and so a new ground of love: John x. 17, 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life to take it up again.' The Father was well pleased with the reconciliation of lost sinners, he loveth Christ for undertaking and performing it; therefore it is unreasonable to imagine that, now he was about the highest act of obedience, there was any decrease of his love to him. No; his dispensation might be changed, but not his love. As the sun shining through a clear glass, or through a red glass, casts a different reflection, a bloody, or a bright, but the light is the same.

4. His personal holiness was not abated or lessened. The Lord Jesus was 'full of grace and truth,' John i. 14. He had the 'Spirit not by measure,' John iii. 34; he had in perfection all divine gifts and graces to accomplish him for this office, Col. i. 19; John i. 16, he was anointed by the Holy Ghost, and the oil that was poured on him never failed. Therefore he was always most holy and pure, one that never knew nor did sin. Neither his nature nor his office could permit an abatement of holiness: Heb. vii. 26, 'Such an high priest became us as was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' The Son of God might fall into misery, which is a natural evil, and so become the object of pity, not of blame; but not into sin, which is a moral evil, a blot, and a blemish. When he died, 'He died, the just for the unjust,' 1 Peter iii. 18. The death of Christ had profited us nothing if he had been a sinner for a moment; therefore this desertion was not a diminishing of his holiness, but a suspension of his comfort.

5. God's assistance and sustaining grace was not wholly withdrawn, for the Lord saith of him, Isa. xlii. 1, 'This is my elect servant, whom I uphold.' And everywhere the Lord is said to be with him in this work: Ps. cxxi. 5, 'The Lord is at thy right hand;' and Ps. xvi. 8. 'I have set the Lord always before me: he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' Which passage is by Peter applied to Christ: Acts ii. 25, 'For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved.' The power, presence, and providence of God was ever with him, to sustain him in his difficult enterprise. When his agonies began he told his disciples, John xvi. 32, 'Ye shall leave me alone: yet I am not alone, but the Father is with me.' The Father was with him when his disciples forsook him, and fled every one to his own, to carry him through, and that his arm might work salvation for him, and that he might not sink under the burden.

Secondly, Positively.

1. God's desertion of us, or any creature, may be understood with a respect to his communicating himself to us. We have a twofold apprehension of God, as a holy and happy being; and when he doth communicate himself to any reasonable creature, it is either in a way of holiness or in a way of happiness. He doth now in the kingdom of grace communicate himself more in a way of holiness, but in the king-



dom of glory fully in a way of happiness, both as to the body and the soul. These two have such a respect to one another, that he never gives felicity and glory without holiness, Heb. xii. 14. And a holy creature can never be utterly and finally miserable. He may sometimes give holiness without happiness, as when for a while he leaveth the sanctified, whom he will try and exercise under the cross, or in a state of sorrow and affliction; therefore holiness is the more necessary. In his internal government God doth all by his Spirit; now the Spirit is more necessarily a sanctifier than a comforter. It was by the Spirit that Christ was with God, and God with Christ; therefore his desertion of Christ, or any creature, must be mainly understood with respect to the Spirit working in any, either as to holiness or comfort. When God withdraweth either holiness or happiness, one of them, or both, or any degree of them, from any creature, he is said to desert them. Now apply this to Christ. It is blasphemy to say that Christ lost any degree of his holiness, for he was always pure and holy, and that most exactly and perfectly; therefore he was deserted only as to his felicity, and that but for a short time.

2. The felicity of Christ may be considered, either as to his outward and bodily estate, or else to his inward man, or the estate of his soul.

[1.] Some say his desertion was nothing else but his being left to the will and power of his enemies to crucify him, and that he was then deserted when his divine nature suspended the exercise of its omnipotency so far as to deliver up his body to a reproachful death, so to make way for this oblation and sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. God could many ways have protected Christ, and hindered his passion: Mat. xxvi. 52, 53, 'Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then could the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?' If the Lord had seen it fit to glorify himself by the deliverance, rather than the sufferings of Christ, he could have found ways and means enough to save him; but how then could our redemption be accomplished? Christ himself by his divine power could have protected his bodily life, for he telleth us: John x. 18, 'No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.' But it pleased God to appoint, and Christ to submit to another course, and therefore was he so far deserted, and left in the hand of his enemies. He telleth them, Luke xxii. 53, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' This, some say, was all Christ's desertion; and that he cried out with a loud voice, in the hearing of all, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' to give notice of the price that was to be paid for our ransom. He complained not of the Jews that had accused him, nor of Pilate that condemned him, nor of Judas that had betrayed him; but of God that had forsaken him, and left him in the hands of his enemies, as if this were the most grievous thing to the Son of God. But certainly this was not all; the desertion was not only in his outward estate, and with respect to bodily death, for these reasons:—

(1.) Why should Christ complain of that so bitterly, which he did so readily and willingly undergo, and might so easily have prevented,

and which was most obvious, and so clearly foreseen in his sufferings? He foretold it again and again to his disciples, and spake it to his enemies; and should he now represent it as a strange thing? Surely these strong cries were not extorted from him by the mere fear and horror of bodily death. I confess he died not insensibly, but showed the reality of all human passions; yet there was no reason why he should so bitterly and lamentably complain, if nothing else but bodily death had been in the case, and that brought upon him by his enemies.

(2.) If we look merely to bodily pains and sufferings, certainly others have endured as much if not more, as the thieves that were crucified with him lived longer in their torments, and the good thief did not complain that he was forsaken of God. Peter was crucified, and that with his head downwards, as ecclesiastical history tells us, which, as it was greater cruelty in the adversaries, so also greater pain to him; and yet he trusted that God would sustain him and support him under it. Therefore, certainly, there was something greater and more grievous to the soul of Christ than these bodily pains, which drew this lamentable and loud cry from him.

(3.) It would follow that every holy man that is persecuted and left to the will of his enemies, might be said to be forsaken of God, which is contrary to Paul's holy boasting: 2 Cor. iv. 9, 'Persecuted, but not forsaken.' Therefore there was something more than to be left to the will of his enemies.

(4.) This desertion was a punishment, one part or degree of the abasement of the Son of God, and so belongeth to the whole nature that was to be abased, not only to his body but his soul. We read often of his soul-sufferings: Isa. liii. 10, He was to 'make his soul an offering for sin,' and to 'see the travail of his soul,' ver. 11. His soul was deprived of consolation, and some effects of the Spirit as to joy and comfort.

[2.] As to the felicity of his inward estate, the state of his soul. Christ carried about his heaven with him, and never wanted sensible consolation, spiritual suavity, the comfortable effects of the divine presence, till now they were withdrawn, that he might be capable of suffering the whole punishment of sins, and feel not only pains and torments of body, but troubles of soul, such as we have when God hideth his face from us, but without sin. The divinity kept back those irradiations of heavenly light and comfort, or, for a while, suspended that joy and comfort which otherwise he felt in himself, though it gave out that virtue and strength which was necessary to support and sustain him under so great sufferings. As when the sun is eclipsed, the light of it ceaseth not, but is only hidden from the earth by the interposition of a dark body. So here, Christ had not the participation of that heavenly joy which before his soul felt by dwelling with God in a personal union, though there were no separation of the human nature from the divine; the ground of it was not taken away, but only the sense suspended; no dissolution of the union, but a ceasing of the comfort of it.

In short, I will show how this sort of desertion is—

1. Possible.

2. Grievous.

1. Possible, the union between the two natures remaining; for as

the divine nature gave up the body to death, so the soul to desertion. Christ, as God, is 'the fountain of life,' Ps. xxxvi. 9, and yet Christ could die. So the Godhead is the fountain of all joy and comfort, for he is called 'the God of all comfort,' 2 Cor. i. 3; and yet Christ's soul was troubled and heavy unto death, the Godhead suspending its virtue and operation. Both might well consist, for though the presence of the divinity be necessary with the humanity of Christ, yet the effects are voluntary. God worketh not out of necessity, no, not in the human nature of Christ; all kind of communications are given out according to his own pleasure. The divinity remained united to the flesh, and yet the flesh might die; so it remained united to the soul, and yet the soul might want comfort. The bond by which the two natures were united in one person remained firm and indissoluble, but the influx of sweetness and comfort was suspended. Some effect there is of the union, but not that which affords comfort and felicity, and this was suspended but for a time. There is a desertion, indeed, which agreeth not with the dignity of Christ. There is a total and eternal desertion, by which God so deserteth a man, both as to grace and glory, that he is wholly cast out of God's presence and adjudged to eternal torments, which is the case of the reprobate in the last judgment; this is not compatible to Christ, nor agreeing with the dignity of his person. There is a partial, temporal desertion, when God for a moment hideth his face from his people, Isa. liv. 7. This is so far from being contrary to the dignity of Christ's nature, that it is necessary to his office for many reasons.

2. That it is very grievous. This was an incomparable loss to Christ.

[1.] Partly because it was more natural to him to enjoy that comfort and solace than it can be to any creature. To put out a candle is no great matter, but to have the sun eclipsed, which is the fountain of light, that sets the world a-wondering. For poor creatures to lose their comforts is no great wonder, who, though they live in God, are so many degrees distant from him; but for Christ, who was God-man in one person, that is a difficulty to our thoughts, and a wonder indeed, for by this means he was so far deprived of some part of himself.

[2.] Partly because he had more to lose than we have. The greater the enjoyment, the greater is the loss or want. It was more for David to be driven from his palace, than a poor Israelite to be driven from his cottage. We lose drops, he an ocean. A poor Christian that hath some heaven upon earth in the fore-enjoyment of God, and the first-fruits and earnest of the Spirit, hath more to lose than another that hath had only some vanishing taste in the offer of eternal life, and receiving the word with joy. Proportionably judge of Christ, who was *comprehensor*, while he was *viator*, had the beatifical vision while on earth.

[3.] Partly because he knew how to value the comfort of the union, having a pure understanding and heavenly affections. God's children count one day in his presence better than a thousand, Ps. lxxxiv. 10; one glimpse of his love more than all the world, Ps. iv. 7. If they have anything of the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, they would not part with it for all the sensual enjoyments which others prize and value so much, and if they lose it they are touched to the

quick; they lose that which is the life of their lives, which they account their chief happiness. Now Christ was best able to apprehend the worth and value of communion with God, having such a clear understanding and tender affections, and therefore it must needs be grievous to him to have his wonted consolations suspended.

[4.] Partly because he had so near an interest and relation to God: Prov. viii. 30, 'One bred up with him, and daily his delight;' Col. i. 13—*Τὸς ἀγάπησ*. Look, among the children of God if they have any interest in him, how mournfully do they brook his absence. Mary Magdalen, 'Woman, why weepest thou? They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him,' John xx. 13. She sought a Christ, and found a grave. Christ's words, *my God*, do not only express his confidence but affection, when his God and Father hideth his face from him.

[5.] Partly from the nature of Christ's desertion. It was penal. All desertions may be reduced to these three sorts—for trial, for correction, or punishment. For trial; so God left Hezekiah, 'to prove what was in his heart,' 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. For fatherly correction; so God leaveth his people for a while, to teach them repentance, humility, hatred of sin, more entire dependence on himself, Isa. liv. 7, 'I have left thee for a small moment, but with everlasting mercies will I love thee.' For punishment; so he left Saul: 1 Sam. xxviii. 6, when he answered him 'neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.' So he leaveth the wicked to a reprobate mind. Now Christ's desertion was not for a trial. Fallible creatures may be put upon trial, but the Son of God needs it not. It would not agree with the goodness and wisdom of God to put his beloved Son on such a trial. He was neither unknown to his Father, nor did he vainly presume of his own strength as to need to be confuted by trial. Nor can it properly be called fatherly correction, for there was no sin in Christ that needed to be corrected. Indeed, 'the chastisement of our peace was upon his shoulders,' Isa. liii. 5. Therefore it remains that this desertion was penal and satisfactory, such as came from the vindictive and revenging hand of God. Our sins met in him, and he was forsaken in our stead. There was no cause in Christ himself, wherefore he deserved to be forsaken of God, but we had done the wrong, and he maketh the amends. There was nothing in Christ's person to occasion a desertion, but much in his office; so he was to give body for body and soul for soul; and this was a part of the satisfaction. He was beloved as a Son, forsaken as our mediator and surety.

II. Why was Christ forsaken?

*Ans.* With respect to the office which he had taken upon him, to expiate our sins, and to recover us from the deserved wrath and punishment into the love and favour of God. This desertion of Christ carrieth a suitableness and respect to our sin, our punishment, and our blessedness.

1. Our sin. Christ is forsaken to satisfy and make amends for our wilful desertion of God. When Adam sinned, we all turned the back upon God who made us. Yea, all actual sins are nothing but a forsaking of God for very trifles, an aversion from God, and a conversion to the creature: Jer. ii. 13, 'They have forsaken me, the fountain of



living waters, and have hewn out unto themselves broken cisterns that will hold no water.' Now we that forsook God deserved to be forsaken by God; therefore what we had merited by our sin, Christ endured as our mediator. He himself submitted to desertion. It is strange to consider what small things draw us off from God: 'For handfuls of barley and pieces of bread will that man transgress,' Ezek. xiii. 19; 'for a pair of shoes,' Amos ii. 6; 'for one morsel of meat,' Heb. xii. 16; Isa. lii. 3. This is the great degeneracy and disease of mankind, that a trifle will prompt us to forsake God, as a little thing will make a stone run down hill; it is its natural motion. There is nothing that is so easily exposed and put to hazard as the favour of God. Now this being the great sin of man, and the cause of other sins, it was needful that the odiousness of this sin should be set forth by the bitterness of Christ's sorrow under the want of the love of God. Christ's complaints show how God's favour is to be valued, and that it is a dangerous thing to part with it for carnal satisfactions. The consolations of God are cheap, and small things in the eyes of most men in the world. What is more slighted than God and Christ and our own salvation, and neglected for very trifles? And then what more perfect cure, and better way to instruct the world, than that these sins could not be expiated but by the desertion of the Son of God, and his bitter complaints for the suspension of the effects of the love of God to him?

2. It carries a full respect to the punishment appointed for sin. Certain we are that he 'bore the curse of the law,' Gal. iii. 13. Now the curse of the law, actively taken, is nothing but the sentence of the law, or rather of God the judge, condemning the transgressors of it to such punishment as the law appointed; passively taken, it is the punishment itself. And the final and great curse is that described, Mat. xxv. 41. To be banished from the presence of the Lord, and cast into extreme torment. There is a double punishment—*pœna damni et sensus*, the loss and the pain. The loss consisteth in our separation from God, from the comfortable happy fruition of him in glory: 'depart, ye cursed.' The pain in eternal torments is set forth by the worm and by the fire, Mark ix. 44. Now Christ being our surety, Heb. vii. 22, and giving himself 'a ransom for all,' 1 Tim. ii. 6—*ἀντίλυτρον*, the word implies a substitution or surrogation of one person in the room of another; he was to suffer what we were to suffer; if not the *idem*, every way the same, yet the *tantundem*, that which was sufficient to Christ's ends, that which was to carry a full resemblance with our punishment. It is one part of the punishment of sin to be forsaken of God, and many say the punishment of loss is greatest; he was therefore to suffer so much of it as his holy person was capable of; something that answereth to the *pœna damni* in his desertion, and to the *pœna sensus* in his agonies and pains: Isa. liii. 4, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.'

It is true the accidentals of punishment Christ suffered not. As—

[1.] To the place, he was not in hell. It was not necessary that Christ should descend into the hell of the damned. One that is bound as a surety for another needs not go into prison provided that he pay the debt. All that justice requireth is, that he satisfy the debt. Indeed, if he doth not, nor cannot satisfy the debt, he must to prison.

So here the justice of God must be satisfied, the holiness of God and hatred to sin sufficiently demonstrated, but Christ need not to go into the place of torments.

[2.] For the time of continuance. The damned must bear the wrath of God to all eternity, because they can never satisfy the justice of God, therefore they must lie by it world without end. As one that pays a thousand pounds by a penny a week, is a long time in paying; a rich man lays it down *in cumulo*, in a heap of gold all at once. Christ hath made an infinite satisfaction in a finite time; he bore the wrath of God in a few hours, which would overwhelm the creature. Christ did not suffer the eternity of wrath, but only the extremity of it, *intensivè*, not *extensivè*. The eternity of the punishment ariseth from the weakness of the creature, who cannot overcome this evil, and get out of it.

[3.] There is another thing unavoidably attending the pains of the second death in reprobates, and that is desperation, an utter hopelessness of any good, yea, a certain expectation of continual torment, Heb. x. 27. The gates of hell are made fast on them by an irresistible decree; and the gulf is fixed between the place of the damned, and the place of the blessed, so that there is no coming from the one to the other, Luke xvi. 26. Now this despair is not an essential part of the law's curse, but only a consequent, occasioned by the sinner's view of his remediless and woful condition. But this neither did nor could possibly befall the Lord Jesus, who was able by his divine power both to suffer and satisfy, to undergo and overcome, and therefore expected a good issue in his conflict: Ps. xvi. 9, 10, 'My flesh shall rest in hope; for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine holy one to see corruption,' was spoken as from Christ, Acts ii. 27. A shallow stream would drown a little child, whereas a grown man may hope to escape out of a far deeper place, yea, a skilful swimmer out of the ocean. Christ passed through that sea of wrath which would have drowned all the world, and came safe to shore.

3. With respect to our blessedness, which is to live with God for ever in heaven. Christ was forsaken, that there might be no longer any separation between us and God. He was forsaken for a while, that we might be received for ever. Our separation from God by sin was the meritorious cause, but the final cause was our eternal conjunction with God; so that this desertion, which was so bitter to Christ, is the cause of sweet consolation to us, as it hath procured for all them that obey the gospel that they should be happy for ever in the eternal vision and fruition of God. I observe this, because of the constant use of the scripture, which expresseth our benefits in a direct opposition to Christ's sufferings; as 'He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21. He was 'made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us.' He was 'made of a woman, that we might receive the adoption of sons,' Gal. iv. 4, 5. He was 'made poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich,' 2 Cor. viii. 9. And 'by his wounds and stripes we are healed,' 1 Peter ii. 24. By his death we have life, by his shame we have glory, and so, by consequence, by his desertion we obtain communion with God, and the everlasting fruition of him.

By a wonderful exchange he taketh our evil things upon himself, that he might bestow his good things upon us, and took from us misery that he might convey to us felicity.

### APPLICATION.

First, by way of information.

1. How different are they from the spirit of Christ that can brook God's absence without any remorse or complaint? Christ cried with a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' These go on securely, never observe God's accesses and recesses; when the comforts of his Spirit, and the communications of his grace are wholly suspended and withholden from them, they never lay it to heart. Stupid and insensible creatures! It is all one to them whether God go or come, whether he manifest himself propitious to them or his face be hidden from them. They take up with the vain delights of the present world. Micah showed more respect to his idols than they do to God: Judges xviii. 24, 'Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? and do you ask, What aileth thee?' When God is gone they are not troubled. The Christians wept when Paul said, 'Ye shall see my face no more,' Acts xx. 25; and will ye not mourn and lament your loss when God hideth his face and shutteth up himself in a veil and cloud of displeasure? Much of serious Christianity lies in an observation of God's coming and going, and a suitable carriage, Mat. ix. 15. A serious Christian will be affected with the loss of comfort and quickening, and lament after a withdrawn God.

2. It informeth us of the grievousness of sin. It is no easy matter to reconcile sinners to God; it cost Christ a life of sorrows, and afterwards a painful and an accursed death, and in that death, loss of actual comfort, and an amazing sense of the wrath of God. We make a mock of sin—jest and sport away our souls, but Christ found it hard work to save them and recover them to God. When you make sin a light matter, you slight the sufferings of Christ; oh, therefore, take heed you do not break with God for every trifle!

3. The greatness of our obligation to Christ, who omitted no kind of sufferings which might conduce to the expiation of sin. He exchanged his heaven for a kind of hell to do you good; the fulness of the godhead dwelt in him bodily, and therefore he had a heaven upon earth. If one could say, *Anima justī calum est*, because heaven is begun there in peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. How was it with Christ? This heaven he wanted for a while, felt no comfort, yea, he was amazed at the sense of God's wrath due to sinners; therefore it was said in the type of him, 'The pains of hell got hold upon me,' Ps. cxvi. 3. Oh! let this excite us to love Christ, that you may count nothing too dear for him.

4. The infiniteness of God's mercy, who appointed such a degree of Christ's sufferings, as in it he gives us the greatest ground of hopes to invite us the more to submit to his terms. There is nothing standeth in the way but our own impenitence and unbelief. Now God is so amply satisfied, shall we deprive ourselves of eternal blessedness? This is the worst cruelty and hatred to our own souls.

## SERMON X.

*Whisperers, backbiters.*—ROM. I., part of the 29th and 30th verses.

THE context sheweth how corrupt and miserable man's nature is without Christ. His heart was first withdrawn from God, and then became a sink of loathsome sins and vices; therefore the apostle telleth us how after men were false to God, how little they were true to themselves, whether considered singly and apart, or as to commerce and society: singly and apart, defiling themselves with uncleanness of all sorts; as to commerce and human society, full of malice and contention, which sometimes goeth as far as blood; at other times sheweth itself in falsehood and baseness of disposition, generally in self-love and detraction from others.

Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the sorest. When God leaveth mankind to its own degeneracy and corruption, and one great branch of this corruption is detraction, which venteth itself either by whispering or backbiting. So it is in the text, 'Whisperers, backbiters.' These two words agree that they both wound the fame of our neighbour, and they both do it behind his back or in his absence. But they differ—(1.) In that whispering doth it secretly and closely, but backbiting openly—the one being privy, the other open defamation, and are like theft and rapine; what theft and robbing are to our goods, the same are whispering and backbiting to our good names. (2.) Whispering tendeth to breed strife among our friends, or to disgrace us to some who are well conceited of us; but backbiting to our general disgrace before all the world, or amongst whomsoever. The one seeketh to deprive us of the good-will of our friends, the other to destroy our service. But however they agree and differ, they are often conjoined in scripture: 2 Cor. xii. 20, 'I fear lest when I come among you I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults.' The apostle foresaw it as too probable that neither of them would be much pleased with their meeting together: nor he with the Corinthians, when he should find them corrupted with partialities and divisions; nor the Corinthians with him, when he should be forced to inflict censures upon them for their factions and emulations, too much bewrayed by their backbitings and whisperings against each other. So here in the text they are conjoined, 'whisperers, backbiters,' when the apostle speaketh of the reigning sins among the Gentiles.

*Doct.* One great sin wherein the corruption of human nature bewrayeth itself is detraction, or depriving others of a good repute.

Here I shall show:—

I. What is detraction.

II. The heinousness of the sin.

I. What it is. (1.) The nature of it. (2.) The kinds of it.

First, The nature of it in general. It is an unjust violation of another's fame, reputation, or that good report which is due to him. God, that hath bidden me to love my neighbour as myself, doth therein



bid me to be tender not only of his person and goods, but of his good name. And indeed one precept is a guard and fence to another. I cannot be tender of his person and goods unless I be tender of his fame. For every man liveth by his credit: and therefore certainly this is—(1.) A sin against God; (2.) A wrong to men; (3.) It proceedeth from evil causes.

1. It is a sin against God, who hath forbidden us to bear false witness against our neighbour, and to speak evil of others without a cause: Eph. iv. 31, 'Let all evil-speaking be far from you;' by evil-speaking is meant there disgraceful and contumelious speeches, whereby we seek to stain the reputation of others.

2. It is a wrong to man, because it robbeth him of his good name, which is so deservedly esteemed by all that would do anything for God in the world: Prov. xxii. 1, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.' The meaning is in order to service, and as it more nearly respects both life and livelihood. So Eccles. vii. 1, 'A good name is better than precious ointment.' Their ointments were reckoned by those Oriental people amongst their most precious riches and treasures, yet a good name is preferred before them; which inferreth this conclusion, that the man himself should prize it so: for he that is lavish of his fame is not usually over-tender of his conscience. Therefore, as he himself should not prostitute his good name, so others should not blast it and blemish it; for it is a greater sin than to steal the best goods which he hath, and it is such an evil as scarce admits any sound restitution; for the imputation even of unjust crimes leaveth a scar though the wound be healed.

3. The causes it proceedeth from. They are these:—

[1.] Malice and ill-will, which prompteth us to speak falsely of others, so to make them odious, or do them wrong or hurt. Now, to hate our brother in our heart is no way consistent with that goodness and charity which the impression of the love of Christ should beget in us. The apostle saith, 1 Peter iv. 8, 'Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.' If nothing but love and fervent love will restrain us, surely where hatred is allowed, men care not what they think, or speak, or do against others. Now, as there is a brotherly love due to our fellow-saints, so there is a love due to all men. 2 Peter i. 7, I am to hate no man, but to seek their good. There is a twofold hatred—the hatred of offence and abomination, and the hatred of enmity. The hatred of offence, which is opposite to the love of complacency, may be justified as to the wicked: Prov. xxix. 27, 'An unjust man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.' But then we should first and most abominate ourselves for sin; this very hatred and abhorrence should begin at home, and we should be most odious to ourselves for sin, for we know more sin by ourselves than we can do by another. But for the other hatred, the hatred of enmity, which is opposite to the love of benevolence, that should be quite banished out of the heart of a Christian. And it is not enough for God's people to keep themselves free from hatred and malice against one another, but against all men: Titus iii. 2, 'Put them

in mind to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness to all men: for we ourselves were sometimes disobedient, &c. If this old hatred were gone, a multitude of offences would be covered.

[2.] It comes from uncharitable credulity, whereby men easily believe a false report, and so propagate and convey it to others: Jer. xx. 10, 'I have heard the defaming of many; Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting,' &c. The prophet complaineth—Many, and those no mean ones, have I heard reproaching and taunting me, so that he was a terror to himself and to all his friends. Many had combined by false suggestions and malicious informations against him to work his ruin. If any will raise a report tending to the discredit of another, some will foster it, and it loseth nothing in the carriage, till by additions and misconstructions it groweth to a downright and dangerous infamy.

[3.] It comes through rashness and unruliness of tongue: some men never learned to bridle their tongues, and the apostle James telleth us that 'therefore their religion is vain,' James i. 26. Till we make conscience of these evils, as well as others, we content ourselves with a partial obedience, and therefore cannot be sincere. But many never set themselves to learn this part of their duty, and therefore divulge a report before they try it, or receive any just proof of it. Possibly it may not come from downright malice, but their tongues hang too loose, without the coercion and just restraint of grace, and so they either report false things, or speak truth to an evil end: Prov. xi. 13, 'A tale-bearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.' Whisperers must be talking, and be it true or false, out it comes. Certainly it is a sin as long as you knew it not to be true, or, if you do, when you have no warrantable call to mention it. To reveal secrets which you may conceal without wrong to God, or your own consciences, or the common good, or the good of your neighbour, is loquacity, or the sin of idle and impertinent talkativeness, the disease of a whisperer and tale-bearer.

[4.] It comes from carnal zeal, which is nothing else but passion for our different interests and opinions. The bitter envying which the apostle speaketh of, James iii. 14, hath made mad work in the world as to strifes, and confusions, and quarrels, and bloodsheds, and persecutions. But usually it venteth itself in evil-speaking; for the apostle maketh 'backbitings and whisperings' the fruits of 'swellings and tumults,' 2 Cor. xii. 20. Oh, what false and lying tales are there carried to and fro, that a man knoweth not what or whom to believe! So many lies walk under the disguise of religion, that not to credit them, or countenance the report, seemeth a decay of affection, but surely not to religion, but only the interest of a faction.

But a question ariseth, Is all speaking evil of another unlawful?

*Ans.* I cannot say so, but yet it is hard to keep it from sin.

1. He that doth it without just cause is plainly a detractor, and so a grievous sinner before God. You may impose and impute false crimes upon others, which is properly called slander, and God thereby convinceth the professor of the true religion to be a hypocrite: Ps. l. 20, 'Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, and slanderest thy

own mother's son.' God doth not only reject the liars for hypocrites, but also the backbiters and slanderers. Those that allow themselves in the frequent practice of this sin, what hopes can they have of acceptance with God, since he hath entered his plea against them? For the act to be sure is sinful; there can be no other end in it but the wronging of our brother's fame and reputation, to his loss and hurt. The nature of the thing sheweth it.

2. He that doth but speak what he hath heard from others, without any assertion or asseveration of his own, as not knowing the truth of the report, can hardly be excused from sin. For if without just cause he speaketh those things that may wound the reputation of others, he is in part accessory: for he reporteth those things which may induce the hearers to think ill of another, or at least beget a suspicion in their minds concerning him, and so is a concurring cause to wrong another's name and good report. Now we should be so jealous of sin, that we should not countenance it in others without a just and weighty cause.

3. He that doth speak that which is true, but tendeth to the infamy of another, may be guilty of sin, if he have not a sufficient call and warrant. As for instance—(1.) If it be a matter we have nothing to do with, but only speak of their faults for talk sake; this is to be 'busy-bodies and tattlers,' 1 Tim. v. 13: as we all love to speak of other men's faults, when we look little at home. This is a sin, when it is not matter of our cognisance. Or (2.) If we aggravate things beyond their just size and proportion; for then we do not exercise Christian lenity and meekness towards those that are fallen, Gal. vi. 1. Or (3.) If we urge their crimes, and deny their graces; this is like flies to pitch on the sore place. Is there no good amongst all this evil? But it may be done, when crimes are public, and men themselves have forfeited all good repute, and God doth as it were hang them up in chains for a warning to the rest of the world; or when their reputation may injure the truth, and seduce the souls of others, or be an injury to the just who are slandered by them. In short, when the glory of God, or love to the public good, or the avoiding some great danger that may befall others by their esteem, then a lesser good is to be neglected to procure a greater, and a growing evil prevented, when men, by dissembling their wickedness, seek a fame to the manifest hurt of others' souls.

Secondly, The kinds of it are two in the text—whispering and backbiting.

1. Whispering, which is privy defamation of our brother, to bring him into disfavour and disrespect with those that formerly had a better opinion of him. Herein whispering differeth from backbiting, because the whisperer stingeth secretly, but the other doth more openly attack our credit. Now this whispering is a great sin:—

[1.] Because it is here reckoned among the sins which reigned among the heathen, and God hath expressly forbidden to his people: Lev. xix. 16, 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people.' You see tale-bearing and crimination is expressly against God's word; and if your hearts stand in awe of the word of God, how dare you indulge it and allow it in yourselves? It is

observed that the Hebrew word *rokel* properly signifieth a merchant or a trafficker up and down with spices and other things; whereupon *rakil*, the word there used, is a tale-bearer, that accuser that makes merchandise of words, and like a pedlar goeth from place to place to open his pack, and utter his wares, to hear and spread abroad criminations of other men. This is made the property of very wicked men: Jer. xi. 4, 'Every neighbour will walk with slanders.'

2. It is against natural equity, because they do that to others which they would not have done to themselves, Mat. vii. 2; and therefore storm and take great offence when God, by a righteous providence, permitteth others to retaliate with them, and pay them home in their own coin, as usually he doth; for they who are not tender of the credit and reputation of others, their names are cast out of God's protection, and permitted to the strife of tongues.

3. They are a cause of much mischief in the world, as—

[1.] Grief to the party wronged: Prov. xviii. 8, 'The words of a tale-bearer'—we read in the margin 'of a whisperer'—'are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly;' that is, they equally hurt as a sharp sword that is thrust into us, and causes pain and anguish. By 'the chambers of the belly,' is understood the heart. Now whether the heart of the hearer, or the heart of the party injured? Why not both? The hearer; the words pierce into his heart, and breed hatred, or at least suspicion of his friend. The party injured; when he comes to the knowledge of it, they breed his grief and vexation.

[2.] They are a cause of much debate and strife: Prov. xxvi. 20, 'Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no tale-bearer (or whisperer) strife ceaseth.' Where strife is compared to fire, and the whisperer's informations or criminations, to the wood or matter that feedeth the fire; the extinction, or putting out of the fire, to the ceasing of strife and contention, which is caused by the absence of the whisperer; that is, when he is not admitted by either party: Prov. xvi. 28, 'A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth choice friends.' Husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants, princes and subjects, intimate friends. Now 'He that soweth discord between friends or brethren is an abomination to the Lord,' Prov. vi. 19. Therefore, how can one that feareth God, allow himself in speaking evil privily against his neighbour?

[3.] There is a greater mischief than this, and that is, it many times tendeth to the destruction of another's life: Ezek. xxii. 9, 'In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood.' Usually the vapours of slander descend in the showers of persecution; and the devil was first a liar, and then a murderer. By whispers men are stirred up to hate others, and then pursue them with all manner of hostility and displeasures. As Doeg the Edomite first accused, and then, by the command of Saul, slew Abimelech the high priest, and all his family, destroying the whole city of the priests called Nob, as you may see 1 Sam. xxii. 9. David, when he professeth the uprightness of his government, would allow no such in his court, but would severely punish them: Ps. ci. 5, 'Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off.' These ways of whispering and detraction, by which



men are wont to gain confidence, favour, and employment from princes, should not only miss of their aims with him, but be severely punished when he met with them.

But here ariseth a question, whether all private complaints and informations against others come under the name of whispering?

I answer—No, with these cautions:—

1. If the party be duly admonished; for before we go any further, the rule is, Mat. xviii. 15, 'First tell him his fault between him and thee alone.' Private admonition must always precede crimination to others; therefore if you forbear privately to admonish the offender in love, and seek not to reclaim him from his sinful course, you cannot be excused from sin.

2. If it be made to such as have power to redress the fault, by the most discreet and gentle means, before it break out any further. So it is said, Gen. xxxvii. 2, Joseph 'brought unto his father their evil report;' that is, their infamous carriage, which caused evil report of them; which is set down, not to note his ill-will, but his good affection and godliness.

3. If the complainer seeketh nothing but the amendment of the party; otherwise, to vent and divulge the fault, to make the party less respected, or to his hurt, is not love, but closer malice; for true zeal is not for destruction, but for edification.

4. If he grieve that he hath cause to complain, and pray for his conversion; for then it is more likely that all is done in love. Many times the grief is personated, and when whisperers have a mind to wound to the quick, they will say, I am sorry to hear such a thing, loth to speak of it. But this is like the archer that draweth back his hand that the arrow may fly with the more force. But when we pray to God, there is the greater presumption of sincerity, because we explicitly make him a party, and do what we do as in his sight and presence.

*Secondly*, Backbiting is a more public speaking evil of our absent brother, to the impairing of his credit. Now, this may be done two ways:—

1. With respect to the good things found in him.

2. With respect to the evil supposed to be committed by him.

1. With respect to the good things found in him. There are four degrees in this:—

[1.] The first and highest is, when we deny those good things which we know to be in another. This is not only to wrong our neighbour, but to rob God of his own praise; for he expecteth to be glorified for all those gifts and graces which he hath scattered among the sons of men, not only actively by persons themselves, but objectively by the beholders. As for instance, if God hath made any a new creature, he is to be 'to the praise of his glorious grace,' not only actively, but objectively, Eph. i. 12; though the man in whom this work was wrought be silent, yet the work should speak for itself, that is, give occasion to beholders to praise God. Now to deny this work, is not only to wrong the party, but wrong God. Thus Job's friends counted him a hypocrite, when upright; and the people of God are often traduced as 'dissemblers, when yet true,' 2 Cor. vi. 8. Jesus Christ himself was

counted a wine-bibber, because of his free and social course of life ; for he affected not a monkish austerity. This is the highest degree, when men plainly deny those gifts and graces which are conspicuous in others.

[2.] When they do not deny, but lessen, the gifts and graces of others. To extenuate and clip another's due praise is envy, but in honour to prefer them above ourselves is charity and humility : Phil. ii. 3, ' In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.' Humility is content to sit in the lowest place : Rom. xii. 10, ' In honour preferring one another.' Some say this is not to be understood of that opinion we have of others, but the respect we put upon them. We are to honour others, *non sententia mentis, sed actionibus et officiis* ; that is meant of offices of love and outward respect, but not of the sentiments of the mind. Certainly it is just that we should condemn no man, but give every one all agreeable honour and respect. But that a rich man should judge a poor man to be in place and estate before him ; a learned man, an ignorant man more knowing ; a godly man, a wicked more holy, is impossible and sometimes inconvenient. Therefore they understand it of condescending to mutual offices of love and respect, or, rather detracting from ourselves than others. But though this exposition might fit the latter place, yet not the former. ' Esteeming others better than ourselves,' must relate to the opinions and sentiments of our minds : therefore the meaning is, We should carry all things with that quietness and humility as if every one had a better opinion of others' wisdom and godliness than his own. And this is reasonable enough for every one that is acquainted with himself. Humility will teach him to think meanly of himself or anything that is his ; and his charity will prompt him to give others all that possibly can belong to them, without any retrenchment or defalcation.

[3.] When we own the good done by them, but deprave it by supposing a sinister intention. Thus Satan could not deny but that Job served God, but (Job i. 9) ' Doth Job serve God for nought ?' It is usual to count the servants of God hypocrites and self-seekers, and accordingly to persecute them. If one be poor, it is discontent, melancholy, or some fleshly ends set him on work. If mean and simple, it is their folly and ignorance makes them so scrupulous and precise. If ministers be zealous for God, they must do something for their calling ; if great men, they only mind their own interest and advantage. Where the action is fair, we are not competent judges of the intention of the heart.

[4.] When neither denying, nor lessening, nor depraving, but when we have just occasion to speak of a man's due commendation, we enviously suppress it. Envy is a natural sin : James iv. 5, ' The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' And it bewrayeth itself by a dislike of other men's just praise. This is a sin of omission at least ; therefore it is said, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, ' Charity envieth not.' Nothing is more contrary to the goodness commended to us in the gospel than such a spirit, which cannot bear the good of another whether seen or spoken of. Thus Joseph's virtue was an eyesore to his brethren, therefore they endeavoured his destruction. Charity rejoiceth in the

gifts and graces of others as in our own; but where this hath no place, their praises are our disgrace. And few there be that can say with John the Baptist, 'He must increase, but I must decrease,' John iii. 30; that is, in splendour and fame, and so confirmed the testimony given to Christ.

2. As to evil supposed to be committed by them.

[1.] When we publish their secret slips, which in charity we ought to conceal: Prov. xi. 13, 'A tale-bearer revealeth secrets.' Certain things should have a veil drawn over them, and not be manifested without sufficient cause. But when a man intrudeth himself into the mention of things faulty, which he might with better manners and more honesty conceal, it is the effect of a base heart.

[2.] When, in relating any evil action of another, we use harder terms than the quality of the fact requireth, and make evils worse than they are, beams of moles, and mountains of mole-hills. We should lessen sins all that we can; I mean, the sins and faults of others: Acts iii. 17, 'And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.' Certainly we should not aggravate things to the height, nor from a simple act determine the state of the person, nor from the failings of a single person conclude the whole party.

[3.] By imposing false crimes: Prov. x. 18, 'He that uttereth a slander is a fool;' that is, a wicked person. As Mephibosheth said of Ziba, 2 Sam. xix. 27, 'He hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king.' The most godly and innocent persons cannot escape the scourge of the tongue, and unjust calumnies.

II. The heinousness of the sin.

1. In general, that is evident from what is said already. I shall urge two arguments more.

[1.] That men shall be called to an account for these sins as well as others; they are not passed by in the judgment: Jude 15, 'God will execute judgment upon all ungodly sinners,' not only for their ungodly deeds, but 'for all their hard speeches.' Now, if injurious and contumelious language come into the judgment, how should all beware of the least accession to this guilt? So 1 Peter iv. 4, 5, 'They speak evil of you, who shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.' The mockers as well as persecutors were to give a strict and sad account. It is no slight and light sin to divulge and spread false calumnies to hurt the credit of our brethren. God takes notice of a thought in our heart against them, a word in our mouths, and will exact a strict account thereof.

[2.] It is the property of a citizen of Zion, one that shall be not only accepted with God now, but dwell with God for ever, not to be given to backbiting: Ps. xv. 3, 'He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour;' that is, that makes strict conscience of backbiting or calumniating, and abstaineth from doing any kind of wrong or reproach to his neighbour.

2. More particularly, it is the more heinous:—

[1.] Partly from the person against whom it is committed. As suppose the godly and irreprovable for the main, who by their life and conversation have the best right to honour and esteem; to do it against them is most unjust: Ps. lxiv. 3, 'They whet their tongues as a

sword; they shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect; suddenly do they shoot at him and fear not; that is, their slanders and calumnies are shot like poisoned darts and arrows secretly or clancularly, without any desert or notice of the party against whom they are intended; or else against persons publicly employed, and in the special service of God, as magistrates: Num. xii. 8, 'Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, against Moses?' So in the ministry: 1 Tim. iii. 7, 'He must have a good report from them without, lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil.' Against these it is not only unjust, but noxious and hurtful to God's service.

[2.] From the persons before whom the slander is brought, as suppose kings and princes; so that they are deprived not only of private friendships, but the favour and countenance of these under whose protection they have their life and service. Thus Haman whispered against the Jews, Esth. iii. 8, 'It is not for the king's profit to suffer them to live;' Doeg against the priests, Ps. lii. 1, 'Why boastest thou in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God continueth for ever.' It is a strange matter of pleasure and joy to some persons in power to be able to mischief those that deserve it least. God is eminently great and good. This sort of pride is diametrically opposite to his nature. Alas! to trouble a few persons, how irrational is it! But such are our depraved natures. Some are never pleased with those things that alone yield durable pleasure; but to be able with their counsel, as with one poisonous vapour, to blast a multitude of innocent persons.

[3.] From the end of it. If it be done with a direct intention of hurting another's fame, it is worse than if out of a rash levity and loquacity. Some men have no direct intention of mischief, but are given to tattling. It is a great sin in them, and an unprofitable mis-pense of time; but it is a greater in those that make it their business to disgrace others or sow discord. These are the bane of human society.

[4.] From the effect or great hurt that followeth, be it loss of estate, as in the case of Mephibosheth, or a general trouble and persecution on the people of God. When their good names are buried their persons cannot long subsist afterward with any degree of service. And all this may be the fruit of a deceitful tongue.

The use is, to show how good-natured Christianity is, and befriendeth human societies; it condemneth not only sins against God, but sins against our neighbour. It bindeth its professors to the practice of the apostle: Acts xxiv. 16, 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men;' Phil. iv. 8, 'Whatsoever things are honest, just, good, and true; if there be any virtue, or any praise, think of these things.' The world hath taken up this prejudice, that religion makes us ill-natured. Of itself there is nothing more benign; it only condemneth those that are good-natured to others but not to God.

*Use 2.* Let us not speak evil of others behind their backs, but tell them their faults plainly in love and wisdom, nor encourage others in this sin: Prov. xxv. 23, 'As the north wind drives away the rain,



so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.' They that receive tales and delight to hear other men's faults, encourage others in their sin, and are accessory to or partakers of the guilt. It brings an evil habit and custom in our own souls. In short, let us keep up a humble sense of our own faults, and looking at home, it will not only divert us from slandering of others, but make us compassionate towards them, and breed comfort in our own souls.

## SERMON XI.

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*—GAL. V. 16.

IN these words observe—(1.) A duty enforced; (2.) The consequent and fruit of it.

1. The duty is *to walk in the Spirit*, which is the sum of all Christian piety.

2. The motive is taken from the consequent and fruit of it: *and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*. Let us fix the sense.

1. For the duty, 'to walk in the Spirit.' Walking implieth the tenor and course of our actions, in all which we should follow the direction and inclination of the Spirit. But what is meant by the Spirit? That it may be known, both the contrary principles must be explained together.

[1.] *Flesh* is sometimes taken for the body: as Eph. v. 29, 'For no man yet ever hated his own flesh;' it is brought as a reason why husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies, ver. 28, and *spirit* is taken for the soul, Eccles. xii. 7. But this is not the sense here, for every man hath soul and body, not the regenerate only; and a man is not only to look after the welfare of the soul, but his body also, it being the instrument which it useth in its operations.

[2.] The *spirit* is sometimes put for reason, and the *flesh* for sensual appetite: as Eph. iv. 23, 'And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;' and 1 John ii. 16, 'The lusts of the flesh.' But this will not take in the whole sense of this place, for other faculties are corrupted besides the sensual appetite, and other faculties must be renewed as well as the understanding.

[3.] There is another acceptation of *flesh* and *spirit*; that is, that spirit signifieth the uncreated Spirit, who is the author of grace; as John iii. 5, 'Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit.' Where *spirit* is put for the Holy Ghost, who immediately worketh grace in us, called therefore 'the Spirit of sanctification,' as that saving grace which is the effect of his work is called 'the sanctification of the Spirit.' And the opposite principle, *flesh*, signifieth the corrupt nature of man, as John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh;' corrupt, sinful, inclined to earthly things. Now though this would bear a good sense to interpret flesh and spirit of the Holy Ghost, and concupiscence

or natural corruption (for no question he concurrerth to the mortifying of the old man, till sin be wholly expelled, Rom. viii. 23, and still doth quicken and excite the new man to action, Gal. iv. 25), yet here the apostle speaks of two inherent principles.

[4.] Therefore by *flesh* and *spirit* is meant the old man and the new, and so by spirit is meant the renewed part, or the new man of grace in the heart: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;' that is, there is a work of saving grace wrought in our hearts by the Spirit of God, which new nature hath its motions and inclinations which must be obeyed and followed by us. And by *flesh*, is meant inbred corruption, or the old man, which is 'corrupt, with his deceivable lusts,' Eph. iv. 22. Now, then, you see what it is to walk after the Spirit, to direct and order our actions according to the inclinations of the new nature.

2. For the consequent fruit of it: 'and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.'

Here two things must be explained:—

[1.] The lust of the flesh.

[2.] Fulfil.

[1.] For 'the lust of the flesh.' By it is meant the inordinate motions of corrupt nature. The flesh doth not consider what is right and good, but what is pleasing to the senses, and craveth their satisfaction with much importunity and earnestness, to the wrong of God and our own souls; especially in youth, when the senses are in vigour, and lust and appetite in their strength and fury. And generally, all carnal men are governed by the lusts of the flesh, called by the apostle, 'The wills of the flesh and the mind,' Eph. ii. 3. By which the heart is drawn from God to things earthly and carnal. Well, then, by the lusts of the flesh are meant the motions of inbred corruptions.

2. *Ye shall not fulfil*; that is, accomplish and bring into complete act, especially with deliberation and consent. Mark, he doth not say that the lusting of corrupt nature shall be totally suppressed, but it shall not be fulfilled. The best of God's children feel the motions of the flesh, but they do not cherish and obey them. The lusts of the flesh may be said to be fulfilled two ways—(1.) When the outward act is accomplished, or 'when lust hath conceived and brought forth actual sin,' James i. 15. Which may sometimes come to pass in the children of God, when they walk not in the Spirit, or obey not the motions and directions of the renewed part. This again may be done two ways, either upon surprise or deliberation. By way of surprise, Gal. vi. 1, *εὖν καὶ προληφθῆναι*; upon deliberation, when men plot, and make provision to fulfil their lusts, contrary to the apostle's advice: Rom. xiii. 14, 'Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Thus it was with David in his great sin; and this doth mightily aggravate the offence, and provoke the Lord against us. (2.) When for a continuance we obey the flesh, usually accomplish its motions without let and restraint, and with love, pleasure, and full consent of will; this is proper to the unregenerate. The flesh doth reign over them as its slaves; this is spoken of, Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.' Let it not have a power over you as slaves. Well, then, the meaning is, you will not abuse

your Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh, or give up yourselves to do that, or seek that which the flesh lusteth after.

*Doct.* The more Christians set themselves to obey the new nature, the more is the power of inbred corruption mortified and kept under.

To understand this point, let me lay down these propositions:—

I. That there is a diversity of principles in a Christian—flesh and spirit.

1. There is a good principle, called *spirit*, because the Spirit is the author of it: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, ‘A new heart and a new spirit will I put into you.’ It is called also ‘the divine nature,’ 2 Peter i. 4, because it is made up of those gracious qualities wherein we resemble God; ‘The seed remaining,’ 1 John iii. 9, because it is not a transient operation, but a permanent habit, disposing and inclining the soul to God and heaven; ‘The new man,’ Eph. iv. 24, because we have it not by nature, but by grace, we are new formed to the image of God. Now the use of this principle may be known partly by the manner how it is wrought in us, and partly by the uses and ends for which it serveth.

[1.] For the manner how it is wrought in us by the Spirit, that is set forth Heb. viii. 10, ‘I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts.’ The directive and imperial power of the soul is sanctified and seasoned by grace, the mind enlightened, the heart inclined. The mind is enlightened by the knowledge of God’s will, and the heart inclined that we may delight to do his will; it is suited thereunto. Therefore, the new creature doth both serve to direct us, and so performeth the office of a guide and leader to the godly in all their actions, so far in religion as God’s glory is concerned, and also to move and excite us to that which is good. For ‘the spirit is willing, though the flesh is weak,’ Mat. xxvi. 41.

[2.] By its uses and ends. None of God’s gifts are given in vain. The new nature is the choicest talent that the sons of men are intrusted withal. Therefore, it hath its use and end, which is to fit us for God and heaven.

(1.) It disposeth the soul to a sincere obedience to God, as an inherent principle: Eph. vi. 24, ‘It is created after God in righteousness and true holiness,’ as suiting us to these things. So the Spirit is promised to enable us to walk in God’s ways: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, ‘And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.’ It helps us to avoid sin: 1 John iii. 9, ‘Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.’ They that give back<sup>1</sup> cannot yield to those sins with which others are surprised and captivated.

(2.) It prepares us for heaven; thither is the tendency of the new nature, 2 Peter i. 4; 1 John v. 4, ‘Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:’ it moveth us to mind, love, and seek after heavenly things. This grace came from heaven, and there it is perfected.

2. There is another principle of corrupted nature remaining in us, which is sometimes called ‘flesh,’ as before; sometimes ‘the old man,’ Eph. iv. 22; ‘Sin that dwelleth in us,’ Rom. vii. 17; ‘The body of

<sup>1</sup> Apparently a misprint.—Ed.

sin,' Rom. vi. 6; 'The law of the members warring against the law of the mind,' Rom. vii. 23.

By this principle they are inclined to that which is evil. This principle also may be known:—

[1.] By the manner how it was derived to us.

[2.] By its tendency and operations.

[1.] The manner how it was derived to us, from Adam in his apostasy, and as fallen from his chief good and last end, John iii. 6. When man fell from God, he fell to himself. The temptation was, 'Ye shall be as gods,' Gen. iii. 5. He would set up self as a god. And what was that self which man sought to idolise, but himself rather considered as a body than as a soul? And, therefore, when God sought to reduce man, where lay the difficulty? That text will inform you, Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh;' that is, sunk or lost in flesh, altogether wedded to the interests of the bodily life.

[2.] By its tendency and influence it prompts us to do those things which are most acceptable to sense, or agreeable to our worldly and carnal ends. The flesh operateth several ways, according to men's callings, occasions, or constitutions, Isa. liii. 6; 1 John ii. 16. As every soil beareth such weeds as are most suitable to the nature and quality of the ground, so some are enslaved by this, some by that particular sin, yet all of them alike opposite to God. Differences there are as to the choice of their way wherein they please the flesh, some in a more gross, some in a more cleanly manner, yet they all walk in the lust of the flesh, following inbred corruption as their guide, or obey it either in a way of worldliness, ambition, or sensuality. Some ways are more blameless before the world, because they less deserve<sup>1</sup> a worldly interest; some are so prodigiously wicked that they cause a horror even in mankind though degenerated. Now, after conversion some of our former sins cripple us, and we halt of the old maim still; and it is not enough to stop one gap while corruption runneth out at many more, but we must make conscience of not 'fulfilling the lusts of the flesh' in any kind. Well, now, I have showed you the two principles which are in a Christian, that we may have a sense of our imbecility, and that we are but regenerated in part.

II. I will prove to you that there is a liberty in a Christian of walking according to each principle, either the Spirit or the flesh.

1. That the Christian hath liberty of walking according to the Spirit is out of question, 'for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' 2 Cor. iii. 17. Surely the Spirit of Christ can free us, and doth free us, from the bondage of corruption: Rom. viii. 2, 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath freed me from the law of sin and death,' otherwise there would be no distinction between nature and grace. If we should be still shackled and manacled by our lusts, and be as unable to pursue our last end as we were before, if there were no inclination to God and heavenly things, what have they gotten by grace? and therefore, though we are still weak, yet we have the gift of the Spirit to free us from sin. The force and efficacy of the new nature appeareth in three things—*scire, velle, posse*; in knowing our duty, and willing, and purposing, and doing our duty, suitable

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'dis-serve'?—Ed.



to the three faculties of man—his understanding, will, and vital power. So the spirit received from Christ, 2 Tim. i. 7, is ‘a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind.’

[1.] For *scire*. The new nature partly consists in the internal light of the mind, by which we understand the things of God revealed in the scriptures concerning our duties and privileges, and so ‘the unction’ is said to ‘teach us all things,’ 1 John ii. 20; that is, all things which belong to our necessary duty and happiness. God’s children in necessary things have a good understanding, or, as it is said, Isa. xi. 3, they are ‘quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord.’ By this it doth warn us of our danger, mind us of our duty upon all occasions.

[2.] For *velle*, to be willing. The force of the new creature lieth in the love of God, for we are never converted to God till he hath our hearts, till we love him with all our soul, with all our might and strength, and hate what is contrary to him: Ps. xcvi. 10, ‘Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.’ Now, surely they that love God and hate evil are at liberty more than others to serve and please God and avoid sin. Hate sin once, and it hath little power over you.

[3.] For *posse*, or the active power. The wonder is rather how he can sin deliberately, voluntarily, than how he cannot sin, 1 John iii. 9; and for doing good, πάντα ἰσχύω, Phil. iv. 13, ‘I can do all things.’ Eph. ii. 10, A spiritual man is ‘prepared for every good work.’

The assistant power which accompanieth the new creature in all his actions doth certainly give him a great advantage of liberty to know, will, and do things pleasing unto God. As he doth first convert us unto God, and quicken us when we are dead in trespasses and sins, so after conversion, when the principles of a new life are put into us, he still helpeth us: and as all creatures depend upon God *in esse conservari et operari*, Acts xvii. 2, so doth the new creature depend on the Spirit; he leadeth and guideth all the children of God to their everlasting estate, Rom. viii. 14. He assists the will and the vital power, Phil. ii. 13; otherwise, we may complain with Paul, Rom. vii. 18, ‘For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.’ There may be a will or an inclination, but it can be brought into no effect. He cleareth the mind, which otherwise would be blinded by temptations, excites the will, which otherwise would be blunted with oppositions, assists the vital power, which else would be obstructed and impeded from producing its effects.

2. That a Christian hath a liberty or power of walking according to the flesh. The opposite principle, though it be broken so far that it is not in habitual predominancy, yet doth too often prevail over us; otherwise it were impossible to sin, or to be unjust, unmerciful, unmindful of God and heavenly things, unchaste, intemperate, or licentious in our actions; and all the admonitions and exhortations of the word, to keep the regenerate from yielding to the enticements of the flesh, would be in vain, if they could not possibly yield to them. In heaven, indeed, there need no dissuasions from sin, because the glorified saints are above all possibility of sinning; there is no devil to tempt, nor world to entice, nor flesh to incline them to be seduced by those temptations: but earth is not heaven. Here

mortified lusts may awaken, and recover strength by a temptation. But more distinctly these arguments show it :—

[1.] That though the inclination be to God and heaven, which is the fruit of saving grace, yet the acts of it are voluntary. Grace is a real, active, working thing, but it doth not work necessarily, as fire burneth; it must be excited and stirred up, both by the Spirit of God, who ‘worketh in us, both to will and to do,’ Phil. ii. 13, and by ourselves. We must *ἀναζωοποιεῖν*, 2 Tim. i. 6. We must still be blowing up this holy fire, as the priest did the fire of the altar to keep it burning; and its motions must be hearkened to, cherished, and complied withal, if we would keep the carnal part under, and prevent it from breaking out into shameful acts. But as we grow remiss or careless in our duty, sin acquireth and prevaileth over us.

[2.] The flesh which remaineth in us is importunate to be pleased; and though it be not superior in the soul, yet it hath a great deal of strength, that still we need, even to the very last, to keep watching and striving, and must resolve to be deaf to its entreaties and solicitations: 1 Peter i. 14, ‘Not fashioning yourselves to the former lusts of your ignorance,’ or accommodating yourselves to please the flesh; that is, they must not cast their conversations into a carnal mould, nor suffer their choice and actions to be directed and governed by the influence of the flesh, or give up themselves to the satisfaction of their sinful desires. In short, former lusts are but in part subdued, our old love to them may be soon kindled, and the bias of corruption gather strength again, and the gates of the senses are always open to let in such objects as take part with the flesh and stir it up. Therefore we must not imagine that there is no need of diligence, or striving and watching. Holy Paul saw a need of ‘beating down his body; lest, after he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway,’ 1 Cor. ix. 27. After so many years’ service in the cause of Christ, this great champion was not secure of the adversary he carried about with him. There is need of caution to the last, that we do not revert into our old slavery. The contrary principle in us still retaineth some life and vigour, though much abated; there is not such a con-naturality and agreement between the heart and sin as there was before; but yet sin still dwelleth and worketh in us, and we are often foiled by it.

3. That since there is a liberty, we must be careful to live according to the operation and influence of the better principle; for it lieth upon us as our duty, though we have the power from above. There is a double argument implied in the text: the one is, *a beneficio*; the other, *a periculo*—the profit, the danger.

[1.] *A beneficio*, from the benefit accruing to us: we shall not ‘fulfil the lusts of the flesh.’ If they yield to the motions and inclinations of the regenerate part, they cannot do the evil which the carnal part would have them; the grace they have will hold them in as a bridle, and turn their minds another way. Surely sin is no such lovely thing that we should be enamoured of it; yea, it is such an hateful thing, that we should shun and avoid it by all means possible. Now, when you have an help at hand, not only near you, but within you, such as the new nature, which riseth up in rebukes and dislikes against sin, you should take this advantage, otherwise you offer violence not only

to the law of God, but that new nature which he hath put into you. There are three reasons which may be urged here:—

(1.) The better principle, the more it is obeyed, the more it is strengthened; for ‘the way of the Lord is strength to the upright,’ Prov. x. 29. The habits of grace increase by exercise: and the more godly and heavenly we are, the more we shall be so; and the more constantly we act grace, the more easily and readily we act it, and with greater pleasure and delight. This is a sure rule, that God rewardeth grace with grace: one duty is an help to another, and the sweetness and pleasure groweth upon us every day. It is at first yoking that the bullock is most unruly; and beginners are burthened with the toil of obedience more than grown Christians. Christ’s yoke groweth more easy every day by the bearing; for the opposition is more broken, and the experience of the sweetness and goodness of this way is more increased, Prov. iv. 18, 19.

(2.) The power of inbred corruption is subdued, and the lusts of the flesh weakened; for, as the better principle groweth, the other loseth strength. Mortification and vivification mutually help one another: the more we are dead unto sin, the more we are alive unto righteousness: so, on the other side, the more we live unto righteousness, the more we are dead to sin; for the carnal life is swallowed up of the spiritual. And therefore to grown Christians temptations either make none or no considerable impression; they are alive to God, and therefore dead unto the flesh and dead unto the world. It cannot be imagined that the flesh should bear sway where there is a strong opposite principle to check it; and when we suffer it not to be idle and unfruitful, it will obtain its effect. Sin cannot be our trade, custom, and delight. No; it is complained of as our heaviest burden, Rom. vii. 24, resisted as the greatest evil, and most opposite, not only to our duty, but to our very nature and temper.

(3.) This walking in the Spirit giveth us an evidence of our interest in the grace of justification: Gal. v. 18, ‘And if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.’ Not to be under the teaching of the law as a rule of obedience, is impossible for a creature. To challenge such an exemption in point of right, is to make ourselves gods. To usurp it in point of fact, is to make ourselves devils. It must be meant, therefore, either of the irritating or condemning power of the law. If of the former, as the law by the rigid exacting of obedience doth increase sin rather than subdue it, and maketh corrupt nature spurn and rebel against it, so it is the same with the former motives; but that is a more limited sense. ‘Not under the law,’ may be expounded to be not under the condemning power of it; and so to be under the law is opposed to be under grace: Rom. viii. 1, ‘There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.’ There is a great privilege; but what is the qualification? ‘Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;’ that is, obey the new nature.

[2.] *A periculo*, the danger of not obeying the new nature, or walking after the Spirit.

(1.) They lose their advantage, and receive one of God’s gifts in vain. To receive objective grace in vain aggravateth our guilt, John iii. 19; but to receive subjective grace in vain doth more provoke God.

Objective grace is that which is discovered in the gospel; subjective grace is that which is found in the heart of a believer, the internal grace of the Holy Spirit renewing the heart. Now, to sin away this advantage after we are made partakers of it doth increase our guilt; surely, therefore, 'if we live in the Spirit, we should walk in the Spirit,' Gal. v. 25. We should improve God's best gifts, or else the work of his Spirit is lost. He loseth nothing but corn, wine, and oil bestowed upon others, but he hath bestowed the sanctification of the Spirit upon you; shall he lose the glory of that also?

(2.) The new nature is exceedingly weakened and suffers loss, if it be not cherished and obeyed. The church of Sardis is warned to prevent the dying of gracious habits. David speaketh as if the work were to begin anew, and his restoring were a second conversion: Ps. li. 10, 'Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me.' The principle of grace being not adhered to, loseth much of vigour and power.

(3.) When these motions are not obeyed, and this power is not exercised, God is provoked to withdraw the quickening grace. Though the spirit here spoken of is the new nature, yet the Holy Ghost is the superintendent of it, and doth move, guide, direct, and quicken by it. The new nature inclineth, but he giveth strength to its motions. Now the Spirit withdraweth when this work is slighted, and we wilfully run into sin: Ps. li. 11, 'Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.'

(4.) There is another mischief; his sanctifying work is not only obstructed, but his certifying and sealing work is obscured, and so our day is turned into night: Eph. iv. 30, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.'

*Use 1.* It sheweth what necessity there is that we should look after conversion to God, or a work of grace wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, for the apostle supposeth they had the Spirit. There is no walking without living, for otherwise our motions are but the motions of puppets, not proceeding from internal life, but acted from springs and engines; no subduing the flesh without setting up an opposite principle. Therefore, we must give up ourselves to the Holy Spirit, first to be sanctified, then governed by him; first renewed, then guided, ordered, and directed by him in all our actions, and the flesh dieth away insensibly.

2. Being renewed by the Holy Ghost, that is, having our minds enlightened and hearts inclined, we must obey this inclination; for life is not given us that we may have it, but that we may act by it, and do things suitable to that life which we have. Grace is not a sluggish, idle quality, but is always working and warring on the opposite principle.

3. Though at first we are pestered and encountered with the lusts of the flesh, which divert us from God and heavenly things, yet we should not be discouraged by every difficulty; for difficulties do but inflame a resolved spirit, as stirring doth the fire. And, besides, though we do not wholly subdue the lusts of the flesh, yet we shall not accomplish them and live in subjection to them, but by degrees get power against them.

4. The carnal life is not of one sort. Some wallow in sensual



pleasures, others have head and heart altogether taken up with the world and worldly things. Now if God hath put a new bias upon our wills and affections, we must show it forth by a heavenly conversation; for they that mind earthly things are carnal, and the great inclination of the new nature is to carry us unto God and the things of another world, 2 Cor. v. 5.

5. They are much to blame that complain of sin, and will not take the course to get rid of it by obeying the instincts of the Holy Ghost, or the motions of the new nature. The Lord's spirit is a 'free spirit,' Ps. li. 12, and his 'truth maketh us free,' John viii. 32. And we are interested in this liberty when born of the Spirit. Let us be true to our duty and we shall bless God for our liberty, rather than complain of our bondage. It is laziness and cowardice not to improve grace, which was given us for this use.

6. How much we are concerned in all conflicts, especially in those which allow deliberation, to take part with the Spirit, and obey his motions rather than to fulfil the lusts of the flesh: otherwise, by consent and upon deliberation, you are unfaithful to Christ and your own souls. Your business is not to gratify the flesh, but to crucify it, to overrule sense and appetite, and cherish the life of grace, Gal. v. 24. And surely when conscience hath help to deliberate, it is a greater evil to resist it, than when hurried by our own passions.

7. It is of great use and profit to us to observe which principle decayeth, the flesh or the Spirit; for thereby we judge of our condition, both in order to mortification and comfort.

The increase of the flesh may be known:—

(1.) By your backwardness to God. Grace is clogged when you cannot serve him with sweetness and delight, Rom. vii. 18.

(2.) When the heart groweth careless of heaven, and your life and love is more taken up about things present than to come, Phil. iii. 18, 19. The contrary is found when grace is in vigour, 2 Cor. iv. 18; Col. iii. 1, 2.

Secondly, The prevalency and increase of the Spirit is known:—

(1.) By a humble contentedness and indifferency to plenty, pleasures, and honours; Phil. iv. 12, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need;' Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be ye content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'

(2.) When your delight in God, heaven, and holiness is still kept up: Rom. viii. 5, 'For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.'

(3.) When the heart is kept in a preparation for the duties of your heavenly calling.

## SERMON XII.

*'For I know that my Redeemer liveth.'*—JOB XIX. 25.

THESE words were spoken by Job, a man for the present miserable, and suspected by his friends as one that neither feared God nor trusted in him. Therefore, to comfort himself in his misery, and to vindicate his innocency, he makes confession of his faith.

In this confession you have the grand and most important articles reckoned up.

1. He doth solemnly declare and believe the promised Messiah to be his Saviour: *I know that my Redeemer liveth.*

2. His coming to judgment: *and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.*

3. The resurrection of the dead, with application to himself, for he saith, ver. 26, *And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.*

4. And lastly, the beatifical vision, ver. 27, *Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.*

We have to do with the first article, his belief of salvation by the promised Messiah: *'For I know that my Redeemer liveth.'*

I am not ignorant that this whole context is carried to another sense, not only by the Jewish doctors, but by some Christian interpreters of good account, whose reasons, consisting wholly in grammatications, I list not now to examine. The common and received sense seemeth better.

1. Because these words are ushered in with a solemn preface, containing in them some notable truth: *'Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! Oh that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know,'* &c. Surely such a passionate preface will become no other matter so well as the great mystical truths of the Christian faith.

2. The word (*Goel*, or kinsman) *redeemer*, will suit with no person so well as Christ.

3. The rest of the passages do not run smoothly unless they be accommodated to this sense, and that I take to be the most obvious sense which the words will best bear.

4. Job, as it is clear by many passages in this book, had often disdained all hopes of being restored to any temporal happiness in this life, affirming that all his hope was gone, that he was worse than a tree cut down. This is the drift and current of all his former discourses.

5. When he saith that he should see God in his flesh, and with the same eyes he now had, I cannot imagine why these passages should be so emphatically spoken if he only intended in this paragraph a hope of being restored to his temporal happiness.

Having premised this, in the words observe:—

1. The causal particle, *for*, giving thereby a reason why he would have his words so marked, because of the excellency of the matter.

2. The article of faith : *my Redeemer liveth.*

3. The manner how this article is asserted and professed by Job.

(1.) With certainty of persuasion : *I know.* (2.) With application and appropriation : *my Redeemer* ; for I know *my Redeemer liveth.* All put together will yield this point :—

*Doct.* That it is a great comfort to the saints in all their afflictions to know that they have a Redeemer living in heaven.

This is the first thing whereby Job comforteth himself.

I. I shall consider the matter of the comfort.

II. Show you how it is applicable to all afflictions.

I. The matter of the comfort consists in four things :—

1. That there is a *Redeemer.*

2. That he is *their* Redeemer.

3. That he *liveth.*

4. That they *know* this upon certain and infallible grounds.

1. That there is a Redeemer ; for he doth not say, I know that my Creator liveth, but my Redeemer.

The word is *Goel*. The Septuagint render it *ὁ ἐκλύειν μὲ μέλλων*, he that will deliver me. Theodotion, better, *ὅτι ὁ ἀγγιστος μου ζῇ*, my near kinsman liveth. The word properly signifies such a one as, in regard of propinquity or nearness of kindred, had a right to redeem a mortgage, or the like engagement of land or livelihood : Lev. xxv. 25, 26, ‘ If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, than shall he redeem that which his brother sold.’ Or else to prosecute the law against the murderer of his friend or kinsman, Num. xxxv. 19, 24.

It is taken sometimes more largely for any deliverer out of thralldom, or avenger of wrong in general. And so is in the Old Testament applied to God or Christ, to whom the term chiefly belongeth. To God, because of his powerful providence and rescuing his people out of their calamities : Ps. xxv. 22, ‘ Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.’ To Christ, to whom it is most proper : Isa. lix. 20, ‘ And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to them that shall turn away ungodliness from<sup>1</sup> Jacob ;’ which the apostle applieth to Christ, Rom. xi. 26. He then is the Redeemer, and it implieth—(1.) That he is our kinsman after the flesh, or by incarnation ; (2.) That he paid a price to God for us in his passion ; (3.) That he pursueth the law against Satan, and rescues us by his power ; all which are notable grounds of comfort. For under the law the redemption of the inheritance, or the person of the poor brother sold, was to be made by the next of blood, and that by the male side, not by the mother’s, but by the father’s side, and he also was to be the avenger of blood.

[1.] There is much comfort in this, that Christ is our kinsman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and therefore certainly will not be strange to his own flesh. He did redeem us, not only *jure proprietatis*, by virtue of his interest in us as our Creator, but *jure propinquitatis*, by virtue of his kindred, one of us, of our stock and lineage ; the Son of Adam, as well as the Son of God. The apostle tells us, Heb. ii. 11, ‘ For he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one ; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.’ As the

<sup>1</sup> Qu. ‘from ungodliness in’?—ED.

first-fruits offered to God were taken out of the same heap, so he was of the same mass with us. Christ is not only man, but 'the Son of man.' He might have been man if God had created him out of nothing, or he had brought his substance from heaven. But he is the Son of man, one descended of the loins of Adam, as we are; even thus 'he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one.' He is of the same stock with all mankind, but the kindred is reckoned to the sanctified, because there it holdeth of both sides. Christ is born of a woman, and they are born of God, and so he is a kinsman doubly—*ratione incarnationis sue*, and *regenerationis nostræ*; in regard of his own incarnation and our regeneration. He partaketh of the human nature, and we partake of the divine nature. And it followeth, 'therefore he is not ashamed to call us brethren.' We are said to be ashamed when we do anything that is filthy, dishonest, or base, or misbecoming our dignity and rank which we sustain in the world. The former consideration is of no place here. For the latter, those that bear any port and rank in the world are ashamed to show too much familiarity towards their inferiors; but such is the love of Jesus Christ towards his people, that though he be infinitely greater and more worthy than these, he is not ashamed to call us brethren. Well, then, here is the first step of our comfort and hope, to see God in our natures. The eternal Son of God became our kinsman that he might have the right of redemption, and recover the inheritance which we had forfeited. We could not have such familiar and confident recourse to an angel, and one who was of another stock and different nature from ours, nor put ourselves into his hands with such trust and assurance. Now he and we are of one nature, we may be the more confident. It is a motive to man: Isa. lviii. 7, 'Thou shalt not hide thyself from thine own flesh.' In Christ all the perfections of man were at the highest. This made Laban, though otherwise a churlish man, kind to Jacob: Gen. xxix. 14, 'Surely thou art my bone and my flesh.' One of our stock and lineage will pity us more than a stranger.

[2.] This kinsman was to pay the price and ransom of his captivated brother; that also is implied in the notion of a Redeemer: Lev. xxv. 48, 49, 'After that he is sold, his uncle, or his uncle's son may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin to him of his family may redeem him.' So when we had sold ourselves, Jesus Christ, who only of the kindred was free and able to do it, paid a price for us: 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'We are bought with a price.' And this price was no less than his own precious blood, 1 Peter i. 18, 19. A price was necessary; for God was not an enemy that could be overcome, but must be satisfied, and amends made for the wrong done to his majesty, that the notions which are ingrafted in man's heart concerning God might be kept inviolate. The Lord knows how apt we are to please ourselves with the thoughts of impunity, as if it were nothing to sin against God, and a small matter to break his laws. Now, to prevent this thought in us, before his justice would let go the sinner, he demanded satisfaction, and equivalent satisfaction to the wrong done, to expiate the offence done to an infinite majesty. Therefore no less could be a sufficient ransom for lost sinners than the blood of Christ. This is the price



which our kinsman hath paid down for us. In short, the wrong was done to an infinite majesty, the favour to be purchased was the eternal enjoyment of the ever-blessed life, the sentence to be reversed was the sentence of everlasting death; and therefore Christ alone could serve the turn. Here is another ground of comfort. Cyril calls it, *καύχημα τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας*.

[3.] This kinsman was to revenge the quarrel of his slain kinsman upon the murderer. So he is a Redeemer, and that not only by merit, but by power; not only as a lamb, but as a lion. There needed no price to be paid to Satan: we are redeemed from him, not by satisfaction, but by rescue. The apostle tells us, Col. ii. 15, 'He spoiled principalities and powers.' Luke xi. 21, 'He bindeth the strong man, and taketh away his goods.' Heb. ii. 14, 15, 'That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' The devil had partly a usurped power over man, as the god of this world, or at least as the enemy of mankind; so Christ rescues us by force: partly a ministerial and permitted power, as the executioner of God's curse and vengeance; so he outlaweth him, and puts him out of office by the merit of his passion. Satan had no power over death as *dominus mortis*, as the supreme lord, that hath power to save and to destroy; but as *minister mortis*, as a hangman and executioner hath power from the law to put the malefactor to death. So Christ destroyed him not in regard of essence, as if there were no more a devil to tempt and hurry us to destruction; nor in regard of malice, as if he did no longer seek to devour; but in regard of office and ministry; he is put out of office, and hath no more law-power to destroy those that have fled to Christ for refuge; and so hath freed us from all the fears of death and hell, which our guilt and Satan's temptations subjected us to.

2. That he is *their* Redeemer is the next ground of comfort. Job doth not profess faith only in *a* Redeemer, but in *his* Redeemer: 'I know that *my* Redeemer liveth;' not by an uncharitable exclusion shutting out others, and engrossing the Redeemer to himself, but—

[1.] By a fiducial application making out his own title and interest. Some things in nature are common benefits, not lessened to any because others enjoy them, as a speech heard, and the sun shining, &c. The saints do not exclude others: 1 John ii. 2, 'And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world;' 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness; not for me only, but for all them also that love his appearing.' This doth not lessen the benefit to us, and our obligations to him. Plato thought himself obliged in kindness to one that paid his fare for his passage over a river, and reckoned it *positum apud Platonem officium*, a courtesy that obliged Plato; but when he saw others partakers of the same benefit, he disclaimed the debt, and only took part of it on himself. Upon which Seneca groundeth this aphorism, that it is not enough for him that will oblige me to him to do me a good turn, unless he do it to myself directly—*non tantum mihi, sed tanquam mihi*; otherwise, *quod debeo cum multis, solvam cum multis*. I will only pay my portion and share of thanks and

respect. But this cannot be applied to this extraordinary kindness of Christ, for every man is indebted for the whole, not every man for a part of redemption. God's love to every one is infinite, and he hath paid an infinite price for thee, purchased an infinite happiness to thee. His love to thee was without measure and bounds, so must thy thankfulness be to him without stint and limit. Though he died for others as well as thee, yet thou art bound to love him no less than if it had been for thee alone; he shed his whole blood for thee, and every drop was poured out for thy sake.

[2.] By a fiducial owning and appropriation, challenging his right in him. So doth Thomas: John xx. 28, 'My Lord and my God.' Faith appropriates God to our own use and comfort. The devils know that there is a God and a Christ, for they confessed, 'Thou art Jesus, the Son of the living God;' but they can never say with comfort, 'My God and my Christ.' This application is the ground of our love to Christ, and our comfort in Christ.

Our love to Christ. Things that concern us affect us. This is the quickening motive to the spiritual life, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me,' Gal. ii. 20; and 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him, because he loved us first.' A particular sense and experience of God's love to our own souls doth most quicken and awaken our love to him again, when we see that he hath thought of us, and taken care of our salvation, that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

So for our comfort in Christ. It is the propriety a man hath to any good thing that doth increase the comfort of it. It is a misery to a man to see others enjoy a benefit which he hath as much need of as others, and he can enjoy no part of it. I may allude to that, Prov. v. 15, 'Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.' The greater we know the benefit, the greater will be our trouble to want it. A poor man that sees a large dole given, and multitudes relieved, and he can get nothing, is the more troubled. So here, to see Christ ready to save sinners, and we have no comfort by him, is very afflicting: Eph. i. 13, 'After ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' It is not sufficient to know that the gospel is a doctrine of salvation to others; but every one should labour, by a due application of the promises to their own hearts, to find it to be a doctrine of salvation to themselves in particular. The seeing of meat, though never so wholesome, doth not nourish, but the eating of it. The beholding of Christ revealed in the word as a Saviour in general is not sufficient to give full comfort, without applying him to be my Christ, my Saviour, my Redeemer. We must make sure of our share in this universal good. We read of blood shed and blood sprinkled, atonement made, and atonement received, but no man hath satisfying comfort by the blood of Christ till it be sprinkled upon his heart, and applied to him by the Spirit of God, and thereby assured that it was shed for him.

3. The next ground of comfort is, that our Redeemer *liveth*. This is true of Christ, whether you consider him as God or as man. (1.) As God; so he is co-eternal with the Father, 'the first and the last,' the beginning of all things, and the end of them. So he saith not, he hath, or shall live, but he 'liveth.' 'In my flesh shall I see God,'

He speaks of the Redeemer's life without any distinction of time—past, present, or to come; so that he is altogether, with the Father and the Spirit, from everlasting to everlasting, one living God. (2.) As man after his resurrection: Rev. i. 18, 'I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death.' Now in this sense I take it for his life in heaven after his resurrection from the dead; and that is of great comfort to us; for the apostle telleth us, that 'if we were reconciled by the death of Christ, much more shall we be saved by his life.' The comfort is great that arises from the life of the Redeemer.

[1.] It is a visible demonstration of the truth of the gospel in general, and in particular of the article of eternal life. The truth of the gospel in general: Acts xvii. 31, 'Hath given assurance,' that is, a sufficient evidence to induce a belief of the gospel, 'in that he hath raised him from the dead.' Christ came from heaven as a faithful witness to beget faith as well as to give us knowledge, sealing his testimony with unquestionable proofs, to make it the more sure and credible to us, for he hath confirmed it by a life of miracles, and chiefly by rising from the dead himself, and ascending visibly to heaven. His resurrection from the dead is proof enough to justify his doctrine, and to evidence the certainty of his testimony; for God by his divine power would not countenance a deceiver, and raise him from the dead, and receive him into glory with himself. Particularly it proves the state of unseen glory; life and immortality are more fully brought to light in the gospel than by any other means, 2 Tim. i. 10. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ there is not only a clear revelation of it, but a full confirmation, because Christ is entered into the glory that he spake of, and promised to his disciples. He is gone before us into the other world, that he may receive us unto himself, and that we might, with a more steady confidence, wait for it in the midst of fears and uncertainties of the present life.

[2.] His living after death. It was the solemn acquittance of our surety from the sins imputed to him, and a token of the acceptance of his purchase; when Christ rose again from the dead, our surety was let out of prison, Isa. liii. 8. And it is a ground of confidence to us, for when the debtor sees the surety walk abroad, he may be sure the debt is satisfied. Therefore it is said, Rom. iv. 25, 'Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.' Christ is sometimes said to rise from the dead, and sometimes to be raised from the dead. His taking up his life again argued his divine power; but as man, he was raised. So it is said, Heb. xiii. 20, 'The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ.' God the Father brought him again from the dead, as an evidence of full satisfaction. Our surety did not break prison, but was solemnly brought forth. The disciples said, Acts xvi. 37-39, 'Let them come themselves and fetch us.' An angel was sent from heaven to roll away the stone, to show that Christ had a solemn release and discharge.

[3.] His living implies his capacity to intercede for us, and to relieve us in all our necessities: Heb. vii. 24, 25, 'But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; therefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever

liveth to make intercession for them.' Christ is there compared with the Levitical priesthood. They were many that succeeded one after another, and being hindered by death, could never bring their work to perfection ; but this priest ever liveth to plead the church's cause with God, presenting his human nature in his sight, and appearing continually before his Father's throne, and this for all that come to God by him. They are his clients, and he is their advocate. It is against the rules of that court to plead for others that continue in their unbelief and impenitency. After the beast was slain without the camp, the Levitical high priest did enter into the sanctuary with blood ; so Christ after his sacrifice did enter into the heavenly sanctuary with the names of the twelve tribes of all the saints on his breast and shoulders, there to appear before God for us, Heb. ix. 14. He ever liveth to accomplish the fruits of his purchase for those that are reconciled to God by him as a high priest, to answer the accusations of Satan as our advocate, to stop the breaking out of wrath. As Jonathan in Saul's court did mitigate his father's anger against David, so Christ doth interpose night and day to prevent breaches, and to preserve a mutual correspondence between God and us, as our lieger-agent ; to sue out grace suitable to our conflicts, difficulties, and temptations, as our friend in court ; to procure the acceptance of our prayers, as our mediator and intercessor, Heb. viii. 2.

[4.] His living is the root and cause of our life, for he having purchased eternal life, not only for himself, but for all his members, ever liveth to convey it to them, and maintain it in them : John xiv. 19, 'Because I live, ye shall live also ;' John vi. 57, 'As I live by the Father, so he that believeth in me shall live by me.' By reason of the mystical union that is between Christ and believers, they may rest upon it, that as long as the head hath life, the members shall not be utterly without life, for Christ is a pledge and a pattern of that power that shall work in us in order to life spiritual and eternal.

4. The next ground of comfort is the certainty of persuasion : 'I *know* that my Redeemer liveth.' As if he had said, I do not doubt of it, nor suspect it in the least. I *know* implies :—

[1.] A clear understanding of this mystery. The more fully we understand the grounds of faith, the more efficacy they have upon us to beget confidence and joy of faith in us. The fears that haunt us are the fruits of darkness and ignorance, accompanied with a sense of guilt ; but as gospel-knowledge increases, they vanish as mists do before the sun : Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee ;' if God were better known, he would be better trusted.

[2.] I know, implies certainty of persuasion. This is either certainty of faith, or of spiritual sense.

First, Of faith, which depends on the certainty of God's revelation. That was either the general promise in paradise : Gen. iii. 15, God had said, 'The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head.' Now upon this promise Job is as confident of a redeemer, as if he had seen him with his bodily eyes. Thus Abraham is said to have seen Christ's day : John viii. 56, and Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' Or his faith was built upon



some particular revelation : Heb. i. 1, 'God, who at sundry times, and by divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets.' They had a sufficient discovery of the Redeemer to be a ground of faith. Certain it is, the eyes of believers were then upon him. We are told that Christ was 'the lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' Rev. xiii. 8. He is set forth in prophecies and types. 'Now faith is the evidence of things not seen;' not seen by sense, but clearly seen in the promise. He was the joy of all ages, even of those that lived before he came in the flesh. The same is true after the coming of Christ, as well as before, for we 'believe in him whom we have not seen,' 1 Peter i. 8. We should as heartily love him and rejoice in him as if we had conversed with him bodily. Only we have an advantage: history is not so dark as prophecy, and it is more easy to believe what is past, where we have the suffrage and experience of so many ages to confirm us, than to expect what is to come, where we have only God's bare word to support us. The mystery is now more clearly revealed to us than before the exhibition of our Saviour; therefore, according to our advantage, so should the increase of our faith be. We should be able to say, 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him.' We should rest upon Christ with more confidence.

Secondly, The certainty of spiritual sense. We know that he is *a* Redeemer by the discovery of the word; that he is *our* Redeemer by the application of the Spirit, as he manifests himself to us and in us. This knowledge of spiritual sense is often spoken of: Job xiii. 18, 'I know that I shall be justified;' Heb. x. 34, 'Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance;' Rom. vi. 6, 'Knowing this, that your old man is crucified, that is, *feeling*.' Now both these are of great comfort, the certainty of faith and the sweetness of sense; for without the certainty of faith, the soul is only left to blind guesses and loose conjectures, and so can never have solid comfort. Without the knowledge of sense, that is, of our interest in salvation, the soul loses much of its joy and peace. As novices and men that have never before been at sea are troubled at the swelling of every wave and billow though they are safe, yet, because they do not know they are safe, their voyage is a torment to them. So those that take the assurance of the word of God for the truth of redemption by Christ, and tremblingly build upon it, yet because they know not their own interest, have not the comfort of the Spirit, their journey to heaven is the more troublesome. Therefore it concerneth us to build upon a sure foundation, so to get a clear interest.

II. How this is applicable in all afflictions. That easily appears from these premises:—

1. In public troubles and difficulties. We are amazed and perplexed many times at the events that fall out in the world, and know not whereunto these things will grow. Yet this is some comfort and support to all that are concerned in Zion's affairs, that Christ is alive at his Father's right hand, and will pursue all things that make for the glory of God, and the advancement of his own kingdom. I say, the glory of God: Rom. vi. 10, 'In that he liveth, he liveth unto God.' His own kingdom: Ps. cx. 1, 'Sit thou at my right hand till I make

thine enemies thy footstool.' He is at the right hand of God, and there shall abide till he return to judge the world. In the meantime, he hath the inspection of all affairs: all judgment is put into his hands, John v. 22. Things are not left to the will of man, nor to their own contingency, but are guided and ordered by him with good advice. However matters go, Christ is governor, who is not, cannot be deposed from his regal office, nor jostled out of the throne. As Luther said upon some loss that befell the friends of the gospel, *Etiamnum vivit et regnat Christus*. When the floods lifted up their voice, and all things seemed to threaten ruin and to overwhelm, then follows, 'The Lord reigneth; the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters,' Ps. xciii. 1, 4. It is spoken of the kingdom of Christ, for the advancing and preserving of which he gives forth signal testimonies of his regal power.

2. In spiritual distresses; when we want life and quickening, are opposed with troubled thoughts about our sinful infirmities. Your Redeemer hath life in himself, but not for himself alone; he came into the world that we might have a fuller communication of his grace, John x. 10. Now he is gone back again to God, and filled with the Spirit, to communicate it to the members of his mystical body: Eph. iv. 10, 'He is ascended up to fill all things.' When we are dead, our Redeemer liveth as a fountain of life to God's people.

3. In outward calamities. He liveth when other comforts fail or are taken away from us; he will prove the nearest and best friend when all others forsake us; he will not only sympathise with us, but help us, and knoweth how to give a comfortable issue out of the sorest troubles: 2 Cor. iv. 14, 16, 'Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For which cause we faint not.'

4. It is a great comfort in calumnies and slanders, when our names are taken up in the lips of the taunters and cast forth as evil. Job here, when his friends suspected him as fallen from the grace of God, puts his cause into the hands of the great Mediator who was now with God in heaven, making intercession for him, and will one day stand on the earth judging the world. We need not fear any partial judge here below, nor be troubled at their prejudices and misconstructions. Christ is the true judge, 'who will bring to light the hidden things of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God,' 1 Cor. iv. 5, that is, every one that hath done well. Though we have failings, yet those that flee to a Redeemer for pardon and reconciliation with God, and grace to walk uprightly, shall then be acquitted.

5. Chiefly it is a comfort against the fears of death, that you may yield up yourselves into Christ's hands. Thoughts of dwelling with God in eternal life are less comfortable, because death and the grave interpose; we must pass through them before we can enjoy him. But though we die, Christ liveth, who is the resurrection, and those that believe in him shall live though they die, John xi. 25. For our souls, he standeth ready to receive them: Acts vii. 59, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And our bodies at the last day shall be raised again to immortal life: 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory,' Col. iii. 4. We need not fear death, for

by his dying and rising again the powers of the grave are shaken, and death itself is become mortal. The grave is not a prison, but a place of repose, Isa. lvii. 2; and death not a final extinction, but a passage into glory. It is ours: 1 Cor. iii. 22, 'All things are yours, life, death, things present, things to come; all are yours.' And it is gain: Phil. i. 21, 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Therefore we may go to the grave with comfort and hope. Christ died and yet is alive; so shall we. 'He is risen as the first-fruits of them that sleep,' 1 Cor. xv. 20. The whole harvest was blessed and sanctified by a handful of the first-fruits dedicated to God. When Christ arose, he virtually drew all the elect out of the grave with him; being renewed and reconciled by his grace, they may be confident of a joyful resurrection, for Christ is their fore-fruits. The first-fruits did not bless the tares, darnel, and cockle that grew amongst the corn; no man that ever offered the first-fruits desired a blessing upon the weeds. No; 'Bind the tares in bundles, and gather the wheat into my barn.' But if he indeed be your Redeemer, and hath redeemed you from all iniquity, that is, from the guilt and power of sin, it is a comfort to you to know that he lives gloriously with God, and will draw all his own after him, that they may live gloriously with him. He is our fore-runner, Heb. vi. 20, who is gone to heaven and hath taken possession for himself, and in our behalf, to make the way more passable for us. When we die, we do but go thither whither he is gone before us; he standeth upon the shore ready to receive us into glory.

*Use of Exhortation.*

I. Believe it and be persuaded of this truth, that you have a Redeemer living with God in the heavens.

1. This is a matter of mere faith, and therefore it must be soundly believed before it can have any efficacy upon us. Some points of faith are mixed, partly evident by natural reason, partly by divine revelation: as that there is a God; it is matter of sensible experience, Rom. i. 20, and a matter of faith also; 'whosoever comes to God must believe that God is.' Nature helpeth forward the entertainment of these things, but redemption by Christ is a matter of pure and mere faith, and is received by believing God's testimony, 2 Thes. i. 10. There is no improving these points till we soundly believe them.

2. Because we often think we believe these general truths when indeed we do not believe them at all, or not with such a degree of assent as we imagine. Our Lord, when he speaks of these truths: John xi. 26, 'He that believeth in me shall live though he die; believest thou this?' John xvi. 31, 'Do ye now believe?' We conceit our faith to be much stronger than indeed it is about the main articles of faith.

3. Because among them that profess themselves Christians, there are monstrous defects in their faith. Naturally we look upon the gospel as a well-devised fable, 2 Peter i. 16; and many that dare not speak it out, yet do but speak of Christ in jest and for fashion sake. I am sure most live as if there were no such matter, and the many impostures and cheats of Christendom, and the divisions and scandals

amongst us, have weakened the faith of many, that were it not for shame they would turn professed infidels. There could not be such boldness in sinning, such coldness in spiritual and heavenly things, such neglect of Christ and heaven, if men were true and sound believers. Others content themselves with a negative sense; they do not question or contradict these articles of faith, because they do not consider them, but take up the common opinion, hand over head, and were never assaulted with temptations to the contrary; they do not doubt of it, say they; but are they rooted and grounded in the faith? Col. i. 23. Their not doubting comes from their non-attention. Others have a speculative assent; there is a certainty of evidence and a certainty of adherence. The former consisteth in the conviction of the mind, the latter in the bent of the will and affections. An object rightly propounded extorteth the former from the understanding, not expecting the consent of the will; the latter followeth *imperium et consensum voluntatis*. The former arises from the evidence of the thing; the latter from the consideration of the worth, weight, and greatness of it: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' They must not only be apprehended by us as true, but seriously considered as the highest and most important things, so as that we may adhere to them with all our hearts. It is such a belief of the gospel as produces a firm and cordial adherence, otherwise it will not serve the end and purpose of the gospel, which requireth us to crucify our lusts, sacrifice our interests, and perform those things which are displeasing to nature upon the hopes it offereth to us, and with confidence and joyfulness to wait upon God for his salvation, in the midst of all pressures and afflictions. If your adherence were more firm, you would find your comfort more lively, fresh, and constant, your obedience more uniform, you would not be so shaken with temptations and assaults, and the incursion of worldly cares and sorrows. In great temptations the children of God see the need of a firm and cordial assent to the main gospel truths, Heb. vi. 1, 2. Nay, in ordinary practices, in every prayer you make to God, Heb. x. 22, 'Let us draw nigh to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith;' 1 Tim. ii. 8, 'I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.'

4. Endeavour to arrive at the highest degree of assent. Faith is or should be strongly persuaded of what it believeth. It is an evidence, not a conjecture; not a surmise, but a firm assurance. We should certainly know what we believe: 'We know thou art a teacher sent from God,' John iii. 2; 'We know, and are sure, that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,' John vi. 69; 2 Cor. v. 1, 'We know that we have a building of God;' 1 John iii. 2, 'We know that we shall see him as he is;' 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' Invisible things revealed by God should be certainly known, because God hath told us such clear, firm apprehensions become us. Faith is not a bare conjecture, but a certain knowledge; not we think, we hope well, but we know, is the language of faith. It is not a bare possibility we go upon, nor a probable opinion, but a



certain, infallible truth. I put you upon this, partly because we have a great argument in the text. If Job could see it so long before it came to pass, should we not now see it? Believers of old make us ashamed who live in the clear sunshine of the gospel. Job lived long before the gospel was revealed; the redemption of souls was at that time a great mystery, being sparingly revealed to a few. But one of a thousand could bring this message to a condemned sinner, that God had found a ransom, Job xxxiii. 23. Partly to put you upon earnest prayer to God, and other holy means. The Spirit opens our eyes and inclines our hearts: Eph. i. 17, 18, 'I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.'

II. I exhort you to apply and improve it to your particular comfort. I shall speak :—

1. To the careless.

2. To the sensible.

1. To the careless, who do not give diligence to make their interest clear, that they may be able to say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' Some are contented so they may be well in the world, and live in peace, credit, and mirth here, but never look after an interest in the Redeemer, or to get a sure hope of a sentence of absolution from him at the last day. They content themselves with a general belief that Christ died for sinners, and only make use of it for the increase of their carnal security and boldness in sinning. We must not only consider what Christ hath done, but what we are to do that we may be partakers of the benefits. The general work of redemption Christ hath performed for us, without any consent on our part. He took our nature, fulfilled the law, satisfied the justice of God, merited grace; but we must thankfully receive him, live in him and to him, before this is applied to us, or we can have the comfort of it, 2 Cor. v. 17; xiii. 5. They content themselves to think and hope well, but do not make it sure upon good grounds. And when questions and scruples are raised in their hearts, there is not a full hearing of the matter, the court is broken up ere things are well determined; and so they run the hazard of uncertainty, and live and die venturing their souls upon the bare possibility of being saved, never put it out of doubt, nor 'assure their hearts before God,' 1 John iii. 19.

2. To the sensible; to live upon this truth in the midst of their calamities, especially that they may enjoy the comfort of it in a dying hour.

*Object.* You will say, We could take comfort in this, if we knew we had a Redeemer at God's right hand; but alas! after all our profession of the name of Christ, and long waiting upon God, I cannot make this close application, to say, 'My Redeemer liveth,' or 'My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,' Luke i. 47.

*Ans.* But cannot you bless God for the gospel, and the offers of pardon and life by him? The main foundation of comfort lies in the general truths; your hopes are not built chiefly upon the sense of your own interest, but the ransom which Christ hath paid for you. Is it

nothing to you that God should become man, and your judge your kinsman? John i. 14. Surely goodness and mercy is nearer to us in our own nature than it was in the divine nature. We have an apparent demonstration of it to us, that Christ would come among us to bring home souls to God, Heb. vi. 17, 18. Again, is it nothing that, in this nature of ours, he would pay our ransom, that none should perish for want of a sufficient satisfaction to God's justice, but for want of a willing heart to accept and own his Redeemer? John iii. 16, 17; Rev. iii. 24-26. We are so far onward in our way. Again, is it nothing to us that our Redeemer will rescue us out of the hand of the destroyer? 1 John iii. 8. It is his office. This should prevail with us, not to tie the cord the faster, but to wait upon him with the more hope if you desire his aid to this end and purpose, for it is his office. Again, is it nothing to you that this Redeemer liveth; that Christ, in your nature, rose again, and is now at God's right hand, to manage the causes of poor sinners? Rom. viii. 34. St Paul's triumph hence ariseth. Lastly, is it nothing to you to know this, that God hath sent the gospel to you, and given you faith of these things? 1 John v. 20, 'We know the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.' Is this favour nothing? These are the truths you must live upon.

*Secondly*, To those that question whether Christ be our Redeemer, whether they may look upon themselves as having an actual interest in the benefits of his death and intercession.

I answer—This is evident: (1.) By their own act; (2.) By God's act.

1. Their own act. General grace must some way be made particular, else it cannot profit us. All are not justified, nor adopted, nor saved. There is the same merciful God, the same all-sufficient Saviour, the same gracious covenant. Some apply this grace, others do not. Christ doth not save us at a distance, but as received into our hearts; as a plaster doth not heal at a distance, but applied to the sore: John i. 13, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' If you heartily consent and accept of the Redeemer's grace to heal your wounded souls, you shall partake of salvation.

2. There is an act on God's part. What have you to show that God is reconciled to you? This is not evident till we have the pledge of our reconciliation with God, the gift of the Holy Spirit. This affords infallible assurance of God's favour. Other things may be given in wrath, but the Spirit is the earnest of his eternal love. God loved Christ, and gave him the Spirit without measure, John iii. 34. By the Spirit his love is applied to us, Rom. v. 5. This is the evidence from whence we may conclude our actual communion with God. It holdeth good exclusively, Rom. viii. 9; inclusively, 1 John iv. 13. The Spirit first works, and then witnesses; he is first a guide and sanctifier, then a comforter. As a guide, he leadeth us to all truth: John xvi. 13, 'When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth;' Rom. viii. 14, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' As a sanctifier, he breaketh the power of fleshly lusts, Rom. viii. 13; conformeth us to the image of Christ, Rom. viii. 29. Then as a comforter, he witnesseth our present interest and our future hopes: Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit beareth

witness to our spirits, that we are the children of God ; ' 2 Cor. i. 22, ' Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts ; ' Eph. i. 13, ' In whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.'

### SERMON XIII.

*And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.—*  
1 TIM. VI. 8.

THE apostle hath mentioned some in the 5th verse that counted 'gain was godliness ;' that is, suited their godliness with their worldly ends, or made a trade of it to live by. Their religion must bear all their charges, they would be at no cost about it at all. The apostle takes occasion to show that their notion may be right if well interpreted, though extreme wrong in the sense they mean it. It was impious in them to make Christianity a means to secular advantages ; but interpret it aright, 'Godliness with contentment is great gain,' much better than all the wealth in the world. By godliness he means the Christian religion, because it prescribeth and delivereth the true way of worshipping and serving God, and they gain fairly that gain Christ. A man that is acquainted with God in Christ is the true rich man ; this with contentment is great gain. Our worldly desires make us poor. You have enough if you be contented with the condition wherein God places you. Paul retorts their own notions upon them. He is a rich man that doth not possess much and hath need of little. Anything above a competency is needless to us, who must shortly pass out of this life into another. Nature is contented with a little, and grace with less ; because it is manifest that 'as we brought nothing into this world, so we can carry nothing out,' and all that we have above what we spend or use is lost to us. In the text he inferreth his inference : 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' The words are plain, and afford this observation :—

*Doct.* That one great point of godliness is to be content with what we have, though it be but food and raiment.

In handling this point, I shall inquire :—

I. What contentment is.

II. What considerations are most apt to breed it.

III. That it is a high point of Christianity.

I. What contentment is. It is a quiet temper of mind about outward things ; and so it is opposite to three things—murmurings, distracting cares, and covetous desires.

1. Murmurings : Jude 16, 'Murmurers, complainers.' The word signifies blamers of their portion ; they are always picking quarrels at God's dispensation, and entertain crosses with anger and blessings with disdain. But now, when our minds are satisfied with the fitness and sufficiency of our present condition, there is no repining against

God, no fretting and tearing ourselves; the mind is framed to the estate, be it never so mean.

2. Distrustful and distracting cares. Men are full of troubles, especially when they are in a hazardous strait and low condition; therefore God forbids this: Mat. vi. 25, 'Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; or yet for the body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' Men are fearful and anxious for the future, and doubt whether God will allow them the necessities of life, food, and raiment; therefore it is said, Luke xii. 29, 'Be not ye of a doubtful mind.' They distract themselves with these anxious thoughts. The word properly signifies to be carried in the air, as clouds, by an uncertain motion; and so it is applied to them who are tossed about without consistency or fixedness of mind, by an impatient suspense or anxious solicitude about God's providence.

3. Covetous desires: Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have.' The apostle speaks there of times of persecution; and no temper of mind is so fit for us in such times as contentation with whatever God at present allows us. They that are greedy of more forget or dislike what they have already. There is no reason for it; for what use is there of more than what may nourish us within and cover us without? But we punish ourselves with our own wild desires. Well, then, contentation is opposite to all these; it is such a quiet of mind as suiteth our hearts to our condition, and relieth upon God's merciful providence and gracious promises for support and necessities during our service in the world, without being troubled about other things.

II. What considerations are offered and implied in the text as most apt to breed it.

1. That God is a sovereign Lord, and dispenses these outward things at his pleasure. We are not proprietaries; we must only content ourselves with the use, or a transitory fruition: Luke xvi. 12, 'If you have not been faithful in another's, who will give you that which is your own?' That *other's* is God, who is the dispenser and disposer of these things. The whole drift of the parable is to show that we are but stewards: God reserves the sovereign right to himself—gives us only the use or trust for our own and others' good. No man esteemeth himself to be an owner of that which another besides himself hath power to dispose of, as God hath of us and of all that belongeth to us. Our possession of anything is but limited and respective. We are but tenants at the will of the Lord; he can take us from our service, or our service from us at his own pleasure: Job ix. 12, 'Behold, he takes away, who can hinder him? Who will say to him, What doest thou?' God hath an absolute power, his right is uncontrollable; so is not ours. Now, this hath a great influence upon contentedness with our condition; for if we and all that we have be God's own, he may do with his own as it pleases him, Mat. xx. 15. If he takes anything from us, he doth not require his own; and nothing more reasonable but that every one should have liberty to dispose of what is his own according to his will. Every one of you must say, I am God's creature; he may use me for his glory, in what manner and in what rank and degree he pleaseth.



2. It is the wisdom and will of God not to give to all alike, that some should have more and some should have less. He puts ten talents into the hands of some of his servants, and but one into another's, Mat. xxv. Therefore if your portion be straiter than others, it is what God hath allotted : 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8, 'The Lord makes poor and the Lord makes rich ; he bringeth low and he lifteth up : he setteth some among the princes, and to inherit the throne of glory,' whilst others sit on the dunghill or roll in the dust. The world is not governed by chance, nor is it the blind idol fortune that dispenses honours and estates, but every man's portion and the bounds of his habitation are set forth by God. It comes not from second causes, or an uncertain rolling about the sphere of human mutability, but God's ordinance and appointment, who, as he hath cast the world into hills and valleys, hath made the estate of one man differ from another. No estate in this world is universally good for all, as no gale of wind can serve for all passengers on the deep waters. Nor doth the same weather fit every soil ; that drought which burneth up the hotter grounds comforteth those which are more chill and cold. If one man had another's blessings he would soon run wild, as another would grow desperate if he had their crosses. Therefore the infinite wisdom of the great Governor of the world allots every one his portion. God knows the reasons of this unequal distribution, though they be hidden from us. Now, this also hath an influence upon contentment, for we ought to submit to the good pleasure of God, and can no more quarrel with his providence for keeping us low and bare than his creation, that he made us men and not angels, or that he will furnish the world with all kind of creatures, worms and beasts as well as men : Isa. xlv. 9, 'Shall the clay say to the potter, Why hast thou made me thus ?'

3. These earthly things, which are thus variously dispensed, are only useful to us during the present life in the mortal body. In heaven we have no need of these things, and we must leave them all on this side the grave : 1 Cor. vi. 13, 'Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats ; but God shall destroy both it and them.' Meats are appointed by God and nature for the use of men, and the body of man in this life hath absolute necessity of them ; but in the next life, which is a spiritual life, this eating and desiring of meat shall be taken away. It is a mercy to have meat when we are hungry, and garments to cover our nakedness when cold, but it is a greater mercy to be above these necessities. Well, now, this life is but short and uncertain ; it is but a coming into the world and a going out again : Job i. 21 ; 1 Tim. vi. 7, 'We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.' Now, we that are ready to step into another world, and are certain within a short time to be stripped for ever of all these things, what great matter is it if God keep us low and bare ? All will shortly be as poor as you, and a little time should make but a little difference. That is not our true wealth and riches which we cannot carry away with us ; what is left behind is not ours, but other men's ; and therefore, whilst you are alive, you should not be much troubled about that which you cannot enjoy when you are dead. If we have what will serve for our passage, what should we do with more ? We cannot carry away our riches along with us, but the sting and

guilt of mis-enjoying them and mis-employing them will be sure to stick by us both in death and judgment. It is not the possession, but the use that will comfort us. Though we cannot carry our estates into the other world, yet the comfort of a good conscience we may carry with us: 'Their works follow them,' Rev. xiv. 13. Then they go to enjoy the eternal reward of bliss and peace for their hard and painful service here in the world.

4. The comfort, safety, and happiness of this life lies not in abundance: Luke xii. 15, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life lies not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.' This consideration is added because some might think, though we can carry nothing out of the world, yet whilst we live we should seek larger supplies. Our Lord answereth this surmise: Though outward things are very useful to sustain life, yet no man is able to prolong his life, or to make it more happy and comfortable to him, by possessing more than he needs or uses. What good will the superfluity of wealth do him? These things are extrinsical to our being and happiness. When you have the world at will, you can get no more from it than bodily food and bodily clothing. The poorest may attain to that. It is no great matter whether our dung or excrements be of finer matter or coarser; whether a gay show we make in our apparel, so we have for warmth and decency; whether few or more dishes at our table. Too much oil puts out the lamp, and superfluity afflicts and oppresses that part which it seems to gratify. When men have troubled themselves and the world to make themselves great, what a sorry happiness have they! Their net and their drag, by which they catch men as a fisherman doth fishes in the sea, it all tendeth to this, that their portion may be fat and plenteous. A poor felicity, that they have a little good cheer and a merry life here. They that want such abundance live as well as they, and have as much health and contentment: Ps. xvii. 14, 'They have their portion in this life, and their bellies are filled with hid treasures, and they leave the rest to their babes.' They ransack the storehouses of nature to satisfy their gluttony and excess, but yet all this while they are not the nearer to contentment, nor farther off from the grave. So that it is best to be content with necessities.

5. Nothing besides food and raiment is absolutely necessary. By food is meant something to nourish us, and by raiment something to cover us. If you indulge wanton appetites, if you make provision for the flesh, or ask meat for your lusts, God will not hear nor regard your desires. Jacob desires but food and raiment of God: Gen. xxviii. 20, 'If God be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, then God shall be my God.' But how could he put his owning and acknowledging of God upon these terms? The meaning is, this shall be a new engagement, esteeming it as a great favour. All our desires should be suited, not to our luxury, but the necessity of nature; raiment, not ornament; necessary supports, not delicacies: therefore we should not make lust a wanton, but be content if God will any way enable us to serve and glorify him. We should be content with his allowance; it is enough for the service and honour which he expecteth from us, and to carry us through that little time which we have to spend in the world. It is not abundance

that we need, but a contented heart : let a little suffice, if God gives no more. Diseased persons need more attendance than the healthy ; the distempers of our souls multiply our necessities, and as we indulge them they gain upon us ; therefore every one of us should bring himself to be content with necessities. Superfluities are an impediment rather than a help, as a shoe too big for the foot hinders our going, or as David could not go on with Saul's armour, because it was too great for him, 1 Sam. xvii. 39. We are freest from temptations when we have least, though enough for health, strength, and cheerfulness.

6. Food and raiment are not hard to be obtained. I do not mean with respect to our endeavours, but God's blessing ; for in these things God will not forsake us. We have a heavenly Father, who knows what we stand in need of, Mat. vi. 32. They that have least from God have ordinarily food and raiment vouchsafed to them ; he will not leave his people to unsupportable difficulties ; our condition is tolerable, if not comfortable, 1 Cor. x. 13. He hath wonderful means to help, when all their supplies are removed out of the view of sense. It is notable to observe, the Israelites were not plagued when they murmured out of want, but when they murmured out of wantonness. Real wants, we may rationally presume, will be supplied, not fancies and carnal appetites. As for instance : Ps. lxxviii. 21, ' Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth, and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger came up against Israel.' Therefore—why ? When he had taken care to supply their wants by giving them plenty of water out of the rock of Horeb, and by sending manna in the morning and quails in the evening, yet they fell a murmuring and complaining, preferring their condition in Egypt before that which God had brought them into. They must have a table better furnished with bread and flesh ; they were clogged with this manna, not contented with a provision for their wants, but required a satisfaction to their appetites. This highly displeased and provoked God, and brought very sharp punishments upon them. So again, Ps. cvi. 14, 15, ' They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert, and he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls.' Their minds ever and anon ran upon the flesh-pots of Egypt ; and because they had not that festival plenty in the wilderness, they murmured as if Moses had brought them out of Egypt to die there, and God must show more miracles, not to supply their wants but to pamper their lusts.

7. This life was given us to seek a better, and therefore the felicity of it must not be measured by a more ample portion of food and raiment, but as we are fitted and prepared for the better life, which is the end and scope of life itself. All these things are but your provision in the way to heaven, therefore not principally to be sought after ; your business is to serve God, and seek the salvation of your souls : Mat. vi. 33, ' Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you ;' that is, there will be enough to sustain us in our journey to heaven, whilst we are preparing for eternity, and therefore we should be content.

8. Many times the less we have in this life the more fervently is the life to come sought after ; a moderate estate is freest from tempt-

ations. Abundance of all things without any want inclines us to a forgetfulness of God; as, on the other side, perpetual want, without any cheerful taste of God's goodness, disposes men to atheism. In the two extremes religion is either starved or choked. We see it in countries and persons: in countries, Sodom and Gomorrah, which was as the garden of God, Gen. xiii. 10, was the first instance of unnatural sin, and an example of supernatural judgment. Some in great prosperity have no thoughts of God and the world to come; others that live in sordid poverty never consider the goodness of God, and so live and die miserable creatures. The middle estate is freest from danger, and religion is most secured in it: Prov. xxx. 8, 9, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of God in vain.' Pride and insolency are incident to the one, and any base dealing to the other. A great estate, like a rank soil, is more apt to breed weeds; and bitter necessity betrays us to any base shift for our sustenance; therefore if God gives us anything to live upon, we should be content.

9. That God best knows what will do us good or hurt, and therefore we should refer it to him to dispose of us according to his own pleasure. Certainly we should not want if God saw it better for us to abound, for he is no niggard of his blessings, but is good, and doth good. But it is not meet that man should have the disposal of himself, or his own condition and affairs, or that God should accommodate his providence to our carnal interest and will. No; God's will must always precede, and ours follow. We have a corrupt will, guided by a dark understanding; and if the blind lead the lame, what can be expected but disorder and ruin? Therefore our wills must not lead and make the first choice, but God's. We must bring our hearts thoroughly to yield to what God appointeth, and that our present estate is best for us. How unmeet judges are flesh and blood of what condition is fit for us! We would be fed only with the delicacies of prosperity and pleasure, but it is for our profit that we should be chastened, 'that we should be partakers of his holiness,' Heb. xii. 10, 11. What a strange creature would man be if he were what he would wish himself to be! Vainly proud, stupidly careless, and neglectful of God and heavenly things; therefore our best way is to be what God will have us be: 'Not my will but thine be done,' Mat. xxvi. 39.

10. We must be contented with a competency, but yet we ought to be fitted and prepared for eternity. If God please to give us conveniency, it is his great mercy; but our resolutions must be to be contented with any condition God will put us into: we except not life itself out of our resignation. The people of God are wont to suppose not only some necessity but an extremity: Hab. iii. 18, 'Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' He saith not, If I have only food, and raiment, and hard fare, it shall suffice me. No; but 'If the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.' In many cases poverty may come upon us like an armed man, and spoil us of all: but when we seem to be



starved in the creature, yet then we may feast in God. God's children do not capitulate with him how much they will suffer and no more, but resolve to bear the heaviest burden, to submit to the sharpest affliction. So again, Ps. xlv. 19, 20, 'Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death, yet we have not forgotten the name of our God, or proved unfaithful to him.'

III. The reasons why it is a high point of Christianity to get contentation with any estate God shall put us into are:—

1. In the general, it is a mystery only learned in Christ's school: Phil. iv. 11–13, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be therewith content; and I know how to be abased and to abound: I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need; I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.' This art is not soon learned. What is there in Christianity above other disciplines to teach us this contentation? The doctrine of God's particular providence, fatherly care, and eternal life,—these, seconded by the sanctifying operation of the Holy Ghost, cause this resolution in us, to encounter all the difficulties of this present life in a humble and quiet mind.

2. More particularly, let us consider—(1.) What is necessary to this contentment; (2.) What effect it produces.

[1.] What is necessary to this contentment.

(1.) Faith, or a sound belief of God's being and gracious promises and eternal recompenses; that there is a God, that he hath a particular care of human affairs, and that he will not leave his people to unsupportable difficulties, but will guide them to eternal life. It is in vain to press people to contentedness till they be thus persuaded. For the first truth, that there is a God: 'He that cometh to God must believe that God is.' For the second truth, that he hath a particular care of human affairs: 1 Peter v. 7, 'Cast all your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you.' The third truth, that he will not leave his people to unsupportable difficulties: Heb. xiii. 5, 6, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me.' For the fourth truth, a prospect of eternal life: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Now if God be, and be thus engaged to his people, why should we be discontented if he takes his own methods to bring us to everlasting glory? We cannot suffer anything that God is not aware of; every dram of our affliction is weighed out to us by that all-wise, all-merciful Providence; and there is nothing which we suffer that he knoweth not how to turn to our good, looking for nothing from us but our trust and thankfulness.

(2.) It comes from humility, when we are content to be at God's finding, knowing that we have deserved nothing from him: Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all thy truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff passed I over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.' The humble man is content to be dealt with as the Lord pleases. Pre-

scribing to God always comes from ascribing to ourselves. We think we have deserved more than he gives us. We, that are worthy of the heaviest judgment, surely should be thankful for the smallest mercy : Eccles. vii. 8, 'The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.' Patience is rooted in humility, but discontent in pride.

(3.) It comes from weanedness from the world. They that do not seek great things for themselves will stand to God's allowance. It may be God may bestow great things upon them, as he did upon Abraham and David, but they do not seek them, especially in times when it is a mercy they have life and liberty. That is forbidden, Jer. xlv. 5. In short, grace doth all, both as to poverty and riches, and makes rich and poor stand on the same level. Now this is a high point in religion, to grow dead to the world, to behave ourselves in a manner as unconcerned in poverty or riches ; for the world is the great impediment to the heavenly life, as being the bait of the flesh, the snare of Satan, by which he detaineth souls from God. If once we grow indifferent to these things, we would not feel any great power in temptations to pleasure, wealth, and honour, and would soon be thorough Christians ; the spiritual life would be more easy and even. Easy, for where men seek no great things for themselves in the world, and a little matter contenteth their desires, and checketh their murmurings, the resistance of the carnal nature to the empire of grace is without much difficulty overcome ; they can enjoy plenty or want, renounce their aspiring thoughts, meddle sparingly with fleshly delights, they are seeking a better estate. More evenly ; there is no notable blemish on them who are crucified to the world ; they do not stain their profession, wound their consciences. Their choices are governed by religion, not by carnal interest ; they are kept 'unspotted from the world,' James i. 27.

[2.] The fruits it produces. I shall name but two of many.

(1.) They are not distracted with great worldly business. They esteem that to be the best way that brings them nearest to their great end, which is not to enjoy happiness in this life, but in the world to come. Those whose hearts are all for the present, they must have the world to the full, or they are not contented ; they never think of laying up treasure in heaven, Mat. vi. 19, 20. That is not their end and scope, but to live commodiously here, that they and their posterity may flourish in the world : Ps. xvii. 14, 'They which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasures, they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.' But a good man that eyes another happiness, is not much troubled how it is with him here, so he and his may be accepted with God hereafter. Therefore their business is not to lay up treasure to themselves on earth, but to be rich towards God, Luke xii. 21.

(2.) They that can be contented with a little, are most likely to be true to God and conscience. They can better suffer hunger, thirst, nakedness, and other troubles for the gospel : Acts xx. 24, 'None of these things move me ;' that is, made no great opposition and perturbation in his mind. It is no strange thing to them when trials come. They can part with all things under the sun, rather than quit their

duty to Christ ; for temptations have lost their force when worldly desires and lusts are mortified. They withered in persecution that received the good seed for a time, Mark iv. 17. When religion carries one way, and the world another, then farewell religion for the world's sake. When Christ had spoken so much of the cross, then Judas turneth apostate. When Demas saw the world went on otherways, he forsook Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 10. When Christ told the young man of parting with all, he went away sad, Mark x. 22. If heaven cost so dear, it is no pennyworth for him. So men will come into no danger or trouble for Christ, because they are not contented with a little.

*Use 1.* If the godly ought to be content with food and raiment, it shows the vanity of men's vast desires ; they have much above food and raiment, yet they are not satisfied. A true Christian is contented with necessities, but worldly men 'enlarge their desires as hell,' Hab. ii. 5. They are so far from acquiescing in their portion assigned to them by God, though it be competent and enough to satisfy their wants, yea, and far beyond (so that many are glad of their leavings) ; yet they are always hunting after more, like death and the grave, which are never satisfied. They are restless, still adding, if they be princes, kingdom to kingdom ; if they be churchmen, preferment upon preferment ; and if ordinary men, estate upon estate, house to house, field to field. These desires are pettishly solicited, eagerly followed, and many times finally disappointed.

*2.* It checks our impatiency under disappointment. If we have not our will in worldly things, we are troubled, our desires are too ardent. We must needs have them, cannot be without them, trouble ourselves about them, and so murmur and repine against God ; and this breedeth fearful tempests in the soul. As Jonah bitterly contended with God about his gourd, Jonah iv., and Rachel, 'Give me children, or else I die,' Gen. xxx. 1. If we cannot have what we would, all is nothing. Ahab is sick for one poor vineyard. Haman counteth his honour nothing as long as Mordecai sits at the king's gate. As in a carriage, if one pin be wanting all is at a stop.

*3.* It shows the evil of our distrust, notwithstanding we have God's fatherly providence and promises to rely upon, and so large a covenant interest : 1 Cor. iii. 21-23, 'All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' All things are yours, ordinances, providences, this world, the next, life, death. Would you have more ? All are instrumental for our good, if we resolve to be faithful to Christ.

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## SERMON XIV.

*I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.*—ECCLES. IX. 11.

THE whole book is a search after true happiness. The particular paragraph whereof the text is a branch proveth that it cannot be obtained in this world, because of the various events of God's powerful and unsearchable providence. The discourse beginneth, chap. viii. 16, 17, 'When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business which is done upon the earth, then I beheld all the works of God, that a man cannot find out the work which is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea farther, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.' God's providence in the government of the world is secret. When a wise man hath applied his mind to reconcile all the seeming incongruities of it, he cannot get a clear and satisfying account of all the proceedings thereof, but must at last acquiesce in the sovereignty and dominion of God. The footsteps of providence are not easily traced, his judgments are a great depth, Rom. xi. 33; Ps. xxxvi. 6, xcii. 5. They may be adored, but not searched into.

Now two things in our reflection upon providence perplex us:—

1. One is, that things are promiscuously dispensed to good and bad men; yea, many times the good are afflicted, and the bad are advanced. To this he speaketh in the beginning of the chapter, where he sheweth that all outward things are dispensed without any great difference. Josiah died in the war, and so did Ahab. Is Abraham rich? so is Nabal. Is Solomon wise? so is Ahithophel. Is Joseph honoured by Pharaoh? so is Doeg by Saul. Had Isaac long life? Gen. xxv. 20, so had Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 17.

2. The other perplexity is, that events and successes do fall out otherwise than the preparation and ability of second causes do seem to promise. As holiness and unholiness do not make the difference, so the natural ability and inability of man, the wisdom and folly, the strength and weakness, make no difference as to their worldly condition. Men of greatest abilities are disappointed of their hopes and ends, which weak and insufficient men do many times obtain. Now this is asserted in the text: 'I returned and saw,' &c.

In which words observe the preface and observation; or—

I. The accurate inspection of the wise man: *I returned, and saw under the sun.*

II. The result of this inspection and observation, propounded negatively and positively.

First, Negatively, in five particulars.

1. *The race is not to the swift.*
2. *Nor the battle to the strong.*
3. *Nor yet bread to the wise.*
4. *Nor riches to men of understanding.*



5. *Nor favour to men of skill.*

Secondly, Positively : *but time and chance happeneth to them all.*

I. His accurate inspection : 'I returned and saw under the sun ;' that is, besides all the former vanities of the present life. The same phrase is used chap. iv. 1, 'I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun.' So ver. 7 of that chapter: 'Then I returned, and saw vanity under the sun.' This phrase is used to show the great certainty and evidence of his observation ; it is a thing I have narrowly observed. The instruments of knowledge are seeing, hearing, observing, and deducing inferences from thence. *Under the sun*, that is, here in this lower world ; I considered all human actions, the things which are done in this life among men ; he looked about and turned himself every way.

## II. The observation thence resulting.

First, Negatively, propounded in five instances, which comprehend all the business of the common life : neither swiftness, nor strength, nor wisdom, &c.

1. *The race is not to the swift.* This may be understood either of the ordinary race, wherein the swift may sometimes fail, or, straining themselves beyond their strength, be mischiefed in their bodies, or maimed by some accident ; and so, when he speaketh of the race, he meaneth it of the successful race, as in the next clause : *nor the battle to the strong* ; he meaneth the successful battle, whereby they get the victory. Success is not always on the side of the swift and the strong. Or secondly, of any course whereby a man endeavours to outrun danger. So Asahel, who was swift of foot as a wild roe, was slain by Abner, 2 Sam. ii. 18, 23 ; and Jer. xlvi. 6, 'The swift shall not flee away, nor the mighty man escape ;' they shall stumble and fall. The swift cannot always flee from danger : Isa. xxx. 16, 'They that pursue you shall be swift.'

2. *Nor the battle to the strong.* Rabshakeh telleth us that 'Counsel and strength are for the war,' Isa. xxxvi. 5. But many times great strength is foiled, and a small army overcomes a greater. The strength of the mighty doth not always avail them to fight and conquer. Thus was Goliath foiled by David, 1 Sam. xvii. 50 ; and Gideon's three hundred overthrew the mighty host of Midian, Judges vii. 7 ; and we are told, Ps. xxxiii. 16, 'There is no king saved by the multitude of his host ; and a mighty man is not delivered by much strength ;' and 1 Sam. xiv. 6, 'There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.'

3. *Nor yet bread to the wise.* Bread is put for all means of subsistence, and many wise men have been hard put to it. Certainly wisdom doth much to get a livelihood in the world : Prov. xxi. 20, 'There is a treasure to be desired, and oil in the house of the wise.' Yet many times it falleth out that men of great wisdom scarce get a subsistence in the world. As David was put to desire supplies from Nabal, a fool. And we are told by Solomon, that 'folly is set in great dignity when the wise sit in low place,' Eccles. x. 6. Paul was 'in hungerings often and fastings often,' not voluntary but enforced, 2 Cor. xi. 27. Yea, it is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, that certain women ministered to him of their substance for his support, Luke viii. 3.

4. *Nor riches to men of understanding.* Experience often verifieth this, that the learned are very poor, when lesser wits and mean people get great substance. We read in scripture of a rich fool, Luke xii. 20, and a poor wise man, Eccles. ix. 15; and, in the general, that 'it is the blessing of the Lord maketh rich,' Prov. x. 22. He is behindhand with none of his creatures; he giveth to some wit, to others riches.

5. *Nor favour to men of skill.* To attain favour with men it availeth not to be skilful, that is, able and well experienced, unless God add the blessing thereunto. Suppose favour in the eyes of princes or the people. Alas! men of no desert are promoted, as Doeg by Saul. And the populacy are carried away with slight persons, rather than those of the greatest wisdom and parts.

Secondly, Positively: *but time and chance happeneth to them all.* Hence are two things mentioned which do much befriend worldly matters—

1. Time.

2. Chance.

1. *Time*, whereby is meant occasion and opportunity. There is a certain time which God hath allotted to every purpose and action, which if men had the wisdom to take hold of, their business would better succeed; 'but because man knoweth not his time, great is his misery upon earth,' therefore he effecteth not the things he goeth about.

2. The next word is *chance*, or occurrence; so is the word translated 1 Kings v. 4, 'The Lord hath given me rest, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent;' it is the same word. The success is such as the counsel of God hath foreordained, yet to us it chanceth<sup>1</sup> to be a mere chance and adventure. In short, that which God hath from all eternity ordained, shall and must come to pass at such a time as God hath ordained it should be, and likewise in such a manner, and by such ways and means, as he hath ordained it shall be done. Things casual to us are counsels to him. What was *chance* to others is *the Lord* to Job, chap. i. 21. Therefore not uncertain chance is intended, but such as is ruled and governed by God, who disposeth of all occasions and events according to his own good pleasure, either in escaping out of danger, or obtaining victory, or being supplied with necessaries, or growing rich, or received into favour; it is all as God will order it. The swift, the wise, the strong, though they are best prepared, disposed, and do most intend their business, yet the event is in God's hand, who disposeth it according to His own will.

Before we draw the doctrine from hence, we shall remove the false inferences and deductions that some make.

1. Some think these words to be spoken in the person of the epicure or atheist, whom Solomon introduceth as reasoning against divine providence; but it agreeth not with the preface, 'I returned, and saw under the sun;' which is usually prefixed before his observations about the vanity and vexation that ariseth from mere worldly things.

2. This text must be vindicated from them who set up an idol of the heathens' blind fortune, as if all things were carried by uncertain chance. No; it is occurrence (as before); and though it be chance to men, it is providence to God, the universal and first agent, who

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'seemeth'?—ED.

‘worketh all things according to the counsel of his will.’ It is not chance to him, for he never misseth of his end, for his knowledge is infallible and his power insuperable.

3. From those who reject the use of means, and all operations, dispositions, and preparations of second causes, as if they moved not, and God did not act or move by them. No; this a false deduction and inference both in naturals and spirituals.

[1.] In naturals, for God worketh by means, and by means prepared: Hosea ii. 21, 22, ‘I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth,’ &c. There is a train of causes governed and influenced by God. The second causes have their operation, but they are under the government of the first, who worketh by them, and also suspendeth their operations at his pleasure. There are two extremes: one of Durandus, that God giveth second causes only power to work of themselves, and doth only continue this power to them, but not work with them. But this is false; for all things depend on God, not only for their being, but working: Acts xvii. 28, ‘In him we live, move, and have our being.’ The other is, that the creature hath no operation at all, that the first cause doth only work *ad presentiam creaturæ*, by the presence of the second. But this is also against the wisdom of God; for if the second causes did no way concur to the producing of their effects, then they are made in vain, and used for such an end in vain.

[2.] Nor in spirituals: Phil. ii. 12, 13, ‘Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.’ God’s working is an engagement to us to wait upon him in the use of means, that we may meet with God in his way, and God may meet with us in our way. In his way; for God hath appointed certain duties to convey and apply his grace to us; we are to lie at the pool till the waters be stirred, to continue our attendance till God giveth his grace, Mark iv. 24. In our way; for God influenceth all things according to their natural inclination. God, that enlighteneth with and by the sun, burneth with and by the fire, reasoneth with and by man, acts necessarily with necessary causes, and freely with free causes. He doth not oppress the liberty of the creature, but preserveth the nature and interest of his own workmanship: Hosea xi. 4, ‘I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.’ He draweth by propounding reasons, which we consider, and so betake ourselves to a godly life. In short, we must do what we can, otherwise we are wanting to ourselves; but we must not depend upon our own counsel, wisdom, and strength, for the event is not always to the swift, strong, and wise.

The true observation contained in these words is this:—

That many endeavours of the creature are often frustrated of their end when there is greatest probability of success.

Here Solomon representeth men:—

1. Under several accomplishments of *swift, wise, strong*.
2. As addressing themselves to some effect to obtain success.
3. As in the issue disappointed. None of these accomplishments alone do give the event intended and hoped for, nor doth it depend absolutely and infallibly upon them.

4. That all things intended, desired, expected by us, depend upon

time and chance, namely, as they depend upon God's providence, as and when God will order and determine the time and opportunity, the success and event.

Therefore from the whole it appears, that instruments most fitted and furnished, and most diligent in their way, are frustrated of the event which they so earnestly intended and hoped for.

### REASONS.

I. The best instruments fail out of their ignorance, oblivion, and inadvertency, from which man cannot altogether free himself in this life, not only in matters spiritual, but secular, whether economical in the disposing of ourselves and relations, or family interests and concerns. Wise men have their errors : James iii. 2, ' In many things we offend all of us.' This ignorance sheweth itself sometimes in a mistake of instruments whose hearts we know not ; or if we know them for the present, we are not sure of futurity, how they may change or be alienated and drawn off from us. Sometimes about time and opportunity, for the beginning, setting on foot, or carrying on any good works : ' Man knoweth not his time.' Sometimes in the manner of doing there is some error ; for some things we know speculatively we do not know practically, and what we know in the general is to be done we do not always know in particular cases, but are blinded by our affections ; what we know habitually we do not know actually, we do not consider of it for the time. In short, no man knoweth all the secrets and circuits of human affairs. God only is omnipotent and omniscient, hath all creatures in his power, and can foresee all events. But it is much for us to understand our duty, we cannot know events, for things are carried strangely beyond men's expectation, and their likeliest projects crossed.

II. Because if we have sufficient knowledge, yet God can easily put some impediment from within or without to hinder the use of our wisdom, power, and knowledge.

1. Within. He can blast our excellencies in an instant, or obstruct the use of it for the time. As though he did not destroy the property of the fire, yet he suspended the burning, when the three children were in the furnace. So of a sudden can he blast our strength : Ps. xvi. 5, 6, ' The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep ; none of the men of might have found their hands ; at thy rebuke the chariot and horses are cast into a dead sleep.' Whatsoever strength, courage, wit, or any other point of perfection any man hath, God, who gave it, can take it away when he pleaseth, or suspend the use of it. All this God can do with a rebuke, with a word of his mouth. Now, as the strong cannot find their hands, so the wise cannot find their hearts : Job v. 14, ' They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night.' Who were these ? The wise and the crafty, whom he speaketh of in the foregoing verses. In the clearest cases they are to seek, and so their well-contrived plots come to nothing. There is a blast and plague upon their judgments, so that they do involve and confound themselves ; and what by self-conceit and froward self-will, they drive on their designs so precipitantly and furiously that they must needs miscarry. They do not seem to



have the judgment of ordinary men. Thus though men be endowed with good gifts and qualities, both of wisdom and strength, God can easily take away their power and will to use them.

2. From without. By casting in some casual event, which we foresaw not, and could not think of. Man cannot foresee all the wheels which move in a business; if he did, he is not able to turn them; so that, besides taking away his wisdom, courage, and strength, when the work is to be done, God puts some impediment in his way which was unexpected. There are certain sudden accidents which none can foresee and prevent, any of them able to turn the enterprise another way. The most casual fortuitous things are ordered by God, for the great ends of his providence. As for instance, Haman travailed with a design to cut off all the people of the Jews, but his chief spite was against Mordecai. Now by chance the king could not sleep that night, and calleth for the book of memorials, Esth. vi. 1, and found the discovery of a treason by Mordecai there recorded, which spoiled all the deep plots of Haman against the Jews. Ahab intended to avenge himself upon Micaiah, and to escape in the battle, changed his robes and royal apparel, and counselled Jehoshaphat to put on his: 'and a man drew a bow at a venture,' 1 Kings xxii. 34. God directed the arrow to the heart of the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat escapeth, and he is slain. So that notable instance, the sunshine upon the water, 2 Kings iii. 22-24. When the Moabites came to distress Jehoshaphat, when they cried 'Moab to the spoil,' it was indeed 'Moab to a sore destruction.'

Now these, and many such like instances, teach us that the most casual and fortuitous things do certainly and infallibly fall out by God's providence and heavenly government. And again, that there is some occurrence which providence casteth in by the way to disappoint the most likely means; and whatever gifts and qualities men are endowed withal, yet events are not in their power, but depend on the free concurrence of God. I speak nothing now of the influence of angels upon human affairs, whom God maketh use of in the government of the world.

III. The most able instruments do often provoke God to disappoint them, whilst their abilities of counsel and strength are a means of hardening their hearts in carnal confidence, and often engage in business that proves mischievous to them; I say, in the most lawful businesses they provoke God to disappoint them, because they undertake them without God; but too too often being unrenewed and unsanctified, their wit and power is used against God.

1. It is a great crime to go about any business without God: Prov. iii. 5, 6, 'Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' When our wisdom and strength is set up as an idol or image of jealousy, God is obliged to blast it. Therefore they that make their bosom their oracle, their wit their counsellor, they seldom carve out to themselves a good portion. In all serious business we must ask his leave, counsel, blessing.

2. But many times men of great abilities, being unsanctified, employ them against God. They are ordinarily the devil's greatest agents and factors for his kingdom. In seducing our first parents he

made use of the serpent, which was 'more subtle than any beast of the field,' Gen. iii. 1. Now these make God their opposite party that engage in any such enterprise upon the confidence of their wisdom and strength, and then they are 'snared by the work of their own hands,' Ps. ix. 16. God delighteth to be seen to put rubs and stumbling-blocks in their way, that they may fall by some miserable disappointment, and their craft and power may turn to their own ruin.

IV. To say and do, or to make a thing to be, is the act and name of Jehovah, which glory he will not communicate to any other: Lam. iii. 37, 'Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?' that is, who is able to bring about what he speaketh and purposeth, unless God permit and give way thereunto? Therefore, whatever preparation of means or likelihoods there are, we must not be too confident of future events. We cannot bring them to pass by our own power, and God doth not always work by likely means; he hides events from men: Isa. xlviii. 7, 'Lest thou shouldst say, I knew them.' Now the event could not be hidden if the Lord went on in a constant course, giving the race to the swift, &c. God carrieth on his providence so as to leave no footsteps behind him. He goeth not one way so often as to make a path of it, that men may see the plain tendency thereof.

The uses follow.

It teaches us:—

I. The nothingness of the creature, and the all-sufficiency of God. That is a great lesson indeed, and mightily useful to us throughout the whole spiritual life.

First, It is a notion which the scripture much delighteth in, to represent God as all and the creature as nothing. At first, when Moses inquired God's distinctive name, God giveth him no other but I AM: Exod. iii. 14, 'And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and I AM hath sent me unto you.' What thing is there under the cope of heaven that cannot say 'I am that I am'? The least worm hath its own being; but this, as God's distinctive name, implieth that he encloseth all being within himself. Secondly, The creature is nothing: Isa. xl. 17, 'All nations before him are nothing; they are accounted less than nothing, and vanity;' Dan. iv. 35, 'The inhabitants of the world are reputed before him as nothing.' All created beings must vanish out of our sight when we think of God.

But how are the creatures nothing, which faith teaches us? and how something, which sense teacheth us? Something they are unquestionably in respect of that derived and dependent being which they have from God. We must not establish the Pyrrhonian conceit that the whole world is but a fantasy, indeed nothing, and our life but a dream, or sceptically to look upon the being and modes of all things as uncertain. No; nor to imagine that sense is so far fallible that a man of sound sense and understanding may not be sure of the objects conveniently presented to his sense. Certainly the sceptics need to be scourged as fools till they feel themselves something. But yet it is of high importance in the work of godliness to see the creature nothing. It is so:—

1. By way of comparison with God.
2. By way of exclusion of God.
3. By way of opposition to God.

1. By way of comparison with God. So God's name only is *I AM*, and then there is none besides him. If the creatures be compared among themselves, some are good, strong, wise, others not; but they are all nothing in comparison of God. Though there be a difference between the stars in the night, some are brighter and some are darker, some of the first magnitude, second, third, &c., yet in the daytime they are all alike inconspicuous, all are darkened by the sun's glory. When we compare the creatures one with another, we shall find different degrees of perfection and excellency; but by the glorious brightness of the Father of lights all these inferior lights are obscured and their differences unobserved. God saith somewhere, '*I am*, and there is none else; *I am* alone. *I* lift my hand to heaven, and swear, *I* live for ever.' It is counted an usurpation of divine honour for the creature to say *I am*: Isa. xlvii. 8, '*Babylon said in her heart, I am.*' So Nineveh: Zeph. ii. 15, '*This is the rejoicing city, that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none besides me.*' Isa. xlvii. 10, '*Thy wisdom and understanding hath perverted thee, and thou hast said in thy heart I am, and there is none besides me.*' For us to reckon upon our wisdom, strength, or goodness, is a derogation from God. God in scripture is represented as only wise, only strong, and only good, Job ix. 19, 1 Tim. i. 17, Mat. xix. 17. The creature hath but the shadow of these things. As it is but a borrowed kind of speech to call a picture or a statue a man—this is Cæsar, this is Alexander—because of the likeness and representation, so the creatures are but a resemblance when we call them wise, strong, good. To this head may be referred those expressions, '*the true light*,' John i. 9, '*the true vine*,' John xv. 1. These terms originally agree to God, and but in a borrowed sense to the creature.

2. By way of exclusion of God. As the sunbeam is nothing when the sun withdraweth, or the sound is nothing when the musician taketh away his mouth and breath from the pipe and instrument: Ps. civ. 29, 30, '*Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and they are created; thou takest away thy breath, and they die.*' The creature in comparison with God is in reckoning nothing; but in exclusion of God it is in reality nothing; because all their life, wisdom, strength, and the acting of it is but borrowed and derived from God, and held only at God's pleasure. Naturally and spiritually it is true. If any of us say, *I am*, we must add with Paul, '*By the grace of God I am that I am*,' 1 Cor. xv. 10. And again, '*I live, yet not I, but Christ*,' Gal. ii. 20. If God withdraw his providential influence and supportation, we vanish into nothing: Job vii. 8, '*Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not*;' meaning that God, fastening his eye upon him in anger, would look him into nothing.

3. In way of opposition to God, either to his cause and interest in the world: Isa. xli. 11, '*Behold, all that are incensed against thee shall be as nothing.*' The creature beareth a big bulk in the eye of sense, seemeth not only as something, but as all things; and as long as a man looketh to what is visible, we have no hope and comfort to

fasten upon. But what are the swift, the wise, the strong to God, or against his providence, when God is angry for sin, and we use ordinary means to avoid the danger, and do not reconcile ourselves to him, and take up the controversy between him and us? Alas! human endeavours can avail nothing against his wrath. Those probable means, which have prevailed at other times, will prove a mere nothing; be we never so strong and wise, and use never so many politic means to avert the judgment: Amos vi. 13, 'Ye rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to ourselves horns by our own strength?' They gloried in this, that their strength was renewed and increased, and so hoped to elude the threatened judgment, and to drive away any enemy that might invade them. 'They glory in a thing of nought,' saith the prophet. Alas! what are armies, troops, confederacies, councils? Things of nought, when God will blow upon them; all things on this side of God are of nought, and vain to be gloried in, when our sins are come to a height, and judgments are threatened and near.

Secondly, I will prove to you, that the true apprehension of this is mightily useful to us throughout the whole spiritual life; for no one thing keepeth the creature upright so much as to see all in God, and nothing in the creature. This establisheth our dependence on God's promises in the most difficult cases; as Rom. iv. 17, 18, What made Abraham to 'believe in hope against hope,' and give God so much credit and glory as he did? By his faith 'he believed in him that quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that are not as though they were.' Again, there is nothing that doth so encourage us in the difficult services which God calleth us unto, as to remember God is all, and the creature is nothing. As when the apostles went to preach the gospel first at Jerusalem, in the very face of opposition, whose interest led them to oppose it. When among the Gentiles, possessed of a religion entailed upon them by the tradition of many ages, and for which they were zealous, the devil stirring up the hatred of many furious spirits against them. The doctrine was novel, and did not court the senses, but persuaded men to row against the stream of flesh and blood, slighted by the people, disputed against by their wise men, persecuted by the powers that then were, had no temporal interest to back it; and this to be promoted in the face of the learned world, by a few poor fishermen, when all civil disciplines were then in their ἀκμή and height. What encouraged them to this? The apostle telleth you, 1 Cor. i. 26-28, That though they had 'not many mighty, not many noble,' to own them; yet 'God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are.' In short, that though magistracy and populacy were against them, the creature is as nothing, God all in all. Again, to depend on God's providence in the midst of losses, wants, straits: 2 Cor. vi. 10, 'As having nothing, yet possessing all things.' Again, if we have a due sense of God's being, the tempting baits of the world would scarce be seen; the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world would be forgotten, as if they were not: Prov. xxiii. 5, 'Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is not?' It is as if it were not, if God will blast them, if God will not work by them. Again, to look for a



blessing upon all the means : 1 Cor. iii. 7, 'For neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase.' The best and wisest ministers can do nothing, either to plant or water, to convert or build up, unless God give the blessing, and set in with their labours. Again, to keep us humble in the highest enjoyments : 2 Cor. xi. 5, 'In nothing I come behind the chiefest apostles, though I am nothing ;' all is but a borrowed excellency. Thus you see it hath an influence upon our uprightness and sincere dealing, from first to last, to look off from the creature to God alone.

Thirdly, I shall show you that this is the intent of this lesson which is given us in this place. For wherefore is the race denied to the swift, and the battle to the strong, and riches to men of understanding, but to show us that the creature doth not do all, yea, that it is nothing if you exclude God ? Why doth the Holy Ghost direct us to this meditation, but to carry up our thoughts to the overruling power of the highest cause and agent, disposing of time and chance, that second causes may be seen to depend upon him both in being and operation ? and that we should not abuse our talents, by confiding in them without God, or turning and using them against God, either to oppose his interest, or defeat his judgments ? So that I might rest here. But the meanest capacities will require more explicit application.

II. To teach us in this lottery of human affairs to look after surer comforts. This is the whole drift of this book ; for Solomon, in his critical search and observation of all things done under the sun, aimeth at this, to direct our hearts to blessings which are more stable and sure. God would leave these things at uncertainty, that our hearts might not too much be set upon them, that we might not pursue after favour, riches, and credit, as the best things. If all things here did run in one certain tenor, men, that are mightily wrought upon by sense, would look no higher ; but there is a nobler pursuit, a better happiness to be found elsewhere. The race is not always to the swift ; but in the spiritual race, we 'run not as uncertain,' 1 Cor. ix. 26. There the crown is sure, if we keep running and faint not ; here the battle is not always to the strong, and 'he that putteth on his harness must not boast as he that putteth it off.' But if you 'fight the good fight of faith,' 'the God of peace will tread Satan under your feet shortly,' Rom. xvi. 20. Here bread is not to the wise ; many persons of understanding labour and toil all their days for the meat that perishes, and at length can hardly get it. But if you 'labour for the meat that perisheth not, the Son of man will give it you,' John vi. 27. In spiritual and heavenly things, choose and have, seek and have, labour and have ; but it is not so in worldly things ; there many times we have but our pains for our travail. Again, nor riches to men of understanding. Fools go away with the world, and we need not envy them if we be wise to salvation : 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee ; so is he that heapeth up riches to himself, and is not rich towards God,' Luke xii. 20, 21. Earthly things cannot make a man truly rich ; the true riches are the heavenly treasure, the graces of the spirit, to be 'rich in faith,' James ii. 5 ; 'Fruitful in good works,' 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. He that valueth an estate more by the possession than by the use, is a spiritual fool, and will at length be thrown into hell for his perverse choice. No

matter if you want the riches of this world, so you be rich towards God. Christ gave his Spirit to the best disciples, but his purse to Judas, who was a thief and a robber. Once more, nor favour to men of skill. The favour of men, princes or people, is a very uncertain thing, and the best experienced in affairs do not always light on it; but if we have the favour of God, this breedeth solid joy, Ps. iv. 7. Gladness is sent into the heart when God smileth, though the world frowneth. These spiritual and eternal blessings are dispensed by a sure covenant, the others are promiscuously given by an uncertain providence.

III. What need there is God should be seen and sought unto in all our designs and resolutions about the disposal of ourselves and ours.

1. What will the use of means and second causes do without God? When we have prepared best, and consulted best, the intentions we travail with may miscarry, for the event is wholly in God's hands: Prov. xvi. 1, 'The preparations of the heart are from man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.' Man propoundeth, intendeth, purposeth; but the success cometh from God.

2. When we have done our duty, and used such good means as God affordeth, then we may quietly refer the success to God, in whose hands are all the ways of the children of men, and upon whose good pleasure the issues of all things depend, Prov. xvi. 13.

IV. The wisest and best of men must not expect always to be happy, but must prepare themselves for sinister chances; for the words are brought in upon this occasion of rejoicing in our comforts. In an uncertain world we must always reserve a liberty of full and free submission to God's providence, if the event should not answer expectation; for 'the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.' We must not be too confident of future worldly events, for in these things God, by whose providence all things are governed, would leave us to uncertainty. Alas! many times we mistake and miss of fit opportunities, and then the best preparations and sufficiencies will be lost. 'My times are in thy hand,' saith David, Ps. xxxi. 15. And sometimes God interposeth, and will be glorified by us in an afflicted condition. Therefore you must reserve a liberty to God, to order and govern you according to his own pleasure, as to success in your callings, comfort in your relations, favour with men in your employments. God may make every relation a door to let in affliction. You should often consider the sovereignty of God, the uncertainty of your own lives, the mutability of all worldly things. You speak arrogantly when you presume of success, and take more upon you than you are able to perform: 1 Sam. ii. 3, 'Talk no more exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth;' that is, presumptuous conceits of absolute success. And the apostle James, chap. iv. 13, 14, &c., 'Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. Your life is a vapour; and ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. Now ye rejoice in your boastings, all such rejoicing is evil.' There are certain times when God is resolved to proceed with his people in a judiciary way, and then all means we can use will not keep off the stroke: Amos ii. 14-16, 'Therefore the flight shall

perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, nor the mighty deliver himself; neither shall he stand that handleth the bow, nor he that is swift of foot deliver himself, nor he that rideth the horse. He that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away in that day, saith the Lord.' No means, though never so probable, will avail us in a time of judgments; neither speed of horse or foot, neither strength of body, nor courage of mind, nor provision of armour, nor skill to use it; but the judgments shall reach all they aim at. Then it is plainly fulfilled, that 'the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,' &c.

V. Take heed of carnal confidence, or depending upon the sufficiency of any means, though never so likely to produce their effect. Partly because God delighteth to cross men in their carnal confidences, he blasteth those sufficiencies which we depend upon and rejoice in apart from himself, to maintain his own right. Success is his: 'The battle is the Lord's,' 1 Sam. xvii. 47. He blasts men in the things they boast of. Asahel's swiftness was his ruin; so was Ahithophel's policy and Absalom's hair. God saith to Babylon, thy understanding hath undone thee. Men often by their wit bring themselves into mischief, yea, into hell.

VI. To keep humble men of the best abilities and sufficiencies for any work.

1. Before the event; for many times they meet with more disappointments than those that want them, and their best designs miscarry when meaner persons are carried through their difficulties with less ado.

2. After the event we must look above second causes, not attribute anything to our own strength or gifts, but to God's assistance and blessing on our labours. 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man glory in his might,' &c., Jer. ix. 23. So Deut. viii. 17, 18, 'Say not in thy heart, My power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth. Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for he it is that giveth thee power to get wealth.' Let us not 'sacrifice to our own net.' 'The battle is not to the strong, nor bread to the wise.' It is God's, and he will not be robbed of his glory. And as we should carry it humbly towards God, so also to men, not despising them of mean gifts. Many times God giveth them more success in the ministry, in ordinary callings, in favour and preferments in the world, or esteem in the eyes of the people. It is God only makes the difference, and what thou hast above others thou hast it from God, and for God; not to lift up thyself, but to exalt God; therefore give thanks, and do not condemn others.

VII. To prevent the discouragement of those that want gifts, or parts, or means. Suppose their adversaries be mighty: 'It is nothing with God to help with many, or them that have no power,' 2 Chron. xiv. 11. 'The less in the creature the more in God: 2 Cor. xii. 9, 'His power is perfected in our weakness.' God many times passeth over the strong, wise, and understanding, and gets himself most glory in protecting the weak, and providing for them.

The issue of all is this: Let us bear all things befalling us from the wise hand and providence of the Lord, and encourage ourselves in his all-sufficiency in all straits and difficulties.

## SERMON XV.

*And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.—Acts XXI. 14.*

THE history that concerns this passage begins at the 8th verse. In the whole you may take notice:—

I. Of the occasion.

II. Of the carriage of the saints upon it.

I. In the occasion I observe:—

1. That Paul was now at Cesarea, in Philip's house, ver. 8. Philip was one of those that were scattered and driven out of his dwelling by Paul's persecution, Acts viii. 4, 5; and now he received him into his own house. Philip, that was injured by Paul a persecutor, is easily reconciled with Paul a convert. It is an ill office to rake in the filth which God hath covered, and it argueth some envy at the divine grace to upbraid men with sins committed before conversion. Former miscarriages and injuries should be forgotten. If Christ hath taken them into his bosom, we should not be strange to them.

2. There Agabus comes to him and prophesieth of Paul's bonds at Jerusalem. Agabus was a prophet, but by what appears of him in scripture, ever a prophet of evil tidings: he foretold a famine, Acts xi. 28, and now Paul's bonds. God will be glorified by all manner of tempers and dispositions. Some, like Agabus, come always with a sad message in their mouths; and yet these have their use. Even those that give warning of judgments to come should be accepted, as well as those that bring us hopes of mercy and deliverance. It was an unjust exception of the king of Israel against Micaiah, 1 Kings xxii. 8, 'I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' They that do evil do not love to hear of evil; and yet that may be true which is not pleasing.

3. Agabus useth a sign, ver. 11; he goes and binds himself, and sheweth thus it should be done with Paul at Jerusalem. This was usual with the prophets; as Isaiah went naked and barefoot to show what should be their usage under the king of Assyria, Isa. xx. 2, 3. Ezekiel was to pack up his stuff and remove, to signify what should be the lot of the people, Ezek. xii. 3-5; that God might teach his people by visible signs, as well as by word of mouth, and what was received by both senses (sight and hearing) might make a deeper impression upon their souls; therefore he hath instituted sacraments. As kings delight to have their royal deeds not only recorded in chronicles, but to have some monuments set up as a sign which may be perpetuated in future ages, so the Lord Jesus, having vanquished death, hell, the grave, the devil, and sin, not only has it recorded in his word, but would give us signs and monuments, that we might continually remember both the victory and the comfort we have by Christ.

But what needs Paul so often to be warned of his bonds? He had been told before, Acts xx. 22, 23, 'I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the



Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.' And then again, in this chapter, Acts xxi. 4, 'There were some disciples which said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem.' How shall we reconcile these expressions? They 'said through the Spirit that Paul should not go up to Jerusalem;' and yet Paul was 'bound in the spirit to go to Jerusalem.' In this latter place we must distinguish between the prediction of troubles and the counsel of safety. The prediction of troubles; so they said through the Spirit that it would be dangerous for Paul to go to Jerusalem, but they dissuaded him from going to Jerusalem out of their own private love and affection to him; so that Paul was warned again and again.

*Quest.* But why was he warned so often?

*Ans.* That he might be thoroughly prepared. God doth not love to take his children unprovided. Paul was not surprised, but had warning upon warning of his present danger. If a sudden and unexpected flood of miseries break in upon us, it is not because we want warning, but because we will not take warning. When we are well at ease, we will not think of death and the cross; and therefore, if we be unprovided, we may thank our own security.

II. The carriage of the saints upon this occasion. And there we may take notice of four things:—

1. The entire affection of the disciples to Paul, who had done them good: *they besought him, &c.*

2. Paul's entire affection to God: *yet he would not be persuaded.*

3. Their discretion: *when he would not be persuaded, they ceased.*

4. The ground of their discretion, their piety: *they said, The will of the Lord be done.*

1. Their entire affection to Paul: 'Both we and they of that place besought him that he would not go up to Jerusalem,' ver. 12. This entreaty did not proceed from self-love, for they were resolved to go with him, ver. 15, but zeal for God's glory. The lives and liberties of those that are eminent instruments of God's glory are very dear and precious to God's faithful people. Paul declares of Aquila and Priscilla, Rom. xvi. 4, 'For my life laid they down their own necks;' and Acts xix. 31, His friends desired him 'that he would not adventure into the theatre.' They have them in singular love for their worth's sake, and therefore, when they are in danger they weep sore, Acts xx. 37; and when they are dead they make great lamentation: 'Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him,' Acts viii. 2. As the Israelites said to David, 2 Sam. xxi. 17, 'Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel;' that is, lest the glory and splendour of the nation perish with thee. The loss of a good magistrate is a great loss, and such instruments are not easily had again when once lost.

But was this well done to persuade him?

Yes; for though the prophet had foretold what Paul should suffer, yet we know of no command they had to the contrary. All desires against God's secret will are not unlawful, when we afterwards submit to his revealed will: 1 Kings viii. 18, 'And the Lord said to David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thy heart.' And yet that was against

God's secret will ; it was in his heart to build God's house, and it was no sin, for there was no command to the contrary. So here they were to desire the preservation of so precious an instrument as Paul was ; yet Satan might have a hand in it, from their persuasion to weaken his resolution. Satan often laboureth to take us off from our duty by the persuasion of our loving friends, who mean us well in what they say to us. When Christ had told of his sufferings at Jerusalem, Peter said, ' Be it far from thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto thee.' Our Saviour replied, ' Get thee behind me, Satan,' Mat. xvi. 22, 23. Who would have thought that Christ's disciple should have been Satan's instrument, and then when speaking in love to his master ? Therefore we must not measure their counsel by their good meaning, but by God's word, and be deaf to all relations, that we may discharge our duty to God. See Deut. xiii. 6, 7. In our affections to eminent instruments to God's glory, there may be much of carnal infirmity.

2. Here was Paul's firm resolution : ' He would not be persuaded.'

Did Paul do well in this ? How doth this agree with that character of heavenly wisdom that it is ' easy to be entreated ?' James iii. 17.

I answer—*In* our duty it is praiseworthy to be easy to be entreated, but not *from* our duty. Paul went bound in the spirit to Jerusalem. He knew the will of God, and therefore though they did even break his heart, they could not break his purpose. No persuasions of friends, no apprehensions of danger, should turn us out of the way wherein God commands us to walk. No persuasion. So Christ, when he was desired to avoid suffering, which was the end of his coming into the world, rejected the motion. It is notable, the Lord Jesus with the same indignation rebuketh Peter dissuading him from suffering, as he did the devil tempting him to idolatry. See Mat. xvi. 23, compared with Mat. iv. 10. No dangers. Here were dangers threatened. Agabus foretold bonds, the Spirit foretold bonds, others told him of bonds, yet Paul was not persuaded. So when the king of Babylon threatened the three children, they resolutely answered, Dan. iii. 18, ' Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us ; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image.' And therefore Paul rebukes them, for they were weeping when they saw his resolution : ' What ! mean ye to break my heart ? For I am not only ready to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of Christ.' A little to clear the expression by the way.

Is it not a good thing to have a broken heart ? And are not they that further it to be commended rather than reproved ?

I answer—There is a twofold heart—a heart that is hard against God, and soft for God ; and a heart that is hard for God, and soft against God. The first, when it is bold in sinning, but fearful and soft in troubles. As Deut. xx. 8, ' The fearful and the soft-hearted.' But now the heart which is hard for God, and soft against God, is the heart which is a coward in sin ; but like a lion, undaunted in all manner of sufferings. They will trust in God though he kill them, and can confront the greatest dangers, and yet tremble at the least offence against God, and dare not do it. Now saith Paul, You

break my heart ; that is, even weaken my courage, and take me off from my purpose.

3. Observe their discretion, that ‘when he would not be persuaded, they ceased.’ Either Paul told them what intimation he had from God, or else they thought so wise a man as Paul would not thrust himself upon danger without a warrant. It is the disposition of humble spirits not to be peremptory of their own conceits, but to submit to those that are wiser than themselves. Mat. iii. 15, John would not at first admit Christ to his baptism, out of reverence to him, and humility. But saith Christ, ‘Suffer it to be so now.’ When he was informed of Christ’s mind, then he suffered him. So those that were so zealous for inclosing of the common salvation, ‘When they heard that God had granted repentance unto life to the Gentiles, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,’ Acts xi. 18. It sheweth we should not be too stiff in our private conceits and humours, when a plain evidence appeareth to the contrary,—a lesson that men have great need to learn.

4. Their piety, the ground of their discretion: ‘The will of the Lord be done.’ The scripture speaks:—

[1.] Of God’s determining and decreeing will: Eph. i. 11, ‘He doth all things according to the counsel of his will.’

[2.] Of his approving or liking will: Rom. xii. 2, ‘That ye may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.’

The text speaks not of his commanded, but of his intended will ; not of his will to be done *by* us, but of his will to be done *upon* us. God’s intended will is either—(1.) Secret, before the decree bring forth the issue and event ; (2.) or else declared by the event. While it is secret, we pray for the accomplishment of it: Jer. xxix. 11, ‘I know the thoughts that I think towards you.’ &c. And we conceive all our desires with submission to it. But now we speak of his will revealed and declared in his providence. There is a submission required to both.

1. To God’s intended will, while it is yet kept secret.

That in every business we should ask his leave and blessing. It is a piece of religious manners to begin with God.

[1.] His leave, as Judges i. 1 : ‘Shall I go up and fight against the Canaanites, or shall I not?’ And thus Jehoshaphat would inquire of the prophet, ‘Shall I go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and prevail?’ The honest heathens had this principle, *A Jove principium*, that every action was to be begun with God.

Balaam had a conscience this way, he would inquire of God before he would proceed either to curse or bless. By this means we acknowledge God, our dependence upon him, and his dominion over us. It is robbery to use any goods without the owner’s leave. We and all ours are the goods of God. God hath such a dominion over us as a man hath over his goods ; not only a dominion of jurisdiction, as governor in law, but a dominion of propriety. Therefore in journeys, in removing of our dwelling, in disposal of our children, God must not be left out, but be treated with in the first place.

[2.] His blessing. When the event is uncertain, beg the Lord’s concurrence, and the blessing of his providence: Jer. x. 23, ‘O Lord,

I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' Man cannot manage his own actions with any comfort or success; therefore we must beg it of God, whose will doth all in the case. So Gen. xxiv. 12, 'And he said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day.' We are to desire all may speed while we are in God's way. It is a vain thing to promise ourselves great matters without the leave and blessing of providence; for our lives and actions, and all which concern us, are in God's hands.

2. We must refer the event to his determination. This is a great part of trust in God, and of quietness of mind, when we are so persuaded of the Lord's goodness, wisdom, and power that we leave the event to him, and refer it that he shall cast it as he pleaseth, being so sensible of the power of his providence, and so confident of the goodness of his conduct. Submitting all things to God's will after the event is patience, and submitting all things to God's will before the event is a notable piece of faith. When I trust God absolutely, let him do with me what he pleaseth; but I know he is a good God, and he will do nothing but what is good, and what is for the best. We are obliged in all things we design to be subordinate to God's will, and to accept of it: Rom. i. 10, 'Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you; James iv. 15, 'We ought to say, If the Lord will;' 1 Cor. iv. 19, 'But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will.' So in many other places. This was a truth evident to the heathens. Plato brings in Alcibiades asking Socrates how he should speak of future events, and in what manner he should express himself; and Socrates answers, Even as God will. To use such an express reservation in all our undertakings is profitable to beget reverence in ourselves, and to instruct others. Thus far the light of nature teacheth men. I confess it is not absolutely necessary in all cases to express ourselves so, but this disposition should be in our minds: 1 Cor. xi. 34, 'And the rest will I set in order when I come.' He doth not say there, 'If God will,' but yet he reserves that. I speak this as the lowest thing, that we be not too confident of events, but refer them to the Lord's will. But a child of God goeth higher: he knows he hath a good God, a heavenly Father, which guides all things in wisdom, power, and goodness. And the event may be against his desires, appetites, conceits, fancies, but he knows God will govern and do better for him than his own choices. He trusts all to God.

3. Our purposes and desires must be so moderated that we may be forearmed for all events: 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26, 'If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation: but if he say thus, I have no delight in thee; let him do with me as seemeth good unto him.' Such a holy indifferency should there be upon our spirits, that we should be like a die in the hand of Providence, to be cast high or low according as it falls. When we are over-earnest for temporal blessings, we do but make a scourge, a snare, and a rod many times to ourselves. For when God's will is declared to the contrary, this fills us with bitter sorrow; and obstinate desires pettishly solicited put us upon great vexation and



disappointment, and that layeth us open to atheism, and distrust of God, the conduct of his providence, and the promises of the invisible world. Therefore, until God hath declared his pleasure, there must be such moderation as to be prepared for all events.

4. When the event depends upon a duty, we must do the duty, and refer the event to God: 1 Cor. ix. 16, 'Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me, if I preach not the gospel!' It is a base principle to say we must be sure of success before we will engage for God. No; when there is an apparent duty we must do our duty, and trust God with the event.

5. In a dubious case observe the ducture and leading of Providence. The Israelites were not to remove but as they saw the pillar of cloud before them. And so in all things the happiness of which depends upon God's secret will. See what God's providence will lead you to: Acts xvi. 10, 'We endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them.' Sometimes we are left to gather and collect for our own reason what such or such a thing means. Now, after earnest prayer, when the fair course and tendency of outward circumstances lead us, we may look upon it as the way of God's providence for our good. It is said, Ezra viii. 21, 'I proclaimed a fast, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.' How did they know the Lord was entreated for them? Why, after prayer they found such an overruling instinct, such a fair invitation of Providence, that from thence they apparently gathered, This is the right way the Lord would have us walk in. This is the direction to be given to Christians when the event is uncertain.

But when the event is declared in God's providence, then we have nothing to do but plainly to submit, and that very quietly and contentedly, with hope and encouragement in the Lord. And that is the main point.

*Doct.* That it is the duty of all God's children to be willing to submit themselves to the dispensation of God's providence, in whatever befalls them or theirs.

In this point there is:—

I. Something implied, that all things come within the guidance of God's providence.

There is nothing so high but God doeth it: Dan. iv. 35, 'He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, and say unto him, What doest thou?' The sun doth not shine by chance, nor the rain fall by chance.

There is nothing so mean but it is under God's providence: Mat. x. 29, 30, 'Not a sparrow lights to the ground without your heavenly Father.' A mighty support unto Christians in their affliction.

There is nothing so bad but the Lord can turn it to good: Gen. 1. 20, 'Ye thought it for evil, but God meant it for good.'

There is nothing which happeneth from wicked men to his children but the Lord hath a hand in it: Job i. 21, 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken,' &c. It is Chrysostom's gloss upon that place:

He doth not say the thief, the Sabean, the Chaldean, hath taken; no, but the Lord hath taken, the same God that gave it. If it come from Satan, God hath a hand in it, for many of Job's troubles and afflictions, especially upon his body, came immediately from Satan; and yet he saith (chap. vi. 4), 'The arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in me.' They were the arrows of the Almighty, though shot out of Satan's bow. This certainly is implied, that God hath a will, hand, and providence in all those things which are most contrary to us. The will of the Lord is to be seen.

II. That which is expressed is, that we ought to submit to the providence of God.

I shall prove it:—

1. By the example of the Lord Jesus Christ: Mat. xxvi. 39, 'Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt.' He had more to lose than any of us have, or possibly can have; the comfort and influence of the presence of God in a personal union; and more to suffer. Yet he submits, and professeth a full subjection to his Father's will. His cup was a bitter cup, which made him sweat drops of curdled blood, yet he was willing to drink it, even the dregs, since it was his Father's will. But let me fully vindicate the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Object.* You will say, Christ desires it to pass: Mat. xxvi. 39, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' How could Christ make an offer of prayers repugnant to God's will and purpose? He knew it was the will of his Father that he should suffer many things, and be slain, and had rebuked Peter resisting the soldiers. 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' John xviii. 11.

Many answers may be given for the clearing of this matter.

[1.] We must know, contrary to the monothelites, that there was a double will in Christ, as there was a double nature—divine and human. These are not contrary, but yet distinct. The divine nature would, because it was necessary to our redemption. The human nature was to show a reasonable aversion of what was destructive to it; and yet the human nature did not contradict the will of God, because he did it not absolutely, but only conditionally: 'Father, if it be possible.'

[2.] There is a deliberate elective will and a natural velleity. Now mark, the human nature did except against his suffering, not with a deliberate, elective will, but only by a natural velleity. There is a resolute will which overcometh all impediments, and there is an innocent desire, showing itself in a simple complacency in that which is good, or a displacency to that which is evil, but goes no farther. Apply this to the business in hand. When Christ would have the cup pass, it is not meant of his resolute and effective will, but only of his will expressing a simple displacency of the human nature to what is destructive to it.

Aquinas gives us another distinction. There is a will natural and indeliberate, and a will deliberate and elective. The one sheweth the sudden inclination of nature to what is good for us as we are living creatures; the other is an act of reason as we are reasonable creatures. The natural inclination of all creatures is to preserve themselves; but

the deliberate will chooseth what the understanding judgeth to be good, all circumstances considered. The inclination of nature flees death and torments, but reason submitteth to it. As for instance, a bitter potion is against the inclination of nature, for, as we are living creatures we would be put to no pain; but the reasonable creature, by an elective will, takes that bitter potion for health. Cutting off a gangrened member is against the first inclination of man, as a living creature; we submit to it as a reasonable creature, lest it corrupt the whole body. So in the martyrs, the flesh could not but be against sufferings, being contrary to their well-being as living creatures; but the spirit, that is their reason, guided by grace, submitted to the greatest torments for the glory of God. Thus the Lord Christ saith, 'Let this cup pass.' There was the inclination of an innocent nature declining so dreadful an evil; but yet it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will; therefore, 'Not my will, but thine be done.'

Others to the same purpose. There were two things willed by Christ; one was *bonum naturæ*, the good of nature; the other was the glory of God with our salvation; and the first was desired but subordinately to the second. So that the Lord Christ is a notable pattern that our appetites and desires are not to be according to the interests of the flesh, but for the glory and honour of God, and the good of others.

The next pattern we have is David, a man after God's own heart, in 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26, 'Behold, here am I; let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.' What a meek submission was here to God's pleasure, resigning up his person, crown, and estate to the wise and gracious disposal of God, to receive a benefit or punishment as the Lord should determine. David sets his name to a blank, and bids God write what he pleaseth. It is hard for us to consent to known articles, but David wholly referreth himself unto God: 'Let him do what seemeth good unto him.'

So Abraham, the father of the faithful, how contentedly doth he speak; and he thought no other but that Isaac, the son of the promise, should be sacrificed, Gen. xxii. 8, when his son asked him, 'Where is the burnt-offering for sacrifice?' and he answered, 'My son, the Lord will provide an offering; and so they went on their way together.' When God declareth his will not only contrary to our natural affection, but our gracious hopes, when he taketh away instruments upon whose life his glory seems to depend, we have the same answer, 'God will provide.'

The next shall be of Eli: 1 Sam. iii. 18, 'It is the Lord; let him do whatsoever he pleaseth.' When the sentence was passed, he humbly submitteth. He doth not murmuringly say, Must I bear the punishment of my sons' iniquity? their will is not in my power; if they be wicked, let them answer for it. No, 'It is the Lord;' and his will must stand; 'It is the Lord,' who is too just to do us wrong, too good to do us hurt.

The next shall be the great doctor of the Gentiles, St Paul: 2 Cor. xii. 7-9, 'And for this I besought the Lord thrice;' he knocked thrice at the throne of grace, as Christ prayed thrice, and Elijah prayed thrice for rain. Well, but the Lord made him no answer, 'But my grace is

sufficient for thee.' The thorn in the flesh, some painful disease or affliction, must continue. And what saith Paul? 'Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions for Christ's sake.' He doth entertain it with some kind of cheerfulness and thanksgiving, if he may have experience that the grace and power of Christ may rest upon him; it is enough that God's will is fulfilled, though it be with our pain and loss.

Now let us consider:—

I. Wherein this submission consists.

II. Upon what grounds we ought to submit.

I. Wherein this submission consists.

Negatively, it is not to be insensible. Godliness doth not teach men stoicism, to harden themselves under the rod of God. The Lord complains of that, Jer. v. 3, 'I have stricken them, but they have not grieved,' &c. We must lay his hand to heart as well as his word. We are not to be like the corner-stone which bears the whole weight of the building and feels nothing. There are two extremes—slighting the hand of God, or fainting under it, Heb. xii. 5; and slighting is worse than the other. There is no patience where there is no sense and feeling. Certainly there can be no improvement where there is not a feeling the rod of God, the strokes of his correcting hand upon us.

But affirmatively, there is in it:—

1. A work of the judgment, which subscribes to the justice and goodness of the dispensation, that it is just: Dan. ix. 7, 'O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face.' It is a smart and dreadful correction, but the Lord is righteous. And to the goodness of it, Isa. xxxix. 8, 'Good is the word of the Lord.' Though it was a terrible word, yet the submission of a sanctified judgment calls it good.

2. The act of the will is accepting of it: Lev. xxvi. 41, 'If they shall accept of the punishment of their sin.' There is a consent and choice of the will; such a perfect correspondence between the temper of a gracious heart and the will of God, they take it well and kindly from God that it is no worse, as a patient takes bitter pills for his good. There are some kind of reluctances of nature, but their overpowering judgment and will doth approve and accept. Afflictions are to be taken as a potion, not as a drench, not forced upon us whether we will or no; we must accept of them, take them down ourselves; it is a bitter cup, but it is of our heavenly physician's tempering. Seneca, a heathen, could say, *Deo non pareo, sed assentio ex animo*—I do not merely submit to divine providence, but consent to it. A strange thing that a heathen should say so. It is good, and so we accept it; not barely out of necessity and by a patience perforce, but there is a willing submission to what the Lord ordereth concerning us.

3. There is a command reached out over the affections of anger and sorrow. (1.) Anger, that we may not fret against the Lord: Ps. xxxvii. 1, 'Fret not thyself against evil-doers.' Many times when words are kept in there is a secret rising and swelling of heart against God's providence;



as an oven stopped up is the hotter within. So though it may be words do not break out, yet the heart boils, riseth, and dislikes God's dealing: Ps. lxii. 1, 'My soul, keep silence to God;' not only my tongue, but my soul. Thoughts are as audible with God as words; therefore there is a command upon our anger and indignation, that it may not swell and rise up against God's providence. (2.) Upon our sorrow, that it may not run into excess, causing disorder. We are allowed to grieve, but with temper and moderation. To be horny, flinty, dead, and senseless, whatever breaches are made upon us, doth not suit with the temper of a Christian. Christ hath legitimated our fears and sorrows, for in the days of his flesh he had his tears, sorrows, and groans; therefore, 1 Cor. vii. 31, mourn we should, but as we mourned not. If the affection be stubborn and boisterous, it must be cited before the tribunal of reason. We must give an account of it: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God,' Ps. xlii. 5. The upper part of the soul checks the excesses of the lower part when its commands are slighted.

4. The tongue is bridled, lest discontent plash over; as 'Aaron held his peace,' Lev. x. 3. It was a sad stroke, but it was the Lord. He kept his tongue from murmuring against God. If there be a fire kindled in our bosoms, we should not let the sparks fly abroad. Murmuring is a taxing of God, as if he dealt hardly and unjustly with us; and if it vents itself, it is more to his dishonour: Job xl. 4, 5, 'Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further.' Job was resolute enough before to fill his mouth with arguments; if once he could meet with God, he would reason the case with him, but presently is damped at God's appearance; and when his passions were a little calmed, he renounceth his former bold resolutions, and would no longer give vent to his distemper, and is resolved to be silent before God, and to give over his plea, and bury all his discontented thoughts in his own bosom. As if he had said, Once in my foolish passion I was complaining of thee, and desirous to dispute with thee; it is time to give over that debate, and humbly to submit.

II. What are the grounds of this submission? For patience is wise and considerate, and proceeds upon solid reasons, as impatience is rash and unreasonable.

1. They see God in his providence: Ps. xxxix. 9, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.' That is the first principle of submission; surely God hath a hand in it: Isa. xxxviii. 15, 'What shall I say? he hath spoken to me, himself hath done it.' That passage, though it be in a song of thanksgiving, doth not relate to the deliverance, but the affliction, the disease and sentence of death which he had received. There is atheism and anti-providence in our murmurings. If we did see God at the end of causes, we could no more murmur against his providence than we can against his creation. You would laugh at that man that should murmur and complain because God made him a man and not an angel. It is as ridiculous to oppose yourselves against the will of God in other dispensations; and the more immediately the affliction comes from God, the greater

our submission should be ; as, in sickness, and death of friends and relations, 'It is the Lord.' But if subordinate instruments be used in bringing on the affliction, every wheel works according to the motion of the first mover ; all the links are fastened to God's hands ; therefore if we look no higher than the creature, we murmur, and break our teeth in biting at the next link. David was so far from opposing God that he bears the contumely of the instrument : 2 Sam. xvi. 11, 'Let him alone, for the Lord hath bid him curse.' That was a time of humiliation, not revenge. If God will admonish us of our duty by the injuries of men, and cure our impostume with the razor of their sharp tongue, we must be content. To resist lower officers of the state is to condemn the authority with which they are armed. They could not wag their tongues without God.

2. That God hath an absolute sovereignty to do what he will : Rom. ix. 20, 21, 'Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus ? Hath not the potter power over the clay ? We are in his hands, as the clay in the hand of the potter.' His supreme right and dominion over the creatures, to dispose of them according to his pleasure, should be often thought of by us : Job ix. 12, 'Behold he taketh away, who can hinder ? who shall say unto him, What doest thou ?' He hath an absolute dominion, and is not accountable to any. A man may do with his own as he pleaseth. Why should we not allow him the common privilege of all proprietors ? A man may cut out his own cloth as he pleases. If God deprive us of any enjoyment, there is no resisting him by force, seeing God is omnipotent ; nor ought there to be any question to be made of the justice of the fact, seeing he hath absolute dominion, and is not accountable to any. All creatures are in his hand to dispose of them as he pleaseth ; and sometimes he sees fit to take them away in a violent manner, so as may most affect the parties interested, and show us his sovereignty. He will do it in his own way, by arming the thoughts and humours of our own bodies against us. Here our subjection to God must begin, till he be pleased to give some farther account of his dealing with us : Job xxxiii. 13, 'Why dost thou strive against him ? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.' Before what tribunal will you call the Lord ? Where will you cite him to answer for the wrong done to you ? This sovereignty of God doth exceedingly calm the heart ; God hath right alone to govern the world. He did govern it before we were born, and will do it when we are gone. He deposeth kings and disposeth kingdoms and all affairs as he will. Men must not prescribe rules to God, nor limit his uncontrollable authority. Our work is not to dispute and quarrel, but to obey and submit in all things.

3. This sovereignty of God is modified and mitigated in the dispensation of it with several attributes. As—

[1.] With infinite justice : Deut. xxvii. 26 ; when every curse was pronounced they were to say *Amen*, let it come to pass, for it is just. All that we suffer is deserved, nay, 'less than our iniquities deserve,' Ezra ix. 13. As the restored Israelites acknowledge, when they were in Babylon, they might have been in hell. Job xxxiv. 10, 'Far be it from God that he should do wickedness, or the Almighty that he

should commit iniquity.' All such thoughts are to be rejected with abhorrence and indignation. We have strange conceptions and thoughts of God when under a temptation; ver. 23, 'He will not lay upon man more than right,' that he should enter into judgment with God. No; he goeth on just and sure grounds, though we do not always discern them.

[2.] God doth it too with great faithfulness; they look on all afflictions as federal dispensations, as appendages of the covenant of grace: Ps. cxix. 75, 'In very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.' Mark, he doth not say, *notwithstanding* thy faithfulness, but *in* faithfulness he performs his covenant. When he thresheth us, it is to make our husks fly off, that he may quicken us to a serious remembrance of himself, and of the duties we owe to him.

[3.] It is ordered with great wisdom: 'For God is a God of judgment,' Isa. xxx. 18. He knows what is best for his people. We think this and that best, but God is wiser than we. When many providences fall out, we think it would be better for the church if it were otherwise. But this is to tax God's wisdom, and charge him with want of love and tenderness towards his people; they are dearer to him than they are to you. Chrysostom shows how we take upon us to order affairs. He brings in an instance of a man that is very kind to the poor; if he dies they are undone: have you more care of them than God their maker? Job did not eat his morsels alone, but the poor did eat his bread, and were clothed with his fleece, therefore the sides of the poor are said to bless him. Cannot God provide for the poor without Job? So in like cases for the church's sake. This providence seems to tend altogether to evince; but God knows how by these and these means to provide for his people; and you must not prescribe to him. It was blasphemy in Alphonsus to say, *Si Deo a consiliis adfuisset, se consultius multa ordinaturum*—'That if he had been by when God made the world, he would have ordered some things with greater advice and better care. He would not have placed the horns of the beasts above their eyes, but under their eyes.' Such blasphemy do we secretly lisp out in our murmurings and discourses about providence, when we are questioning how this, that, and the other thing can be for his glory. The Lord knows how to guide all things to his glory, and we must absolutely yield to it.

[4.] With much love; for he that hath the wisdom of a father hath also the bowels of a mother. A mother may sooner forget a poor shiftless child than God will forget his people, Isa. xlix. 15, &c. There is a great deal of love showed in our afflictions. Sometimes in mitigating them: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear.' And as Jacob drove on as the little ones were able to bear, so the Lord suits his conduct and lays on the affliction as his people are able to bear. Castles are victualled before they are besieged. After great comforts then comes affliction: Heb. x. 32, 'After you were enlightened ye endured a great fight of affliction.' Then again, in refreshing their troubles with many gracious experiences. The Lord doth things which seem very bitter to the carnal sense and gust, but when he hath defecated and refined our taste, then he sheds abroad his love into our

hearts by the Holy Ghost, Rom. v. 3, 5. Their adoption is cleared up, and the loss of outward comfort is accompanied with a greater increase of spiritual comfort. Again, he shows his love in ordering all things for their good, Rom. viii. 28. Out of what corner soever the wind blows, it blows good to the saints. 'Arise, O north wind, and blow thou south,' &c. North and south, contrary points; Cant. iv. 16, yet 'the spices of his garden flow out;' that which is against our will is not against our profit; God is still pursuing what is for his own glory and good of the elect. So all that falleth out is either good or will tend to good.

*Use.* This teacheth us upon what grounds there should be such a submission to all personal and domestical calamities which may befall any of us, and to all that befall the church. It is the will of God; and that is the great ground of composing the heart whatever falleth out. Whenever you hear of the increase of violence, or any resolution against the people of God, this should calm us, 'The will of the Lord be done;' God knows what is best for his people. This is an everlasting ground of comfort, that we are still in God's hands, and whatever befalls us, it comes by his special providence, even by his that numbers the hairs of our heads, and who carves out every condition to us: Dent. xxxiii. 3, 'Surely he loved his people; all the saints are in his hands.' When the disciples were sore troubled and affrighted, John vi. 20, 'Jesus comes to them and said, Be not afraid, it is I' that order this. There are many remarkable passages in that story. The disciples were, in the dark of the night, overtaken with a mighty storm, and for a long time did not know what would become of them. The text saith they had rowed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs before Christ appears. Christ seeth it not fit to appear at first, but lets the trial go on until it be a trial indeed. Now about the fourth watch of the night, Jesus passed by, Mark vi. 48; that is the morning watch, and then Jesus appears to them. We are very tender of ourselves, and soon think we are low and tried enough, therefore would fain be delivered; but our wise Lord seeth we need more. When Christ came, then their fears are increased. Christ came walking upon the water, and they thought it was a spectre. Spirits broken with troubles are very apt to take in afflicting impressions from everything they see and hear. The very way of our mercies may be matter of terror to us. At length he discovereth himself: 'It is I, be not afraid.' I walk upon that water which seems to be ready to swallow you up. I, that raised the waves, know how to still them. Here is that which may allay all our disquiets and fears. Remember, it is not the instrument but Christ and God must be eyed, and the will of the Lord be done.

In our darkest condition God seeth us, when we do not see him: Ps. lxxiii. 22, 23, and Job xxiii. 9, 10, 'I looked on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him. But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.'



## SERMON XVI.

*God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—*  
JOHN III. 16.

IN these words you have the sum and substance of the gospel. In them observe :—

1. The fountain and original of all that grace and salvation which is brought unto us, God's unspeakable love to mankind : *God so loved the world.*

2. The way which God took to recover our lapsed condition, or the effect and fruit which flows from this fountain : *that he gave his only-begotten Son.*

3. The end of it : *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life ;* where take notice of—

[1.] The qualification, or the free and easy condition put upon men in the gospel : *that whosoever believeth in him.*

[2.] The benefit that resulteth to us, expressed negatively and affirmatively : *should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

First, The rise and beginning of all is God's inconceivable love : 'God so loved the world.' Where observe :—

1. The object : *the world.*

2. The act : *loved.*

3. The degree : *so loved.*

1. The word by which the object is expressed is 'the world,' which noteth mankind in its corrupt and miserable state : 1 John v. 19, 'The whole world lies in sin.' The world is a heap of men who had broken God's law, forfeited his love and favour ; they neither loved nor feared God, but were unthankful and unholy ; yet this world God loved.

2. The act : 'he loved.' The love of God is twofold—the love of benevolence and the love of complacence.

[1.] The love of benevolence is the pity and compassion of God towards man lying in sin and misery. This is understood in this place, as also in Titus iii. 4, 'The kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared.'

[2.] The love of complacence. So he loveth us when he hath made us lovely. In which sense it is said, Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous God loveth righteousness ;' John xvi. 27, 'The Father himself loveth you, because ye loved me.' This belongeth not to this place.

3. The degree : 'so loved.' He doth not tell you how much, but leaveth it to your most solemn, raised thoughts. It is rather to be conceived than spoken of, and admired rather than conceived.

Observe from the words :—

That the beginning and first cause of our salvation is the mere love of God. The outward occasion was our misery, the inward moving cause was God's love.

[1.] Love is at the bottom of all. We may give a reason of other things, but we cannot give a reason of his love. God showed his

wisdom, power, justice, and holiness in our redemption by Christ. If you ask, Why he made so much ado about a worthless creature, raised out of the dust of the ground at first, and had now disordered himself, and could be of no use to him? We have an answer at hand, Because he loved us. If you continue to ask, But why did he love us? We have no other answer but because he loved us; for beyond the first rise of things we cannot go. And the same reason is given by Moses, Deut. vii. 7, 8, 'The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you;' that is, in short, he loved you because he loved you. The same reason is given by our Lord Jesus Christ, Mat. xi. 26, 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' All came from his free and undeserved mercy; higher we cannot go in seeking after the causes of what is done for our salvation.

[2.] The most remarkable thing that is visible in the progress and perfection of our salvation by Christ is love. And it is meet that the beginning, middle, and end should suit. Nay, if love be so conspicuous in the whole design and carrying on of this blessed work, it is much more in the rise and fountain. God's great end in our redemption was the demonstration of his love and mercy to mankind; yea, not only the demonstration, but the commendation of it. That is the apostle's word, Rom. v. 8, 'God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' A thing may be demonstrated as real that is not commended or set forth as great. God's design was that we should not only believe the reality, but admire the greatness of his love. Now, from first to last love is so conspicuous that we cannot overlook it. Light is not more conspicuous in the sun than the love of God in our redemption by Christ.

[3.] If there were any other cause, it must be either the merit of Christ, or some worthiness on our part.

(1.) The merit of Christ was not the first cause of God's love, but the manifestation, fruit, and effect of it. The text telleth, he first 'loved the world,' and then 'gave his only-begotten Son.' It is said, 1 John iii. 16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.' Look, as we perceive and find out causes by their proper effects, so we perceive the love of God by the death of Christ. Christ is the principal means whereby God carrieth on the purposes of his grace, and therefore is represented in scripture as the servant of his decrees.

(2.) No worthiness in us; for when his love moved him to give Christ for us, he had all mankind in his prospect and view, as lying in the polluted mass, or in a state of sin and misery, and then provided a Redeemer for them. God at first made a perfect law, which forbade all sin upon pain of death. Man did break this law, and still we break it day by day in every sin. Now when men lived, and went on in sin and hostility against God, he was pleased then to send his Son to assume our nature, and die for our transgressions. Therefore the giving of a Redeemer was the work of his free mercy. Man loved not God, yea, was an enemy to God, when Christ came to

make the atonement : 1 John iv. 10, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins ;' Col. i. 21, 'And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.' We were senseless of our misery, careless of our remedy ; so far from deserving, that we desired no such matter. God's love was at the beginning, not ours.

*Use 1.* Is to confute all misapprehensions of God. It is the grand design of Satan to lessen our opinion of God's goodness. So he assaulted our first parents, as if God (notwithstanding all his goodness in their creation) was envious of man's felicity and happiness. And he hath not left off his old wont. He seeketh to hide God's goodness, and to represent him as a God that delighteth in our destruction and damnation, rather than in our salvation ; as if he were inexorable, and hardly entreated to do us good. And why ? That we may stand aloof from God, and apprehend him as unlovely. Or if he cannot prevail so far, he tempteth us to poor, unworthy, mean thoughts of his goodness and mercy. Now we cannot obviate the temptation better than by due reflections on his love in giving his Son for the world. This sheweth that he is fuller of mercy and goodness than the sun is of light or the sea of water. So great an effect shows the greatness of the cause. Wherefore did he express his love in such a wonderful, astonishing way, but that we might have higher and larger thoughts of his goodness and mercy ? By other effects we easily collect the perfection of his attributes ; that his power is omnipotent, Rom. i. 20 ; that his knowledge is omniscient, Heb. iv. 12, 13. And by this effect it is easy to conceive that his love is infinite, or that 'God is love.'

*Use 2.* Is to quicken us to admire the love of God in Christ.

There are three things which commend any favour done unto us :—(1.) The good will of him that giveth ; (2.) The greatness of the gift ; (3.) The unworthiness of him that receiveth. All concur here.

1. The good will of him that giveth. Nothing moved God to do this but his own love. It was from the free motion of his own heart, without our thought and asking. No other reason is given or can be given. We made no suit for any such thing ; it could not enter into our minds and hearts ; into our minds to conceive, or into our hearts to desire, such a remedy to recover the lapsed estate of mankind. Not into our minds, for it is a great mystery : 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness,' &c. Not into our hearts to ask or desire ; for it would have seemed a strange request that we should ask that the eternal Son of God should assume our flesh, and be made sin and a curse for us. But grace hath wrought 'exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think,' Eph. iii. 20 ; above what we can imagine, and above what we can pray for to him.

2. The greatness of the gift. Great things do even force their way into our minds, whether we will or no. The gift of Jesus Christ is so great, that the love of God is gone to the uttermost in it. He hath not a better Christ, nor a more worthy Redeemer, nor another Son to die for us ; nor could the Son of God suffer greater indignities than he

hath suffered for our sakes. God said to Abraham, Gen. xxii. 12, 'Now I know that thou fearest God, since thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.' God was not ignorant before, but the meaning is, this is an apparent proof and instance of it. So now we may know God loveth us; here is the manifest token and sign of it.

3. The unworthiness of him that receiveth; this is also in the case. We were altogether unworthy that the Son of God should be incarnate, and die for our sakes. This is notably improved by the apostle, Rom. v. 7, 8, 'For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, but for a good man some would even dare to die: but God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' The apostle alludeth to the distinction familiar among the Jews: they had their good men, or bountiful; their righteous men, zealous for the law; and their wicked men, obnoxious to judgment. Peradventure one would venture his life for a very merciful person, but you shall hardly find any to be so liberal and friendly as to venture his life for a righteous and just man, or a man of rigid innocence. But mark, there are abating terms—*scarcely* and *perhaps*. The case is rare that one should die for another, be he never so good and righteous. But God's expression of mercy was infinitely above the proportion of any the most friendly man ever showed. There was nothing in the object to move him to it, when we were neither good nor just, but wicked. Without respect to any worth in us, for we were all in a damnable estate, he sent his Son to die for us, to rescue and free us from eternal death, and to make us partakers of eternal life. God so loved the world, when we had so sinned, and wilfully plunged ourselves into an estate of damnation.

But you will say, If this mercy be so great, why are men no more affected with it?

I answer:—

1. Because of their stupid carelessness; they do not see the need of this mercy, and therefore do not prize the worth of it. If they were sensible that there is an avenger of blood at their heels, or God's wrath making inquisition for sinners, they would more earnestly run into the city of refuge, Heb. vi. 18.

2. They do not truly believe this mystery of grace, but speak of it by rote and hearsay, after others. All affections follow faith: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious.'

3. They do not seriously consider the importance of it, therefore the weightiest objects do not stir us; our minds are taken up about toys and trifles.

4. They have not the lively light of the Spirit: Rom. v. 5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' It is not our dry thoughts and doctrinal knowledge that will affect and change our heart, till the Spirit turneth our light into love and our knowledge into taste.

Use 3. Is to exhort us:—

1. To improve this love. It is an invitation to seek after God; for see what preparations his love hath made to recover you to himself, and will not you be recovered? God doth not hate you, and therefore



you need not flee from him as a revenging God: He 'so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' In that capacious expression you are not excluded, therefore exclude not yourselves. And such a broad foundation of his mercy being laid, what may you not expect from it? 2 Cor. v. 19. He hath procured a remedy and ransom; as soon as you repent and believe, you shall have the comfort of it.

2. It exhorteth us also to answer it with a fervent love to him that hath given such a signal demonstration of his love to us: 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him, because he first loved us.' Men always expect to be loved there where they love, and think it hard dealing if it be not so.

3. Let your love to God be like his love to you. Love was at the bottom of all this grace; let it be at the bottom of all your duties: 'Let all your things be done in love,' 1 Cor. xvi. 14. Let your carriage apparently be a life of love: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.'

II. I come now to the second branch of the text—the way God took to express his love to us: He 'gave his only-begotten Son.' Jesus Christ is so called to distinguish him from the adopted children, and to show his personal subsistence, which is by way of filiation, or being eternally begotten in the divine essence. So great was our misery, that no less remedy would serve the turn; and so great God's mercy, that he withheld him not from us.

*Doct.* The greatest manifestation of God's love to the sons of men is the giving his only-begotten Son to be their Redeemer and Saviour.

There is a twofold giving of Christ:—

1. He is given *for* us.

2. He is given *to* us.

1. He was given for us when he was sent into the world to become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and to die for our sins. This is spoken of, Rom. viii. 32, 'God spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all.'

2. He is given to us, when we have a special interest in him, and a participation of his benefits: 1 Cor. i. 30, 'Christ Jesus is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.'

He is given for us, as he took our nature; he is given to us, as he dwelleth in our hearts by faith. He is given for us, as he undertook the work of our redemption; he is given to us, as he accomplisheth and brings about our conversion to God, and applying to us the benefits of his purchase. I shall speak of both.

I. As he is given for us, it mightily bespeaketh the love of God, and his care of our salvation. In creation, God made us after his own image and likeness; in redemption, his Son came in the similitude and likeness of sinful flesh. In creation, the angels were dignified above us, but not in redemption, Heb. ii. 16. He did not redeem the apostate angels. In short, this was the most convenient way for God to bring about the purposes of his grace towards man, for these reasons:—

1. That our faith might be more certain, by the appearing of the

Son of God in our nature, by his dying, rising again from the dead, and ascending into heaven, and so giving a sensible proof of our whole religion.

[1.] By appearing in human nature he had opportunity of conversing with men, to convince them of the gracious will of God, and teach them obedience to him, not only by his doctrine, but his example, and securing the truth of both by the many miracles which he wrought in the days of his flesh: John vi. 27, 'Him hath the Father sealed;' that is, owned, acknowledged, demonstrated, that whatever he did or said was the will and good pleasure of God.

[2.] By his dying he satisfied the justice of God, and so maketh a way for the course of his mercy to us, that we might obtain release and pardon of all our sins and transgressions against the law of God: Rom. iii. 25, 26, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,' &c.

[3.] His rising again from the dead was a visible satisfaction to the world that his sacrifice was accepted: Rom. iv. 25, 'Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.' The unbelieving world by that supreme act of power have no reason to stand out against his faith and doctrine.

[4.] By his ascending into heaven, the truth of eternal life was more confirmed, for thereby he gave us a real demonstration of that glory which he spoke of and promised to his disciples and followers: 1 Peter i. 21, 'God raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.' He himself is entered into that happiness, and we shall follow him.

2. That our hope might be more strong and lively, being built upon the example of Christ and his promises to us. The example of Christ is of great support to us in all our troubles, for if we fare as he fared in this world, we shall fare as he fareth in the world to come. Therefore we are said to be 'begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,' 1 Peter i. 3; that is, have a ground of hope and cheerful assurance, as he by his sufferings came to his reward and crown, so shall we obtain the matter of his promises: 1 John ii. 25, 'And this is the promise which he hath promised, even eternal life;' John xii. 26, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.'

3. That our love to God may be more fervent. If God had saved us some other way, the salvation had been something less; for according to the degrees of the gift, so is our obligation. Now God would oblige us at the highest rate, and therefore he gave his only-begotten Son to die for us. It is said, he 'spared not his own Son,' Rom. viii. 32. There is a twofold not sparing—either in a way of impartial justice, or in a way of transcendent bounty; the last is chiefly intended in that place, though the other is not altogether excluded. He delivered him up to die for our sakes. Now surely this should gain much upon us, when God thought nothing too good to part with for our salvation.

4. It makes our obedience more ready, for Jesus Christ came to

live by the same law that we were bound to: Gal. iv. 4, 'When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.' Yea, to obey God at the dearest rates: Heb. v. 8, 9, 'Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered: and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' He submitted unto and performed the whole law: his obedience cost him dear, since an ignominious and shameful death was a part of it.

II. God, that gave Christ for us, giveth him also to us, and with him the benefits of pardon, reconciliation, adoption, and right to eternal life, if we be duly qualified. The offer is made in the gospel: on our part there is required only a thankful acceptance of Christ on his own terms. This also is the greatest gift, for the other is in order to this, and this is the completing of it, and applying it for our comfort. I shall prove it by three reasons:—

1. Without Christ there is no recovery of what we lost.

2. No removal of that misery we incurred.

3. No obtaining of what we should desire and pursue after as our proper happiness.

1. No recovery of what we lost. What did we lose by the fall?—the image and favour of God, and fellowship with God.

[1.] The image of God was defaced by sin. Man abode not in the honour of his creation, but became as the beasts that perish. Now the restitution of this great gift we only have by Christ, who is the pattern and author of it. The pattern: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' The author: Titus iii. 5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which ye have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' Till we are in him, and be one with him, we have not this great benefit: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' We are destitute of that image of God wherein we were created, and better we had never been born, unless new born.

[2.] The favour of God, which is an immediate consequent of his image. God delighted in man as innocent, but man sinful is the object of God's wrath, loathing, and aversion. Therefore Christ died to recover man to the love and favour of God: 2 Cor. v. 14, To make peace between the offended sovereign and subject offending; to interpose between God angry and man guilty. Now this breach continueth till we are reconciled by Christ, till we love God, and are beloved by him. And better we had been in a lower rank of creatures, than to continue under God's displeasure; for the misery of the beast dies with them, death puts an end to all their pains at once; but the wrath of God, not appeased by Christ, continues on the sinner for ever.

[3.] Fellowship with God was lost by the fall. Man was driven out of paradise, and shut out of God's presence by a flaming sword (Gen. iii. 24), the emblem of his wrath, and all intercourse was broken off; but Christ came to open the way, 'by whom we have access unto God

with boldness and confidence,' Eph. iii. 12. Heb. iv. 16, 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need.' We need daily access to God, we cannot live without him. How can we look him in the face with any comfort when we have no mediator? we cannot have any serious thoughts of him without trembling.

2. There is removal of that misery which we have incurred, which is the death and curse wherein we are involved by sin. As long as the curses of the law stand in full force against us, we can have no firm confidence; if we look to time past, there is a huge heap of sins, the least of which is enough to sink us into hell; if we look to time present, our nature being not yet healed, our hearts swarm with divers lusts, and we are ready to sin again; if to time to come, death, hell, and judgment affright us. Christ findeth us where Adam left us, in the highway to hell and damnation: John iii. 18, 'Condemned already;' and to hope for any release, unless it be upon God's terms, is to make him untrue and unjust. Certainly God will not break his word, and disturb the order of his covenant for your sakes. Therefore how will you escape the curse and condemnation of the law if Christ be not given to you?

3. There is no obtaining of what we should desire and pursue after as our proper happiness, but only by Christ. Man was made for God, and cannot be happy without him, and he is most completely happy in the full enjoyment of him. Now there is no coming to that blessed state but by Christ: John xiv. 6, He is the way to the Father. The most eminent sense is with respect to our final blessedness, when we come into his immediate presence: so 1 John v. 11, 'This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.' It is Christ alone that can put us in the way, and bring us home to eternal bliss.

*Use 1.* Is to confute the world's opinion, who measure God's love by outward things or worldly felicity. Alas! the love or hatred of God is not known by these things, Eccles. ix. 1, 2, neither can the heart of man be satisfied with them; these things can give us a bellyful, but not a heartful, Ps. xvii. 14, 15. Those that take up with the creature, never felt the weight of sin, are not serious in matters of eternal concernments. The only true happiness is in having God for our God, Christ for our Redeemer, the Spirit for our sanctifier and comforter.

*Use 2.* Is to excite us to bless God for Jesus Christ. The apostle doth frequently in all his groans and afflictions: Rom. vii. 25, 'I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' &c.; 'Blessed be God for the grace of Jesus Christ,' whereby we have pardon for what is past, and grace for the future to perform what God will accept. So 1 Cor. xv. 57, 'Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' God by Christ hath given us the victory over sin, death, and hell. So should you, especially in the Lord's Supper—it is an Eucharist—be thankful that God hath given Christ for us, which is an unspeakable gift. And now he cometh to give him to you, afford him a hearty welcome into your souls as you take him, and apply him by faith, and give up yourselves to him as his redeemed ones. You



come to look upon Christ, who made his soul an offering for sin; he is here represented as crucified before your eyes, and is by God specially offered to your acceptance, and with him pardon and life. You must be joyful and thankful for these great gifts and benefits, so dearly bought, so surely sealed, so freely offered, and in the sense of all this devote yourselves to God.

*Use 3.* Make it your main care to see if Christ be given to us. Without him you cannot have any true remedy against evil, nor any solid hope of good. Certain it is that in our natural estate we were without him. Is there a change? The two great ends for which Christ came were, to appease God, and to be the principle of a new life. Is Christ given for these ends? Have you received him? Do not think Christ fell from heaven into your bosom whether you would or no. Did you ever feel your misery without him, and cry mightily to God, Give me Christ, or else I die, and perish for ever? I confess, conversion is not always evident in feeling, but it is in the effect and fruit. What fruits have you then abiding in you? The great fruit of Christ being given to you is the Spirit's dwelling in you: Rom. viii. 1, 'But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.' The great work of the Spirit is to sanctify the soul to the service of him that redeemed us: Titus ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Clear this, and the cause is decided.

III. I come now to the third part of the text, which is the end of this love, 'That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have life everlasting;' where I observe—

1. The connection of our duty and privilege. Christ died to procure a covenant wherein pardon and life is offered to us upon gracious terms. In the gospel we must observe what God hath promised, and what we must do; both must be alike acceptable to us, the duty as well as the benefit, or else we consent not to the whole tenor of the covenant.

2. The universality of the proposal, that *whosoever* believeth on him; no sorts of men are excluded from the remedy but those that exclude themselves by their impenitency and unbelief.

3. The nature of this act and duty which giveth a right and title to the benefits offered, and that is believing: no more is mentioned here. But none truly believe but those that carry themselves accordingly, or perform the duties which that belief calleth for. If it be such a lively operative faith, it will secure our title to these benefits.

4. The benefits are negatively and positively expressed; negatively, they 'shall not perish; positively, but 'have everlasting life.'

[1.] The negative expression is mentioned, partly because of our former deserts; we incurred the sentence of eternal death, which is taken off from penitent believers; they shall not be condemned with the unbelieving world: partly because of our present fears; guilt presents destruction before our eyes, but the cause of that is taken away as sin is remitted and weakened: and partly to support us in our troubles: they may be afflicted, but not perish for ever; chastened, but not destroyed; not for perdition, but amendment.

[2.] The positive part is expressed partly to show our heavenly Father's love, who cannot be satisfied till he hath brought us into his immediate presence; and partly to answer the desire of the faithful, who long for everlasting communion with him; we cannot be satisfied till we be for ever with the Lord, in a perfect state of subjection to him, and fruition of him.

*Doct.* That faith is the way which God hath appointed whereby to receive benefits by Christ.

I. What faith is.

II. How this is to be understood.

III. Why the gospel covenant layeth so much weight on it.

What is faith? Surely it concerns us to know it, since the scriptures speak so much of it everywhere. There are in it three things:—(1.) Assent; (2.) consent; (3.) trust.

1. A firm and cordial assent to this truth, that Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of mankind, who came down from heaven and suffered for our sins, and became the foundation of that new covenant which offereth pardon and hopes of bliss to all those who, feeling the burden of their sins, will trust their souls upon Christ's redemption and ransom, and forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil, and take him for their only Lord and Saviour, that by him they may return to God. This assent is a part of faith, but this is not all. The reasonable soul in man hath life, sense, appetite, and motion, as the souls of the beasts have; but this is not the difference between us and them: besides sense, life, and appetite, we have reason and discourse. So here, knowledge and assent are implied in faith, but more is required to make it justifying and saving. Assent is good as it is inductive of other things, or leadeth on other things, to wit, choice and trust; and it is not only good, but necessary, lest we build without a foundation. It was of great weight heretofore, when Christ's person and doctrine was more questioned and contradicted: John viii. 24, 'Unless ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins;' lose all the benefit of his coming. It is said, 1 John v. 1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.' It was a mighty thing then to believe and profess Christ to be the Messiah, and to cleave to that profession, whatever temptations they had to the contrary. But I dare not leave the decision of men's spiritual estate upon that trial only; the bleak winds that blew then in their faces, blow now on our backs; and it is as dangerous now to deny Christ to be the Messiah, as it was for them to profess it. However, assent is still necessary, to put the greater life and power into our faith; for if the fire were well kindled, it would of itself break out into a flame. The stronger our assent is, the more powerful to beget love and dependence on God's promises, obedience to his commands, and perseverance notwithstanding temptations. This assent, to do its work, must be firm and cordial.

[1.] Firm. You must believe unfeignedly that Christ is the Messiah and Redeemer of the world: Acts ii. 36, 'Let the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' The word signifies *safely*, they may venture their all upon it: John xvii. 8, 'They have known.' There is a common customary superficial belief, that men take up upon the

credit of their forefathers, and the consent of the country where they live, and there is a sound persuasion of the truth of the gospel wrought in us by the Spirit of God. And though human credulity doth little, yet this last serveth to renew the soul : Mat. xvi. 17, 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in heaven ;' when Peter had said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' This makes us victorious over the devil, the world, and the flesh : 1 John v. 5, 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?' If this important supreme truth were well believed, it would doubtless prevail against the allurements of the world and the flesh, and make men see that they have something else than this deceitful world to look after. Truths go to the quick when soundly believed.

[2.] Cordial. Many seem verily to be persuaded that Jesus is the Son of God, but are no way affected with this mystery of grace, nor changed. The devils may give a bare assent to this great gospel truth. Compare Mark v. 7 with Mat. xvi. 16, the confession of the devil with the profession of Peter. The devil owned Jesus to be the Son of the most high God, as well as Peter, the Son of the living God. Austin's observation is very good : *Hoc dicebat Petrus, hoc dicebant daemones, Petrus ut Christum amplecteretur, daemones ut Christus ab iis recederet*—Peter said the same thing, and the devil the same thing ; Peter said it that he might embrace Christ, the devils that he might depart from them. It is one thing to be of this opinion that Christ is the Saviour of the world, another to accept and receive him into our hearts.

2. The next thing which I shall observe in faith is a consent to receive Christ as God offereth him to us in the gospel : John i. 12, 'To as many as received him,' &c. He gave power to become the sons of God to as many as believed on his name.

[1.] It is not a rash consent, but such as is deliberate, serious, and advised. When we assure men that God in the gospel calls them to accept of Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and that they shall be pardoned and saved, they are ready to say with all their heart ; but they do not consider what it is to receive Christ, and therefore retract their consent almost as soon as it is given. Therefore Christ directeth us to sit down and count the charges, that we may allow for opposition and temptations, Luke xiv. 28-33. When you have considered his strict laws, made a full allowance for incident difficulties and temptations, and can resolve, forsaking all others, to cleave to him alone for salvation.

[2.] It must not be a forced and involuntary consent, such as a person maketh when he is frightened into a little religiousness for the present, but would never mind it, nor yield to it, if he were in a state of full liberty. It may be in a distress or pang of conscience ; by all means they must have Christ ; or when sick are afraid to die, or under some great judgments ; as the Israelites when they heard the thundering on Mount Sinai : 'All that thou hast commanded us, we will do,' Deut. v. 27. No ; this will not serve the turn : the will must be effectually inclined to Christ, and to God the Father by him, as our

ntmost felicity and end. All Christ's people are a willing people, Ps. cx. 3.

[3.] It must be a resolved consent, a fixed, not an ambulatory will, which we take up for a purpose, or at some certain times for a solemn duty or so. No; you must 'cleave to him with full purpose of heart,' Acts xi. 23. Trample upon everything that would separate you from him, Phil. iii. 8, 9; Rom. viii. 36, to the end. It must not be a feeble consent, such as is contradicted by every foolish and hurtful lust, but a prevalent consent, such as can maintain itself against difficulties and temptations, and the oppositions of the flesh, and control all other desires and delights.

[4.] It must not be partial, but a total, universal consent; not only a consent of dependence or trust, to accept of Christ as our Saviour, but a consent of subjection to him as our Lord: Col. ii. 6, 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.' Many would have Christ and his benefits, but they would not yield that he should reign over them: Luke xix. 27, 'Those mine enemies, that would not I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.' But the true believing implieth a taking of Christ and his yoke: Mat. xi. 29, 'Take my yoke upon you,' &c. Christ and his cross, Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' It is accompanied with a resolution to obey his laws and keep his commandments, that we may abide in his love.

3. The third thing in faith is trust, spoken of Eph. i. 13, 'In whom ye trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' Trust is a dependence upon Christ for the blessings which he hath procured for us, and promised to us; and is represented by the metaphors of staying the mind on God: 'Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou keepest him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' By the staying of the mind is intended its fixedness and stability, when, being satisfied with the promises, we can comfortably wait for the event and issue. The other metaphor is, committing ourselves to God: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' When we can trust our all in Christ's hands, knowing that he can give us that righteousness whereby we may stand before God, and have comfortable access to him, and at length give us that eternal life which is our supreme happiness. When you can trust him for deliverance from the guilt, power, and punishment of sin, and for the beginning, strengthening, and preserving of grace in us to everlasting life, you have obtained a good degree of faith. Only for the further opening of this trust, I must observe to you:—

[1.] That this trust respects all Christ's offices, which are, prophet, priest, and king. You trust him as a prophet when you give up yourselves as his disciples to the conduct of his word and Spirit, being persuaded that he will infallibly teach you the way to true happiness: John vi. 68, 69, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' This trust is our remedy against all false



religions; for what should draw us from the true and chief doctor of the church? You trust him as a priest, when you believe the value of his merit and sacrifice, and comfort yourselves with his gracious promises and covenant, and come to God with more boldness and hope of mercy upon the account of his intercession, especially in your great extremities, Heb. iv. 14–16. Therefore we may pray confidently, and make an open and free discovery of our wants and requests to God, who will relieve us, and do what is best for us in a fit season, when we most want it and least expect it. We must trust him as a king, when we become his subjects, and are persuaded that he will govern us in truth and righteousness, in order to our salvation, and defend us by his mighty power till he hath brought us to glory and blessedness: 2 Tim. iv. 18, ‘The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.’

[2.] That this trust is practical, and is not to be determined by our confidence so much as obedience and resolution to take the way which God hath prescribed, that we may obtain the blessings which he hath promised to us. This consideration is necessary, partly because God or Christ will be trusted no farther than he hath obliged himself, and so far we may depend upon him. Now Christ hath only obliged himself to be ‘the author of eternal salvation to those that obey him,’ Heb. v. 9. Partly because this obedience is difficult, self-denial is required, Mat. xvi. 24, ‘Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself,’ &c. A surer note of our faith than a confidence or a presumption that we shall fare well enough though we indulge the ease and desires of the flesh, and gratify our interest in the world; and therefore, faith being an obediential confidence, doth confute these vain conceits. Many think they may the more boldly venture on sin, the more they believe, or seem to believe, the grace of God in Christ. Others think all their business is to get a victory over their consciences, and though they do not deny their lusts, yet if they can be strongly persuaded that God will be merciful to them in Christ, they shall not perish but obtain everlasting life. No; we must obey, we must deny ourselves, or else we do not trust Christ to bring us to heaven in his own ways and methods, but trust to some vain conceits of our own.

II. How this is to be understood, ‘that whosoever *believeth*,’ since many other things are required of us, as repentance, mortification of sin, self-denial, new obedience or holiness? Luke xiii. 5, ‘Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.’ Mortification: Rom. viii. 13, ‘If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.’ Self-denial: Luke xiv. 26, ‘If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.’ New obedience or holiness: Heb. xii. 14, ‘Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.’ I answer—All truths are not delivered in one place, and therefore a solitary faith will not bring us to heaven, but that which is seconded with other things. But more distinctly:—

1. Faith is not required to exclude other things that are connexed with it by the ordination of God. For every one that believeth Christ, believeth the whole gospel to be true. Except against one part and you

may except against all the rest. Now it is evident in the gospel that without regeneration, repentance, and holiness, no man can be saved and see God ; therefore every one that believeth in Christ must trust him to obtain it in the way that he hath appointed and promised to give it.

2. Faith is not required to exclude other things that are included in the nature of it, or flow as genuine effects from such a cause. A purpose of obedience is included in the nature of faith, and actual obedience is the fruit of it. Every one that believeth Christ receiveth him in all his offices ; therefore a purpose of obedience is included in the nature of it ; and if faith be sincere, universal obedience in self-denial, mortification, and our duty to God and men, will naturally be derived from it. Therefore, as he that is to entertain a king makes reckoning of his train, and that he will not come alone, so every one of whom faith in Jesus Christ is required must reckon that his faith must be evidenced to be sincere by the fruits of it.

III. Why is faith required, that we may receive benefit by Christ ?

For these reasons :—(1.) In respect of God ; (2.) In respect of Christ ; (3.) In respect of the creature ; (4.) In respect of our comforts.

1. In respect of God, that our hearts may be possessed with a full apprehension of his grace, who in the new covenant appeareth not as a revenging and condemning God, but as a pardoning God. This reason is rendered by the apostle, Rom. iv. 16, 'It is of faith, that it might be of grace.' The law brought in the terror of God, by being the instrument of revealing sin, and the punishment due thereunto : ver. 15, 'The law worketh wrath, for where there is no law there is no transgression,' no such stinging sense of it ; but the gospel brought in grace. The law stated the breach, but the gospel showed the way of our recovery. And therefore faith doth more agree with grace, as it makes God more amiable and lovely to us, and beloved by us, by the discovery of his goodness and grace. The saving of man by Christ, that is, by his incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension, do all tend to possess our hearts with his abundant grace. To the same tend also his merciful covenant, gracious promises, and all the benefits given to us ; his Spirit, pardon, and communion with God in glory, all is to fill our hearts with a sense of the love of God. And all this is no more than necessary ; for a guilty conscience is not easily settled, and brought to look for all kind of happiness from one whom we have so much wronged. Adam, when once a sinner, was shy of God, Gen. iii. 30 ; and sin still makes us hang from him. Guilt is suspicious, and if we have not one to lead us by the hand, and bring us to God, we cannot abide his presence. For this end serveth faith ; that sinners, being possessed of the goodness and grace of God, may be recovered and return to him by a fit means. In the new covenant, repentance more distinctly respects God, and faith respecteth Christ : Acts xx. 21, 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' Repentance respects God, because from God we fell, and to God we must return. We fell from him, as we withdrew our allegiance, and sought our happiness elsewhere ; to him we return, as our rightful and proper happiness ; but faith respects the Mediator, who is the only remedy of our misery, and the means of our eternal

blessedness. He opened the way to God by his merit and satisfaction, and actually bringeth us into this way by his renewing and reconciling grace, that we may be in a capacity both to please and enjoy God ; and that is the reason why faith in Christ is so much insisted on, as our title and claim to the blessedness of the new covenant. It hath a special aptitude and fitness for our recovery from sin to God, because it peculiarly respects the Mediator by whom we come to him.

2. With respect to Christ.

[1.] Because the whole dispensation of grace by Christ cannot well be apprehended by anything but faith ; partly because the way of our recovery is so supernatural, strange, and wonderful, that unless we believe God's testimony, how can we be persuaded of it ? That the carpenter's son should be the Son of that great architect and builder who framed heaven and earth ; that life should come to us by the death of another ; that God should be made man, and the judge a party, and he that knew no sin be condemned as a criminal person ; that one crucified should procure the salvation of the whole world, and be Lord of life and death, and have such power over all flesh as to give eternal life to whom he will ;—reason is puzzled at these things ; faith can only unravel them. Partly because the comfort of the promises is so rich and glorious, and the persons upon whom it is bestowed so unworthy, that it cannot easily enter into the heart of a man that God will be so good and gracious to us : 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things God hath prepared for them that love him.' Therefore, sense and reason could look for no such thing. Faith is necessary, and a strong faith, that it may work upon us. These are things which we could neither imagine nor hope for. Partly because the chief of our blessings lie in another world, and nature cannot see so far off, 2 Peter i. 9. Partly because Christ's most sincere people are afflicted with so many difficulties, and so seemingly forsaken ; and temptations to unbelief are many and pressing, that it is hard to maintain any life in ourselves unless we have faith, that is, a strong assent and invincible trust. Well, now, consider for what good reason God requireth faith. Sense only looks to things seen and felt ; reason seeth effects in their causes, and yet but probably ; but faith is a believing such things as God hath revealed, because he hath revealed them ; and surely this only can sustain us in the expectation of God's grace and mercy unto eternal life. Whilst we are employed in duties so opposite to the bent of the carnal heart, and have so many temptations to the contrary, what can support us but a strong and lively faith ?

[2.] Till we believe in Christ, we can have no comfort or use of all his offices. How can we learn of him the way of salvation, till we believe him to be the prophet sent of God to teach the world the way to true happiness ? Mat. xvii. 5, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him.' How can we obey him, unless we believe in him that he is our Lord, who hath power over all flesh, at whose judgment we must stand or fall ? Acts xvii. 30, 31, 'Now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man

whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.' How can we depend upon the merit of his obedience and sacrifice, and be comforted with his gracious promises and covenant, and come to God with boldness and hope of mercy in his name, and be confident that he will justify, sanctify, and save us, unless we believe that he is a priest, who once made an atonement, and continually makes intercession for us? Heb. ix. 25. In the days of his flesh, when any came for any benefit to him, he put him upon his trial, 'Believest thou that I am able to do this?' Mark ix. 23, 'Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' 'Believest thou that I am able?' to Martha, John xi. 26. Thus they were not capable of any benefit till they believed.

3. With respect to that holiness and obedience which God expected from the creature. Christ came to restore us to God, which he doth both as a Saviour and lawgiver to his church; and till we believe in him, both these qualities and functions miss of their effect.

[1.] As a Saviour, he came to take away the curse of the law, and to put us into a capacity to serve and please God, by giving us his Spirit to renew our natures and heal our souls: Isa. liii. 5, 'The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed;' 1 Peter ii. 24, 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.' We shall never mind our duty, nor be capable to perform it, unless we believe that he is such a Saviour.

[2.] As a lawgiver, obliging us by his authority to live in obedience unto God. The kingdom of the Mediator is clearly subordinate to the kingdom of God; for he came not to vacate our duty, but to establish it; he came to restore the lost groat to the owner, the lost sheep to the possessor, the lost son to the father. As the grace of Christ doth not vacate the mercy of God, so the authority of Christ, that *novum jus imperii*, doth not free us from the authority of God. Now, who will submit to an authority that is not convinced of it, or doth not believe it? But when once we believe, then we bow heart and knee.

4. With respect to our comfort. Often in scripture faith is represented as a quieting grace. The comfort, quietness, and peace of the soul dependeth much upon faith in Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, which banishes our fears, and makes us in our greatest hardships to trust Christ with all our happiness, and to feast the soul with a constant peace and everlasting joy. Whether this world be turned upside down and be dissolved; whether we be in poverty and sickness, or in health or wealth; whether we be under evil repute or good; whether persecution or prosperity befall us, how little are we concerned in all these if we 'know in whom we have believed'? 2 Tim. i. 12. Heaven is where it was before, and Christ is at the right hand of God; how little then should all these things disturb the peace and comfort of that soul that shall live with God for ever? Ps. cxii. 7. But sin is our greatest trouble. If sin be your trouble, I answer, Is it your infirmity or iniquity? If infirmity, 'There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,' &c., Rom. viii. 1. If iniquity, break



off your sin by repentance, and then there may be comfort for you; for Christ came to save us from our sins.

*Use 1.* Is to confute men's presumptions of their eternal good estate, whereby many damnably delude their own souls.

1. Some, when they hear that whosoever believeth shall be saved, have a carnal notion of Christ, that if he were alive they would own him, and receive him into their houses, and use him more friendly than the Jews did. This is but a knowing Christ 'after the flesh,' 2 Cor. v. 16. He is not to be received into your houses, but into your hearts. Besides, we do not know our own hearts, or what we should have done if we had lived then; a person of such contemptible appearance as Christ was, and so free in his reproofs of the sins of the times, would not have been for our turn no more than theirs. The Jews said, Mat. xxiii. 30, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been guilty of the blood of the prophets.' The memory of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram was as detestable to the carnal Jews as that of Judas and Pontius Pilate to Christians; but they were not a whit the better men, no more are we.

2. They do great reverence to his name and memory, profess themselves Christians, and abhor Turks and infidels. No; this will not do neither. Many prize Christ's name that neglect his office; honouring the physician without taking his remedies never brought health. They have learned to speak well of Christ by rote after others, but they do not savingly and sincerely believe in him to cure and heal their souls, and suffer him to do the work of a mediator there. The other respect is to be ascribed to the chance of their birth: they have the happiness to be born there where Christ is the God of the country; that which makes others Turks and infidels makes them Christians: but though they stand upon the higher ground, they are not the taller men.

3. They are very willing to be forgiven by Christ, and to obtain eternal life; but this is what mere necessity requires them. They will not suffer him to do his whole work, to sanctify them, and fit them to live to God, nor part with their nearest and dearest lusts, and come into the obedience of the gospel; or at least, if Christ will do it for them, without their improving this grace, or using his holy means, they are contented. But 'having such precious promises,' and such a blessed Redeemer, we are to 'cleanse ourselves,' 2 Cor. vii. 1. The work is ours, though the grace be from him. So Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.'

4. Some have a strong conceit that they shall be saved and have benefit by Christ. This, which they call their faith, may be the greatest unbelief in the world; that men living in their sins shall yet do well enough is to believe the flat contrary of what God had spoken in his word: 1 Cor. vi. 9, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor drunkards, nor effeminate persons, &c., shall inherit the kingdom of God.' It is not strength of conceit, but the sure foundation of our hope, that will support us; nor are they the most happy who have the least trouble, but who have the least cause.

Use 2. Do we believe in the Son of God? Here will be the great case of conscience for settling our eternal interest.

1. If we believe, Christ will be precious to us: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'Unto them which believe, he is precious.' Christ cannot be accepted where he is not valued when other things come in competition with him, and God will not be prodigal of his grace.

2. Where there is true faith, the heart will be purified: Acts xv. 9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith.'

3. If you do believe in Christ, the heart will be weaned from the world: 1 John v. 4, 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'

4. If you have the true faith, it works by love: Gal. v. 6, 'For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith, which worketh by love.'

By these things will the case be determined. Then the comfort and sweetness of this truth falls upon your hearts, that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

## SERMON. XVII.

*See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil.—*  
DEUT. XXX. 15.

MOSES, the man of God, having acquainted the people with the tenor of God's commandments, both concerning worship and civil conversation, doth enforce all by a pregnant exhortation, laying before their eyes the blessings of obedience, and the plagues and curses that should overtake them in case they should decline from the ways of the Lord thus recommended to them; in all which he showeth himself not only as an ordinary preacher speaking by way of exhortation and doctrinal threatening, but as a special prophet speaking by way of prediction, and that with such clearness and certainty that these few chapters may be looked upon as an exact calendar and prognostication, wherein the good or bad days of this people are expressly calculated and foretold; yea, comparing events with the prediction, you would rather conceive Moses his speech to be an authentic register and chronicle of what is past than an infallible prophecy of what was to come: nothing good or bad hath befallen this people from the beginning to this day but what is here foretold. What is more largely declared upon in this exhortation is contracted into a narrow room and summary here in the text: 'See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil.'

In the words observe:—

1. The matter propounded, in two pairs, that have a mutual connection one with another: *life and good, death and evil.*

2. The manner of proposal: *I have set before thee.*

3. A duty inferred or attention excited: *see.*

1. The matter propounded, a double pair or conjugation: 'Life and good, death and evil.' Life as the end, good as the means leading to life; or else, life, that is, the enjoyment of God; and good, the felicity following it. The Septuagint changeth the order, *τὴν ζῶην καὶ τὸν θάνατον, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακόν.*

2. The manner of proposing: 'I have set before thee.' Septuagint, *δώδεκα πρὸ προσώπου σου σήμερον*; that is, in a lively manner laid forth and offered for choice. We have a saying, *ἀντικείμενα παράλληλα μάλιστα φαίνεται*, that contraries put together do mutually illustrate each other. Here is good and evil, life and death, put together, that we may embrace the one and eschew the other. As the poets feign of Hercules when he was young, virtue and vice came to woo and make court to him; virtue, like a sober chaste virgin, offering him labours with praise and renown; vice, like a painted harlot, wooing him with the blandishments of pleasure. So, in the 9th of Proverbs, wisdom and folly are represented both pleading to draw in the hearts of men to them: ver. 4, compared with the 16th, 'Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith, Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine that I have mingled;' the one hath her pleasures and the other hath her pleasures, only the pleasures of folly are 'stolen waters' and 'bread eaten in secret,' comforts we get by stealth, jollity, and mirth, when conscience is asleep. So here Moses layeth before them the fruit of obedience and disobedience—life and death.

3. The word exciting attention: *ἴδου*, 'See,' I have done this in order to choice; for so it is ver. 19, 'Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.'

*Doct.* It is the duty of the faithful servants of the Lord in a lively manner to set before the people life and death as the fruit of good and evil.

Moses was God's minister to instruct this people, and what doth he propose and confirm in his doctrine, but life and death, good and evil? and this was a part of his faithfulness. Witness that vehement obtestation used ver. 19. He calls heaven and earth to record that he had faithfully discharged his duty herein. This was the course that God himself took with Adam in innocency. He set before him life and death, a blessing and a curse, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, Gen. ii. 9, that he might live by the one and not perish by the other. God had respect to the mutability of his nature, and therefore restrained him by the threatening of death as a curse not to eat of the one, as he enjoined him to eat of the other as a pledge of life and blessing. This same course did Christ take in his sermons, by telling them of the wide gate and the strait gate, the broad and narrow way, much company and little, the one tending to destruction, the other to life, Mat. vii. 13, 14. So wisdom speaks by Solomon, Prov. viii. 35, 36, 'Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; but he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.' So that you see this is an excellent way to gain men to the holy life.

I. Let us consider our work.

II. The reasons why we must do so.

I. Our work, the matter of it, and the manner in which we are to propound it to you.

1. The matter : we must set before the people :—

[1.] Life and good.

[2.] Death and evil.

This I shall open in these propositions :—

First, That there is a distinction between good and evil, vice and virtue. He that doth not acknowledge it is unworthy the name, not only of a Christian, but of a man. Certainly he is unworthy the name of a Christian, for the whole word of God doth mete out the bounds between both these, and show what is forbidden and what is commanded ; and therefore it is a defiance of Christianity to doubt of it. But he is also unworthy the name of a man. Nature apprehendeth that some things are worthy of praise, and others worthy of blame and reproof ; else why should wicked men be offended to be taken for such as they are, and desire as much as possibly they can to seem better, and to cover their dishonest actions with a plausible appearance ?

Secondly, The matching these two, death and evil, life and good. And here I shall speak—(1.) Of the suitableness of the connection between them ; (2.) The greatness of both ; (3.) The certainty of both these, life and death, as the fruit of good and evil.

1. The suitableness or correspondency there is between holiness and beatitude, sin and misery. It must needs be so, if we consider the wisdom, justice, holiness of God.

[1.] The wisdom of God, which doth all things according to weight, measure, and number, cannot permit the disjunction of these two things, so closely united together as sin and punishment, grace and happiness, but there will be an appearance of deformity and irregularity. For if there be such a thing as good and evil, as *bonum* and *malum morale*, as reason will tell us there is ; and again, if there be such a thing as pleasure and pain, as joy and sorrow, or that which we call *bonum* and *malum naturale*, as sense will tell us there is ; then it is very agreeable to the wisdom of God that these things should be rightly placed and sorted ; that moral evil, which is sin, should be punished with natural evil, which is pain and misery ; that the inordinate love of pleasure, which is the root of sin, should be checked by a forethought of pain ; and that moral good, which is virtue and grace, should end in joy and pleasure. For God is naturally inclined, as the creator of mankind, to make his creatures good and happy, if nothing hinder him from it. Well, then, we see how incongruous it is to the wisdom of God, who permits no dissonancy or disproportion in any of his administrations, to admit a separation of these natural relatives. If there were no other testimony of this, yet the dispositions of our own hearts would know it ; for they are some obscure shadows of the properties which are in God. We have compassion on a miserable man, whom we esteem not deserving his misery ; we are also moved with indignation and displeasure against one that is fortunate and successful, but unworthy the happiness that he enjoys. Which is an



apparent testimony and proof that we are sensible of an excellent harmony and natural order between these two things, virtue and felicity, sin and misery; and to see them so suited doth exceedingly please us.

[2.] The justice of God, as he is judge of the world, and so must and will do right, doth require *ut bonis bene sit, et malis male*—that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do evil. God is naturally inclined to provide for the happiness of man, as he is his creator; and if there were no sin to stop the course of God's bounty, there would be nothing but happiness in the world. But since the entrance of sin into the world, men are of different sorts; some recover out of their estate of sin, and live holy; others wallow in their filthiness still. Now it is agreeable to God's general justice, as he is the judge of the world, to execute vengeance on the one and reward the other; that happiness should accompany virtue by a natural and inseparable dependence, and misery incessantly attend vice, Rom. ii. 6–8. It is true, the bond which joineth happiness and virtue together is not so strong, and so every way naturally evident, as that which joineth vice and punishment. If a person in sovereignty and honour does not will that moral evils be punished, it is in some sort to consent to them; but the condition of the creature is such that he ought to be holy and virtuous, though God had not positively commanded him; and God having so commanded, we are bound to obey his command, though he had not proposed the hope of a reward, inasmuch as we owe all to God, both because of the infinite eminence of his majesty, as because we hold our beings and all from him. And therefore there is a distinction: Rom. vi. 23, 'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' The one is wages, the other a gift. The promise which God maketh of remuneration, and the actual retribution which he performeth of the same, ought to be imputed only to his goodness and gratuitous liberality. Men cannot pretend any other right before him, from whom we hold all things, yea, our very being. Now, that which proceedeth of goodness seemeth not to be of so strait an obligation, but that he is at liberty to do, or not to do, especially when the transaction is between two persons, the dignity and authority of one of which is infinitely above the condition of the other, as the majesty of God is above his creature. Therefore as to such a reward God is free, and therefore might have enjoined holiness without the promise of such a recompense. But the general relation that is between punishment and sin, holiness and happiness, as to the consequence of one upon another, is agreeable to the general justice of God, which is a perfection necessary to him, as he is the supreme governor and ruler of the world.

[3.] The holiness and purity of God, which inclineth him to hate evil and love that which is good. God, excelling in holiness himself, loveth the virtue and holiness of his creature, Prov. xi. 20; for how can he be imagined but to love his own image? And as goodness and holiness are loved by him, so he 'hateth the workers of iniquity,' Ps. v. 5, and abhorreth those that despise that which is most glorious in himself, his holiness. And then, if God loveth the good

and hateth the evil, he will express this in answerable effects, good with life, and evil with death.

In short, the difference between good and evil is not more naturally known, than it is naturally known that the one is to be punished, the other rewarded: whether we consider the wisdom of God, which sorteth and joins all things according to their natural order,—and therefore sin, which is a moral evil, is joined with sufferings, a natural evil, that is, a feeling of something painful to nature, and afflictive to it; or the justice of God, which dealeth differently with men that differ in themselves; or the holiness of God, who therefore will express his love to the good in making them happy, and his detestation of the wicked in the misery of their punishment.

2. The greatness of both these,—life and death; they are both eternal. Punishment in one scale holdeth conformity with the reward in the other. The full reward is an ‘eternal and far more exceeding weight of glory,’ called everlasting life; so is the full punishment, the eternal abode of body and soul under torments, expressed by everlasting fire. If we did only deal with you upon slight and cheap motives, you might refuse to hearken; but when we tell you of life and death eternal, you ought most seriously to consider:—Whatever can be hoped or feared from man is comparatively of little moment, because his power of doing good or evil is limited; but on the one side, ‘It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,’ Heb. x. 31; on the other side, Rom. v. 2, ‘We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.’ God will act like himself, infinitely gloriously, especially when he is ‘all in all,’ when he doth not act by the mediation of the creatures, but immediately punishing the wicked and rewarding the good. The vessel can convey no more than it receiveth. When the creature is an instrument of vengeance, God acteth according to the proportion and rate of that creature; as if a giant should strike one with a straw. If God doth us good by an ordinance, the water runneth but as the pipe will contain; he cannot manifest himself in that latitude, but then God is all himself immediately. Consider:—

[1.] The greatness of the death that accompanieth evil. The afflictions and sorrows of this life are a part of this death. When Moses here had insisted on many temporal plagues which should befall his people, he saith, ‘I have set life and death before you.’ There are many miseries in this life which are the fruit of sin, which would make your hearts ache and your ears tingle to hear of. And then death, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body, is the king of terrors. But we speak of the second death, which is far more terrible, which consists in an eternal separation from the blessed and glorious presence of the Lord; no death like this. In all creatures that have sense, death is accompanied with pain; but this is a perpetual living to deadly pain and torment, from whence there can be no release. In the first death, the pain may lie in one place, but in the second it extends all over. The first death, the more it prevaileth the more we are past feeling; but in this death the sufferer has a greater vivacity than ever, the capacity of every sense is enlarged, and made more receptive of pain. While we are in the body, *vehemens*

*sensibile corrumpit sensum*—the more vehemently and violently anything strikes upon the senses, the more doth it dead the sense; as the inhabitants about the fall of Nilus are deaf with the continual noise. Too much light puts out the eyes; taste is dulled by custom. But here the capacity is improved by feeling. The power of God sustains the sinner, whilst his wrath torments him. As the saints are prepared for the blessedness of heaven, we cannot bear the least glimpse of that happiness which they enjoy above; so the wicked are fitted to endure those inconceivable pains. When the first death approaches, there is struggling for life, men would not die; but in the second death they desire a final destruction, they would not live.

[2.] The greatness and excellency of that life that ensueth good. All manner of blessings in this life is the lowest step of it. At death, when the spirit returneth to God that gave it, then it beginneth to be discovered, but it is consummated when body and soul shall be translated to heaven. This is life indeed. *Nescio an ista vita, mortalis vita, an vitalis mors, dicenda sit*—the present life is a kind of death, always in *fluxu*; like a stream, it runneth from us as fast as it cometh to us: Job xiv. 2, 'He fleeth away as a shadow, and continueth not.' We die as fast as we live, like the shadow of a star in a flowing stream. This life is annoyed with a thousand sorrows and calamities; but there is a freedom from all sin and misery, and a full fruition of pleasures for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11, and our capacities are strong to bear them. This life is patched up with supplies from the creatures, there is a full fruition of God himself, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And in this life such 'days may come wherein we have no pleasure,' Eccles. xii. 1. Life itself becomes a burthen; but that life, as it lasteth for ever, so we are never weary of it. The enjoyment of God is new and fresh to us every moment. As the angels for thousands of years are beholding the face of God, but never weary of so doing, so shall we always delight ourselves in seeing God as he is.

3. The certainty of both these, life and death, hell and heaven, as the fruits of good and evil.

[1.] Reason sheweth it certainly that there is eternal life and death, or a state of torment and bliss after this life. All men are persuaded that there is a God, and very few have doubted but that he is a rewarder of virtue and a punisher of vice. Now, neither the one nor the other is fully accomplished in this world, even in the judgment of those that have no great knowledge of the nature of sin, nor what punishment is competent thereto. Therefore there must be after the sojourning in the body a time in which retributive justice shall be executed, and punishments and rewards that here are dispensed so disproportionably, even to what natural reason would expect from the hand of God, shall most equally be dispensed to persons. If any say virtue is a reward to itself, as in some sense it is, yet the full reward lieth in another world, and the main encouragements must be fetched from thence. There is an opposite principle against it in the heart, which must always be curbed and suppressed, and it meeteth with many temptations from the reproaches and oppositions of those who like not this sort of life. The sensual and ungodly will use all ways and means to brand the holy and heavenly as an humorous sort of men; and if

their hands be tied by the restraint of laws and government, so that we are not exposed to sufferings by their violence, yet we cannot but expect slanderous abuses from them. Now, the case being so, the motives must be sufficient to resist all the temptations of this life, to keep us in the love and obedience of God to the end, which the bare sense of our duty would hardly do in the midst of so many temptations. We are in a state of imperfection, and sense is very strong in us all, and the sufferings of the obedient are very great, that if we had not an eye to the recompense of the reward, we could not so well deny ourselves. Let every man consult his own soul, what would support him when all the world is against him, and he is hooted by the clamours of the wicked rabble, and pursued with sharp laws, and exposed to great difficulties and hardships; if he had no life to live but this, what would he do? Besides, it will not stand with the goodness of God, if you can suppose one that loves goodness for goodness' sake, and is so hardy as to condemn all his natural interests, that such a man should be a loser by his faithfulness and obedience to God, and be made altogether miserable by his duty without recompense, 1 Cor. xv. 19. And upon another account his goodness is engaged to take his servants into his own blessed presence; for the prevailing inclination of holiness, that is planted by his own hand in their breath, to love, serve, and see him, is an earnest that we shall not always be thus imperfect; for our reward consisteth, as of complete felicity, so exact holiness, seeing God, and being like unto him: 1 John iii. 2, 'We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' But suppose this were true, that virtue were a reward to itself, then what provision is there made for the punishment of vice? Cannot it be said, that they that addict themselves to that course of life are punished enough by doing so? Alas! wicked men profess great contentment in that course of life which they lead, and would be glad of the news that they should have no other punishment than to wallow in their lusts. Nature teacheth us, and the practice of all nations confirmeth it, that evils which consist in a breach of duty must be punished with afflictive evils painful to nature. Never such a lawgiver was heard of that would punish a man for robbery by causing him to commit adultery. And for virtue, though it hath a beauty to draw our love, yet it cannot itself be its own price and recompense, for man is of such a nature as he is still drawn on with the hope of some further good, till he come to the enjoyment of the chiefest good. And so many are the trials of the righteous in this world, that the apostle telleth us 'We were of all men most miserable, if our hopes were only in this life,' 1 Cor. xv. 19. The calamities of the good are as great a discouragement and offence as the prosperity of the wicked, therefore there is an estate of life and death to come. Besides, if man be God's subject, employed by him in a course of duty and service, when his work is ended then must he look to receive his wages, accordingly as he performed his duty or faulted in it. Now our work is not ended till this life be over; then God dealeth with us by way of recompense either in pains or joys. Add further, reason will tell us that these pains and joys after death should be everlasting, that the recompense should last as long as man lasts. For



man as to his soul is immortal, and there is no change of estate in the other world after our trial is over, and things of religion become mere matter of sense. Certainly one that hath lived holily, and is translated to glory, there is no reason that he should afterwards be made miserable; and the punishment holdeth conformity to the reward: Luke xvi. 26, 'Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.' There is no changing of estates or places in the other world, the blessedness and misery is eternal. Things to come would not considerably counterbalance things present, if there were not eternity in the case.

[2.] Conscience hath a sense of it, and on the one hand standeth in dread of eternal death, and on the other is cheered with the hopes of eternal life. The first is proved Rom. i. 32, Heb. ii. 14, and 1 Cor. xv. 56. Men are afraid of death, not only as a natural evil, as it puts an end to present comforts, but as it is an entrance to an unknown country. What is the reason of the stings of conscience, which are never so sensible and quick as when men approach near death, or behold themselves in some near danger? What are these but presaging fears that anticipate miseries after this life? If the soul were extinguished with the body, then troubles should in reason vanish; but we find that this is the time when these alarms are redoubled, and these tempests increase with violence. On the other side, there are joys of the Spirit which are a taste and earnest of eternal life: Eph. i. 13, 'He hath given us the earnest of the inheritance.' Good men have so much of heaven upon earth as may assure them they may look for more; this hath supported them in all their difficulties and labour. Now if there was no such thing, the wise and best men that ever the world saw would be liars or fools; liars in pretending comfort which they had not, or fools in being deceived by their own vain imagination, and in taking such pains in subduing the flesh, hazarding their interests, and performing their duty upon the hopes of another world.

[3.] Scripture, if we will take God's word for it, is express, Rom. viii. 13, Rom. vi. 21, 22, and Gal. vi. 8. The present world is comprised in two ranks—either sowing with the flesh, that is, such who employ their labour to make provision to gratify the carnal appetite, or sowing to the Spirit, such as employ their time and study in advancing the work of the Spirit; and they issue themselves into two states in the other world—the state of everlasting perdition or everlasting life. Thus do the scriptures propound good and life, evil and death.

Secondly, The manner how this is to be done. It must be set forth with all evidence and conviction as to the reason of men, with all earnestness and affectionate importunity to awaken their affections. In short:—

1. So as will become the belief of these things. We must not speak of them as a thing spoken in jest and by rote, but as firmly persuaded of the truth of things as if heaven and hell were before our eyes, and as evident to sense, Heb. xi. 1. We look upon these things naturally as at a distance, and so have but a cold apprehension of them; but we should by faith see them as near at hand; as you would pull a man out of the fire, Jude 23, or as falling into a deep pit or bottomless gulf; as one in

the greatest earnest. Belief puts a life into truths which otherwise are but dead and weak in their operation: 'I believed, and therefore did I speak;' as if we had a deep sense of these things upon our own hearts.

2. As will become experience: 2 Cor. v. 11, 'Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.' A man that knoweth the terrors of the Lord, that hath been scorched himself, will set them before men as if they were at hand, ready to surprise them. Others that talk of these things but as cold opinions, they will not be so careful to rouse up men to mind the case of their souls: 'If one went unto them from the dead, then will they repent,' Luke xvi. 30.

3. So as will become zeal for the glory of God, which is much promoted by the subjection and obedience of his creatures, and his interest in them; therefore we should be diligent and industrious in drawing souls to Christ: Col. i. 27, 28, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.' 2 Cor. xi. 13, They have blind, unbelieving hearts, therefore need to be taught; cold careless affections, and need to be warned;<sup>1</sup> and this with the greatest wisdom that can be used, that all may be presented to Christ at the last day. This is that which sets all agoing. When we are wooing for Christ we should not do it coldly and triflingly, but as those that would prevail for their master, that he may be glorified in their being gained to him.

4. So as will become compassioners of precious and immortal souls, for whom Christ died, souls that must live for ever in heaven or hell. Oh, mind them of their duty, warn them of their danger; they are ready to tumble into the flames of hell every moment, therefore with all earnestness set life and death before them. We should use the more compassion to souls, because God himself, who hath employed us, hath expressed so much of his compassion. He doth not only tell them they will die, but expostulateth with them, 'Why will you die, O house of Israel?' Ezek. xxxiii. 11; and Ezek. xviii. 23, 'Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, and not return from his ways and live?' The greatest quarrel Christ hath with sinners is because they will not come to him for life: John v. 40, 'Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.'

Two reasons make this more evident:—

1. This is God's will.

2. This is of great profit to the souls of men.

First, This is God's will, that his law should be propounded with the sanction of it; that is, with penalties and rewards. God might rule us with a rod of iron, require duty out of mere sovereignty; but he will 'draw us with the cords of a man,' Hosea. xi. 4, with such arguments as are fitted to man's temper, as he is a reasonable creature; that is, by promises and threatenings. We are best moved and induced to anything by those two affections of fear and hope; the one affection serveth for aversion and flight, the other for choice and pursuit. Therefore he that knoweth the wards of the lock accordingly suiteth the keys, and doth not only require an exact duty, but also promiseth good and threateneth evil. Sovereigns, in their public edicts, do not

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'warned'?—Ed.

argue with their subjects, but only interpose their authority ; but God condescendeth to reason with his creatures. He doth not say, as sometimes, Thus shall ye do, I am the Lord ; but, If you do thus, this will be your ruin ; and ‘Obey these statutes for your good,’ Deut. vi. 24 ; and so doth persuade as well as command.

Secondly, It is of great profit to the souls of men.

1. It is of profit that they should often be minded of the issues of things. Israel’s want of wisdom cometh from this: Deut. xxxii. 29, ‘Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end ;’ that is, how obedience and disobedience will succeed with them, Lam. i. 9. David’s trouble at the prosperity of the wicked arose from want of this: Ps. lxxiii. 17, ‘Then I understood their end.’ Rom. vi. 21, ‘The end of these things is death.’ *Fugientes respice*, what will they leave in their farewell and departure?—Jer. xvii. 11, ‘At his latter end he shall be a fool.’ The first addresses of sin smile upon us, but ‘the sting is in the tail.’ So the beginning of godliness is bitter, but afterward it yieldeth everlasting peace and comfort.

2. That they may reflect on both combined : either of them single is of great force, but both joined together come in upon the heart with greater power. We need a bridle and a spur ; a bridle because of our proneness to evil, and a spur because of our backwardness to good. We have both, we are compassed and hedged in with our duty on every side. If we look back, there is death to affright us ; if forward, heaven to allure us. There is eternal life to draw us, there is eternal death to drive us. If God had only terrified us from sin by inexpressible pains and horrors, and made no promise of unspeakable joys, this were enough to engage us to live without blame and blemish, that we might not be cast into the prison of hell ; or, if only to quicken our diligence, he had propounded hopes and happiness as the privilege of those that live virtuously and holily, and evil men did utterly perish when they die, this were enough to draw us. If God had only promised heaven and no hell, there would not be so strong a motive ; but can we be cold and dead when both life and death are laid before us, and both for ever ? This is very unreasonable. Solomon telleth us, Prov. xv. 24, ‘That the way of life is above to the wise, to avoid hell beneath.’ Every step they tread is a going from eternal death, and an approach to eternal life. Therefore, as we would escape the torments of hell, and possess the joys of heaven, we should be serious. We are undone for ever if we be not blessed for ever ; and the nearer we draw to the one, the more we avoid the other ; so that we have a double reason not to go back, and much to engage us to go forward.

## APPLICATION.

Use of exhortation.

1. Suffer us to discharge our duty in this kind: Heb. xiii. 22, ‘I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation.’ It is but a small request we have to you, that you will but suffer us to take pains to save your souls. It is irksome to carnal men to have their sluggishness stirred up ; but what is there that should make it grievous and distasteful ? Many can endure us when we treat of the joys of heaven, but when we

come to flash hell terrors in the face of obstinate sinners, and tell them of damnation and wrath to come, they think us harsh and severe, and say, as Ahab of Micah, 'He prophesieth nothing but evil to me.' Ay! but we must set both before you both life and death; and it is better to hear of hell than to feel it. That is a cowardly confidence that cannot endure the mention of our danger. There are others that like the offer of heaven, but would sever those things that are so aptly joined,—life and good, death and evil; that cannot endure this doctrine in this sense. They say, with those carnal hearers, 'Evermore give us the bread of life,' John vi. 34. But they mistake the terms upon which it may be had. Oh! but we are not in the place of God, and cannot make the way to heaven easier than it is; but we propound God's covenant as we find it, life and good, the conditions as well as the offer. Would you have us compound with you, and deceive your souls with a false hope, which will leave you ashamed when you most need the comfort of it? Men would live with the carnal, die with the sincere; therefore suffer us to be earnest with you.

2. The next thing that we exhort you to is to believe the certainty, consider the weight and importance of these truths, that there is a difference between good and evil, that the fruit of the one is death, of the other life; and consider how irrational it is for a man to love death and refuse life. No man in his right wits can make a doubt which to choose: 'In vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird,' Prov. i. 17. You cannot drive a dull ass into the fire that is kindled before his eyes. It is true you hate death, and yet it is proper to say you choose it: Prov. viii. 36, 'All they that hate me, love death.' Why, refusing the good, do you so eagerly pursue the evil? How can ye hate the wages, and yet love the work by which the wages is to be earned, and in requital of which it will be certainly paid? If you detest hell, why not sin? If you love heaven, why do you not do good? There is an inseparable connection between these. Who can pity the torment of that man that thrusts his hand into the fire? What should be the cause of this but incredulity and inconsideration?

[1.] Unbelief and atheism; they do not think God will recompense men according to their works. Now, till men believe it, tell them of hell or heaven never so much, it will not work upon them. Who would lose that which is certain and present, for the hope or fear of that which is to come and doubtful, when they suspect or believe it not fully? No wonder they go on still in the paths that lead down to the chambers of death, and are prejudiced against the ways of life. But why are men such infidels as to future things?

(1.) You cannot disprove what is declared in scripture, or by any sound argument evince that there is no heaven or hell; for all you say or know, there are both really existing; and if there were no more but that, it were good to take the surer side, especially when you part with nothing but a few base pleasures and carnal satisfactions. Reason should make us very careful. In a lottery, where there is but a possibility of gaining, men will venture a shilling or a small matter for a prize. If there be either no hell or heaven, you part with no more than the vain pleasures of a fading, perishing life; but if this doctrine prove true, you run the hazard of eternal torments, and lose the comfort of eter-



nal joys; therefore it is better to trust this doctrine than try it. It is prudence to make provision for the worst.

(2.) But doth not natural reason and conscience, and the presages of our hearts, shrewdly evidence that there is a world to come, as before was proved—a heaven for the good, and a hell for the wicked? At present the wicked flourish, and the good many times suffer; what shall we conclude thence? Mal. ii. 17, ‘Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in him; or where is the God of judgment?’

(3.) If nature be not so clear, scripture is full and positive. If we do indeed believe the scripture, as we profess to do, certainly we cannot so grossly go against the whole current and drift of it. That scripture which you profess to be the book of God, and take for the rule of your lives and expectations; that scripture which your consciences dread as owning the voice of God therein; that scripture which is confirmed by God’s providence and frequent experiments; that scripture which hath such a rational evidence in itself,—it is that assurareth us of a world to come, and bringeth it to light in the word. The very thought of such a hell and heaven as were invented by the ancient heathens, was enough to make them virtuous; though as to the manner and circumstances of it, the more understanding knew it to be a very fable and supposition: yet the thing itself, being bottomed and founded upon those natural apprehensions of the immortality of the soul, and the attributes of the deity, had powerful effects upon them. Now shall we talk of Christianity, pretend a reverence for the scriptures, and shall we tremble no more at the certainty of a hell than Gentiles at the possibility of it? Shall their suspicion work more than our faith? If they were so pliable to poets’ discipline, how should we be moulded and framed by the doctrine of Christ? What awe and holy trembling should it breed in our hearts!

[2.] Inconsideration. We are so taken up with the cares and pleasures of the present life, that we are not at leisure to think of death and life, hell and heaven, or upon what terms we stand with God: Jer. viii. 6; Eccles. xi. 9, ‘Remember that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.’ The young man in the heat of his lusts forgetteth that a time of reckoning will come. Oh, think of your ways, and whither you are a-going. It is foolish to busy ourselves about many things, and neglect the main: Luke x. 41, 42. You think it will bring a damp on your hearts. But if you cannot endure to think of hell, how much less will you endure one day to suffer it? Is it such a trouble to consider it?—what is it to feel it? Timely consideration is the way to prevent and escape these torments; it will help to preserve you from coming thither, and cause it to work upon you. Oh, then, ‘Set your hearts unto all these words which I testify among you this day,’ Deut. xxxii. 46. Consideration will awaken the soul that was formerly laid asleep. Will heaven or hell entice or deter the man that thinketh not of it? Shall we not, therefore, have a little patience while we deeply ponder and weigh these things in our minds? See, life and death is set before you; and will you not allow a few serious thoughts about them, nor ask your souls what shall become of you to all eternity? God’s great complaint of

Israel is: Isa. i. 3, 'My people will not consider;' and the same complaint may be made of us. Things are evident and clear to faith, reason, and conscience; but we will not consider, and so wander out of the way.

3. The next thing we exhort you to do, is to make choice for your own souls. That is the use Moses makes of it: Deut. xxx. 19, 'Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.' Hearing, believing, considering, are all in order to choice; and without choice, and a determined, fixed, bent of heart, you will never walk evenly in heaven's ways. Determine not only that you must, but you will, walk in the way which God hath set forth for you. God's ways must be chosen: Ps. cxix. 30, 'I have chosen the way of truth;' and ver. 173, 'I have chosen thy precepts;' Josh. xxiv. 15, 'If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve.' Not as if it were indifferent, but to set an edge upon their appetite. There is much strength in the bond, when a man bindeth himself freely, and makes him the more inexcusable if he doth not observe it. All will choose life before death, but they are out in the means; they do not choose good before evil, the good of holiness before the evil of sin. Every man desireth some good. It is as natural for the reasonable creature to desire to be happy, as it is for the fire to burn; but we do not make a right choice of the means that may bring us to that happiness that we desire. They would be happy, but they choose means quite contrary to happiness. Oh, then, choose the ways of God; let life be your motive, and holiness your choice. This is the way to live for ever, to avoid hell beneath. As soon as we come to years of discretion, we should make our choice to go on in the ways of life. To this we are obliged by the most weighty reasons, urged by the enforcements of the word, and by the sad and numerous examples of young people, who make an ill choice in the beginning, and go on, and are hardened therein, and perish for ever.

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### SERMON XVIII.

*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.—*  
MAT. VII. 12.

It is a general complaint of the world that Christians are defective in the duties of the second table. Some hypocrites may be so, to mask over a dishonest life with a pretence of worship and godliness; but we are not to judge of the rest of the people of God by these, no more than we would judge of the glory of a street by the filthiness of the sink or canal, or of the sound grapes in the cluster by the rotten ones. For certainly all that have truly submitted to Christianity do find that religion doth influence their relations, and run out and issue itself in all the duties which they owe to man as well as unto God. And it was not a boast which Austin said to the heathens, 'Let all

the religions of the world produce such princes, such subjects, such husbands, wives, parents, children, as the Christian religion produceth.' This was the glory of religion then, and it should not fall in our hands. Or possibly this may be the cause of it, unrenewed men which allow one another in their excesses, and glory in some kind of mutual civilities, may equal or overpass the godly therein. Look, as dogs excel men in the acuteness of smell, and the eagle in sharpness of sight, and many other beasts in other senses, because it is their excellency, so there are certain lower respects which the men of the world mutually pay one towards another, and they may excel in these as their peculiar worth.

But, however, be that complaint true or false, it concerns us to take notice of it, and to prevent all suspicion of this kind. And therefore we need to press moralities upon Christians, and that from the true root, the love of God; for that is the great mistake of this age, to set up a sort of false morality, and forget the true one that is built on faith in Christ and love to God.

Now, to set down each particular duty would be tedious. The life of man is short, and the law in all its necessary explications long and voluminous; and therefore to have a sure rule, and a short one, would be a very great advantage to us in this matter.

And this one direction which I have read to you out of the word of God will serve instead of all. It is a *sure* rule, for Christ gives it us, who is truth itself; and though it be short, it is *full* enough for our purpose, for here is the substance and quintessence of the law and prophets, all drawn into one compendious rule and abridgment of our duty, the best epitome that ever was. A sentence this is of such weight, that the Emperor Severus (as Lactantius reporteth out of Lampridius) was so taken with it, that, having heard it from some Jew or Christian, he wrote it in his palace, and caused it to be engraven in golden letters in the courts of justice, and to be proclaimed at the punishment of offenders. And therefore I shall briefly discourse of this rule, and present it to your serious consideration.

In the words there is:—

I. A rule of life: *whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*

II. The commendation of it: *for this is the law and the prophets.*

III. The illative particle: *therefore.*

My business shall be to open these circumstances.

I. Here is the rule of life. This general precept may be considered in the affirmative or in the negative (for negatives are included in their affirmatives). The affirmative is in the text, 'All those things that you would men should do unto you;' the negative is in that noted saying, *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*—that which you would not have done to you, do not you to them. The one, the negative, conduceth to restrain injury; but the other, the affirmative, urgeth us to do good. The negative enforceth justice and equity in us to others; the affirmative, love and charity. Heathens by the light of nature were more sensible of negatives, that they should not hurt others in their body, goods, or good name, as we would not in either of these things be wronged ourselves; therefore Christ, passing that, layeth

down the affirmative, of which nature is less sensible, of doing good to them, as we desire they should do to us in our extremities.

But because one cannot well be handled without the other, I shall begin with the negative consideration, which concerns right and justice to the persons, names, goods, and possessions of others. We are earnest to have fair dealing from others; we should be as earnest to yield the same again. There is no man but hath a quick sense of injuries done to himself. When we are wronged by lying, slandering, oppression, or by fraudulent bargains, how will we discourse of equity, and plead for right upon these occasions? Why, the like tender respect, the like sense, should we have in our dealing with others; as you would not others should defame, oppress, or overreach you, so should not you do to them. In other men's dealings with us we are masters, acute discerners of right in our own case, able to teach what men ought to do; but in our dealing with others we are scarce scholars. We would be revered, commended, fairly used, have others tender of our credit; and if we be abused in person, disgraced in speech, endamaged in goods or good name, we complain of the wrong. Therefore it was well said of Calvin, that it would be much better for mankind if we were as faithful learners of active duties as we are acute doctors concerning passives; that is, that we would not offer such usage to others as we would not be well pleased with ourselves, but give as we would receive.

To impress the rule upon you, I shall give four considerations in the negative sense.

1. That in the duties of the second table we have more light than we have in the first; for when Christ sets forth the sum of both the tables, Mat. xxii. 36, 37, he tells us that we must 'love God with all our hearts, our souls, our strength, and mind;' but when he comes to the love of our neighbour, he gives a measure more easily discernible; we are to 'love our neighbour as ourselves.' Love will tell us what is good for ourselves. The love of God must be preferred both to ourselves and to our neighbours. And in guiding and expressing our love to God, we need many rules. Our desires of good to ourselves are a complete measure and rule of that respect we owe to our neighbours. This principle of self-love would show us what we owe to one another. (But though nature discovers a God, and reason that this God should be worshipped, yet nature could never carve out such a worship as is proper to God, and as God likes; there needs a larger explication. Let a man be free from passion and from inordinate self-love, consider what he would have done to himself; this will direct him plainly what should be done to others that agree with us in the same common nature, and who have an original right with us in things that belong to justice and equity, and should be as fairly respected by us as we expect to be treated by them.

2. The breach of this rule is more evil in him which hath experienced the bitterness of wrongs or misery than in another; because experience giveth us a truer knowledge of things than a naked idea and conception of them. He that knoweth things by mere contemplation, doth but know them at a distance, and as it were afar off; but he that knoweth things by experience, knows them at hand, and feels



the smart of them. Therefore conscience should work more in them by way of restraint, because they know what it is to be oppressed and disgraced, and remember how grievous it was when they did lie under any wrong. Look, as it is made an argument of confidence in Christ's pity, because his heart was made tender by experience: he was tempted, he was despitely used, he experimented all our sorrows; therefore 'he is able'—that is, has a greater fitness—'to succour those which are tempted,' Heb. ii. 18. And in another place we read, that 'He learned obedience by the things which he suffered,' Heb. v. 8. Did Christ learn anything better, or improve his knowledge, which had 'the Spirit without measure'? Yes, he might have an experimental learning and feeling. Thus, when he suffered things so regretful and contrary to that life he had assumed, he knew what it was to overrule the natural inclinations of life, and subordinate them to the will of God, and learn obedience by the things which he suffered, and will more compassionate when poor creatures are put upon duties against flesh and blood. And it is used as an argument why we should come to the throne of grace with boldness: Heb. iv. 15, Because 'we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with our infirmities,' &c. He hath experimented them in his own person, he knows these things himself. And so Exod. xxii. 21, 'Thou shalt not vex a stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' The people of Israel knew what it was to be exposed to the envy of the natives, where they had few friends and many enemies. But especially observe that Lev. xix. 33, 34, for there you have this great law repeated: 'And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him; but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thyself.' Mark, what thou wouldst have done to thyself, do to the stranger. Why? 'For ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' They knew how burdensome it was to their souls to be under the yoke, how grievous a thing oppression was. Now suitably it concerneth all those which have lain under defamation, slander, and oppression, they should be mighty tender and careful how they speak of others, and what they do to others. They which have been servants themselves, and have felt the burden of heavy tasks and short allowance, hard and unmerciful usage from their masters, they should not exact all their labours, nor deal cruelly unto servants when they are masters themselves; for not only the law of God, but their own experience, will rise up in judgment against them, and increase the sting of their conscience. So the drift of that parable would do well to be considered in these times: Mat. xviii. 33, 'That servant which had his own debt forgiven him, yet he plucked his fellow-servant by the throat. Shouldst thou not have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, as I had compassion on thee?' When we are under restraint, and groan for our liberty, we would fain have an opportunity of glorifying God. If God should hear us in these kinds, should not we be like affected to our fellow-servants, and not seek to hunt every one, that do a little dissent from us, as vermin to death, and as unworthy to be allowed among us? A man which is in debt, how grievous is it when others deal rigorously with him? Now, for him to deal so with others is a double crime, as being a sin against a

law and against experience. You complain to God in the bitterness of your soul, when ye are under these oppressions; so will they complain against you: therefore it is more evil in you. The—

3. Observation is this: That this rule is spiritual, and concerneth the inward man as well as the outward; not only actions, words, and practices (though it be said, whatsoever men *do* unto you), but the thoughts. The whole law of God is spiritual: Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of God is perfect, converting the soul;' not only guides the motions of the outward man, but reacheth to the workings of the heart. As is the first table, so is the second: for we are told, Mat. xxii. 39, 'The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' How like to it? It is as spiritual as the first, and therefore not only what I do, but what I would think and purpose to do to others, is comprehended in it. Christ therefore speaks of adultery committed in the heart, by impure and wanton thoughts and desires. This rule, which concerns the whole second table, not only concerns the actions, but your dispositions and inclinations; and not only provides against hard speeches, and outward behaviour, but the secret grudgings in your hearts against others, that your affections may not be alienated from them. For mark, what is here, What ye would men should do to you, do the same to them. In other places it is, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself,' Gal. v. 14; so that all the duties and practices which concern the good of our neighbour, must proceed from a principle of love. The justice of the second table, as required of Christians, is a justice tempered and excited by love. Though our outward acts be never so pleasant, yet if love be not at the bottom of it, it is not right. As I Cor. xiii. 3, 'If I give all my goods to the poor, and have not charity, it signifieth nothing.' You will think that is excessive charity, to give all my goods; yea, but if it be not done with love, it is nothing worth, not accepted, nor rewarded by God. And so we must refer these words not only to the outward man, but the principle of love which is in the heart.

4. Proposition: That all which is done by virtue of this rule, must be done not only out of love to man, but out of love to God, and as an act of obedience. For when Christ gives us this direction, 'Whatsoever ye would,' &c., he doth not give it as a politic course, to establish peace in the world, but as a compendious rule to guide us in the duties of the second table. Self-love is the measure, but it is not the reason, ground, or principle of our actions. A measure it is, for we will certainly do right to ourselves; but to make it an act of obedience, so it is accepted of God. It is a common rule, all moral duties must be done as in and to the Lord; out of the love of God, fear of God, and obedience to his blessed majesty: therefore it is said, Eph. v. 21, 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' That must be the great principle which swayeth us; not policy, or respect to our own interest, but conscience. There must be a right principle of motion, as well as a just action, if we will do exactly and according to the law of Christ. Therefore here is the great difference between a Christian and another man in the duties of the second table in his moralities; he turns second table duties into first table duties; it is a thing carried on throughout the whole scripture. Thus if he gives

alms, his alms is a sacrifice ; sacrifice is a duty of the first table, but alms is clearly a duty of the second table. So all his commerce (I do but instance in one for all) ; what he doth to men must be done in and to the Lord. So here in this very case, love to man, it is but a stream which comes from a higher fountain, and that is love to God. A Christian loves God first, and indeed he loves nothing but God, for he loves God in all his creatures. In men we love his natural image, but in the saints his spiritual image : 1 John iv. 21, ‘ This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.’ Our love to our ordinary brother must be excited and measured by our love to God ; and our love to our Christian brother, our fellow-saints, must be from the love of God : 1 John v. 1, ‘ Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.’ So much for the negative part.

Secondly, Now let us come to the affirmative part, which establisheth charity ; for it is not enough if we do not hurt others, but we must do them good. Now charity is seen in two things—both in giving and forgiving.

*First*, In giving : ‘ What you would men should do to you, do you the same to them.’ Be as ready to do good as to receive good. A man is never in a right frame of spirit until he takes as much delight in doing others good as he would take in having good done to himself ; nay, more ; for our Lord tells us that ‘ it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive,’ Acts xx. 35. Why a more blessed thing ? Because this comes nearest to the nature of God, who gives all, and takes of none. And therefore, as we would imitate God in other things, we should in this also ; for all God’s works should leave an impression upon us ; his election should make us choose him and his ways ; his love, to love him ; his giving should make us to give. As a child hath part for part, limb for limb, answerable to his father, so should a child of God answer God in all his moral perfections, especially in his goodness. ‘ As you come behind,’ saith the apostle, ‘ in no gift, so do not come behind in this also,’ 2 Cor. viii. 7. And the rule of Christ here is that which doth enforce this (‘ As ye would,’ &c.), do you afford to others that comfort, that succour, that relief in all their distresses, which you would desire they should afford to you if you were in the same case, and in the same distress ? Alas ! you will say, pity should be showed to a man by his friend ; and will you be merciless, and shut up your bowels, and not show this pity to others ? If you were pined with hunger, and your children cry for bread, and you have none to give them, would you not complain of the hardness of their hearts which have this world’s goods, and shut up their bowels against them, and not dispense anything to their necessities ? Why, if you know the heart of an indigent person, it cannot but move you to observe this rule. And the rather, because usually with what measure we mete to others, it is recompensed into our bosoms by God’s providence ; for whatever need others have of us, we have infinitely more of God, and there will a time come when we shall be as destitute before God as they are before you. For instance, in a time of sickness, when all outward helps fail : Ps. xli. 1, ‘ Blessed is he that considereth the poor ; the Lord will consider him in time of trouble.’ Why, he that is

affected with another's condition as his own, when it is a time of trouble and distress with him, and it may be his brother cannot help him, then the Lord will help him, either in sickness or trouble of conscience; when all outward comforts are as the white of an egg, when the poor perplexed sinner cries, Mercy! mercy! the Lord will show him mercy as he did to others: Mat. v. 7, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Those that only seek to enrich themselves, and solace themselves with mirth and pleasure in the good things they have, must not expect the like promises. But those which have been merciful, bountiful, and ready to help others, God delights to show them mercy; and when they are most destitute, they shall find that God takes notice of this, that they were ready to relieve others.

*Secondly*, In forgiving, the same rule holds. A necessary duty; for while we are here in the world, there will be weaknesses and offences, and we need mutually to forgive, and to take pardon. It is said, Col. iii. 13, 'Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.' See the same, Eph. iv. 32, 'Forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' Mark, he proceeds upon this principle that Christ layeth down: 'Whatsoever ye would,' &c. We are in the world and in the flesh, and therefore should not rigidly exact upon the failings of others, lest they or others deal so with us when our turn comes. We need pardon in this kind, for we give offence: Eccles. vii. 21, 22, 'Take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee; for oftentimes also thine heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.' The meaning is, we should not be over-affected with others speaking ill of us, because we know we have spoken ill of others, and should pass it by with meekness and neglect; therefore the consideration of our passions and of our infirmities should move us to pardon. We have been, or may be as bad as they; we have been once, Titus iii. 3, 'foolish and disobedient,' led by our unruly appetites and desires, therefore we should show meekness to them. Ay, and we may be surprised again: James iii. 1, 'My brethren, be not many masters, for in many things we offend all.' Be not many masters, that is, severe, masterly, or supercilious, if another be fallen and hath offended us, for we shall receive the greater condemnation.

The apostle argueth from another argument, Col. iii. 13; and Eph. iv. 32, 'Forgive others, as God hath for Christ's sake forgiven us.' There is no man can wrong us as much as we trespass against God; and though we are but as the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance, yet our great and many sins are freely forgiven to us; therefore it should prevail with us freely and easily to pardon one another. The scripture urgeth this. Oh, when we consider Christ's example, how Christ hath forgiven us; when we consider the greatness of the wrongs which he pardons, sins that are of a scarlet and crimson dye, Isa. i. 18; when we consider our own baseness in comparison of him, Isa. xl. 22, 'Who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;' and when we consider his omnipotency to right himself of the wrongs done to him, how he 'can



cast body and soul into hell fire ;' surely this should move us to forgive others. Yea, and it is not only a motive, but a rule. Forgive others, as God forgives us ; what is that ? Sincerely, not hypocritically ; freely, not unwillingly ; fully, not by halves ; irrevocably, not for a time only ; but as God forgives and casts all our sins into the depth of the sea, so should we forgive and pass by the sins of others.

Christians, shall I urge another argument in this case, what need there is of forgiveness ? Hereby a man overcometh himself, hereby he shames the party that did him wrong, and hereby he takes God's course to get the victory over the person which hath done him the wrong. Hereby he overcometh himself, his own nature, which thirsteth after revenge : Prov. xvi. 32, 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.' He is able to rule himself, so it is his glory ; he doth overcome that revengeful and froward disposition which is in his own nature. And hereby he overcomes and shames the party that did him wrong ; there is no such way to do this as by forgiveness. Thus David did overcome Saul, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17, when David had him at an advantage and spared him, Saul said to David, 'Thou art more righteous than I.' Oh, what a victory was this, to overcome that fierce man's heart and reconcile him. And you keep God's way in overcoming him ; it is God's prescribed course that you should thus overcome him by kindness and meekness : Rom. xii. 21, 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'

But wherein must we express this forgiveness towards others ? As to the wrong to be forgiven, we must consider it either as an offence against God, or sometimes against public laws, or as it is an offence against us. So far as it is an offence against God or the public laws, here we have not power to forgive, and punishment is due to the common good, *Pœna debetur*. The Lord himself, that forgives us, and forgives for Christ's sake, hath secured the honour of his governing justice by satisfaction ; and if the law requires it, we cannot intermeddle there, only we must pray to God earnestly for them, that is our duty, James iv. 15 ; and in some cases we may intercede with the magistrate to take off the penalty, and are so bound.

This forgiveness implieth two things—a removal of an inward grudge, and a readiness to do all duties of love and kindness to them.

1. A removal of an inward grudge and endeavours after private revenge : Lev. xix. 17-18, 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart ; thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him ; thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Thou shalt not bear a grudge against him, for then you hate him in your heart.

2. There must be a readiness to do all duties of love and kindness to him who hath done the wrong, as God ministereth occasion and ability. There are many laws for this : Exod. xxiii. 4-5, 'If thou meet thine enemy's ox or ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again ; if thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lie under his burthen, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him ;' Luke vi. 27, 'Love your enemies, do good to them

that hate you, bless them that curse you.' Now, so far are we bound to remit the private grudge because of the offence done to us, and also to take all occasions to do them good.

*Object.* But whether may not we have recourse to the magistrate for the recovery of our right, and reparation of our wrongs?

*Ans.* Certainly we may, provided we go not to law for trifles; for when we go to law for small matters, and that before infidels, the apostle reproves it, 1 Cor. vi. 2; and when after all lawful means and courses are used before, for taking away the occasion, as ver. 5, 'Is there not a wise man among you to take up the difference?' And when it is not with a spirit of revenge and rigour, for a Christian should show his moderation in all things, Phil. iv. 5, and his lenity, gentleness, and readiness to forgive. But if it be out of a spirit of revenge, not the conscience of justice, we abuse God's ordinance to our private passions, Rom. xiii. 3.

Having thus explained the law, let me vindicate this rule.

1. It seems not to be so perfect a rule. Because many desire and wish much evil to themselves, should they desire evil to others? As he that would be drunk, should he make another drunk? and he that commits filthiness, should he entice others? *Ans.* The meaning is not what we do in a passion, which works not the righteousness of God, but it is meant of a regular will; not that we do with evil desires, as that we do in right reason, that which you do well informed, well advised, free from discomposed passion; what is according to the law of nature engraven upon your hearts, which is most legible in our own case; what the law of nature would judge to be the duty of other men to do. It is not meant of inordinate sinful desires.

2. But doth not this rule make all men equal, and destroy all order and superiority, if every man must do as he would be done unto? What, shall a master require of a servant no more than he will do to him? Would a poor man have a rich man give him relief? Should he give him no more than he expects back again from this poor man? No; the meaning is, that for that time we should suppose ourselves in the condition of servants, and of that poor man. You should put yourselves in their stead, and suppose if I were a servant, if I were poor. We should put ourselves in the same equality with them, and by the law of proportion the same things that would seem reasonable to you if you were in their condition you should cheerfully do to them. For instance, if I were a servant, and did obey, would not I judge such exaction burthensome and unreasonable? If I were poor, and driven to seek relief, would not I judge a denial harsh? If I were a master, should not I judge such an offence injurious to my authority?

3. Doth not this establish revenge and retaliation of injuries to do to him as he hath done to me? *Ans.* No, rather much to the contrary; for it is not what they have done to us; Christ doth not say so, but what we would have to be done to us that do to them. See Prov. xxiv. 29, 'Say not I will do so to him as he hath done to me; I will render to the man according to his work.' That is an ill reasoning within ourselves, and takes God's work out of his hands, whose prerogative it is to give to every man according to his work. The rule is not look backward, but forward. It doth not look to what they have

done to us, but what we should do to them. To think to do the same would certainly break this rule of Christ, and make us be burthensome to others by such actions, and burthensome to ourselves, and so sin not only against our own conscience but against sense and feeling of the thing committed. Injury and revenge differ only in order. He that returns injury for injury doth but imitate the adversary; and he that imitates that which is evil in another sins twice, both against the law and his own conscience.

4. If all the world were contented to observe this rule, then we should have a quiet world; but others are very oppressive, unjust, and very hard to me, this is to live by the loss, and to bring a restraint upon myself from which others are free. *Ans.* Do your duty to them though they do not theirs to you. Others' sins will not exempt you from the law of God, which is your rule, and not their actions. Whatever they do to you, yet carry it Christianly and meekly towards them. You are accountable to God for your own actions, not for the actions of another man. Therefore if you be able to guide your own spirit to them, how perverse soever they be to you, you will have the comfort that you have endeavoured to do your duty.

Having vindicated the rule, let me show you the grounds and the equity of it. What are the intrinsic grounds and reasons why Christ hath given such a rule to us? No question it is founded not in his bare authority, but in great equity. There are two grounds:—

1. The actual equality of all men by nature.

2. The possible equality of all men as to their condition and state of life.

1. The actual equality of all men by nature: Mal. ii.-10, 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?' Were we not all created by the same God? Ay! and mark the equality goes further; we were all 'made of one blood,' Acts xvii. 26, all descended from Adam. Unequal diversity of rank doth not take away identity of nature. There is a diversity of rank indeed. Some are high, some low, some rich, some poor, some governors, some governed, some teachers, and some obey; but we are all made of one blood. So Neh. v. 5, 'Our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children.' Some are highly advanced above others, yet the poorest creature and you is one flesh, and by nature hath an equal right with you; therefore it is said, Isa. lviii. 7, 'Thou shalt not hide thyself from thine own flesh.' Thy poor, pined, starved brother is thine own flesh.

2. The possible equality of all men as to condition, and as to state of life: they are equal by nature, and it is possible they may be in the same state of life. You stand to-day, another is fallen; you are liable to the same corruption and the same calamities. To the same corruption: Gal. vi. 1. 'If any one be fallen, ye that are spiritual restore such an one with a spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' Rigid censurers may fall into like sins or worse themselves. Alas! the devil is very assiduous in tempting, and the Lord permits him to surprise those that are severe to others. Therefore you should show pity and compassion to the fallen. And then as to possibility of calamities: Heb. xiii. 3, 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being

yourselves also in the body.' There is a twofold interpretation of that place. Some understand it of the mystical body of Christ; but I think rather it is meant of the body of flesh, while we are here in the present life. Strange changes may come before we go out of the body; they that are highest may be lowest. In 2 Kings iv. 13, we read of the Shunammite that had given harbour and entertainment to the prophet, and the prophet said, 'What is to be done for thee? wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? and she answered, I dwell among mine own people.' She was well, and needed nothing; she was able to dwell at home, and to maintain herself well enough, and needed not the prophet to speak to the king for her; but afterwards there comes a great famine, and her inheritance was invaded, and she that would not be beholden to the prophet was beholden to Gehazi, the prophet's man. Compare 2 Kings iv. 13, with 2 Kings viii. 3.

There may be great changes here in the earth, great calamities may befall us; therefore, since we are in the body, and since those that are high to-day may be low to-morrow, and you may need the like help from others, we must have a fellow-feeling with them. God, who is the great arbiter of human affairs, can pull down and set up at his pleasure. We have opened the rule, the first part of the text.

II. The second part is the commendation of this rule: 'For this is the law and the prophets;' that is, this is the sum of the doctrine of God. The law and the prophets were the scriptures only then in force, and therefore the phrase is used proverbially in many places: Mat. xi. 13, 'For all the prophets and the law prophesied till John; Luke xvi. 31, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them;' Acts xxiv. 14, 'I believe all the law and the prophets have spoken.' The law and the prophets were all the Bible they had for that time. Now, saith Christ, the law was as the text, and the prophets as the comment upon the text, to expound and confirm the law by a larger explication.

But you will say, Is this the whole sum of the law and the prophets? Are there not doctrines delivered there insisted upon concerning our respects to God and all the institutions of his worship; are they not contained in the law and prophets?

I answer—The proposition must be understood according to the matter in hand. This is the law and the prophets as to all they say concerning our converse with men. You may have many rules in the law and the prophets, where they are more copiously delivered, but they all issue themselves into this general rule. The worship of God and duties to him are also established by the law and the prophets; for when our Lord had spoken of what we owe to God as well as to man, he saith, Mat. xxii. 40, 'On these two hang all the law and the prophets.' These are the two things that all the law and the prophets seek to establish—viz., love to God and man. But our Saviour here speaks only concerning the second table; what concerns that is comprised in this sentence. All that part of religion which is *inferioris hemispherii*, of the lower hemisphere of duty, is distilled into this quintessential extract. As in the spirits of things the virtue is contracted, which otherwise is largely diffused while it is mingled with grosser



matter, so here the spirits, the extract of law and prophets, are all distilled as to moral matters into this one saying, 'Whatsoever you would,' &c.

III. The third thing to be considered is the illative particle, 'therefore.' From what is this inferred? In the foregoing verses our Saviour speaks of audience in prayer: 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father know how to give good things to them that ask him? Therefore, whatsoever ye would,' &c. Christ makes many notable arguments, and shows that God is ready to give good things to us: 'Ask, and ye shall have,' &c. He proves it from the kindness of earthly parents to their children. And, now, therefore, to intimate this, that if men have their prayers granted, they must observe this rule; they must perform all duties of civil righteousness, as well as be earnest in acts of piety. Upon this limiting it to the audience of prayer, it plainly implies three things:—

1. That God is the judge of human actions; he will take cognisance of this, whether you do to others as they do to you, and you shall hear of it in your dealing with God; that is the first and lowest thing; and remember, you have to do with God as much as they have to do with you. He shows this to bridle the excesses of those that are in power. There are a sort of men that think they may do anything if they can do it safely: Micah ii. 1, 'That do evil because it is in the power of their hand.' They eagerly prosecute their purposes and desires when they have power to effect them. Now a Christian should pause upon the matter, and consider not only what is possible to be done, but what is just and lawful to be done; and conscience should put a severe restraint when nothing else can hinder us; as Joseph said, Gen. xlii. 18, 'This do, and live; for I fear God.' He had a full advantage against them that wrought him so much mischief, but he had an inward principle laid up in his heart which begat a tenderness, 'I fear God.' But when men will do everything they are able to effect, and will do anything as far as their power will reach, remember you must come before God, and God can requite it, though they cannot. It is not conscience which governs the greatest part of the world, but interest. When it is not for men's interest, they will do no wrong; but when they have power enough to do what they intend, they care not how they trample upon their own brethren, hate and pursue them with all that is evil. It is hard to avoid this snare when we are in power. Men forget God and abuse their power, and many times, by a strange providence, they are brought to suffer the like hardness themselves. When we see the oppressions of the innocent, and things carried so perversely, we are apt to say, Lord, who shall call these men into question? who shall accuse them? Why, the sighs and groans of the oppressed before God's tribunal upon<sup>1</sup> all persons depend every moment, these will be more authentic witnesses than any matters of fact can be produced in a lower court.

2. It implieth this, and it enlargeth the rule, that whatsoever usage we expect to meet with at God's hands, the same in some measure we should dispense and deal out to others. He is willing to give all, provided you are willing to do to others as you would be done unto. All

<sup>1</sup> Qu., "upon whom" ?—ED.

the mercy and goodness we expect from him, that must sway our practice and conversation with men. Whatever need others have of us, the same need have we of God: Eph. vi. 8, 'Whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.' So for other relations. In the practice of this rule Christians are to consider not only how they would be dealt withal by men, but with God himself for Christ's sake, which carrieth the precept far beyond the heathen latitude, and mightily enlargeth the rule. Alas! from God we have nothing but undeserved mercy, pardon of sins, &c. So we are to practise this rule, not only to those that love us, but to our enemies; we must show mercy to the worst for Christ's sake. Strict justice, by the light of nature, requires the injurious should suffer according to the wrong is done to me. Ay! but what do I expect from God? Therefore, I am to consider how God will deal with me if I am rigid, severe, exact, and stand upon all things to the uttermost.

3. Another consideration which mightily enforceeth the rule is, that if you do such things to others as you would not have them do to you, God will do that to you which you have done to others; for vengeance is his. They are not to do the same to you again, nor exact nor desire it, but God will. It is good to consider God's judgment, of counter-passion or retaliation: 'As thou hast done, so shall it be done to thee; thy reward shall return upon thine own head,' Obad. ver. 15. They that were pitiless, merciless to their brethren in the day of their flight from Jerusalem, God will pay them home in their own coin: 'And with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again,' Mat. vii. 1, 2; Gen. ix. 6, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' It is not only a law what is to be done, but a rule of providence, what God will do. What more usual than malefactors to be dealt withal according to their own wickedness? There are many instances of this judgment of counter-passion, God doing to them what they have done to others.

Adonibezek, when the people caught him and cut off his thumbs and his great toes, said, 'Threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.' Usually this is the dealing of God. The Israelites had their children drowned in the water by Pharaoh. What then? Pharaoh and all his host, within a little while, all his nobility and men of war, were all drowned in the water. Ahab's blood was lapped up by dogs in the place where they shed the blood of Naboth; and Jezebel, being more guilty, was devoured with dogs. Ahab only permitted this contrivance, but Jezebel acted it. Ahab humbled himself, therefore he was buried with honour; but Jezebel was entombed in the belly of dogs, and her flesh devoured by them. A gallows, we read, was made for Mordecai, and Haman was hanged on it himself. Henry the Third of France, in that very chamber where the massacre was contrived against the Protestants, there he was slain; and his brother before him, Charles the Ninth, was found flowing in blood in his bed, who had shed so much of the blood of God's saints. Judges ix. 18, 19, compared with ver. 23, 24. When the men of Shechem had done great injury to the house of Jerubbaal, 'Ye are risen up against my father's house, and have slain his sons, threescore

and ten persons upon one stone.' What then? ver. 23, 'Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, that the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them.' So also the observation of Austin is not to be passed by, upon the parable of the rich man; he that denied a crumb, could not find a drop to cool his tongue.

But you will say, Is it so with good men also, the children of God, if they should break his law, doth the Lord give them according as they have done to others? Yes; God observes the same justice; though he doth pardon the eternal punishment and take it off, yet here in this world, as to temporals, they shall have like for like. Jacob supplanted his brother; he came to Isaac as the elder, the younger instead of the elder; and Laban brings him the elder instead of the younger, Leah instead of Rachel. Asa, which put the prophet into the stocks, we read of him that he was diseased in his feet. Nay; I shall give you greater instances than that. Joseph's brethren they were not flexible to their brother, and did not hear his cry; at length they came to Egypt upon an honest errand for corn in time of famine, and the man is inexorable: Gen. xlii. 21, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.' What was the matter? How comes this to work? In a storm, things at bottom we see come up to the top; so ever sins in trouble will bubble up, and we shall see that we saw not before. How come they to remember the trouble of their brother, for they knew not Joseph, and twenty years were past since they sold him? They found the man as inexorable as they had been to their brother. God's judgment of counter-passion sets their conscience a-work. A greater instance we have of Paul, that consented to the stoning of Stephen, and was present too at his execution; and it is said, 'They laid down their garments at Paul's feet;' and he himself takes notice of it with great remorse afterwards, Acts xxii. 20. Well, what then? after his conversion how doth God deal with Paul? Stephen had prayed for him too among the rest, 'Lord, lay it not to their charge;' yet God gave him some smart remembrance of his sin. When Paul and Barnabas had been preaching at Iconium, though Barnabas had irritated them as well as Paul, they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Barnabas, who was equal with him in preaching, God ordered it so he was not stoned; but Paul, that had consented to Stephen's stoning, was stoned himself and carried out for dead. What need have we to be exact in observing what is required of us here, for the Lord by one means or other will return it into our bosoms. We have done that to others which we would not should be done to ourselves, and therefore will God do that to us which we do to others.

### APPLICATION.

*Use 1.* To inform us:—

First, What an advantage religion is to mankind, even with regard

to the present life. The world hath a prejudice against religion as if it were an ill-natured thing, and made men forget equity and humane respects in favourable dealings with others. But certainly there is no reason for this prejudice, when it doth require not only love of all in their several capacities, but to do to them all the good possibly we can, and to seek out objects to whom we may do good, and be of a God-like affection. Therefore, see that it be so in your profession and practice, that you may recover the credit of religion by this rule. If this were practised :—

1. How securely and safely might we live one by another ! Whence come all the oppressions and injuries wherewith the world aboundeth, but for want of love to their neighbours as themselves ? How easily might we be brought to pardon wrongs ! And how patiently would we bear the modest dissent of others, when their judgments are not of our size and mould ! How far would we be off doing hurt to others, even as far as doing hurt to ourselves.

2. Consider how beneficial and mutually helpful men would be to each other, seeking others' good as their own, and rejoicing in another's welfare as their own. If the world would but consider how much of Christianity doth consist in loving and doing good, as if all the world had but one soul, one interest, it would render it very amiable to them. Take this rule quite away, and there is nothing so false, bad, cruel, that you would not be drawn to think, or say, or do against your brother.

Secondly, It informs us how much mankind is degenerated, and how few true Christians are in the world. Witness our injustice to the names, persons, and estates of others. We are very critical in determining our own rights and proportions, and what others owe to us. Surely we have all reason to allow others what they justly expect. When you are slandered you are passionate, and therefore should not you be tender of other men's names and estates ? When your debts are detained, you complain of wrong. Should we not be as conscionable for the speedy payment of others ? To buy with a great measure, and sell with a less, is an abomination to the Lord and to men. We judge things done to us thus and thus, and shall we be careless what we do to them ? Uncharitableness, and want of sympathy with us in our troubles, much more insulting over us in our miseries, we look on with detestation ; and shall we pursue and afflict others when we have power to do hurt ?

*Use 2. Exhortation.* As that emperor wrote it on the doors of his palace and courts of justice, so the exhortation is to press you to get this rule deeply graven and written upon your hearts. In all matters of dealing towards others, be exact ; for God, that is the patron of human societies, observes whether you do as you would be done unto. Remember it is a short rule, yet sufficient ; and it is a clear rule, therefore it should more prevail with you.

1. It is a short rule ; and yet if it were well learned and kept, it would save the world a great deal of mischief. Change the persons, and we need not many perplexing rules to guide us. If this were done to me, would I take it kindly ? Turn the tables, put yourselves in their stead.

2. It is a clear rule. Look, as the apostle saith of Onesimus when he was converted, that he was doubly dear to Philemon, both 'in the



flesh and in the Lord,' so the same say I of this rule; it is doubly dear to us, both by nature and grace. The light of nature binds us, and it is prescribed by Christ.

[1.] If you break this rule you offer violence to an inbred principle of conscience. There are many talk of being Christians, yea, but get to be good heathens first. Never speak of higher mysteries of believing in Christ, and communion with Christ, while you live so contrary to the light of nature. What the apostle discourseth concerning the natural branches and the branches contrary to nature is applicable in this case, Rom. xi. 24; what he speaks of persons is true of doctrines: 'For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree?' The meaning is, if the Gentiles were taken into a covenant stock, how much more shall the Jews be grafted into their own stock? So it is true of doctrines. If the doctrines contrary to or above nature have brought in souls to believe in Christ and the higher mysteries of Christianity, certainly much more should those doctrines which are agreeable to our nature have a greater respect and regard by you.

[2.] It is also prescribed by Christ. Now our Lord reasons, Luke vi. 46, 'If you call me Lord and Master, why do ye not the things I say?' It is a mockage to call Christ Lord and Master, and disobey his commands, as it was for them to say, 'Hail, king of the Jews,' that spit upon him and buffeted him. 'Therefore, whatsoever ye would have others do to you, do ye the same to them;' for he hath told you and confirmed it, 'This is the law and the prophets.'

## SERMON XIX.

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.—*  
EPII. II. 10.

THE apostle in the context asserteth that our whole salvation is of grace, not of works; he now proveth it. That which is the effect of salvation cannot be the cause of it. But our well-doing is the effect of salvation, if you take it for our first recovery to God; but if you take it for full salvation, or our final deliverance from all evil, works go before it indeed, but in a way of order, not meritorious influence. To think them altogether unnecessary, would too much depreciate and lessen their presence or concurrence; to think they deserve it would as much exalt them, and advance them beyond the line of their due worth and value. The apostle steereth a middle course between both extremes. They are necessary, not meritorious. They go before eternal life, not as a cause but a way; for they are wrought in us by God, and are

effects of the begun salvation ; so that the good that we do is a part of the grace that we have received, a fruit of regeneration : ‘ For we are his workmanship,’ &c.

In the words are two things:—

I. The state of believers : *for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.*

II. The end why we are brought into this estate : *unto good works, which,* &c.

I begin with the former, and there note:—

1. God's efficiency : *ποίημα αὐτοῦ, his workmanship.*

2. The manner of his efficiency : *κτισθεντες, created* ; all proceedeth from the infinite creating power of God.

3. The meritorious cause : *ἐν Χριστῷ, created in Christ Jesus.*

From the whole observe:—

*Doct.* That those that are renewed and recovered out of the apostasy of mankind, are, as it were, created anew through the power of God and grace of the Redeemer.

I. Let us explain the words of the text.

II. Prove it.

I. For explication of what is here asserted, three things must be explained:—

1. Our relation to God.

2. His way of concurrence to establish this relation.

3. How far the mediation of Christ is concerned in this effect.

First, Our relation to God: ‘ We are his workmanship.’ We are so two ways:—(1.) By natural creation ; (2.) By supernatural renovation.

1. By natural creation, which giveth us some kind of interest in him, and hope of grace from him. As Ps. cxix. 73, ‘ Thy hands have made me and fashioned me ; give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments.’ God is our Creator, and the end of our creation is to serve God ; therefore he gives some kind of encouragement to ask the grace whereby we may serve him. But the apostle speaketh here not of the first creation, but—

2. Of regeneration or renovation, which is called a second or new creation. As 2 Cor. v. 17, ‘ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,’ *καὶνὴ κτίσις* ; a new creation hath passed upon him. By the first creation we are made men ; by the second, holy men. Holiness is a thing of God's making ; we are regenerated and sanctified by his grace, and made capable of doing good by his Spirit. Now this new workmanship bestowed on us implieth:—

[1.] A change wrought in us, so that we are other persons than we were before, as if another kind of soul came to dwell in our bodies. This change is represented in scripture in such terms as do imply a broad and sensible difference between the two states—that wherein we were before, and that into which we are translated ; such a difference as is between light and darkness, Eph. v. 8 ; life and death, 1 John iii. 14 ; the new man and the old, Eph. iv. 22, 24. We seem to be, as it were, creatures transformed out of beasts into men. Instead of being governed by sense and appetite, we are led by reason ; and reason is not only put into dominion, but grace, which is reason sanctified, directing and inclining us to live unto God.

[2.] This change is such as must amount to a new creation. There are some changes which go not so far, as—

(1.) A moral change, from profaneness and gross sins to a more sober course of life ; for there are some sins which nature discovereth, and may be prevented by such reasons and arguments as nature suggesteth, Rom. ii. 14. This may be done by ordinary discretion and advisement. But the new creature signifies such a change, whereby not only of vicious we become virtuous, but of carnal we become spiritual, John iii. 6. Man naturally inclineth to things pleasing to the flesh, and only seeketh, savoureth, and affecteth these things ; but in this change the Spirit interposeth and maketh him spirit. Before, man only lived as a nobler and better-natured animal or living creature, and pleased himself, that is, his flesh, either in a grosser or more cleanly manner, being ignorant, mindless of God and another world ; but new creatures become spirit, have a spiritual inclination, cannot content themselves with a happiness on this side God and heaven. Mere human nature can never bring men to this, but only the power of God.

(2.) A temporary change, as to fall into a sudden religious frame, which is soon worn off ; as Ahab's humiliation, 1 Kings xxi. 27 ; or those that howled on their beds, &c., Hosea vii. 14, frightened into a little religiousness in their straits and deep necessities, like ice in thawing weather, soft at top and hard at bottom ; or those the prophet speaketh of, Jer. xxxiv. 15, ' Ye were turned to-day and had done right, but ye returned again and polluted my name.' They seemed to be changed awhile from evil to good, and then they change again from good to evil. This will not amount to the new creature, for that is a durable thing : 1 John iii. 9, *Σπέρμα μένει*, ' His seed remains.'

(3.) A change of outward form, without a change of heart ; as when a man changeth parties in religion, and from an oppressor becomes a professor of a stricter way. No ; the scripture opposeth this to the new creature, Gal. vi. 15. The new creature lieth more in a new mind, new will and affection, than in a new form of religion. Lead is lead still, whatever stamp it beareth.

(4.) A partial change. Men are altered in some things, but the old nature still remaineth ; their religion is but like a new piece in an old garment ; the heart is not new moulded, so as to leave an impression upon all our actions. The renewed are ' holy in all manner of conversation,' *ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ*, 1 Peter i. 15 ; 2 Peter iii. 11 ; 2 Cor. v. 17. They drive a new trade for another world, and set upon another work to which they were strangers before ; must have new solaces, new comforts, new motives. The new creature is entire, not half new half old ; but with many the heart is like ' a cake not turned.'

[3.] When thus new framed and fashioned, it belongeth to God, it hath special relation to him, James i. 18. It must needs be so ; they have God's nature and life. (1.) Nature, 2 Peter i. 4. They are made like God, bear his image and superscription ; it is a curious piece of workmanship, in which God hath showed his wisdom, goodness, and power ; and so they are sealed and marked out for his peculiar ones. (2.) The life of God, that came from him, and tendeth to him. Others are ' alienated from the life of God,' Eph. iv. 18. They recover it, 1

Pet. iv. 6. His spirit is a principle of life in them, so that they are really alive to God, and dead to sin and the world.

[4.] This workmanship on us as new creatures far surpasseth that which maketh us creatures only. That came from his general goodness, this from his peculiar love; there it is goodness, here it is grace: 2 Tim. i. 9, 'He hath called us with an holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace.' Creatures are sustained by his common providence, but new creatures by his special care and covenant: 'He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing,' Ps. cxlv. 16. But he especially preserveth and supplieth believers, 1 Tim. iv. 10. He giveth others bodily comforts; but these, soul-refreshings and spiritual graces, Eph. i. 3. There is *vestigium*, a tract or footprint of God in all the creation; these have his image restored in them: Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man is created after God.' Well, then, this is that we should look after, that we may be his workmanship made again. It is a woful thing to be God's workmanship by creation and not by renovation. It is better never to have been God's creature in the first making, if not his creature in the second making. Better thou hadst been a beast, yea, a toad or serpent, than a man; for when the beasts die, death puts an end to their pains and pleasures at once, but all thy comforts end with death, and then thy pains begin: the beasts have no remorse to sour their pleasures, but man hath conscience, and therefore can have no rest till he return to God.

Secondly, God's way of concurrence to establish this relation. It is a creation. The phrase is often used: Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man is created after God.' No other hand could finish this piece of workmanship. God often sets it forth by this term: Isa. xliii. 7, 'I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea, I have made him.' So ver. 21, 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.' So in other places. Now, creation is a work of omnipotency, and proper to God. There is a twofold creation. In the beginning God made some things out of nothing, and some things *ex inhabili materia*, out of foregoing matter, but such as was wholly unfit for such things as were made of it; as when God made Adam out of the dust of the ground, and Eve out of the rib of man. Take the notion in the former or latter sense, and it will suit with the matter in hand. (1.) We are formed anew of God, as it were out of a state of nothing, and get a new being and a new life. To this there are frequent allusions in scripture; as Rom. iv. 17, 'He calleth the things that are not as though they were;' 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'Who speaketh (*Ὁ εἰπων*) light out of darkness,' he bringeth life out of death, something out of nothing. Now there is such a distance between these two terms that the work can only be accomplished by a divine power. (2.) Creation out of unfit matter. We were wholly indisposed, averse from good, perverse resisters of it. Now, to bring us to love God and holiness, to restore God's lost image to us, it is a new forming or making of us, and must be looked upon, not as a low, natural, or common thing, but as the work of him who gave us his image at first: Col. iii. 10, 'The new man is renewed after the image of him that created him.' To turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh, God challengeth it to himself, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. This creation sheweth two things:—



1. The greatness of the disease ; that is clearly seen in the difficulty of the remedy. Nothing doth make a man so sensible of the corruptness of his nature, as when we hear by what terms our recovery or restitution by grace is set forth. It is a second creation, a new birth, a resurrection, a raising up of stones to be children to Abraham ; yea, in a sort, beasts are turned into angels. From these things we may a little conceive of the greatness of that disease which all mankind were sick of. Every faculty of our souls was both weakened and corrupted, and God only by his divine power can restore us ; for to be cured we must be wholly new made, and who can make or create but God ? Surely we contributed nothing to it. What enemies were we to our own mercies ! It is no small matter for darkness to become light in the Lord ; for a rugged, stubborn creature to be mollified, and submissive to the Spirit's discipline ; for a slave of the devil to become the subject of Christ ; that a heap of rubbish should be erected into a temple of God, and a dunghill turned into a bed of spices.

2. It teaches us to magnify this renewing work. If you think the cure is no great matter, it will necessarily follow that it deserveth no great praise, and so God will be robbed of the honour of our recovery. But why then is this work so magnified in the scriptures, and such high expressions used about it ? Why is it called an opening of our blind eyes ; a turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God ; ' a quickening them that were dead,' and making us ' new creatures ' ? Why must the Holy Ghost be shed so abundantly upon us for our renovation ? Surely it is some great thing which all these expressions do intend, and should be more magnified in our thoughts, that we may give God his due praise and honour. And they sin greatly that have contemptuous thoughts or a low esteem of it, or see not the absolute necessity of it ; and by extenuating this great change, gave shrewd suspicion they were never acquainted with it. Surely all that have felt what God hath done for their souls, they know how little they have contributed to it, they dare not make light of it, and ascribe it to their own wit or will, or entertain undervaluing thoughts of this grace. Alas ! there is an enmity in every carnal heart against holiness, till God remove it and subdue it, Rom. viii. 7 ; Col. i. 21. And what shall conquer this enmity but his invincible power ? Surely this is the gracious and powerful work of the ever-blessed God, and to be ascribed to him alone. Can a stony heart of itself become tender ? or a dead heart quicken itself ? or a creature wholly led by sense, and addicted to the pleasures of sin, be brought of itself to seek its happiness in an unseen world, and of its own accord deny present things, and lay up all its hopes in heaven ? No ; it is God must take away the heart of stone, quicken those that are dead in trespasses and sins.

Thirdly, How far the mediation of Christ is concerned in this effect. We are renewed by God's creating power, but through the intervening mediation of Christ.

1. This creating power is set forth with respect to his merit. The life of grace is purchased by his death : 1 John iv. 9, ' God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live by him ; ' here spiritually, hereafter eternally ; life opposite to the death incurred

by sin. And how by him? By his being a propitiation; that he speaks of there, ver. 10. We were in a state of death when the doors of mercy were first opened to us, under the guilt and power of sin; for while the guilt and tyranny of sin remaineth, we are said to be dead, and strangers to the life of God; and we begin to live when first regenerated by the Spirit of Christ. Now this we have not without Christ being a propitiation for our sins, that is, without doing something whereby God, without any impeachment of his honour, might show himself placable and propitious to mankind; his justice, holiness, and hatred of sin being sufficiently demonstrated in the sufferings of Christ. Now the honour of his governing justice being kept up, his pardoning mercy is the more freely exercised. God may be propitious to mankind, and yet still be acknowledged as a sin-hating God.

2. In regard of efficacy. Christ is a quickening head, or a life-making Spirit, 1 Cor. xv. 45. Whatever grace we have comes from God, through Christ as Mediator; and from him we have it by virtue of our union with him: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' As soon as joined to him as our head, his grace is applied to us by his Spirit. It is first applied by converting grace, and then continually supplied by the confirming grace of the Spirit; and so we are fitted to every good work. Christ first applieth it in conversion, when he giveth us repentance and a new nature, Acts v. 31; and supplieth it by continual influence, John xv. 5. We live on him as the branch doth on the root. Now from hence we learn what a great benefit renewing grace is; it is a fruit of reconciling grace: 2 Cor. v. 18, 'All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ.' God giveth grace only as the God of peace, that is, as pacified by Christ's death. The Holy Spirit is the gift of his love, and the fruit of this peace and reconciliation which Christ made for us. First, our Lord Jesus Christ merited this grace by the value of this sacrifice and bloody sufferings, and then doth apply it by the almighty power of his Spirit; and Christ is first our ransom, and then the fountain of life unto our souls; and so the honour of our whole and entire recovery is to be ascribed to our Redeemer. When he satisfied God's justice for our sins, he purchased a power to change the heart of man; and he purchased this power into his own hands, not into another's, and therefore doth accomplish it by his Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 18. We should often think what a foundation God hath laid for the dispensation of his grace, and how he would demonstrate his infinite love in giving his Son to be a propitiation for us. When he would show forth his infinite power in determining and changing the heart of man, all the persons concurred: the Father purposing, the Son by way of redemption and purchase, the Holy Ghost by effective power; and all to bring back our souls to God, and to make us capable of serving and pleasing him. It is surely a workmanship of much cost.

Two reasons why they are as it were created anew:—

1. Because of the badness of our former estate. Ruinous and decayed buildings are only to be thrown down, to make way for a new structure and house to stand in the same place. Man naturally is a creature in a state of apostasy and defection, under a loss of original righteousness, averse from God, yea, an enemy to him, prone to all evil,

weak, yea, dead to all spiritual good. And what must be done with such a creature to bring him out of his misery, but wholly to new mould him and make him, that he may have a new being and life? The scripture represents man as blind in his mind, 2 Peter i. 9; perverse in his will, Zech. vii. 12; rebellious in his affections, Eph. ii. 3, 'fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' What sound part is there left in us to mend the rest? If we will be brought home to God, we must of sinful and polluted become clean and holy; and 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one,' Job xiv. 4. We must of carnal become spiritual, and therefore we must be new born, new made, John iii. 6. That instead of minding the things of the flesh we may mind the things of the Spirit, we must of worldly become heavenly. 'Now, he that formeth us for this very thing is God,' 2 Cor. v. 5. 'Ὁ κατεργαζόμενος, he that frameth and createth us for this heavenly state, is God. He that is the framer and maker of all things, of infinite wisdom, power, and love, he createth us anew in Christ, that we may look after eternal life. The heavenly disposition wrought in us is a pledge of it.

2. From the nature of God's work, which is not merely by helping the will, but by giving us the will itself, or the act of volition of it; not by curing the weakness of it, but by sanctifying it, and taking away the sinfulness of it, and inclining it to himself. If the will were only in a swoon and languishment, a little moral persuasion and excitation, outward or inward, by the word and Spirit, would serve the turn; but we cannot say of it, as Christ of the damsel, 'She is not dead, but sleepeth.' No; the scripture saith, We are 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. ii. 1. God's grace is not only necessary for facilitation, that we may more easily pursue and choose that which is good; as a horse is necessary that a man may pass on his journey more easily, which otherwise he might perform on foot with difficulties. No; it is impossible as well as difficult to escape the carnal life without God, Mat. xix. 26. He doth work such a change on a carnal man's heart that he contains the world and seeks after heavenly things. Nay, he doth not only give us a remote power to will if we please, or a remote power to do if we please, but he giveth 'to will and to do,' Phil. ii. 13; the will itself and the deed itself. Thus is God's operation set forth; he reneweth the faculties and exciteth the act of willing and doing by his powerful and victorious influence, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Otherwise, if grace did only give us an indifferency, so that a man may or may not, then man would be the principal cause of his own conversion, and God lose the glory of his grace, and the honour of it be ascribed to the liberty of man's own will. God doth not give a power to repent and believe, and leave it to the determination of man's will to make it effectual; but he giveth faith itself, and repentance itself. Faith is his gift: Eph. ii. 8, 'To you it is given to believe;' Phil. i. 29. The Redeemer was raised 'to give repentance,' Acts v. 31. This is the grace which the saints pray for, faith itself, repentance itself: Ps. li. 10, 'Create in me a clean heart;' Heb. xiii. 21, 'The Lord make you perfect to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight.' We pray not only for a grace that gives the possibility, but the effect; not only for such as doth invite

and solicit us to good, but such as doth incline and determine us to good. And this is the grace we give thanks for ; not a power to repent and believe if we please, but for repentance and faith wrought in us. If God did only give a power to will if we please, to do if we please, man would difference himself, 1 Cor. iv. 7.

3. With respect to Christ: 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus,' who is the head of the new world, or renewed estate. All things are new in the kingdom of Christ; there is a change of everything from what it was before. There is a new Adam, which is Jesus Christ; a new covenant, which is the gospel; a new paradise, not that where Adam enjoyed God among the beasts, but where the blessed enjoy God among the angels; a new ministry, not the posterity of Aaron or tribe of Levi, but a ministry of reconciliation, put into their hands whom God hath qualified and fitted to be dispensers of these holy mysteries; new ordinances, 'We serve God not in the oldness of the letter, but the newness of the spirit;' therefore, if we be in Christ, we must be new creatures. We are both obliged and fitted by this new estate to be so. Some are in Christ externally by baptism and profession; they are visibly in covenant with him, and *de jure*, of right, are bound to be new creatures. Others are in Christ by real internal union. These not only ought to be, but *de facto* are, new creatures; they are made partakers of his Spirit, Rom. viii. 9, and by that Spirit they are renewed and sanctified. Well, then, since there is a new Lord and a new law, all is new; there must be a new creation; for as the general state of the church is renewed by Christ, so is every particular believer.

4. With respect to the use for which this new creation serveth. One is mentioned in the text: 'Created unto good works;' but other things must be taken in.

[1.] In order to our present communion with God. Till we are created anew, we are not fit to converse with a holy and invisible God earnestly, frequently, reverently, and delightfully, which is our daily work and business. The effects of the new creature are life and likeness; those that do not live the life of God are estranged from him, Eph. iv. 18. Trees cannot converse with beasts, because they do not live their life; nor beasts with men, for they have sense only, but no reason; nor men with God, till they have somewhat of the same nature and life. If one had power to put the spirit of man into a brute beast, that beast would discourse reasonably. God hath power to put a divine Spirit into his people, to sanctify their souls, that fits them for converse with God. Look, as in innocency Adam was alone, though compassed about with a multitude of creatures, beasts, birds, and plants, yet there was none, till Eve was made, fit to converse with him, because they did not live his life; therefore the Lord God said, Gen. ii. 18, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.' The man was alone, because he had none like himself that he might converse withal as a man in the exercise of speech and reason; the beasts of the field and fowls of the air were no fit companions for him; they wanted the means of converse, reason and speech: so without grace we are not meet for communion with God, till we have faith and love to admire, reverence, and delight



in him. So for likeness. Conformity is the ground of communion : Amos iii. 3, 'How can two walk together except they be agreed ?' Our state of sin is a state of enmity, and our state of holiness a state of love. Our old course made the breach between us and God, Isa. lix. 2 ; but the new life and likeness qualifies us for communion with him : 1 John i. 6, 7, 'An holy creature may sweetly come and converse with the holy God.'

[2.] In order to our service and obedience to God. Man is unfit for God's use till he be new moulded and framed again : In the text, we must be 'created in Christ Jesus to good works.' Every creature hath faculties suitable to the operations that belong to that creature ; so man must be new created, new formed, that he may be prepared and made ready for the Lord. You cannot expect new operations till there be a new nature and life. When a man is turned from sin, he is 'made meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work,' 2 Tim. ii. 21. Our first care must be to get the heart renewed. Many are troubled about this or that duty, or particular branches of the spiritual life ; first get life itself. There must be principles before there can be operations. In vain do we expect strengthening grace before we have received renewing grace. This is like little children, who attempt to run before they can go or stand. Many complain of this or that corruption, but they do not groan under the burden of a corrupt nature ; as suppose wandering thoughts in prayer, when at the same time the heart is habitually averse and estranged from God : as if a man should complain of an aching tooth when a mortal disease hath seized upon his vitals, or of a cut finger when at the same time he is wounded at the heart,—of deadness in duty and want of quickening grace when they want converting grace. This is like blowing to a dead coal, to complain of infirmities and incident weakness when our habitual aversion from and enmity to God is not yet cured, and of unfitness for service, when we are not come out of the carnal state.

[3.] In order to our future enjoyment of God, and that glory and blessedness which we expect in his heavenly kingdom ; none but new creatures can enter into the new Jerusalem. It is said, John iii. 3, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' *Seeing* is put for *enjoying* ; yet the expression is emphatical, as if he should not be suffered so much as to peep or look within the veil ; therefore the mere carnal man neither knoweth his true happiness, nor careth for it, but followeth after his own lusts, till he be new moulded and framed. By nature men are opposite to the kingdom of God, it being invisible, future, spiritual, mostly for the soul ; and by nature men are for things seen, present, and bodily. The interest of the flesh governeth all their choices and inclinations ; and how unmeet are these for heaven ! In short, our frail bodies must be changed before they can be brought to heaven : 'We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed,' saith the apostle. If the body must be changed, how much more the soul ? if that which is frail, much more that which is filthy ; if flesh and blood cannot enter into heaven till it be freed from its corruptible qualities, certainly a guilty, corrupted soul cannot enter into heaven till it be freed from its sinful qualities.

## APPLICATION.

*Use 1. Of information.*

1. That there is such a thing as the new nature, regeneration, or the new birth, and the new creature. It is one thing to make us men, another to make us saints or Christians. We have understanding, and will, and affections, and sense as men, but we have these sanctified as Christians. The carnal world thinks Christianity puts strange names upon ordinary things; but is it an ordinary thing to row against the stream of flesh and blood, and to raise men above those inclinations and affections by which the generality of the world are mastered and captivated? For a man to be another kind of creature than the rest of men are, surely proceeds from a new nature put into him, 1 Peter iv. 4. The world wondereth at believers in their contemning the pleasant, powerful attractives of sensible things.

2. That by this new nature a man is distinguished from himself as carnal; he hath somewhat which he had not before, something that may be called a new life and nature; a new heart that is created, Ps. li. 10; and may be increased, 2 Peter iii. 18. In the first conversion we are mere objects of grace, but afterwards instruments of grace. First God worketh upon us, then by us. On the unregenerate the Spirit worketh while they do nothing that is good, sometimes the contrary; the regenerate he helpeth whilst they are working, striving, labouring; he quickeneth and exciteth their inclination to God. They have some principles of operation, there is life in them; and where there is life there is some power to act, or else God's most precious gifts would be in vain; therefore it is their duty to bestir themselves, 2 Peter i. 3-5. We have understanding and memory sanctified and planted with a stock of divine knowledge, and can retain things on the conscience, which if we do not, we are highly culpable before God: Mat. xxv. 25, 26, 'Thou wicked and slothful servant,' &c. We have an inclination to God and heavenly things, and we must blow it up: Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee;' 2 Tim. i. 6, 'Stir up the gift of God that is in thee.'

3. How little they can make out their recovery to God, and interest in Christ, who are not sensible of any change wrought in them. They have their old thoughts, their old discourses, their old passions, and their old affections, and their old conversations still; the old darkness and blindness which was upon their minds, the old stupidity, dullness, deadness, carelessness that was upon their hearts, knowing little or nothing, or regarding nothing of God; the old end and scope governeth them, to which they formerly referred all things. If there were a change, there would be some hope the Redeemer had been at work in their hearts. You can remember how little savour you had once of the things of the Spirit, how little mind to Christ or holiness, how wholly you were given up to the pleasures of the flesh, or the profits of the world; what a mastery your lusts had then over you, and a hard servitude you were in. Is the case altered with you now? Is your taste of fleshly delights deadened, your souls taken up more with the affairs of another world? Is the drift, aim, and bent of your lives now for God and your salvation, and the great business you attend upon

the pleasing of God and the saving of your souls? Are ye not servants to your senses and fleshly appetites, and things here below, but can ye govern yourselves, and master these desires? This is a change indeed, but in many that profess Christ, and pretend to an interest in him, there is no such change to be sensibly seen; their old sins, and their old lusts, and the old things of ungodliness are not yet cast off. Surely so much old rubbish and rotten building should not be left standing with the new. Old leaves in autumn fall off in the spring, if they continue so long; so old things should pass away, and all become new.

4. It informeth us in what manner we should check sin, by remembering it is an old thing to be done away, and ill becoming our new estate by Christ: 2 Peter i. 9, 'But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.' Former sins ought to be esteemed as old rags that are cast off, and as vomit never to be licked up again. If we are, and do esteem ourselves to be pardoned, we should never build again what we have destroyed, nor tear open old wounds—so 1 Peter i. 14, 'Not fashioning yourselves to the former lusts of your ignorance'—nor cast ourselves into the old mould and shape, and return to our old bondage and slavery. So 1 Cor. v. 7, 'Purge out the old leaven, that you may be wholly a new lump;' so ver. 8, 'Therefore keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' The unsuitableness of sin to our present state should stir up our indignation: Hosca xiv. 8, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' Worldly things are pleasing to the old man, therefore we should not over-much esteem them; they are not new creatures that have not put off the lusts of the old man.

Use 2. To put us upon self-reflection; are we the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus? that is, are we made new creatures? It will be known by these things,—a new mind, a new heart, and a new life.

1. Have we a new mind? A new creature hath a new sight of things, looketh upon all things with a new eye. He seeth more odiousness in sin, more excellency in Christ, more beauty in holiness, more vanity in the world, than ever he saw before. Before they did *φρονεῖν κατὰ σάρκα*—they knew all things after the flesh. A new value and esteem of things doth much discover the temper of the heart: Heb. xi. 26, 'Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.' They esteem the decay of the outward man to be abundantly recompensed with the increase of the inward, 2 Cor. iv. 16. A new creature is not only changed himself, but all things seem to be changed with him. Heaven is another thing, and earth is another thing than it was before, so is sin and righteousness; yea, he looketh on his body and soul with another eye.

2. As he hath a new mind and judgment, so the heart is new moulded. The great blessing of the new covenant is a new heart. Now the heart is new when we are inclined to the ways of God, and enabled to walk in them.

[1.] There is a new inclination, poise, and weight upon the soul, bending it to holy and heavenly things. The inclination to holiness

David prayeth for: Ps. cxix. 36, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.' To heavenly things: Paul asserteth, 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'We look not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal;' when we always live in delightful foresight and expectation of blessedness to come.

[2.] The heart is enabled also: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put a new spirit into you, and cause you to walk in my ways.' Where there is a new heart, there is new strength or grace given to 'serve God acceptably, and with reverence and godly fear,' Heb. xii. 28. Indeed God assists this power, or else we fail and wax faint; but a power there is in some measure to will and do; for 'the kingdom of God stands not in word, but in power.' There is a power to overcome fleshly lusts; the heavenly mind is not given us in vain: 1 Peter ii. 11, 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' A power to overcome worldly lusts, Phil. iv. 13. When we seek no great things for ourselves here in this world, we can the better bear all conditions. I do confess (as I said before), God must assist this power both in willing and doing, purposing and performing. We may have assistance in one kind and not in another. Paul saith, τὸ θελεῖν, &c., Rom. vii. 18, 'To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would, I have no power.' To will is more than to think, to exert our will into action is more than both. In all we need God's help. Some may have the power to will, when no power to do; so Peter *se posse putabat quod se velle sentiebat*. But yet I describe a Christian, or a new creature, by his power; because God's children are never so deserted but that there is some help from God. There are *auxilia necessaria*, helps of grace simply and absolutely necessary, which are not denied, when liberal and plentiful aids of grace are suspended; and therefore a Christian is to be described by his power, though still in a dependence upon God.

3. A new life, or a new conversation, called walking 'in newness of life,' Rom. vi. 4. Surely he that hath a new principle, the Spirit, and not the flesh; a new rule, the law of God, and not the course of this world; a new scope, the pleasing, glorifying, and enjoying of God, and not the pleasing of men and his own fleshly mind, must needs walk in a different course both from other carnal men, and from what he himself carried on before. But all these are true of the new creature; he is influenced by another principle, Rom. viii. 12, Gal. v. 16; looketh upon himself as having another rule, Gal. vi. 16, Ps. i. 2; and propoundeth to himself another design and scope, Phil. iii. 20, 2 Cor. v. 9; and therefore must needs live another life. Well, then, by these things you may judge of your estate.

Use 3. To exhort you to look after this, that you be the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus. You will say, What can we do? This is God's work, in which we are merely passive.

I answer—It is certainly an abuse of this doctrine if it lull us asleep in the lap of idleness; and we think that because God doth all in framing us for the new life, we must do nothing. The Spirit of God reasoneth otherwise: Phil. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your salvation with



fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.' This principle can neither be a ground of looseness nor laziness. You are under an obligation both to return to God, and to use the means whereby you may return. Your impotency doth not dissolve your obligation. A drunken servant is a servant, and bound to do his work ; his master loseth not his right by his default. An insolvent debtor is a debtor, and if he cannot pay all, he is bound to pay as much as he can. Besides, you are creatures in misery ; if you be sensible of it, your interest will teach you to do what you can to come out of it ; and God's doing all is an engagement to wait upon him in the use of means, that we may meet with God in his way, and he may meet with us in our way. I say, in his way ; for God hath appointed certain duties to convey and apply this grace. Now we are to lie at the pool till the waters be stirred, to continue our attendance till God giveth grace, Mark iv. 24. And I say, that God may meet with us in our way ; for God influenceth all things according to their natural inclination. God, that enlighteneth the world by and with the sun, burneth with fire, reasoneth with man, acteth necessarily with necessary causes, and freely with free causes,—he doth not oppress the liberty of the new creature, but preserveth the nature and interest of his own workmanship ; draweth men 'with the cords of a man,' Hosea xi. 4. He propoundeth reasons and motives, which we must consider, and so betake ourselves to a godly course. The object of regeneration is a reasonable creature, upon whom God worketh, not as on a stock or stone, but maketh use of the faculties which we have, showing us our lost estate, and the possibility of salvation by Christ, sweetly inviting us to accept of this grace, that he may pardon our sins, sanctify and heal our natures, and lead us in a way of holiness unto eternal life. Now these means we are to attend upon ; and it is some advantage when you own your duty, and are sensible of a necessity of changing your estate, who would otherwise be altogether careless and mindless of such a thing. But when you look on it as a duty, that must be speedily and earnestly gone about if you mean to be saved, you are in a fair way of cure. By exhortation we demand God's right, and make the creature sensible of his own obligation, that he may go about this work as well as he can, at least that he may acknowledge the debt, confess his impotency, and beg grace. Besides, there are some things to be done before this renovation in order thereunto, as wood is dried before it is kindled. There are some preparations before conversion, and we are to be active about them. As, for instance, that we should rouse up ourselves, and consider our case : Ps. xxii. 27, 'All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn unto the Lord ;' Ps. cxix. 59, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' Man is very inconsiderate ; his soul is asleep till consideration awaken it again. We are to search and try our estate whether it be good or bad, Lam. iii. 40. Let us 'search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord.' We are to observe God's rebukes : Prov. i. 23, 'Turn ye at my reproof ;' to set ourselves to seek after God in the best fashion we can : Hosea v. 4, 'They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God,' that is, think of recovering themselves and bending their course to him. Chiefly we are to take heed that we

do not hinder God's work, and obstruct our own mercies.\* Prov. i. 25, 'They set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof.' Sometimes conscience is startled, either as being excited by the word, Acts xxiv. 25, or some notable affliction and strait, Gen. xlii. 21; by one means or another the waters are stirred, great helps are vouchsafed to us; observe these seasons. However, check despair. He that did turn water into wine, can turn sinners into saints, lions into lambs; he hath not excluded you from his grace, therefore do not exclude yourselves. When did he ever forsake the anxious and waiting souls that would not give over seeking till they did obtain the sanctifying Spirit?

## SERMON XX.

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*—  
EPH. II. 10.

WE come now to the end why we are brought into this estate, created unto good works, &c. The end is not to live idly or walk loosely, but holily, according to the will of God.

In this latter clause, 'Created unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,' observe:—

1. The object: *good works*; that is, works becoming the new creature: in short, we should live Christianly.

2. God's act about it: *οὓς προητοίμασεν ὁ Θεός*, *which God hath before ordained*. The word signifies both *prepared* and *ordained*. (1.) God hath prepared these works for us. (2.) God hath prepared us for them. He hath prepared them for us either by his decree or precept. If you understand it in the first sense, God, that hath ordained the end, hath also appointed means, as Acts xxvii. 31, compared with 24; or else appointed by his precept and express will, Micah vi. 8; and he hath prepared us for them by his Spirit, making our hearts fit for our work, Heb. viii. 10, enlightening the mind, inclining the will. The first sheweth the necessity of them, the second the easiness of them. God hath accommodated all things to that end, enabling us to know our duty and to do it.

3. Our duty: *that we should walk in them*. Walking noteth both a way and an action.

[1.] It implieth a way, that good works are the way to obtain salvation, purchased and granted to us by Jesus Christ. Unless we walk in the path of good works we cannot come to eternal life.

[2.] An action. Walking notes:—

(1.) Spontaneity in the principle: not drawn or driven, but *walk*, set ourselves a-going.

(2.) Progress in the motion. He that walketh sets himself forward and gets ground; he doth not stand still or lie down, but goeth on still.

*Doct.* That new creatures are both obliged and fitted, or prepared for good works.

I. What is meant by good works?

II. What obligation lieth on the new creature to make conscience of them?

III. How they are fitted and prepared by that new nature which is bestowed upon them by and through Christ?

I. What is meant by good works?

1. The kinds.

2. The requisites.

First, The kinds—all acts of obedience: more particularly they are divided and distributed into five sorts or ranks.

1. *Opera cultus*: acts of God's immediate worship, both internal and external. The internal acts are faith and love, trust, delight, reverence. The children of God are often described by these—by believing in his name, John i. 12; love to God and delight in him; Ps. xcvi. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil;' Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself also in the Lord;' trust: Ps. lxxii. 8, 'Trust in him at all times, ye people;' fear or reverence: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.' External, as to pray, read, hear, to be much in communion with God in all the parts of his worship. Without works of piety we are practical atheists, Ps. xxxvi. 1, and Ps. xiv. 1, 2, 4. God's people do certainly make conscience of these: the internal acts are the life of their souls; the external are their solace, strength, and support, their songs in the house of their pilgrimage, their refreshing by the way. Cornelius, Acts x. 2, feared and prayed to God alway; Daniel would not omit prayer one day though in danger of death, Dan. vi. 10, 11. There is little zeal in them that are not frequent with God, but forget him days without number, Jer. ii. 32.

2. *Opera vocationis*: every man must labour in the work to which he is called. God is pleased to appoint and accept the duties of our callings as a good work. Are they never so mean, yet servants may honour God by diligence in their duties: Titus ii. 9, 10, 'Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters, &c., that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' To be profitable to human society in your place is good; the new nature helpeth us so to be: Philem. 11, Onesimus 'in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and me.' All have their work, from the Mediator to the poorest creature in the world: John xvii. 4, 'I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' So Titus iii. 14, 'Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.' When John's hearers came to know what they should do, he referreth every one to their callings, Luke iii. 10-12; walk conscionably therein, glorify God, soldiers, publicans, &c. Without these good works we are drones in the common hive, yea, burdens upon the earth.

3. *Opera justitie*: works of righteousness and justice, to hurt none, to give every one his due, to use fidelity in our relations, Acts xxiv. 16. The credit of religion is much concerned in the just dealing of them that profess it. God will have the world to know that religion is a good friend to human society: Neh. v. 9, 'Ought ye not to walk in

the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen, our enemies?' This was the primitive glory of Christianity, *Dent exercitum talem, tales exactores fisci*, &c. Some carry it so that they deal with God's commandments as Hanun with David's messengers, as if they had cut off the whole second table, and so prove a stain and blot to religion. In short, they that do not make conscience of paying their debts, and using justice, equity, and honesty in all their dealings, are robbers, thieves, and enemies to human society.

4. *Opera charitatis et misericordiæ*: as to relieve the poor, to be good to all, to help others by our counsel or admonition. We are often called upon for these; thus, Acts ix. 36, Dorcas is said to be 'full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.' So 1 Tim. vi. 18, 'Charge them to be rich in good works.' It is not left arbitrary to you, but laid upon you as part of your charge and duty, a debt we owe to God. Now, if you do not mind this kind of good works, you are unfaithful stewards in the good things committed to your trust. You must not deny God his own when he or any of his have need of it.

5. I think there is another sort of good works which concern ourselves, and that is, sobriety, watchfulness, mortification, self-denial. A man oweth duty to himself: Titus ii. 12, 'Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,' &c. These conduce to our safety: 1 Peter v. 8, 'Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;' and belong to our fidelity to Christ: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof.' Therefore take in these also, and call them *opera militiæ Christianæ*, the works of our spiritual warfare, by which we guard ourselves from the enemies of our salvation, that our hands be not weakened and enfeebled in God's work, that we may carry it on without unevenness and interruption.

Secondly, The requisites to a good work are:—

1. That the person be in a good state: Mat. vii. 17, 'A good tree bringeth forth good fruit.' Married to Christ: Rom. vii. 4, 'Wherefore ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.' A believer: Titus iii. 8, 'Let them which believe in God be careful to maintain good works,' A carnal, unregenerate man may do that which is for the matter good; but till he be changed in his heart and state, his works are not acceptable to God.

2. The principles of operation must be faith, love, and obedience. Faith, owning God's authority: Ps. cxix. 66, 'Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed thy commandment.' Love, inclining the heart: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth me.' Obedience, swaying the conscience: 1 Thes. iv. 3, 'This is the will of God, your sanctification;' 1 Tim. i. 5, 'The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and good conscience, and faith unfeigned.' There we have the pedigree of good works; faith unfeigned begets a good conscience, and that a pure heart, and that love to God, and then all particular duties succeed.

3. A due regard of circumstances, that it may be not only good,



but done well, Luke viii. 15,—with that diligence, reverence, seriousness, alacrity, which the nature of the work doth require.

4. The end, that it be for God's glory: Phil. i. 11, 'Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of God.'

II. How new creatures are obliged to these good works.

1. With respect to God, *he hath ordained that we should walk in them.* If you refer to his decree, he will have his elect people distinguished from others by the good they do in the world, that they may be known to be followers of a good God, as the children of the devil are by their mischief. His eternal decree is made evident to us by our making conscience of good works, and so we 'make our calling and election sure,' 2 Peter i. 10. If you take it for his precept and command, surely we should make conscience of what our father giveth us in charge. He hath appointed us to do so, sent us into the vineyard to work, and shall we say, I will not? Mat. xxi. 29, 30; or loiter and neglect when we have given our consent? or pretend to go, and never set about it? To a gracious heart the signification of God's will is instead of all reasons: 1 Thes. v. 18, 'In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you;' 1 Peter ii. 15, 'For this is the will of God, that with well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.'

2. With respect to Christ, who died to restore us to a capacity and ability to perform these good works: Titus ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;' not only to do them, but do them with alacrity and zeal. As Christ came to raise the comfort of the creature to the highest, so also the duty of the creature to the highest, that his people might be eminent in holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, above all others.

3. With respect to the Spirit, who reneweth us for this end; we are new made, that we may look upon doing good as our calling and only business. All other things are valuable according to the use for which they serve; the sun was made to give light and heat to inferior creatures, and we are enlightened by grace, and inclined by grace, that our light may shine before men, Mat. v. 16.

4. With respect to heaven and eternal happiness, they are the way to heaven. We discontinue or break off our walk when we cease to do good; but the more we mind good works the more we proceed in our way: Phil. iii. 14, 'Pressing onward' to our final reward, and at length our entrance is more full, and with greater peace, 2 Peter i. 11.

III. How are they fitted and prepared by this new nature that is put into them for good works?

*Ans.* There is a remote preparation, and a near preparation.

1. The remote preparation is an inclination and propensity to all the acts of the holy and heavenly life. All creatures have an inclination to their proper operations, so the new creature. As the sparks fly up and the stones downward by an inclination of nature, so are their hearts bent to please and serve God. The inclination is natural, the acts are voluntary, because it is an inclination of a free agent: 'The

law of God is in their hearts,' Ps. xl. 8; Ps. xxxvii. 31. Others force themselves, but here there is an affinity between the work and the vital principle which is in us, so that we need not much enforcement: 1 Thes. iv. 9, 'As touching brotherly love, I need not write unto you, for you are taught of God to love one another.' Now, God's teaching is not by expression, but by impression; he hath inclined, suited our hearts to it: as there need not many arguments to move the mother to give suck to her tender infant; nature hath taught her, left such an instinct and inclination upon her, which doth sufficiently excite her to do it.

2. The near preparation is called promptitude and readiness for every good work, or a 'ready obedience to every good work,' Titus iii. 1. So 1 Tim. vi. 18, 'Ready to distribute;' Heb. xiii. 16, 'Ready to communicate.' So Paul, *ἐτόίμως ἔχω*, Acts xxi. 13. This is beyond inclination. The fire hath an inclination to ascend upwards, yet something may violently keep it down; so a Christian may have a will to good, a strong, not a remiss will, but yet there are some impediments, Rom. vii. 18. Inclination implieth a remote power, but readiness the next and immediate power; therefore a Christian ought to keep himself in a readiness or fitness of disposition for his duty, whether it concerneth God, ourselves, or others. This is seen in zeal, that beareth down all impediments. All graces are operative, and zeal is that earnest impulsion and activity of every grace where it is in strength and vigour. Faith worketh, Gal. v. 6. Love constraineth, 2 Cor. v. 14. Hope quickeneth, 1 Peter i. 3, 'a lively hope.' This proceedeth from the new nature when it is in right frame and strength. We need not only make conscience of our duty, or have some mind to it, but our hearts will not let us have any quiet and rest without it: 2 Peter i. 8, 'They make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Christians must be 'zealous of good works,' Titus ii. 14. Paul was 'pressed in spirit,' Acts xvii. 16; Acts xviii. 5.

The benefits that come by it are:—

1. We do good works more easily, as being inclined thereunto: Exod. xxxv. 29, 'The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord;' Ps. cx. 3, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' There is a great deal of difference between doing things by compulsion and doing things from an inclination; between Israel's making brick in Egypt and building the wall in Nehemiah's time, Neh. iv. 6.

2. With more delight and alacrity: 1 John v. 3, 'His commandments are not grievous;' Ps. cxii. 1, 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.' It is a pleasure to them to do a good work; to others, a toil.

3. With constancy. That which is forced lasts not long; upon the first occasion we break out, cast off the burden which pincheth and galleth us. A man is never constant to his duty till he be held to it by his heart; and the bias of the heart is not fear, but love. You cannot easily persuade him against his love and inclination, though you may overcome his fears: Cant. viii. 6, 7, 'Set me as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it : if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.'

The uses are:—

1. For reproof of many professing Christians, who are not more prepared for the Lord, and made ready for every good work. Alas ! some are 'to every good work reprobate,' Titus i. 16, unfit for any Christian practice. In others, all their holiness standeth in being less vicious or wicked than others. If they avoid the greater crimes, though they freely practise the less, they are accounted good men. Some talk, but do nothing, like cypress trees, tall and beautiful, but unfruitful ; or the carbuncle, afar off seeming all on fire, but the touch discovers it to be key-cold : their zeal is more in their tongues than their actions. Others are very unready, arguing for a mediocrity, disputing every inch with God, beating down the price of religion as low as they can, as little worship and charity as may be, and will do no more than needeth, and it is well if they do that. True goodness, like live honey, droppeth of its own accord, 2 Cor. viii. 2 ; and is always desirous to do more for God : Ps. lxxi. 14, 'I will praise thee more and more ;' Phil. i. 9, 'I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment ;' 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'Furthermore, we exhort you, brethren, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.' But little of this temper is to be found.

The second use, of information.

First, Observe the deduction of good works from their proper causes, viz., the will of God requiring, our regeneration fitting : the one determineth our duty, the other maketh us ready to perform it. While carnal, that which we do is but the image of a good work, not really and spiritually good.

Secondly, The necessity of good works.

1. *Necessitate consequentis*, as the fruit and end of regeneration. All things are valued by their use. What doth the new creature serve for but that we may walk in newness of life ? otherwise it is but a notion. It is not given us to lie hid in the heart, as a sluggish, idle quality, but that we may act by it, and improve it for God. The Lord made no creature in vain. Indeed, all that we have from God, both in nature and grace, was that we might be fruitful in holiness. In nature we have life, health, and parts for nothing else, but that by our present duty we may prepare ourselves for everlasting joys. All God's mercies bind us to diligence, all his ordinances are means to help us, all his graces are power to enable us ; and there is, over and above, the Holy Spirit to excite and quicken that power, John iv. 10 ; Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

2. *Necessitate præcepti*. God hath required them at our hands. Now we must make conscience of what God hath required, especially when all 'his commandments are holy, just, and good.' If some greater thing were required, ought we not to have done it ? 2 Kings v. 13. But when he hath required such noble work, shall we refuse ? There is nothing in his law but what becometh his nature, preserveth and makes happy ours.

3. *Necessitate mediæ*, as the way to heaven. Good works are indispensably required of grown persons if they mean to be saved : Heb. xii. 14, 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God.' A Christian shall be judged at the last day by what he hath done : Rev. xx. 12, 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which was the book of life : and the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books, according to their works ;' 1 Peter i. 17, 'If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth every man according to his work.' Profession will not carry it, but our works come into the judgment. So Rev. xiv. 13, 'Their works follow them ;' that is, they have the fruit and comfort of them in another world, and without them we cannot be saved.

4. *Necessitate signi*, as evidences of our right to salvation, both to others and ourselves. Works or external acts are more sensible and visible, and also liable to the notice of our own consciences ; and it is more hard to judge of the internal grace than the external fruits.

[1.] As to others. God seeth what is in our hearts, but men see it not until the effects manifest it. When John suspected the pharisees, he said to them, Mat. iii. 8, 'Bring ye forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.' The fear of God is more known by the external act than by the internal habit ; therefore that description is given, Prov. viii. 13, 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil : pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate ;' and Job xxviii. 28, 'The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding.' The current of a man's life and actions doth best expound and interpret his heart. Thus the psalmist discovered the wicked : Ps. xxxvi. 1, 'The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.'

[2.] To ourselves, holy conversation and godliness is the surest note of our regeneration. We judge others by external works alone, 'For the tree is known by its fruit,' Mat. vii. 16. Charity forbids us to pry any further ; but we judge ourselves by internal and external works together. If within we have faith in Christ, a love to God, and hatred of evil, a delight in holiness, a deep sense of the world to come, all which graces make up the new nature, then these things issue out into a holy conversation. This breedeth joy and peace of conscience : 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world ;' 1 John iii. 18, 19, 'Let us not love in word, neither in tongue ; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.'

[3.] That good works must not be opposed to God's mercy and free grace, or Christ's satisfaction, merit, and righteousness, either in the matter of justification or salvation, but kept in a due subordination to God's grace and Christ's merits. This is the business of this context, to reconcile the grace of God with the necessity of good works, *et c contra* ; and very well it may be, for they are part of the grace obtained. He is most beholden to God, and indebted to grace, who is enabled to do most good, for all is from him : Phil. ii. 13, 'He worketh in us



both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure ;' so that our very doing is receiving. But because there are a sort of men that may be called justiciaries, who trust, and teach others to trust, to their own virtues and works, without a Saviour, or ascribe the part of a Saviour to them ; and on the other side, the libertines, who teach men not to look at anything in themselves at all, not as an evidence, condition, or means, but to trust to Christ's blood to be instead of faith, repentance, and obedience, which is their duty to be performed by them, therefore it will be necessary to be well acquainted with what is truly the part and office of Christ, what is truly the office of faith and repentance, what of works, that you may be sure to give everything its due, and may wholly trust Christ for his part, and not join faith, or any of your works and duties, in the least degree, of that trust and honour which belongeth to our Saviour, but regard them according to that use for which they are commanded in the gospel.

*First*, Our works, whatever they are, either duties to God or man, are not the first moving cause or inducement to incline God to show us favour, or to bring about our salvation. No ; this honour must be reserved for the grace of God, which moveth and stirreth all in the business of our salvation. It was his grace to provide us a Saviour : John iii. 16, ' God so loveth the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And the giving of faith or converting grace to some before others, is the mere effect of his mercy and good pleasure : Eph. ii. 4, 5, ' God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath quickened us together with Christ : by grace ye are saved.' Then the benefits consequent upon conversion are from God's love and mercy. As justification : Rom. iii. 24, ' Justified freely by his grace ;' not only *by his grace*, but *freely* ; that is, not excited by our works, but acting freely of its own accord. Then for eternal life, we have it from the grace of God and the mercy of our Redeemer : Jude 21, ' Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' So that grace is the first mover and principle in the whole business of our salvation ; it is originally from grace, and all along by grace.

*Secondly*, Our works before or after conversion are not that righteousness, not any part of that meritorious righteousness, by virtue of which sins are expiated, the wrath of God appeased, all blessings of heaven purchased, and we reconciled to God. For this is only to be ascribed to the merit and satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ. ' When we were enemies, we were reconciled by his death, and are saved by his life,' Rom. v. 10. He is our propitiation ; we live by him : 1 John iv. 9, 10, ' In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' It is Christ's office and honour to be a sacrifice for sin and a propitiation for us, and a perfect Saviour and intercessor ; to obtain the Spirit, to fit us for our present duty and future happiness. We are his workmanship in Christ.

*Thirdly*, Our works or duties which we perform in obedience to

God, are not the first means to apply the grace of the Redeemer, or the condition of our first entrance into the evangelical estate. No; that is proper to repentance and faith: Rom. iii. 22, 'The righteousness of God is by faith unto all and upon all them that believe.' And repentance is frequently required also to receive pardon and the gift of the Holy Ghost: Acts ii. 38, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;' Acts iii. 19, 'Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.' It is the penitent believing sinner that is qualified for these privileges; or he that thankfully and humbly accepts of the offered Saviour, and consents to the covenant made with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; he is washed from his sins in the blood of Christ, reconciled, adopted into God's family, and made 'an heir according to the hope of eternal life,' Titus iii. 7. This first faith, by which we believe and consent to the covenant, implieth both a dependence on God's mercy and Christ's merits, and also a consent of obedience or hearty subjection to God.

*Fourthly*, When we have consented to accept Christ and his benefits, and do give ourselves to him, then works or new obedience follow, as necessary to continue our right to pardon and life. For none have benefit by God's covenant but those that keep his covenant as well as make it; and without this we cannot have communion with God: 1 John i. 7, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another;'—nor evidence the reality of our faith and repentance. St Paul was sent to preach to the Gentiles, 'That they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance,' Acts xxvi. 20. Besides, we cannot preserve our claim and right, if we do not still go on to do good: 1 Tim. vi. 18; Ezek. xviii. 24, 'When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, shall he live? all his righteousness shall not be mentioned; in his trespasses that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.' It is true of the hypocrite without scruple, and of the real righteous man; if you suppose the one you may suppose the other. Well, these things must not be confounded or opposed: not confounded, but we must distinctly consider what is proper to the grace of God, proper to the merit of Christ, proper to faith, proper to works; not opposed, so as to make the one exclude the other: as the grace of God to exclude the merit of Christ, or serve instead of it; nor the merit of Christ, his blood and righteousness, to exclude faith and repentance, or be instead of them; nor faith to exclude good works.

*Fifthly*, All the applying grace is from first to last wrought in us by the Spirit. He doth renew and heal our natures, as coming to us from the grace of God and merits of Christ: Titus iii. 5, 6, 'According to his mercy he saveth us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' By the Holy Spirit working in us habitual grace and exciting it, we believe, repent, obey, do whatever is necessary to be done to obtain eternal life; therefore this must not be omitted, but acknowledged as a great part of this grace.

Third use. To exhort us, if we would show ourselves to be new creatures indeed, to be full of good works. The arguments to move us are :—

1. It is a necessary fruit of inward grace, and so doth plainly show that you are partakers of heavenly wisdom : James iii. 17, 'The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.' The carnal worldling, all his wisdom is to grow rich to himself, which indeed is but folly, Luke xii. 21. His business is to live to the flesh, Gal. vi. 8. He layeth out all his strength, time, and care, and wealth for the feeding his own carnal desires ; but the other soweth to the Spirit, layeth out himself in works of piety and charity.

2. External acts, which flow from an internal principle, increase the habit ; the more you do good, the more you are enabled to do good, as bodily strength is increased by exercise. Why is the right hand more agile, stronger, and bigger than the left ? It is oftener exercised, and so fuller of blood and spirits. So in grace, the more you act faith, the more is faith increased. Love groweth more fervent, being kept in a constant exercise, and hope more lively and effective. Always actions increase the principles which did produce them : partly of their own nature : 1 John ii. 5, 'Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.' The more acts of love he puts forth towards God, the more doth his love increase in him : partly by divine reward : Heb. vi. 10, 'He is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.' God rewards them temporally : 2 Cor. ix. 8, 'God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work ;' that is, to give you to be liberal at all times. And when he saith God is able, it not only implieth that God is the fountain of all plenty, and sovereign disposer of it, and so hath power to make you the richer rather than the poorer by your liberality, to make every alms you give like the oil in the cruse, to multiply as you pour it out, that there shall be enough for every object and every occasion, but also he is sure to make it good, for he quotes it again in the next verse, 'As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor ; his righteousness remaineth for ever.' It is taken out of Psalm cxii., where there are signal promises of wealth and riches in the house of the liberal almsgiver. God rewards them eternally : 2 Cor. ix. 6, 'He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.' Now is the seed-time, hereafter is our harvest and crop ; we shall have a liberal reward from God in the general resurrection. God also rewards his obedient servants spiritually, internally ; and that not only with more comfort and peace, but by increasing the grace itself ; for God, that punishes sin with sin, doth reward grace with grace. Wells are sweeter for draining ; on the other side, a key that is seldom turned rusts in the lock. An intermission of good works makes us more unable and unready for them.

3. It is a greater honour to God : John xv. 8, 'Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit ;' Phil. i. 11, 'Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and

praise of God ;' 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, 'Wherefore we pray for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him.' Christ's religion is not a barren religion, but full of good works. It is a mighty credit to religion in you that profess it, when goodness is the constitution of your hearts, to do good the business of your lives.

4. It edifieth others, and provoketh an holy emulation : Heb. x. 24, 'Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works.' We provoke them most by our example when they are cold, negligent, and backward to works of piety and mercy. In all things we should be an instance of divine virtues.

5. This is the fruit which God expecteth from us, that the trees of righteousness should bear the fruits of righteousness. If we frustrate his expectation, he will hew us down and cast us into the fire, Mat. iii. 10. Therefore good works are not needless things.

The means to enable us are :—

1. Be sure that you are renewed. The dead cannot do the works of the living, 'Neither do men gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles,' Mat. vii. 16. Our first business is to look to our conversion to God. All outward duties begin in the heart; they are valued no farther than they come from it sanctified.

2. Keep your hearts under a sense of God's authority, that you may feel something in your own bosoms that may tell you you are bound to obey him, and may plead God's right with you. This is done by a frequent meditation upon your creation and redemption : your creation giveth God a full right to you, and redemption maketh it comfortable ; by both you see you are his : Acts xxvii. 23, 'There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.'

3. You are intrusted with his talents, and of their improvement you must give an account : Mat. xxv. 14, A lord called his servants, and delivered to them his goods, in order to improvement.

4. What encouragement we have from a gracious God and covenant, which takes not advantage of involuntary weaknesses, but accepteth their endeavours who sincerely do their best : Mal. iii. 17, 'I will spare him, as a man spareth his son that serveth him.'

5. Remember often your great obligation to God ; you can never do so much for him as he deserveth of you : Ps. cxvi. 12, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me ?'

6. Do all as in God's eye, and with a constant dependence upon him : Ps. xvi. 8, 'I have set the Lord always before me.' Make him your paymaster, governor, and judge, and it will not only keep you sincere, but diligent in good works. The work is not sincerely done when you look to man, nor thoroughly done. Such have their reward only here, Mat. vi.

7. Love your work. A little thing will stop him that doth it unwillingly : Ps. cxix. 47, 48, 'I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved ;' and 'I will lift up my hands unto thy commandments, which I have loved.'

8. Account yourselves much beholden to God, that he will employ you in any service for his glory.





# FAREWELL SERMON.

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF ST PAUL, COVENT GARDEN,  
*17th August 1662.*

## EDITORIAL NOTE.

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THE ejection of two thousand ministers by the Act of Uniformity in 1662 could not fail to make a great impression on the minds of the people of England, and especially of the ministers who were ejected, and of the people who had enjoyed their ministry. The last utterances of these ministers in the pulpits which they were about to quit were naturally listened to with peculiar interest. Many of these were published from notes taken by hearers; and in the following year, 1663, these were collected and published in a volume, under the title of "Farewell Sermons." In this volume, that by Dr Manton occupies the second place, coming immediately after that of Mr Calamy. From this volume it is now reprinted.

## FAREWELL SERMON.

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*Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*—HEB. XII. 1.

IN the former chapter you have a spiritual chronicle, or a catalogue of the Lord's worthies, and all the eminent effects of their faith; and now the apostle comes to make use of this history, that he had produced through so many successions of ages, of all the holy men of God that excelled in faith: 'Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,' &c.

The text is wholly hortatory. In it observe:—

1. The premises or principle the apostle worketh upon: *seeing we are compassed, &c.*

2. The practical inferences which are deduced from thence, and they are two:—

[1.] One concerning the privative part of our duty: *let us lay aside every weight, &c.* There is something external and without, like to clog us in our way to heaven: *every weight*; and something within that will hinder and trouble us within; therefore he saith, *and the sin which doth so easily beset us.*

[2.] Here is the positive part: *let us run with patience the race that is set before us.* There is motion: *run*; the manner: *with patience*; the stage or way: *the race that is set before us.*

My purpose is to give you some brief thoughts upon this useful and practical inference of the apostle from the histories of the faithful before recorded. Therefore I will sum up the whole text in this point:—

*Doct.* The people of God, that have such a multitude of examples of holy men and women set before them, should prepare themselves to run the spiritual race with more patience and cheerfulness.

There are two things in this doctrine—the encouragement and the duty. I shall open both with respect to the circumstances of the text.

*First*, the encouragement: a multitude of examples; or, as in the text, 'seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.' Mark, here are witnesses: a great cloud of witnesses; and these compassing us round about.

First, here are witnesses. By that term we are to understand those



worthy saints mentioned and reckoned up in the former chapter, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, &c., all the saints of God that have had experience of the goodness of his providence to them, and the fulfilling of his promises. They are all called witnesses. Why? Because they depose a testimony for God, and speak to future generations to be constant, as they were, that they might receive the like reward. This witness was partly in their faith, and partly in the fruit of their faith.

1. They witnessed by their faith: John iii. 33, 'He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.' A man that hath soundly digested the promises, that expresses his faith by cheerfulness and patience under all difficulties, troubles, delays, and those sundry trials that he meets with, he gives it under hand and seal, proclaims it to the world that he hath to do with the true God.

2. They witnessed in the fruits of their faith, as they give us an instance of God's fidelity towards them that faithfully adhere to and firmly believe in his promises; so it is said, Heb. vi. 12, 'Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise.' Let faith but set patience a-work, do but hold out a little while with God, and you may learn by the example of all those holy men we shall inherit the promises; they shall be made good to a tittle, and not one thing fail of all that the Lord hath spoken; as these holy men were exercised and tossed to and fro, but it succeeded well with them at the last. Oh! then, let us hearken to the deposition of these worthy witnesses that are recorded in the scripture, and with such an invincible resolution as theirs was, let us hold on our course towards true happiness. If we do not, they that are now propounded as witnesses to us, will, at the day of judgment, be produced as witnesses against us. And pray, also, let us remember that we are to continue and keep afoot that testimony to succeeding generations; for not only the prophets and holy men of God were God's witnesses, but all God's people also are his witnesses, Isa. xliii. 10; by their faith, patience, diligence, constancy, and cheerfulness under afflictions, they are to give it under hand and seal to the world that God is a true and faithful God. But now, if we, either by our sinful walking or by our drooping discouragements, discredit Christ and his profession, then we are witnesses against him; we deny that religion which we would seem to profess and cry up: Titus i. 16, 'They profess they know God, but in works they deny him;' and the more dangerous because deeds are more deliberate than words, and so a greater evidence of what we think in our hearts. If we, by drooping discouragements and sinful walking, discredit religion, we deny it, and do in effect put the lie upon Christ. Therefore let us remember they were witnesses, and so must we.

Secondly, By a figurative speech they are called a *cloud*—having a cloud of witnesses. Why so? I might trouble you with many conceits interpreters have had of this word *cloud*. Say some, because of the raisedness of their spirits, because clouds fly aloft. Clouds, for the fruitfulness of their doctrine, as clouds send down fruitful showers upon the earth; and clouds, because they cool and cover us from the heat; so some would gloss for our comfort. Others, with more judg-

ment, say, a cloud with allusion to the pillar of cloud which conducted the Israelites to Canaan: yet neither doth this come up fully to the scope of the apostle; for the apostle speaks not of a cloud that goes before us, but of a cloud that compasses us round about, and therefore a cloud. The reason why it is called so, is the number and multitude of those witnesses, as a cloud is made up of a multitude of vapours gathered together and condensed into one body; and so the expression is often used: Ezek. xxxviii. 9, 'Thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land,' &c., noting the increase of the people when God would restore them, the multitude of converts. And so, in profane authors, Livy hath such an expression; an army of men is called a cloud. But this is enough to show the intent of this expression, that there are a multitude, a very great number. Though the godly, comparatively, and with respect to the wicked, are a few; yet, considered in themselves, they are a great number; for if the martyrs and those glorious instances of heroic faith, and that under the Old Testament, when God's interest was more confined to one people, if there were such a church then of so great a number, what will the whole church of the Old and New Testament be, when we shall meet together in heaven? We are often discouraged with the paucity of professors, and are apt to think ourselves to be left alone, 1 Kings xix. 10. But let us remember there is a cloud of witnesses; we are not solitary now, and certainly we shall not want company when we come to heaven, 'To the innumerable company of,' &c.

Again, it meets with an ordinary and strong temptation which Satan suggests to the hearts of the godly, that they are singular and matchless in their afflictions, that none of the people of God have ever undergone such difficulties as they are exposed unto; and this makes them question their Father's affection, and put themselves out of the number of his children. Ay! but all these things are accomplished in the saints of God before you. Here is a cloud of witnesses that have been exercised and tried to purpose, 1 Peter v. 9. They are troubled with a busy devil, a naughty world, a corrupt heart; all have had their trial from God's correcting hand: 'The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' So that we have many fellows; our lot is no harder than the saints of God that have gone before us, for there is a cloud of witnesses.

Thirdly, Observe the apostle calls it a cloud that compasses us round about—*i.e.*, we have instances for every trial, temptation, duty, that we are put upon. Here we have examples of those that have fulfilled the commands of Christ on this side with an undaunted courage; and the examples of those that have borne the cross of Christ with an invincible patience. Here we have examples of those that have conquered right-hand temptations, that have despised the delights of the world; and there are those that have conquered left-hand temptations, that have not been broken and affrighted with the terrors of the world. All the saints of God have trodden that way, the same paths wherein we are to walk after them. We cannot look this way or that way, but we have instances of faith, confidence in God, and patience: 'We are compassed about,' &c. In short, here lies the encouragement that Christians should propound to themselves.

1. That there are examples. Christians of later times have more to answer for their infidelity than those of former ages. They that first believed the promises believed without such a cloud of witnesses, or multitude of examples. Many have gone before us that have broken the ice, and that found good success from their own experience; they have commended God to us as a true and faithful God, and will not you go on? When Jonathan and his armour-bearer climbed up the rocks of the Philistines, then the people were encouraged to go up after. So here are some that have gone before you, and it hath succeeded well with them.

2. These examples are many; not one or two, that might be supposed to be singularly assisted, and to have eminent prerogatives above the rest of their brethren; but many in every age—a whole cloud of them.

3. There are examples of many rare and excellent men, the best that ever lived under heaven: 'Take, my brethren, the prophets for an example,' &c., James v. 10.

4. They are propounded to us, not for their words only, and for their profession, but for their deeds, for their bitter sufferings; and they abundantly manifest to us that there is nothing impossible in our duty, or anything so difficult but may be overcome through Christ's strength enabling us. They all had the same nature we have; they were of the like passion with us, flesh and blood as we are, of the same relations and concerns. And then, on the other side, we have the same cause with them, the same recompense of reward to encourage us, the same God and Saviour to recompense us. He suffered for us as well as for them; therefore we should follow in their steps, and hold fast our confidence to the end; for they have showed us that poverty, reproaches, death itself, and all those things that would look harsh and with a ghastly aspect upon the eyes of the world, are no such evils but that a believer may rejoice in them, and triumph over them. I say, they have showed the blandishments of the world have not such a charm, but they may be renounced without any loss of considerable joy and contentment; and that the duties of Christianity are not so hard but that a little waiting upon God will bring in grace enough to perform them; therefore saith the apostle, 'Seeing we have a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside,' &c. And so I come to the encouragement, to the—

*Second thing, and that is the duty here pressed.* (1.) Here is the privative. (2.) The positive part of our duty. Here is mortification and vivification. Mortification: 'Let us lay aside,' &c.; vivification: 'Let us run with patience,' &c. In both the branches he alludes to terms proper to races. In a race, you know, men strip themselves of their clothes and whatever is burdensome and heavy, that they may be the more light of foot; and so the apostle bids us 'lay aside every weight;' and they did withal diet themselves, that they might have no clog from within: 1 Cor. ix. 25, 'Every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things;' *i.e.*, they took care that they did not clog and dispose<sup>1</sup> themselves for the race they were to run. But they verily run only for a corruptible crown; we for a crown that

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'indispose' ?—Ed.

is incorruptible and glorious; so, according to this double practice of racers, we are to cast aside every weight from without, &c. So here is a double object—laying aside every weight, and every sin. There is *onus externum*—the weight without that presses us down and hinders our speed; and then there is *impedimentum internum*, there is sin, that which weakens within. By reason of the former we make little speed, by reason of the latter we are often interrupted; and therefore we must do as they, that they might be swift and expedite: ‘Lay aside every weight,’ and be more ‘temperate in all things.’ Herein a runner in a race differs from a traveller: a traveller strengthens himself for his journey as well as he can, his clothes on, sometimes carries a great burden with him; but a runner of a race makes himself as light as he can. But to come more particularly to the words.

First, ‘Lay aside every weight.’ By *weight* is meant those things that burden the soul, and make our heavenly progress more tedious and cumbersome; and by weight is meant (I think) the delights and cares of the world, the multitude of secular business, all our earthly contentments and affairs, so far as they are a burden to us, hinder us in our way to heaven; these must all be put off: Luke xxi. 34, saith Christ, ‘Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life,’ &c. The heart that is depressed cannot be so free for God and the offices of our heavenly calling, when we give way to surfeiting, drunkenness, and cares of this world.

1. The heart may be overcharged with the delights of the world. Surfeiting and drunkenness must not be taken in the gross notion; you must not think of spewing, reeling, vomiting, as if to avoid these were a full compliance with Christ’s direction; the heart may be overcharged when the stomach is not. There is a dry drunkenness and a more refined surfeiting; and that is when the heart grows heavy, unfit for prayer, relishes not the things of the Spirit; when the delights of the flesh clog the wheel, abate that vigour and cheerfulness that we should show forth in the worship of God and holy actions. When the delights of the flesh withdraw us from that watchfulness and diligence that is necessary in taking care for our souls, then the heart is overcharged. Voluptuous living is a great sin, it chokes the seed of piety so soon as planted in the heart, so that they can bring nothing to perfection; it brings a brawn and a deadness upon the conscience and affections; there is nothing that hardens the heart so much as the softness of carnal pleasure: Jude 19, ‘Sensual, having not the Spirit.’ Sensuality quenches our natural bravery and the briskness of spirit that becomes a man; much more doth it hinder the sublime operations of the Spirit of God. Well then, remember, Christians, you are not only travellers by the way, but runners in a race. If we were to speak to you only under the notion of travellers in a way, this were enough to wean you from the delights of the flesh: 1 Peter ii. 11, ‘As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.’ The more you indulge these fleshly lusts, the more you hearten and strengthen the great enemy of your souls, and starve the better part. But you are as runners in a race. By this metaphor the duty is more bound upon you; much more should you beat down



the body and keep it in subjection. The apostle hath a notable word: 1 Cor. ix. 27, 'I keep under my body, and bring it in subjection,' &c. I beat down my body; you must either keep under pleasures, or pleasures will keep you under; for a man is soon brought under the power, dominion, and tyranny of evil customs and some brutish pleasure by indulging the lusts of the flesh, 1 Cor. vi. 12. Be but a little addicted to any one thing, and you are brought under the power of it. The flesh waxes wanton and imperious, and a slavery grows upon you by degrees. The more you cocker carnal affections, the more they increase upon you; and therefore you must hold the reins hard, exercise a powerful restraint. Solomon in his penitentials gives us an account of his own folly, and how fearfully he was corrupted this way: Eccles. ii. 10, 'Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy,' &c. This was that which brought him to such a lawless excess, and at length to fall off from God. When we give nature the full swing, and use pleasure with too free a license, the heart is insensibly corrupted, and the necessities of life are turned into disease, and all that you do it is but in compliance with your lusts; your eating and drinking is but a meat-offering and drink-offering to lusts and carnal appetite. I remember Solomon saith, Prov. xxix. 21, 'He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son at length;' *i.e.*, allow a servant too much liberty, and he will no more know his condition, but grow contemptuous, bold, and troublesome; so it is here. We are all the worse for license. Natural desires, unless they feel fetters and prudent restraints, grow unruly and excessive; and therefore it is good to abate the liberty of the flesh, that the body may be a servant and not a master. When you deny yourselves in nothing, but satisfy every vain appetite, custom grows upon the soul, and intemperance proves a trade and a habituated distemper, so that you cannot when you would, upon prudent and pious respects, refrain and command your desires; and therefore it is good sometimes to thwart and vex the flesh, as David poured out the water of Bethlehem that he longed for, 2 Sam. xxiii. 17. Not to deny ourselves in what we affect and covet, lust grows into a wanton, and bold and imperious, and so prescribes upon us, and we are 'brought under the power' of these things.

2. The business and cares of this world; for these immoderately followed, and not in obedience to God, are a sore burthen, and makes the soul heavy, and allows no time and strength for God and his service, and those happy opportunities of private communion with him. When we are 'encumbered with much service,' we neglect that 'one thing necessary,' Luke x. 42; and therefore Christians must take heed that the lean kine do not devour the fat, that Sarah be not thrown out of doors instead of Hagar, that religion be not thrust to the walls, which should be our prime and chief business, while every business hath its time and course. The scriptures, knowing the proneness of our hearts to temporal things, deal with us as we do with a crooked stick; we bend it so much the other way, and therefore sometimes they forbid necessary labour: John vi. 27, 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth,' &c. The meaning is, *not chiefly*, but it bends the stick another way: 'Set not your affections on things on the earth.'

A man must have some kind of affection to his work here below ; but we had need to be bent the other way. We may gather this from this precept : It is better to encroach upon the world, than the world should encroach upon godliness. In short, things are a burthen and clog to us, according as our delight and scope is. If the pomp and increase of the world be our end and scope, then religion will be looked upon as a burthen, that will be a weight, and all duties of godliness as a melancholy interruption ; as they, Amos viii. 5, 'When will the sabbath be over ?' The exercise of godliness will be a troublesome thing, and we shall go about the work of religion as if we went about it not. But on the other side, if heaven and heavenly things be our scope, then the world is a burthen, and then we shall use it in the way, but not abusing, as taking up our rest here, 1 Cor. vii. 31, 32. Man hath a body and soul, and he doth provide for both ; but for one in subordination : the soul is the chief, and therefore we must not so look after the interests and concernments of the bodily life as to forget the interests of the soul, or to neglect them. Many will not so grossly idolise present things so as to renounce things to come. Ay ! but they so often follow the things of the world that they neglect their eternal concernments. The happiness of a people lies in communion with God, and therefore that must be looked after ; we must take heed that the cares of the world have not such a hand and power over us as either to divert us from, or unfit us for, these higher and nobler pursuits, the enjoyment of God in Christ. This is the first thing the apostle speaks to these spiritual racers, to lay aside every weight ; that is, the delights of the flesh and the cares of the world.

Secondly, The next thing to be laid aside is 'sin, which doth so easily beset us.' As we must guard against things without, so we must mortify our corrupt inclinations within, or else it will soon make us weary of our heavenly race, or faint in it. Sin, you know, is twofold—original and actual. Actual sin is not meant primarily, for that is not *peccatum agens*, sin that easily besets us, but *peccatum transiens*, the sin that passes from us ; and original sin is that which is emphatically called sin, Rom. vii. 8. Now this original corruption may be considered as merely native, or as acquired and improved into evil customs and habits ; for according to men's tempers and constitutions, as they are severally disposed, so by the corruption of nature they are inclined to one sin more than another : as the channel is cut, so corrupt nature finds a vent and issue. In every man there is some predominant sin, and in every regenerate person some relics of that sin, from whence is the greatest danger of his soul ; thus David speaks of *his* iniquity, Ps. xviii. 23. Well, then, this is that sin that doth easily beset us ; original sin improved into some tyranny or evil custom, which doth increase and prevail upon us more and more. Now, this is said easily to beset us for three reasons. Partly because it hath a great power and restraint over us, and implies the whole man, the members of the body, the faculties of the soul ; so great an interest hath it acquired in our affections, it doth easily beset us, it hath great power and command over us. Partly because it sticks so close that we cannot by our own strength lay it aside : Jer. xiii. 23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ?' &c. A

man can as soon change his skin as lay aside his customs, that are so deeply engraven as the blackness of an Ethiopian or the spots of the leopard. And partly because it mingles itself with all our motions and actions, Rom. vii. 21, &c. It easily besets us, it is present with us, it impels us, and solicits us, and draws us to sin further and further, and doth make us negligent in what is God's; we cannot do or speak anything but it will infest us in all our duties of piety, charity, justice; on every side it is interposing, vexing, thwarting the motions of the Spirit, and so abates our strength, vigour, and agility, and retards our course towards heaven and glory. Therefore lay aside, as every weight, so every sin, &c.

*Quest.* Now, what is it to *lay aside*, or how can we lay aside, since sin sticks so close to us, and is engraven in our natures?

*Ans.* Certainly something may be done by us, for this is everywhere pressed as our duty: Eph. iv. 22, 'Put off the old man;' and 1 Peter ii. 11. We may put it off more and more, though we cannot lay it aside. Then we are said to lay aside the sin that so easily besets us, when we prevent and break the dominion of it that it shall not reign over us: Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin reign,' &c. Though it dwells in us, lives in us, and works in us, yet it should not overcome us and bring us into bondage, and so it will not be imputed to our condemnation; and at length, when the soul shall be separated from the body, we shall be wholly free from it.

*Quest.* Ay! but what must we do that we may so repress it (the question returns), that we may break the dominion of it?

*Ans.* I answer—This is the work of the Spirit of God; but we must know the Spirit of God doth work the work of mortification two ways—by regeneration and after regeneration. By regeneration, and so he doth immediately, without any co-operation of ours, mortify the deed of sin, gives sin its death-wound: that which is left is as a thing mortified, it is broken. The scripture often speaks of this first work of regeneration: Rom. vi. 6; Col. ii. 11. First, when we are planted into Christ, then we put off the body of sin; and though it doth not presently die, yet it is weakened, that it cannot reign, though it be not destroyed.

2. After regeneration the Spirit doth more and more destroy sin, the relics of sin, this crucified body of sin, till it dieth wholly away; this he doth *in* us, but not *without* us: Rom. viii. 13, 'Through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body.' Not the Spirit without us, nor we without the Spirit, but 'ye through the Spirit.' What is then required of us?

[1.] Seriously purpose not to sin, and promise to God to yield him unfeigned obedience. Especially should we make this promise in the use of those solemn rites by which the covenant between God and us is confirmed. Take up a solemn purpose not to grieve the Spirit, nor to break his law: Ps. cxix. 106, 'I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.' This purpose of heart is the root of all good actions; therefore, in the confidence of God's help, in the sense of thy own weakness, Ps. cxix. 32. We cannot lay wagers upon our own strength, yet it is our duty to engage our hearts to God. To sin against the light of our own conscience, and illumina-

tion of the Spirit, and the chastening and instruction of our own reins, that aggravates our sin; but to sin against and besides our fixed purpose of not sinning, that lightens sin; for then it is a sin of weakness and infirmity, not of wilfulness and malice. And then we can say, as Paul, Rom. vii. 19, when the heart is fixedly bent towards God, 'The evil which I would not, that do I.' Two ways may we be said to sin against purpose: either when we are overborne besides our purpose, our purpose still remains to please God; as when the water breaks over the bank, the bank remaining; in such a case the fault is not in the bank, but in the violence of the flood; or, secondly, when we break off our purpose, or consent to do evil; as when we cut through the bank the water may easily make through. There is a great deal of difference between sin dwelling in us, and sin entertained by us, between sin remaining and sin reserved. When you have a firm purpose against all sin, there is sin remaining, but it is not reserved, it is not kept and allowed.

[2.] Watch over thyself with a holy self-suspicion, because thou hast sin within thee that doth easily beset thee; therefore 'consider thy ways,' Ps. cxix. 59; guard thy senses, Job xxxi. 1; but, above all, keep thy heart, Prov. iv. 23. Conscience must stand porter at the door, and examine what comes in and what goes out. Watch over the stratagems of Satan, and seducing motions of thy own heart.

[3.] Resist and oppose strongly against the first risings of the flesh and the tickling and pleasing motions of sin that doth easily beset us when it doth entice us away from God, or to do anything that is unseemly and contrary unto the duties of our heavenly calling. Oh! remember we are not debtors to the flesh, Rom. viii. 20. Thou art tied to the Lord by all obligations and indulgence; therefore break the force of sin by a serious resistance; check it, and let thy soul rise up in indignation against it: my business is not to pleasure the flesh, but to please the Lord.

[4.] Bewail thy involuntary lapses and falls with penitential tears, as Peter 'went out and wept bitterly,' Mat. xxvi. 75. Godly sorrow is of great use for laying aside of sin, as salt potions kill worms. When children are troubled with worms we give them salt potions; so these bitter penitential tears are the means God hath appointed to mortify sin. That is the reason the apostle saith, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 'Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of.' It is not only a part of repentance, but worketh preserving durable resolutions, a walking closely with God; it is a means God hath blessed to this end and purpose.

[5.] Recover from thy falls, renew thy combat; as Israel, when they were overcome in battle, they would try it again and again, Judges xx. 28. Take heed of ceasing for the present; for though thy enemy seems to prevail, though the flesh seems to prevail against the spirit in the battle, yet thou shalt have the best of it in the war; by the power of grace thou shalt have the victory.

Thus have I gone over the privative part of our duty: 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us.' I should have come to the positive: 'Let us run with patience the race that is



set before us.' There is the duty, let us *run the race* that is set before us ; and there is the manner of the duty, let us run *with patience*. I should have shown you that a Christian's life is like a race from earth to heaven, in a way of holiness and exercise of grace. This race it continues as long as we continue in the world, from our nativity to our death ; after death the strife is ended. Now, in this race we must run, and so run that we may obtain the crown, 1 Cor. ix. 24. Running is a motion, and a speedy motion ; there is no lying, sitting, or standing, but still there must be running. We must make a further progress in the way to heaven, 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,' Phil. iii. 13.

The runner was not to inquire how much of the way already was past, but to strain himself to overcome what was yet behind. And so should we consider what sins are yet to be mortified, what duties yet untouched, almost untouched ; what hard conflicts are yet to be undergone, and still to hold on our way without turning aside or halting because of difficulties, discouragements, stumbling-blocks. And there are fellows and co-partners with us that run this race, with whom we may strive in a holy emulation who should go forwardest, who should be most forward in the course of pleasing God. O Christians ! there are many contentions amongst us, but when shall we have this holy contention ? Heb. x. 24. In a race there is the *agonotheta*, the judge of the sports ; so here God observes all. No matter what the standers-by say, the judge of the sports must decide who must have the crown, 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 4. And then at the end of the race there is the crown : 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,' &c. In a race there are spectators ; so there are here God, angels, and men : 1 Cor. iv. 9, 'We are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men,' &c.

Thus, for the similitude of our race in our way to heaven. Now wherein it differs.

This is a race, not undertaken out of wantonness, but out of necessity. God hath called us to this course ; and if we run not in this race, we are undone for ever. And in other races but one had the crown ; here all are crowned, 2 Tim. iv. 8, though they be not so eminent as the apostle. Here all are crowned that run in the manner God hath required : 'Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto them that love his appearing.'

For the manner, *with patience* : 'Let us run with patience.' Patience is necessary :—

1. Partly because of the length of the race, and the distance between us and the promised reward. Our race cannot be ended but after some degree of time ; long waiting is troublesome to the flesh, and therefore we have need of patience.

2. Because we meet with many impediments, troubles, and temptations by the way ; there are spiritual adversaries with whom we

must fight ; for we go on, we not only run, but fight ; therefore ‘ run with patience.’

3. Because the spectators will be ready to discourage us. We are set forth not only as a spectacle to God and angels, but to the world ; and they will be ready to deride, scorn, and oppose us for our zeal to God, and our forwardness in the ways of God, to discourage us by bitter mockings, &c. ; therefore ‘ Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.’



A FUNERAL SERMON.



## EDITORIAL NOTE.

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THE following sermon appears to have been preached by Dr Manton on occasion of the death of a Christian lady. It was reprinted in 1694, in the following circumstances:—Dr Manton's daughter was Mrs Terry. She died in 1689. Her husband afterwards married a daughter of Mr Thomas Burroughs. This second wife died in 1693. On occasion of her death a small volume was published, containing a brief account of the two ladies, this sermon, and a number of papers from the pen of the second Mrs Terry. It is from this volume that the sermon is now reprinted. We have not seen a copy of the original edition.

## A FUNERAL SERMON.

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*And they that weep as though they wept not.*—1 Cor. VII. 30.

I SHALL insist upon that clause at this time. In it I shall observe:—

1. A concession. He grants them some kind of sorrow and grief.

2. A correction. He moderateth it.

1. He grants them some kind of sorrow, in that he puts weeping for adversity, the affection for the condition, the effect for the cause, as allowing them a holy sensibleness of their misery: ‘they that weep.’

2. Then he correcteth and moderateth this sorrow: ‘as if they wept not;’ because he will not trust such a dangerous weapon in their own hands, and leave the Corinthians to the vileness and waywardness of their own affections: though I allow you to weep, yet it is as if you wept not.

The points are two:—

I. That God alloweth, yea, requireth of his people some sorrow and sensibleness of their condition.

II. That the heart must be so managed under this sorrow, that we may be said not to weep, rather than to weep, at the same time; it must be with such moderation. Or thus: Christians should so sorrow, under the sense of their condition, as if they did not sorrow. I shall speak briefly of both these.

*Doct.* 1. God requireth and alloweth some sorrow: ‘They that weep.’

I shall—(1.) Show you that God doth so; (2.) Show you what this sorrow is.

1. To prove that so it is, I will not stand to instance places of scripture in a point so familiar.

The reasons are:—

First, This is the end why we have affections, that they may be exercised in their season. God hath planted in every man affections suitable to every condition in which he placeth him. It is said, ‘The stars in their order fought against Siserā;’ so affections. We have joy for prosperity, sorrow for adversity. What did God mean to give us such contrary affections, if not that they should be acted in their order and time? that these affections should, like the spokes, turn with the wheel of Providence? And therefore God complaineth much, as if he were frustrated of his end, when we do not answer Pro-

vidence by an exercise of those affections that are suitable to it ; as Jer. v. 3, ' I have smitten them, and they have not grieved.' God wondereth they should be so unnatural as not to grieve when stricken by him. So for mercy : Hosea xi. 3, ' I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms ; but they knew not that I healed them : ' that is, they were not sensible of it, did not take notice, and were not suitably affected with the love of God. They are ranked among the rest of men that are under their natural condition, who are ἀστοργοί, without natural affection. To be flinted, horny-hearted, such as have no smartness, no quickness of affection, especially when the misery is of such a nature that near friends are taken from us, is very displeasing to God.

Secondly, Because that due exercise of sorrow under affliction is very serviceable and beneficial to the soul. (1.) To help spiritual duties. *Anima nunquam melius agit, quam ex impetu insignis aliqujus affectus*—the soul works best when it hath the advantage of an affection. When the soul is made better by the bitterness of grief we feel, and the soul maketh the affection of sorrow to be *vehiculum*, a kind of chariot to carry on the work of repentance : Jer. ii. 19, ' Know and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God.' When the iron is hot, if you strike in you may get good ; take the advantage of your hearts under your sorrows.

Thirdly, To make it serious. Sorrows gather the soul together, and make it more itself : a man cometh to himself in his grief. Usually God taketh this course with his people ; though they begin in the flesh they end in the spirit. Sorrow maketh reason to stand still. Solomon speaketh of bethinking themselves in the land of their afflictions, 1 Kings viii. 47. Jolly persons are slight, never think upon anything. Those that wallowed in pleasures did put far away the day of the Lord, Amos vi. 3. Till the prodigal was tamed by outward grief and want, he never had thoughts of returning. They that did not grieve when God struck them, Jer. v. 3, refused to receive correction. The more sorrowful the mind is, the more serious. Sorrow drieth up all those swimming thoughts and pleasing imaginations by which men drive away their time and divert their care ; and therefore there is a great deal of benefit comes by it ; it puts the soul in an advantageous way of receiving good.

Fourthly, This would double the affliction, not to grieve for such things as nearly touch us. To break the bent and course of nature is dangerous ; affections, when strongly stirred, must have their exercise, for fear of greater harms. It is an ease sometimes to mourn ; strangled grief chokes the heart. 1 Sam. xxv. 37, Nabal's heart became as a stone within him when he heard tidings that mightily affected him ; it had been better he had wept and mourned, as surgeons first let the sore soften before they begin to draw it. Job ii. 13, Job's friends said not a word to him the first seven days, ' for they saw that his grief was great ; ' they let sorrow have its course for a while. Stop floods in their full career, and they rage and swell ; when the death of a near friend hath opened the sluices, let the waters play a little in the channel till it be calmer ; passions spend and tire themselves in their exercise ; grief is sometimes eased by the expression of it. There

is reason too for it, if that of Cardan be true, that a heavy heart is eased by nothing so much as by sighs and tears; because tears empty the head of some vapours with which it is surcharged, and sighs lighten the heart of some fuliginous damps that oppress it. These are nature's offers for ease; you see the reasons.

2. What grief and sorrow this is that God alloweth and approveth. What is sinful grief I shall show you in the next point: here what is lawful and required.

I answer—Not every sorrow, for there is *λυπή πρὸς θάνατον*, as well as *πρὸς θεόν*, a godly sorrow and a worldly sorrow: 2 Cor. vii. 10, 'Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.' In the general it must be a godly sorrow. In these respects:—

[1.] You must see somewhat of God in the affliction. It is a motive this on both hands, both to sensibleness and patience, that it is from God: Heb. xii. 5, 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord,' because it is from God. A man slights every ordinary chance, but when it is from God, then it worketh more effectual upon the spirit. As we see in the case of the Philistines, 1 Sam. vi. 9. If that stroke that happened upon them were a chance, they would trouble themselves no further about it, but if it were from the God of Israel, they would advise about sending home the ark.

[2.] It must be serviceable sorrow, to set you the nearer to God. Sorrow is of the nature of those things that are required, not for themselves, but *πρὸς ἄλλο*, for some farther thing. You must not rest in your sorrow, but make use of it, that it may work kindly, employ it about the work of the sanctuary. Do not cherish your affections for their own sakes, but so as they may be helpful to the soul. Do not go about to still the affection, to think that is all that is required; let it do the soul service, and be glad you have your hearts under such an advantage. You know how Joshua served the Gibeonites; he did not slay them, but condemned them to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the sanctuary. Grief and sorrow, well managed, will make a good drawer of water for the sanctuary. Make your sorrow your servant now to draw water for you, to make you smart and bleed for a good use and purpose. There is a gracious promise to them that sow in tears: Ps. cxxvi. 5, 'They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.' Now we are in tears, but we do not sow tears; tears are not seed, we have not the crop. But what shall we do to make them seed? Spiritualise them, make them spiritual tears; let the water run in a holy channel, and then, like the waters of the sanctuary, they will be healing waters. The death of a friend, though never so dear to us, will never cause any but carnal tears; they minister a good occasion of mourning, but they do not minister a cause and ground of mourning; it is good to distinguish between the cause and the occasion. At such a time God calleth for more than ordinary sensibleness and sorrow; but not because he hath declared his pleasure concerning our friends; that is murmuring, not mourning. We should take this occasion indeed, but our sorrow should work upon a spiritual ground and object.

First, We should take this occasion to mourn for our own sins; miseries are but the effects of sin. You should labour to make sin



bitter by your present feeling. There should be, I say, a special renewing of our repentance by such providences; experience teacheth best. Now you see what sorrow sin bringeth; if men would but improve their occasions of sorrow thus, their hearts would be more keen against sin. It is a great argument to make men continue in a course, when it never proveth evil to them: therefore God challengeth them: Jer. ii. 5, 'What iniquity have you found in me, that you depart from me?' Just as a martyr said, I have served Jesus Christ these many years, and should I deny him now? But if men would thus observe these experiences, sin cannot make this challenge. We can say of sin, Thou hast killed my husband or wife at such a time; my daughter, my brother, at such a time, &c.; consider and say, Have not I provoked God to remove the comfort of a parent or near relation from me? It is said of Gideon, Judges viii. 16, that with briars and thorns he taught the men of Succoth. So God many times teaches us.

Secondly, We should take this occasion to weep for the public abominations. When Polus the tragedian was to act a mournful part, he brought in the urn, or the pot of ashes of his own dead son; that drew real tears from him. We are all to act a mournful part now, even to mourn for our abominations before the Lord. It may be your grief is flat and low; awaken it by these private instances. But take heed, let it not stay there; this is but to give the occasion; some other thing must be the cause and the object of it. Oh, pour out a little water upon the public sins; they are sparks that we have kindled! As the prophet speaks: Isa. i. 11, 'Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, and compass yourselves about with sparks.' It is meant of sins; not, as it is wrongly expounded, of walking in our own duties. Well, pour out this water upon these sparks. When a town is on fire every one will bring his bucket. Why, when the whole kingdom is compassed about with these sparks God giveth you these private occasions that you may bring your bucket to quench the common flame. So Luke xxiii. 28, 'Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.' Alas! who could choose but shed tears to part with such a blessed companion as our Saviour? Yet not for me, saith he, but for the survivors. Weep for your sins and calamities that are coming upon you; let such an occasion open the floodgates, but then cut out a passage for them, that they may run this way.

Thirdly, For the public miseries. Private sorrows should be swallowed up in the public. Look, as private mercies are no mercies, unless it be well with Sion; and therefore it is annexed as a special blessing, Ps. cxxviii. 6, that they should 'see their children's children, and peace upon Israel.' Defensive love is strong always, but in these times more strong, because every one expected the Messiah to come of his race. But that is nothing without peace upon Israel; it is not a consummate mercy without that. Private griefs are nothing in comparison of the miseries of Sion: 1 Sam. iv. 21, 'The glory is departed! the glory is departed!' Though she lost a father, lost a husband, that was sad; but she reflects upon the principal cause of grief, the misery of the church of God. So see Jer. xxii. 10, 'Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more to his native country,—not for good Josiah, but the

misery of wicked Shallum. Thus it must be godly in respect to the end, to draw you to God these ways.

*Use 1.* It condemneth that slighness of spirit that is in most persons. God entereth into their families, and taketh hence a principal pillar, a husband or wife, but they are not affected with it; they carelessly slight it, as if nothing had been done, or some chance had befallen them. A Roman bragged, *Se nunquam cum matre, &c.*<sup>1</sup> They may say they were never comforted, they never needed it; they lay nothing to heart. Brethren, the use of divinity indeed is to compose and still the spirit, not to make it stupid. I am sorry that I am forced to speak anything to trouble you; I had rather comfort; but there is no true rest where there hath not been a due trouble, therefore I must a little speak against this stoical patience and insensibleness. And because discovery of sin doth more wound the heart than all the forcibleness of expression we can use, I shall not cudgel it with barren invectives, but labour to discover this sinful careless insensibleness to the heart, and distinguish it from a holy patience. I have been often upon such like subjects, therefore shall say the less now. I shall difference it chiefly in their grounds.

1. This slighness proceeds:—

First, From want of consideration. There can be no patience where there is no sense of evils. They will not give their thoughts leave to work upon such objects. I do not say we must make it the cause or object of our mourning, yet I say we must make it the occasion; this must awaken sad thoughts in us about our own sins or others' sufferings, but they will not think of it. These are such as are described by the prophet to 'put far away the evil day,' Amos vi. 3; that is, all consideration of God's dealings with them or others.

Secondly, From indulging pleasure. A voluptuous spirit is an insensible spirit: Eph. iv. 19, 'Who, being past feeling, give themselves over to work uncleanness with greediness.' So it is said, Hosea iv. 11, 'Whoredom and wine do take away the heart;' that is, all smartness and quickness of affection. When the soul is sleeping in pleasure, there is a brawniness brought over it. Pleasure is the drunkenness of the soul, and a drunken man feeleth nothing: Prov. xxiii. 35, 'They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not.'

Thirdly, Vain thoughts: Jer. iv. 14, 'How long shall vain thoughts dwell within thee?' Evil workings of spirit, either seeking a way how they may get out, or contriving how it maketh for their worldly advantage. The devil darts evil thoughts in us, how a cross by some sinful course may work for our temporal good, our state be augmented thereby, or capable of further contentment and advancement in the world.

2. Christian patience cometh from this ground; it doth not exclude a sense of evil, but a quieting of the heart against evil. These are the grounds and workings of the thoughts.

First, It seeth God in it: 1 Sam. iii. 18, 'It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good; Ps. xxxix. 9, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.'

<sup>1</sup> 'That he had never been reconciled with his mother;' implying that he had never disagreed with her.—Ed.

Secondly, It seeth God acting with sovereignty : Dan. iv. 35, 'None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?' Job ix. 12, 'Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say to him What doest thou?' Job xxxiii. 13, 'What, dost thou strive with him? he giveth no account of his matters.'

Thirdly, This sovereignty mollified with attributes; as—

[1.] With infinite justice: Dan. ix. 14, 'The Lord our God is righteous in all the works which he doeth;' just and righteous in all his ways. It is just because God doeth it; his will is the measure of his actings: Deut. xxvii. 15, 'All the people to say, Amen;' it is just, Lord.

[2.] With infinite wisdom: Isa. xxviii. 29, 'He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.' He knoweth what is better for you than<sup>1</sup> you yourselves; for God hath the bowels of a mother, so the wisdom of a father.

[3.] With infinite love. It looketh upon God as a father: John xviii. 11, 'The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink of it?' though a bitter cup, it is from my Father.

[4.] With infinite faithfulness: Ps. cxix. 75, 'I know thy judgments are right, and that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.' It looketh upon afflictions as a means in God's hands. I proceed to the second point:—

*Doct. 2.* That Christians ought so to sorrow under the sense of their afflictions as if they did not sorrow.

Their affections must be moderately exercised. Having in the former point showed what sorrow may be allowed, or is required of a Christian, I shall show you here what sorrow is disallowed or unlawful.

1. Such as overwhelmeth and dejecteth the spirit, so as you are not your own man. This is called a fainting, or a sinking of the soul under affliction: Heb. xii. 5, 'Faint not when thou are rebuked of the Lord.' As we must not slight it, so we must not faint under it. Fainting is *quando anima dejicitur de statu*, when the soul is put out of the condition of a free soul, and delivered over to the possession of another. God hath given every man this fee-simple, to possess himself. Now we are not ourselves when we are overcome with grief and sorrow; and therefore it is said, Luke xxi. 19, 'In patience possess your souls;' implying that a man hath not the use and command of his soul when he is overcome with grief; it doth as it were dispossess a man of himself. You know, of a drunken man we say, he is not himself, because he hath not the free use of his reason. Now this being overwhelmed with sorrow is expressed in scripture by this very term, being drunk; as Isa. lxiii. 6, 'I will tread them down in mine anger, I will make them drunk in my fury;' that is, bring such affliction as they shall not be able to enjoy themselves under it, to have the free use and exercise of their reason.

2. Such as is peevish: when men indulge themselves in their disquiets, and will not hearken to what might make for the settlement of their souls; when the heart yieldeth to passion, and huggeth grief, and will not let it go. There is a great deal of pride and stomach in men against God's dispensations, and therefore the prophet expresseth that intolerable misery that should light upon her children

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'what is good for you better than' ?—ED.

by the stomachfulness that was in Rachel: Jer. xxxi. 15, 'Weeping for her children, she would not be comforted.' Men have no ear to hearken to what may be said for God, and therefore are resolved to hold the bitterness of their own thoughts. This stubborn pettishness and wilful grief may be sometimes in God's own chosen. It was in Jacob, Gen. xxxvii. 35; he 'refused to be comforted; for he said, I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.' *I will*; it was a stomached, wilful grief. Christians, by a perverse, peevish justifying of their passions, they say of their sorrows as Jonah did of his anger: Jonah iv. 9, 'I do well to be angry.' When men take it for granted they do well in it, they resolve then to shut their ears against whatever might appease and quiet their thoughts.

3. Such as are impatient and discontented, as if God had not dealt wisely or worthily with them. When a full vessel is shaken the water will splash over; and when there is such a tumult in the heart, unseemly expressions will drop from us, as if God should not have dealt thus with us as to take away these comforts in which were all our solace, the staff and the stay of the family. We, that are neighbours, are apt very often, in discontent, to say, What a serviceable and useful person hath God taken away, and so many bad ones left! as if God had not made a right choice. Foolish man would be accounted wiser than God; but if a man were well skilled in God's attributes he would never murmur, especially if he did but consider this cometh from a wise God. The cause of all the disorder in the heart is the want of fearing God's name; we are not skilled in his attributes. Alphonsus blasphemously said, *Si in principio mundi ipse Deo adfuisset, multa melius ornatusque condenda essent*—things should have been ordered better if he had been of God's council. Many of you do not utter such expressions, but yet too often conceive such thoughts in your hearts. You will not think so; ay, but what mean the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen?—such expressions as these, Oh, would to God I had died first! as David, 2 Sam. xviii. 33, 'O Absalom, my son, my son! would to God that I had died for thee!' And again, Would to God I had been dead a long time ago rather than to survive my happiness; all my estate gone in an instant, as (brethren) in these empty, trying times it is many a man's case. But remember, foolish man, the all-wise God thought it fittest for thee. Yet thus doth the prophet Elijah, when he was driven into the wilderness by Jezebel, 1 Kings xix. 4, in a discontent, request for himself that he might die, 'It is enough now, O Lord; take away my life.'

4. Such as unfit for duty. Affections are no further lawful than they fit for duty. When grief taketh off our hearts from the duties of our general or particular calling, it is an evil grief. See Gen. xxxv. 19-21, Rachel died and was buried, and Israel journeyed and spread his tent. Having lost so dear a wife, he doth not stand puling by the tomb, but Israel journeyed, he went on about his business. We ought so far to be sensible of Providence as may serve to quicken us to duty, not to hinder us. There is a great question now, whether we ought to fear or hope in our misery: some of one side cry down fear; some on the other side cry down hope. Why, brethren, there is not much matter in the exercise of either of these affections, but according as they do



more or less quicken you to duty. If you be the more earnest in prayer, because you hope success is near, truly that is a good disposition of heart; if because fear, that is the most unchristian. I confess, fear is good when it ends in duty. Jehoshaphat 'feared, and set himself to seek the Lord,' 2 Chron. xx. 3; and Noah, 'moved with fear, prepared an ark,' Heb. xi. 7. Brethren, the bare exercise of affections is but a natural and an indifferent thing; the great trial of them is when they fit you the more for the service that God requires of you. Therefore, when persons grieve so for the loss of a husband, wife, children, or estate, that they have no mind to pray, no mind to go about their callings with any comfort, that is an evil grief. It is true that God winketh at some omissions of duties for a small while in such cases, till we are able to manage our thoughts and digest our sorrow; and the letter of the law giveth place to such great necessities. As Aaron's excuse is but reasonable, Lev. x. 19, 'Such things have befallen me this day; and if I had eaten the sin-offering, should it be accepted with the Lord?'—the death of his two sons: though he held his peace, he could not tell how for the present to frame his heart to a joyful duty. As if a minister cannot tell how to bring his heart to preach, if God hath entered upon his family, taken away a wife or children thence. I confess this cometh from corruption, but in such cases God winketh at it for a short time. The reasons are:—

[1.] Because otherwise our carriage would be very dishonourable and derogatory to Jesus Christ, as if he were not better to us than all the comforts that we lose: 1 Sam. i. 8, as Elkanah said to Hannah, 'Why weepest thou? am not I better to thee than ten sons?' So why weepest thou? Is not Christ better to thee than ten wives, ten children, ten parents, a thousand times as much as thou hast lost? If we had but faith to see it, Christ is to a believer whatever he wanteth. The people of God in the wilderness wanted houses: Ps. xc. 1, 'Lord, thou art our habitation.' A Christian hath never more comfort than when he seeth that particular thing made up in Christ which was taken from him by the providence of God. If a believer has lost her husband, she seeth Christ her husband. So for any other relation; if a parent, seeth Christ his parent; if a brother, Christ is a brother. We are to Christ instead of all these relations, and therefore why should not Christ be so to us? See Mat. xii. 50, 'Whosoever doth the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' Mark, we are so to him, and therefore why should we not account Christ to be so to us? Certainly it is a great dishonour and disparagement to him if we do not see all our losses abundantly made up in him.

[2.] It would be a dishonour to our profession. It is a credit to Christianity that the professors of it can be joyful in all conditions: Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, ἀρπάγην; though all they had were snatched from them by rude hands, yet they were joyful. Let guilty Cains look with fallen countenances, Gen. iv. 6. Let the pharisees please themselves in their sour looks, Mat. vi. 16. A Christian's countenance should show him to be above his misery, sprightly and cheerful. Though you take away their coat, as Joseph's mistress did, you cannot take away their comfort; they are glad they can escape with their conscience, though they should leave

their coat behind them. I remember Scaliger playeth the critic with Homer, because champion Achilles is brought in weeping; his beloved Briseïs was taken from him. So it is a disgrace to our high profession when a Christian is brought in *δακρύσας*, weeping; it is beneath you. It is said in Acts v. 41, 'They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ.' Philpot's stocks in the Bishop of London's coal-house were but a pair of organs, as he saith. Nor is it true only in these honourable sufferings for the glory of our religion, but in the strokes of Providence in this very business of deceased friends. The apostle makes it the property of pagans to mourn excessively: 1 Thes. iv. 13, 'Sorrow not as those that have no hope,' *i. e.*, as pagans; they did abound in it: as see Gen. l. 3, compared with ver. 10. Joseph mourned for Jacob but seven days, the Egyptians seventy, even ten times as much. Nay, pagans err so much this way, that if they could not find grief they would force grief; and therefore, at their funerals, if they had no sympathy, they would flash their faces and cut their flesh, that they might be sorrowful. And therefore God saith, Deut. xiv. 1, 'Ye shall not cut yourselves and make baldness in your eyes for the dead; ye are the children of the Lord your God;' that is, you have higher principles, you know such sorrow needless. And hence was it that the primitive Christians were wont to sing triumphant psalms at funerals, as it appeareth out of many places of Chrysostom, to show they had higher hopes of their departed friends.

[3.] It is very prejudicial. You have no benefit, but a great deal of hurt by it, 2 Cor. vii. 10. There it is summed up in one word, 'Worldly sorrow worketh death;' that is, chiefly, sorrow for worldly things, that works death temporal and eternal in its desert; temporal death as it exhausteth the spirits, wasteth the marrow. Worldly sorrow leaveth a very strong impression upon the body, as Solomon saith, Prov. xvii. 22, 'A broken spirit drieth the bones;' it dulleth and deadens the heart. If a man would not save his tears, yet he should reserve them, keep them up for holy uses. God may give you many spiritual occasions to empty your bottle; do not be over-free of them. Affections over-exercised are usually restrained against the next occasion. And as they procure death in respect of the vigour of the body and soul, so an eternal death too; it deserveth it. And so the apostle is to be understood; for he opposeth it to godly sorrow, which hereafter you shall see you have no cause to repent of, as you have of worldly. Grief is a most serious passion; and though a man may forget himself in his joy, he should not forget to think of the danger; worldly sorrow worketh death.

[4.] It is very unreasonable. If men would cite their affections before the tribunal of reason, and ask them what is the matter why they are so violently stirred, they might discern much of their folly: Ps. xlii. 5, David calleth himself to an account, 'Why art thou so disquieted, O my soul? why art thou cast down within me?' Ask why it is, and you will see either no reason, or a corrupt one. *Iniqua lex est quæ se examinari non patitur*, saith Tertullian; and so it is an evil heart that will not be called to an account. Suspect those passions that are loth to be examined. Do but ask yourselves, Why do I

grieve now? you shall see the answer will be foolish, unreasonable, unthankful, or savouring of discontent. Why, it may be you will say, Many dear comforts are taken from me. O brethren, that is an ill expression; no outward comfort can be taken from a Christian. We should live in such a continual waiting for God's pleasure, and in such a quiet submission thereunto, as not to look upon our comforts as taken from us. Job indeed useth the word, Job i. 21, 'The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken;' but he useth it so as if he would be understood as if the Lord had accepted of the resignation; for he blesses God for it. Even our highest comfort, our lives, the lives of the saints, are not taken from them; God doth but, as it were, accept of the resignation. As Stephen, Acts vii. 59, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' So Rev. xxii. 20, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' It is said of the wicked indeed, that their lives are snatched or taken away: as Job xxvii. 8, 'What hope hath the hypocrite when God taketh away his soul?' or snatcheth it away. So Luke xii. 20, 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee,' ἀπαιτοῦσιν ἀπὸ σοῦ—they shall challenge and get away thy soul from thee. Therefore we should resign up our holy friends to God, as well as they do themselves. But let us see how unreasonable this very particular is of mourning for the dead.

Is it to do them good? They are not the better for our tears, they are past recovery by our weeping. Is it not to envy their blessedness to wish them alive again? 2 Sam. xii. 23, 'Wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, he shall not come to me.' Is it because they were so good that we mourn? The better for God; they are gone to their own home. Is it because so bad? 2 Sam. xiii. 39. David was comforted concerning Amnon, because dead, though he died in sin. Or is it because they died so soon which heightens your loss? Consider who decreed it; are you wiser than God? Is it for your own good you weep? That is an holy weeping: 'Weep as if you wept not.' Thus if men would expostulate with themselves, they would see the unreasonableness of their sorrow; it is to no purpose. We express things to no purpose by water spilt on the ground: certainly tears in such cases are but spilt water.

Use 1. To instruct you to take home this lesson, so to sorrow under the sense of your afflictions as if you did not sorrow, be the loss what it will; though I shall chiefly speak to the present occasion. Do not let the grief oppress your heart. Ay! but how shall we do so? I shall give you some motives; as—

1. Be sure to get an interest in spiritual mercies. The doctrine saith, Christians ought so to sorrow as if they sorrowed not. We cannot speak to others in this language, unless we should persuade men to slight the hand of God. We throw bones to dogs, but bread to children. We cannot comfort you in a carnal way: Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts refresh my soul.' Mark, *thy* comforts. To comfort a man's self upon carnal grounds argueth an insensibleness of God's hand, and it is a shrewd sign that God gives us over to ourselves. Therefore, if you take comfort, take it from your interest in spiritual mercies. If you cannot look upon them under a condition of propriety as yours (as every Christian can-

not), yet at least so far look upon them, that from thence all your comfort must be fetched. It is a neglect of providence to go away with a general thought. We must not sorrow too much, and yet we are to consider whether we have good ground why we should be comforted. God giveth wicked men these experiences of sorrow that he may awaken them, and show them there is no comfort to be had thence whence they would fetch their comforts, in carnal delights: Isa. lvii 21, 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' There is a peace in their fancies and conceits, but 'no peace, saith my God.' There is a great deal of hurt done this way by sermons. Ministers instruct men in a moral way, that they should not grieve too much; but they do not instruct a man upon what grounds he should not grieve: you must be sure of better mercies, or at least look after them for your comfort. A man that has an interest in Christ is *τετράγωνος ἄνθρωπος*, a four-squared man, unmoved in all conditions. There can be no peace between a man's affections and condition till there be a peace between him and God. Mark that, Eccles. ix. 7, 'Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.' When God accepteth us, we may then eat our bread with a merry heart, let things fall out how they will.

2. Live in a continual expectation of the creature's change. Things are not half so burdensome when we look for them. A burden cast upon a man's back breaketh it; but when it is compacted and fitted for his shoulders, he goeth away well enough with it. It was some solace that Job could say, Job iii. 26, 'The evil that I feared is come upon me.' Suppose it be your own or your friend's dissolution, live in a continual readiness to part with life, or anything else, at God's call and intimation, and it will not be so grievous to you when it comes.

3. Learn a holy greatness of mind, to be able to live above the creature. Consider the happiness of man is in God alone: all happiness consisteth in conformity to, and communion with, God, the chief good; so that though the creature be gone, your happiness is not gone. That troubleth a man most when his happiness is gone, he will not care so much for other things. It is good to see by what enjoyment they reckon themselves happy; if to have husband, wife, or a house well furnished, everything to our command, then when God taketh away these things your comfort is gone. There is much of people's conceits this way. But consider, what do you reckon the best of your enjoyments? that you have God for your portion: Ps. cxliv. 15, 'Happy is the people whose God is the Lord.' So see Ps. xxx. 7, 'Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.' Set but the heart right in this point, and it will be well. Grace is but the change of a man's chiefest good and utmost end; that is only the difference between a natural man and a spiritual man about the conceits of happiness.

There are other considerations—as the shortness of our misery, the continual abode of other comforts with us; though some be gone, we are not left naked to the world; the happy end of all, the good of our souls. But this for a taste.

Men will think a sermon is to no purpose that is spoken to comfort persons in this kind. To this end:—



1. Consider there is none of us but may have need of comfort one time or other ; though our mountain standeth strong for the present, it may be removed, and it is good to lay up against a dear year. Such truths are most welcome when they come in their season.

[1.] Consider you may have a season when it will be necessary for you : 'Who knoweth what a day may bring forth?' The woman that entertained the prophet, he would fain do her good. No, saith she, 2 Kings iv. 13, 'I dwell among mine own people.' But now that very woman, as in 2 Kings viii. 5, 'She cried to the king for her house and her land ;' she that did not stand in need of the prophet, stood in need of the prophet's man. You have your wife, your children, and friends about you. Oh, there may a time come when you will be glad of one drop of this comfort to support you when they are gone.

[2.] Consider, when it is upon you, you will find it the hardest thing in the world truly to assuage your grief, to grieve so as if you did not grieve. Afflictions are evil, and we are apt to make them worse, to turn wormwood into poison : Heb. xii. 11, 'No chastening for the present but will seem grievous.' Seneca could slightly speak of miseries when he had the use of rich gardens about Rome ; but when he had lost all, he was as much to seek as others.

Now I shall apply all that hath been spoken to this present occasion :—1st, To show you why we should mourn ; 2dly, Why mourn so, as if we did not mourn.

*First, Why we should mourn.* Consider, we have lost a pious neighbour, and that deserveth sensibleness.

1. Because such are a great loss ; we have lost her service, help, and the benefit that we might have had by her. There is no member of Christ but one way or another is useful to the community ; and indeed we found her to be so. We lose an example, we lose useful conference, we lose the pledge of a blessing to a family, to a neighbourhood. May we not say of her as of David : Acts xiii. 36, 'After he had served his generation by the will of God, he fell asleep' ? She did serve her generation, and it was her grief that she did it no more and better ; it should be ours that she did it no longer. Serviceable Christians are a great loss, especially in these times of need.

2. It is a sad intimation to us, and therefore we ought to be very sensible of such a loss : Isa. lvii. 1, 'The righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart, none considering that they are taken away from the evil to come.' Wicked men think they are the bane of a place : *Plurimos deficit Christiani nominis gratia ; Christianos ad leones.* Wicked men are but preserved in reference to the godly ; they are but as a fence of thorns about a garden of roses. Now when the roses are cropped off, what shall become of the thorns but be cast into the fire ? God will dash the potter's vessel : Gen. xix. 22, 'Haste thee, escape to Zoar, for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither.' *I cannot*, mark that : Exod. xxxii. 10, 'Let me alone, and I will make of thee a great people.' God offereth Moses composition : Acts xxvii. 24, 'The Lord hath given thee all them that sail with thee.' These are the staff and the stay, therefore we have reason to be sensible of their removal from us.

*Use 2.* We have reason also to be comforted.

*First,* For the glory that cometh to God by her sweet departure. Those that have envied her life, may wish for her death, even such solace as she felt in the most bitter agonies: Num. xxiii. 10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his.' It is a great comfort that wicked men have not wherewithal to blast religion, when they see how the love of God can compose our spirits in the greatest extremities that befall us either in life or death.

*Secondly,* That she hath left us for glory. It was indeed through many throes, and pains, and sorrows; but death played the midwife, to help her into glory. It is the apostle's exhortation to the Thesalonians, first epistle, chap. iv. ver. 13, that they should not sorrow, even as others which have no hope concerning them which are asleep in Jesus; but admonish them to comfort one another with these words, that at Christ's coming, they which survive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord. 'Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.'



THE  
SAINT'S TRIUMPH OVER DEATH;

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE FUNERAL OF  
MR CHRISTOPHER LOVE,

IN LAWRENCE CHURCH, AUGUST 25, 1651.



## EDITORIAL NOTE.

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THE history of this sermon is given in the "Life of Manton," (vol. i., p. xii.) It was published in 1658 as an appendix to a volume of sermons by Love.

## THE SAINT'S TRIUMPH OVER DEATH.

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*But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.—1 Cor. XV. 57.*

THESE words are a part of Paul's ἐπὶ νίκῃ, or triumphant song. In the song there are two parts, and this is the last.

1. A confident challenge.

2. A solemn thanksgiving.

The one is directed to the enemies, the other to the Giver of victory.

1. A confident challenge, in which he outbraveth death and all the powers of the grave: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' The words allude to Hosca xiii. 14, wherein Christ is brought in speaking, 'I will ransom them from the power of death, and redeem them from the grave: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.' There is Christ's engagement and undertaking for a full conquest of death; Christ threateneth death, and the apostle insulteth over it. The form of the words is altered, because the enemy was now fallen, and Paul proclaimeth the victory. Hitherto death and the grave had insulted over the misery and frailty of mankind; all the tombs and charnels of the world were but so many monuments of death's conquests. Golgotha, the place of skulls, seemed to be designed on purpose to upbraid and discourage our Redeemer; so many skulls and rotten relics of human frailty as there were in that place, so many trophies and monuments of triumph did death produce before the eyes of Christ; as if it were said to him, Canst thou, darest thou, grapple and enter into the lists with such an enemy? But our Lord was not discouraged: when he ascended upon the cross, he did as it were answer these bravings of death thus: 'O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction;' and because he was as good as his word, and every way performed his engagement, the apostle, as one of Christ's followers, cometh and insulteth over this proud adversary that was now fallen, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'

This challenge is illustrated by a *prolepsis*, or an anticipation of an objection. Some might ask, What is this sting of death? what is this power of the grave? The apostle answereth, 'The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law.' Death cometh to have this power by sin, and sin to have this power by the law.

*The sting of death, κέντρον*, the prick. It implieth both the stroke of death and the anguish of it, as in the sting of a serpent, there is the deadly touch and the pain and torment of the wound; and so it noteth the power of death over us—the prick or weapon by which it striketh is sin: Rom. v. 12, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin'—and the terrors and horrors of it, which also do arise from sin. Now, by horrors, I mean not only the natural aversion, retirement, or flight of the spirits, but the bondage, torment, and despair that is upon the conscience. As death is a penal evil, inflicted by the justice of God, guilt maketh death terrible, so that a sinner is 'all his lifetime subject to bondage,' Heb. ii. 14, 15, and kept under an awe of judgment to come. It is not always felt, but soon awakened, especially in sickness and approaches of death. When we feel the cold hands of it ready to pluck out our hearts, conscience is whipped with a scourge of six strings—fear, horror, distrust, grief, rage, and shame.

*The strength of sin is the law.* How is that to be understood? The law giveth strength to sin, *ratione cognitionis, obligationis et augmentationis*; they are the words of a German divine,<sup>1</sup> and will yield us a fit method wherein to open this matter.

[1.] The law *discovereth* sin, and maketh it appear in its own colours; the more light and knowledge of the law, the more sense of sin, as in transparent vessels dregs are soon discerned: Rom. vii. 9, 'I was alive without the law, but when the law came, sin revived, and I died.' When by a sound conviction disguises are taken off from the conscience, we find sin to be sin indeed. Paul was alive before, that is, in his own hopes, as many a stupid soul maketh full account he shall go to heaven, till conscience be opened, and then they find themselves in the mouth of death and hell.

[2.] The law giveth strength to sin in regard of the *obligation* of it; it bindeth over a sinner to the curse and wrath of God. God hath made a righteous law, which must have satisfaction, and till the law be satisfied, we hear no news but of a curse, and that maketh death to be full of horrors: Heb. x. 27, 'There remaineth nothing but a fearful expectation of the fiery indignation of the Lord.'

[3.] It augmenteth and increaseth sin by *forbidding* it; lusts are exasperated and rage upon a restraint, as the yoke maketh the young bullock more unruly. Now, put all together, and you will understand the force of the expression, 'The strength of sin is the law.' The discovery of the law stoppeth the sinner's mouth, and the curse of the law shutteth him up, and holdeth him fast unto the judgment of the great day, by which restraint sin groweth the more raging and furious; all which put together make death terrible; not an end of misery, but a door to open into hell.

Now, this being the case of every man, what shall we do? and how shall we extricate our souls from such a labyrinth of endless horror? You have an answer to that in the next verse in the apostle's thanksgiving, where he acquainteth you not only with grounds of hope, but triumph: 'Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

In this thanksgiving you may observe:—

<sup>1</sup> Pareus in locum.

1. The author of the mercy : God, by Jesus Christ.

2. The manner how we come to be interested in it : 'He giveth us victory.' Or rather, you may observe:—(1.) The act of the Father as to Jesus Christ, in that he appointed him to get the victory. (2.) The act of the Father as to us, in that he applieth this victory to our souls. Christ's victory, and the application of it, are the two grounds of this thanksgiving.

1. Christ's victory over sin, death, and the law, for it must be extended to all the things mentioned in the context ; they are enemies by combination, and knit together in a fast league. The law giveth strength to sin, and sin giveth a sting to death ; as long as the law hath power, sin will be strong, and as long as sin hath strength, death will be terrible. But Christ hath overcome death ; he foiled it in his own person, as I shall show you anon fully ; and for sin, he hath taken away the guilt of it by his own merit, and will destroy it more and more by the power of the Holy Ghost. When he stood before the tribunal of God, he stood there as a surety and undertaker : Heb. vii. 22, 'A surety of a better testament.' Now, he was a surety, mutually God's and our's, to work God's work in us, and our work for us. Among other things which he undertook there, he undertook the abolition of sin : on God's part, he obliged himself that it should be performed by his Spirit ; on our part, he obliged us to endeavours of mortification. Now, because Christ is an able surety, the work is as good as done already : Rom. vi. 6, 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.' Mark, it 'is crucified with him,' as implying his undertaking upon the cross, that 'the body of death might be destroyed ;' as noting the work of God's Spirit, which was engaged and made sure by Christ's death upon the cross, 'that we should not serve sin ;' as noting the concurrence of our endeavours, to which we are obliged by the same sponsory act of Christ. Thus much Christ hath done for the abolition of sin ; now for the law. That was an enemy that could not be overcome, but must be satisfied, and so it was by Christ, who both performed the duty and sustained the penalty of it, chiefly the latter ; and therefore it is said, 'He was made a curse for us,' Gal. iii. 13. The sting is lost in Christ, and the honey left for us. But this is matter of another respect and cognisance.

2. The next reason of the apostle's thanksgiving is the application : he 'hath given us victory ;' for understanding of which you must note that (1.)—Christ's victory is imputed to us as if it were done in our own persons. When we are actually united to him, we are possessed of all his merit. Christ fought our war, and joined battle in our stead. We have a mystical victory in Christ, and are said to overcome when Christ overcame. This is the reason why the acts of believers are complicated and folded up with Christ's acts in the expressions of scripture : 'Crucified with him,' 'quickened with him,' and 'raised with him,' and 'set down with him in heavenly places,' Eph. ii., &c.—all which are terms proper to the judicial union, which is different both from the moral and mystical, as I could easily show you, were it not a matter of another nature. Now this mystical victory is of great use to a believer in time of discouragements. If the law challenge, Satan and conscience say,



Thou art a sinner under a curse, thou mayst answer, I am a sinner, but I am crucified in Christ, in my surety—his payment and suffering is mine. If death or the world discourage, you may say, This is a beaten enemy; I foiled it in Christ, I ascended in Christ, &c.

(2.) The benefit of this victory is imparted and applied to us, by which he maketh us conquerors over sin and death. All Christ's work was not done upon the cross; there is much to be accomplished in our hearts: Rom. xvi. 20, 'The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet,' &c.—not only under Christ's feet, but ours; as Joshua called his fellows to come and tread upon the necks of the Canaanitish kings: Josh. x. 24, 'Come, put your feet upon the necks of these kings;' so Christ will see us conquer. He that got a victory *for us*, will get a victory *in us*, over sin, and death, and hell. Christ hath trodden them under foot already when his own heel was bruised, Gen. iii. 15; now he will do it under your feet.

Having laid this foundation, the point and head of doctrine which I shall discuss is, Christ's victory over death for the comfort and profit of believers.

Death is either the first or second, temporal or eternal. Sinners are under the sentence of both, and both are in a sort put into the hands of Satan; he 'hath the power of death,' Heb. ii. 14, as God's executioner; and the one maketh way for the other. Death to the wicked is but a taking them away to torment, as unruly persons are committed to prison that they may molest no more. God's patience expireth with their lives, and then his vengeance beginneth. The curse of the first covenant was eternal death: Gen. ii. 15, 'Thou shalt die;' that is, eternally. The curse must carry proportion with the blessing; the blessing was eternal life, and the curse was eternal death. I say the sorrow and pain must have been perpetual, answerable to the life which he should have enjoyed; therefore Christ is said to have 'delivered us from wrath to come,' which certainly was our portion and inheritance by Adam; and without Christ there is no escape. But to come to particulars, I shall show you:—

1. How Christ delivered us from death.

2. How far.

1. How he delivered us. The apostle answereth that, Heb. ii. 14, 'By death he destroyed him that had the power of death.' Now Christ's death cometh under a twofold consideration—as a merit, or as a glorious act of war and combat; as the act of a Redeemer, or the act of a conqueror, which answereth to the double evil in death. It is a natural evil, and a penal evil. It is a natural evil, as it is the dissolution of soul and body; it is a penal evil, as it is a curse of the covenant, or the punishment of sin. (1.) There was merit in Christ's voluntary death—it was a ransom for the elect. He died not only *in bonum eorum*—for their good and profit, but *loco et vice omnium*—in their room and stead. As when the ram was taken, Isaac was spared so Christ's death was instead of ours. God will not exact the debt twice, of us and our surety: Job xxxiii. 24, 'Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom.' The sinner must die, or the surety. Now, saith the Lord, I accept of the death and passion of Christ for this penitent man. If we go down to the

pit, we go not down by way of vengeance. By Christ's death the merit of our sin is expiated, justice satisfied, God's wrath appeased, the law fulfilled, sin pardoned, and so the jaws of death are broken. Death in itself is the sentence of the law, the fruit of sin, and the recompense of angry justice, and so it hath no more to do with us, for God 'hath found a ransom.' (2.) You may look upon it as the act of a conqueror. Christ foiled death in his own person. Ever since he rifled the grave, death hath lost its retentive power: Acts ii. 24, *λύσας τὰς ὀδύνας τοῦ θανάτου*, 'loosing the pains,' &c. It is an allusion to the throes of a travailing woman. The grave was in travail till this precious burden was egested, for he could not be holden of it, and ever since the grave is a womb rather than a dungeon and pit of vengeance. *Non vitam rapit, sed reformat* (Prudentius). It doth not destroy life, but renew it. In almost the same metaphor Christ is called 'The first-born from the dead,' Col. i. 18; not that he was the first that was raised from the dead, howbeit he was the first that arose. Others were raised by the power of another, but Christ arose by his own. So he is called, 1 Cor. xv. 20, 'The first-fruits from the dead.' As the offering of the first-fruits was a blessing to all the store, so Christ dying and rising is a ground of conquest to all the elect. Christ before his death had been combating with the powers of darkness and all the subordinate instruments. Death was Satan's beast of prey that was set upon him; but our Lord foiled it in its own dungeon. The battle between Christ and death was begun upon the cross; he grappled with it there, and they went tugging and wrestling to the grave. Christ, like a prudent warrior, carried the war into his enemy's country, and there got loose of the grasp of death, foiled it in its own territory. He arose, and left death gasping behind him; so that the quality of the grave is quite altered. Before it was a prison, Satan's dungeon; now it is a chamber of repose, a bed of ease, ever since Christ slept there. When the prophet speaketh of Christ's resurrection, he saith, Isa. liii. 8, 'He shall be taken from prison and from judgment'—by prison meaning the grave; but speaking of the death of the faithful, he saith: Isa. lvii. 2, 'They shall rest in their beds.' It was for a while to Christ a prison, that to us it might be a bed of ease.

2. The next question is, How far he hath delivered us from death? We see the godly are obnoxious to the changes and decays of nature, yea, to the strokes of violence, as well as others; and how are we delivered? I answer—It is enough that 'the second death hath no power over us,' Rev. xx. 6; nothing to do with us, Rom. viii. 1, *οὐδὲν κατάκριμα*, 'not one condemnation,' &c. We may die, but we shall not be damned; and though we go to the grave, yet we are freed from hell. But this is not all. In the first death believers have a privilege—they do not die as others do.

[1.] The habitude and nature of it is changed. That which is penal in death is now gone. It is not a destruction, but a delivery. Believers have wrong thoughts of death. We are delivered from it as it is a punishment and a curse. Now it is a blessing, one of Christ's legacies to the church: 1 Cor. iii. 22, 'All things are yours.' While death was in the devil's hands it was an enemy; but it is made a

friend and a blessing in Christ, a passage from the vale of tears to the kingdom of glory, the end of a mortal life, and the beginning of that which is immortal. As Haman to Mordecai, it intended a mischief, but it proveth a privilege. To a wicked man it is properly an execution, but to the godly a dismissal of their souls into the bosom of Christ : Luke ii. 28, 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ;' they quietly send away their souls, but a wicked man's soul is taken away. It is twice so expressed : Luke xii. 20, 'This night shall they take away thy soul from thee ;' and Job xxvii. 8, 'When God taketh away his soul,' &c. They would fain keep it longer, but God taketh it away whether they will or no. A godly man resigneth, and sendeth away his soul in peace. His life cannot be taken away—it is only yielded up upon the call of providence ; and he dieth, not because he must die, but because he would die. He may die sooner than he thought, but not sooner than he would ; for when God willeth it, he submitteth. But to return. The blessing of death lieth in three things :—

(1.) The funerals of the godly are but the funerals of their sins and frailties and weaknesses. *Peccatum moritur, miseria moritur, homo non moritur*. It is not the man dieth, but the sin, the misery dieth. All other means and dispensations do but weaken sin, but death destroyeth it. When God justifieth, the damning power is gone ; when God sanctifieth, the reigning power is gone ; but when by death we come to be glorified, then the very being of it is gone. When the house was infected with leprosy, so as scraping would not serve the turn, it was to be digged down ; we are so infected with sin that all other remedies are too weak, nothing but death will serve the turn. When ivy is gotten into a wall, it cannot be wholly destroyed till the wall itself be demolished : cut off the stump, the body, the boughs, the branches, still there are some strings that are ready to sprout again. So it is here, original sin cannot be destroyed, the constant groans of the faithful are, 'Who shall deliver us from this body and mass of sin ?' Rom. vii. 24. But now death is a sudden cure ; sin brought in death, and, as it were in revenge, death destroyeth sin.

(2.) There is a way made for a present and complete union of the soul with Christ : Phil. i. 23, 'I desire to be dissolved and be with Christ.' We are loosed from the body and joined to Christ. It is better a soul be separated from the body than absent from Christ. We have a union here, but not a presence. Now judge you, which is better, —to be present with the body or to be present with the Lord ; to have the company of the body or the company of Christ ? Here the soul is enclosed and imprisoned, as it were ; but there thou hast the free enjoyment of Christ, without the clog of an earthly estate. The soul, as soon as it departs the body, goeth immediately to Christ. As when Potiphar's wife laid hold on Joseph's coat, he escaped, so you leave your upper garment in death's hand, but the soul flieth to God. The body came from Adam, and runneth in a fleshly channel, and what we had from Adam must for a while be mouldered to dust, to purge it from the impurity of the conveyance ; but the soul, by a natural right, returneth to God who gave it, and by a special interest to Christ, that redeemed and sanctified it by his own Spirit.

(3.) The body, which seemeth most to suffer, hath much advantage; a shed is taken down to raise up a better structure. 'It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body,' &c., 1 Cor. xv. 44. Here it is not capable of high enjoyments; it is humbled with diseases, unfit for duties. Again, 'It is sown a corruptible body, it is raised an incorruptible body.' Here it is liable to changes, there it may live for ever without change and decay. If we love long life, there is eternal life. It is carnal self-love that maketh us willing to abide in the flesh; if we did but love ourselves, but love our own flesh, we would not be afraid to die; for to die is to be perfected, to have body and soul free from sin and corruption.

[2.] The hurt of it is prevented. As you are chosen and sanctified in Christ Jesus, it cannot hurt you. I say again, death may kill you, but it cannot hurt you, it hath no power over the better part. Like a serpent, it feedeth only upon your dust; nay, and for your bodies, that which dieth as a creature, is sure to live as a member of Christ. The Lord Jesus is our head in the grave; your bodies have a principle of life within them; believers are raised by the Spirit of holiness; the same Spirit that quickeneth them now to the offices of grace shall raise their mortal bodies. So Rom. viii. 11, 'He shall quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.' The Holy Ghost can never leave his old mansion and dwelling-place. How many grounds of comfort have we against the mortality of the body! Christ is united to body and soul, and he will not let his mystical body want one sinew or joint. In the account that he is to make to the Father, he saith, he is to 'lose nothing,' John vi. 39. Mark, he doth not say *none*, but *nothing*. Christ will not lose a leg, or a piece of an ear. Again, God is in covenant with body and soul; when you go down to the chambers of death you may challenge him upon the charter of his own grace. God is the God of Abraham's dust, of a believer's dust; though it be mingled with the remains of wicked men, yet Christ will sever it, Mat. xxii. 32. Christ proveth the resurrection of the body by that argument, that 'God is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' The ground of the argument is, that God made his covenant not only with the souls of the patriarchs, but with their whole persons. Again, Christ hath purchased body and soul; so much is intimated in that place, 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies.' Christ hath paid price enough to get a title to body and soul, and therefore he will not lose one bit of his purchase; the Lord will call the grave to an account, Where is the body of my Abraham, my Isaac, my Jacob? It is said, Rev. xx. 13, 'The sea gave up her dead, and the grave gave up her dead, and hell gave up her dead.' Let me note that *hell* is there taken for the state of the departed, or else what is the meaning of that passage that followeth afterward, 'and death and hell were cast into the lake that burneth'? &c. Well then, all the dead shall be cast up; as the whale cast up Jonah, so the grave shall cast up her dead. The grave is but a chest wherein our bodies are kept safe till the day of Christ; and the key of this chest is not in the devil's hands, but Christ's. See Rev. i. 18, 'I have the keys of death and hell.' When the body is laid up in the cold pit it is laid up for



another day. God hath an especial care of our dust and remains; when our friends and neighbours have left it, Christ leaveth it not, but keepeth it till the great and glorious day.

[3.] We are eased from the terrors and horrors of death. Death is terrible, as it is a penal and natural evil, as I distinguished before. (1.) As it is a natural evil. Death in itself is the greatest of all evils, *φοβερόν φοβερώτατον*, said an heathen (Aristotle), which, in Job's language, may be rendered, 'The king of terrors,' Job xviii. 14. We gush to see a serpent, much more the grim visage of death. Moral philosophy could never find out a remedy against it. Heathens were either desperate, rash, stupid, or else they dissembled their gripes and fears; but Christ hath provided a remedy, he hath delivered us not only from the hurt of death, but the fear of death: Heb. ii. 14, 'To deliver them from the fear of death, that all their lifetime were subject to bondage;' by his Spirit he filleth the soul with the hopes of a better life. Nature may shrink when we see the pale horse of death approaching, but we may rejoice when we consider its errand, it is to carry us home; as when old Jacob saw the chariots come from Egypt, how did his heart leap within him, because he should see his son Joseph. Death, however we figure it with the pencil of fancy, is sent to carry us to heaven, to transport us to Jesus Christ. Now, who would be afraid to be happy? to be in the arms of our beloved Jesus? Let them fear death that know not a better life. A Christian knoweth that when he dieth he shall 'not perish but have everlasting life,' John iii. 17. The world may thrust you out, but you may see heaven alluring, ready to receive you, as Stephen saw heaven opened, Acts vii. 56. There is an intellectual vision, or persuasion of faith, which is common to all the saints, though every one hath not such an ecstasy and sensible representation as Stephen had; yet usually in the hours of their departure faith is mightily strengthened, and acted so that they are exempted from all fear and sorrow. (2.) As it is a penal evil. It is sad when death is sent in justice, and clothed with wrath, and cometh in the quality of a curse. You know what was said before, 'The sting of death is sin;' they die indeed that die in their sins; death is a black and gloomy day to them, they drop down like rotten fruit into the lake of fire. Now Christ hath taken away the sting, the dolours and horrors of it; he hath taken away death as he hath taken away sin; he hath not cast it out, but cast it down, taken away the guilt and power of it, though not the being of sin: so the hurt, the sting is gone, though not death itself; it is like a serpent disarmed and unstinged, we may put it into our bosoms without danger. There are many accusations by which Satan is apt to perplex a dying soul; these make death terrible and full of horrors; but 'they overcome by the blood of the Lamb,' Rev. xii. 11, and get the victory of these doubts and fears; when sins are pardoned fears vanish. Luther said, *Feri, Domine, feri, absolutus sum a peccatis meis*—Strike, Lord, strike; my sins are pardoned.

[4.] It will be utterly abolished at the last day. We scarce know now what Christ's purchase meaneth till the day of judgment. It is said, 1 Cor. xv. 26, 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;' it is weakened now, but then it shall be abolished as to the elect: Rev.

xx. 14, 'And death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire, this is the second death.' The dominion of death is reserved for hell; it must keep company with the damned, whilst you rejoice with God; for the present it is continued out of dispensation, it doth service to promote God's glory; but then the wicked must share death and hell amongst them, and be kept under a dying life or a living death: but 'all tears shall be wiped from your eyes,' Rev. vii. 17; death shall be no more, and you shall take the harps of God in your hands, and in a holy triumph say, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' It is true we may say it, yea, and sing it now in hope, as some birds sing in winter; but then we are properly said to triumph.

To apply it now.

Use 1. Here is terror for wicked men. You may think it strange that I should draw terror out of such a comfortable doctrine; but consider Jesus' Christ hath conquered death for none but those that have an interest in him; others, alas! are under the full power of it: for the present the case of wicked men is sad, in death it will be worse, in hell it will be worst of all. (1.) It is sad for the present; there is a bondage upon your souls, not always felt, but soon awakened; you cannot think of death and hell without torment; the thought of it, like Belshazzar's handwriting against the wall, smiteth you with trembling in the midst of all your cups and bravery; a small thing will awaken a wicked man's conscience, the fingers of a man's hand upon the wall. Belshazzar seemed a jolly fellow, a brave spirit, sets light by the Persian forces that were even at his door; but God soon taketh off the edge of his bravery, and then his joints trembled, his knuckles smote one against another for fear. If the Lord will but whist to conscience, the bravest spirits are soon daunted;<sup>1</sup> he needeth arm nothing against you but your own thoughts; certainly none but a child of God can have a true and solid courage against death; you cannot suppose it without consternation. David said, Ps. xxiii. 4, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet I will fear no evil.' That is a grisly, sad, dark place to walk in, the very borders of death, side by side with terrors and destruction; yet there David would be confident: it is otherwise with wicked men; hereafter they would not live, and here they would not die. (2.) In death it will be worse, the nearer you draw to the everlasting estate, the more will conscience be opened, and scourge you with horror and remorse. I confess every wicked man doth not die sensible; some are stupid and foolhardy; they may sacrifice a stout body to a stubborn mind; but at last they die uncertain, doubtful if not anxious, and full of horror. As Adrian to his soul, *O animula vagula, blandula*, &c.—O poor soul! whither dost thou now go? thou shalt never sport it more, jest it more! Or, as he said, *Anxius vixi, dubius morior; heu, quo vado!*—I have lived doubtfully and die uncertainly; alas! whither do I go? A man that leapeth in the dark near a deep gulf, knoweth not where his feet shall light; and this is the case of wicked men. But this is not all; usually their death is full of terror. Things written with the juice of a lemon, when they are brought to the fire are plain and legible; so when wicked men are within the stench and smell of hell, they howl upon their beds; few

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'daunted'?—Ed.

or none are able to look death in the face with confidence. Oh ! consider, when you come to die sin stareth in the face of conscience, and conscience remitteth you to the law, and the law bindeth you over to hell, and hell enlargeth her mouth to receive you ; what will you do in such a case ? Satan insulteth, your old tempter is become your new accuser ; nay, you are at odds with yourself ; the body curseth the soul for an ill guide, and the soul curseth the body for a wicked instrument. It is a sad parting when they can never expect to meet again but in flames and torments, and therefore curse the memory of that day whenever they were joined together. A godly man can take fair leave of his body : Farewell, flesh ! go, rest in hope ; thou shalt one day awake out of the dust, and then I shall be satisfied with God's likeness : I have a longing desire of thy re-union ; we have lived together and glorified God together thus long ; God will not suffer thee to see corruption, &c. (3.) In hell it will be worst of all ; envy will be a part of your torment as well as despair : Luke xvi. 23, it is said of the rich man, ' In hell he lifted up his eyes, and seeth Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, and saith, I am tormented in this flame.' It will be an additional torment to compare the believers' eternal happiness with your own misery : they are in the presence of God and his holy angels ; you have no company but the devil, death, hell, and the damned, and are holden under the power of everlasting torments ; you would not live and cannot die ; when you have run through many thousands of years you cannot look for one minute of rest ; conscience gnaweth more and more, you burn but consume not. Oh ! ' it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' Heb. x. 31. Mark that attribute, *living God*. We do not speak in the name of an idol that cannot avenge his quarrel upon you, or of a God that shall die and suffer decay, but in the name of a *living God*, that liveth for ever to see vengeance executed upon his adversaries. There is no hope of release ; as long as God is God, hell is hell.

*Use 2.* It serveth to exhort us all to get an interest in this conquest of Christ. Every one is not fit to make use of Christ's victory over death ; there are many things necessary to enjoy the full comfort of it. I shall name them :—(1.) A care to get sin pardoned. All the power of the devil and death hangeth on sin ; therefore see sin buried ere thou art buried, or it will not be well with thee. There are two deep pits wherein you may bury your sins, and you shall never hear of them any more—the ocean of divine mercy, and the grave of Christ. See them buried in the ocean of mercy : Micah vii. 19, ' Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.' There is depth enough to bury them and drown them, that they may no more come into remembrance. Then there is the grave of Christ ; the merit of Christ is a deep grave, deep enough wherein to bury all the sins of the world : ' Buried with him in baptism,' Rom. vi. 4. Otherwise, if this be not done, you will desire to be buried eternally, and never to rise more. Let me use one metaphor more in this matter, and it shall take its rise from that expression of the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 3 ; we shall be ' clothed upon,' saith he, ' if so be that we shall be not found altogether naked.' It is the great fault of Christians, when they come to die, they are to seek of a shroud, and are found altogether naked. It is

uncomely to see a man in his nakedness; you should be wrapt in the winding-sheet of Christ's righteousness; there is no shroud like to that; come thus to the grave, and the grave shall have no power over you. But to leave the metaphor: This must be your great work and care, Christians, to reflect upon these things in the serious applications and discourses of faith, the infinite mercy of God, the abundant merit of Christ, and the sufficiency of his righteousness for your acceptance with God. (2.) Do not only act faith, but strive after assurance of God's love to your souls. Old Simeon said, Luke ii. 29, 30, 'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation; now let me depart in peace.' He held the Messiah not only in his arms, but in his heart, and then he could comfortably dismiss his soul. 'Now let me die,' said Jacob, when he had seen Joseph. He can never die too soon, as for himself, his own comfort and profit, that hath seen Jesus; his death is not untimely and immature, by what stroke soever he be cut off; whereas otherwise, if you live a hundred years, you die too soon if you die before you have gotten an interest in Christ: 'The sinner of an hundred years shall be accursed.' Old sinners that are left to be eaten out by their own rust, are chimneys long foul, and come at last to be fired. (3.) Mortify corruptions. Sin must die ere we die; he dieth well whose sins are dead before him. Either sin must die or the sinner. As the prophet said in another case, I say in this, 'Thy life must go for its life.' You will find those sins mortal that are not mortified. What should an unmortified man do with heaven? There are no sports nor carnal pleasures there; those blessed mansions seem to him but dark shades and melancholy retirements. The apostle hath an expression: Col. i. 12, 'He hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' We are first made meet for heaven before we enter into it; we are weaned from the world before we leave it. When men hang upon the world as long as they can, and when they can hang no longer, think then to make use of God, the Lord will refuse them with disdain: 'Go to the gods which you have chosen,' Judges x. 14; let the world now help you and save you. In short, a mortified man is prepared and ready; he doth but wait for wind and tide, and falleth like a shock of corn in season. (4.) A holy life and conversation. Men live as if they never thought to die, and then die as if they never thought to live. The best way to die well is to live well; they that are not ashamed to live are not afraid to die. Balaam desired to 'die the death of the righteous,' but would not take pains to live a godly life. Every man cannot say, 'Thanks be to God that giveth us victory by Jesus Christ.' You cannot die in Christ unless you live in him, and in the power of his life advance towards heaven. Oh, labour to exercise yourselves in these things, that you may be in a constant preparation. You never enter into the combat with death but once. It is impossible to mend oversights; either we are slain or saved eternally. Now, if you do what I have here exhorted you to, you may wait till your change come; and when it cometh, your last hour will prove your best.

*Use 3.* It serveth to press God's children to improve the comforts of Christ's victory; do not let it go out of your hands. (1.) Improve it for your friends that are departed in the Lord. Our weeping puts



some disparagement upon Christ's conquest. Why should we weep in the day of their preferment, in the day of their solemn espousals to Jesus Christ? In the primitive times,<sup>1</sup> at funerals, they were wont to sing psalms of thanksgiving. We should bring them as champions to the grave, as those that have passed the pikes, and finished their course, and kept the faith, and have conquered the world, and sin, and death, and danger. Chrysostom, in one of his homilies on the Hebrews, speaketh of the ancient rites at funerals, of their hymns, and psalms, and praises: *Hæc omnia sunt lætantium*, saith he—all these signify joy; and wilt thou weep and sing a psalm of praise and triumph at the same time? I confess it is said, Acts viii. 2, that 'devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.' It is our loss when the church is bereaved of such excellent persons; there is cause of sorrow, but there should be a mixture; we should not mourn as those without hope, 1 Thes. iv. 13. As Christians must not rejoice without sorrow, so they must not be sorry without some mixture of joy. Let us declare that we hope for a resurrection, that we expect to meet our friends again in heaven; and when we weep, let it be like rain when the sun shineth. There should be somewhat of joy in our countenances, as well as tears in our eyes. (2.) Improve it for yourselves, and that—(1st.) In lifetime, that in your resolutions you may be willing to die. Many times we are like Lot in Sodom, or like the Israelites in Egypt, we could wish for Canaan, but are loth to go out of Egypt. This argueth little faith. Can we believe there is a heaven so excellent and glorious, and yet shun it? Can we hope for such an 'incorruptible inheritance,' 1 Peter i. 4, and yet be afraid of it? that we shall enter upon it too soon? What prince would live uncrowned? What heir would whine when he is called to come and take the inheritance? What thoughts have we of eternal life? Do we count it a privilege, or a misery and a burden? And again, it argueth little love. Can we pretend to love Christ, and be shy of his company? He should be unwilling to die that is unwilling to go to Christ.<sup>2</sup> And again, it argueth little judgment and consideration. Wherein is this life valuable? The world is nothing else but a place of banishment. Here is nothing but groaning; all the creatures join in comfort with the heirs of promise, Rom. viii. 23. What do you see in the world, or in the present life, to make you in love with it? Are you not weary of misery and sin? The longer thou livest thou sinnest the more. Certainly thou hast provoked God long enough already; it is high time to breathe after a better estate; and thou hast had taste enough of the world's misery and deceit, and of the frailties and weaknesses of the body. A longer life would be but a longer sickness. What is the matter that we are so loth to let go our hold of present things? If it be not want of faith or want of love to Christ, or too much love of the world, certainly it must be fear of death. And what a baseness and lowness of spirit is this, to fear an enemy so often vanquished by Christ and his saints? If you be at this pass, I have preached all this while in vain; and the victory of Christ, which I have discoursed of, is to little purpose. Oh! consider, generous heathens

Kinet Cathol. Orthod. Ques. 40, primæ part. qs. i.

<sup>2</sup> Illius est nolle mori, qui nolit ire ad Christum.—Aug.

may shame you. You make all the provision of Christ in the gospel to be of less effect than mere moral principles. (2dly.) Especially improve this in the very season and hour of death. The great Goliath is now fallen, and you may come forth and look upon the carcase, Isa. lxvi. 4. Death itself, that startleth the creature, and seemeth to be the great check and prejudice of Christian hopes, is vanquished by Christ; therefore, in the very season when it seemeth to prevail over you, apply the victory, and say, 'Thanks be to God,' &c. When the pangs come upon you, remember this is death's last pull and assault; you may bear with it, it shall molest you no more; as Moses said, Exod. xiv. 13, 'The Egyptians which ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them no more again for ever.' So you shall feel these things no more. In heaven there are no groans, nor tears, nor sorrows; have but a little patience, and as soon as the last gasp is over, the soul shall be carried by angels to Christ, and by Christ to God. Believers have the same entertainment that Christ had; he was carried into heaven by angels: Dan. vii. 13, 'They brought him to the Ancient of days.' And so we are carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, Luke xvi. 22. They have a train to accompany them into heaven, as their friends accompany their bodies to the grave. And as Christ was welcomed into heaven with acclamations, and God saith, 'Sit down at my right hand,' Ps. cx. 1, and 'Ask of me, and I will give thee,' &c., Ps. ii. 8, so are believers welcomed: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into thy master's joy.'

What remaineth, then, but that we die by faith, as well as live by faith; but that we welcome death with confidence, and breathe out our souls in triumph? Moses, when he took up the serpent in his hand, it was but a rod; death thus welcomed and entertained by faith will prove at most but a correction, yea, rather a blessing of the covenant, a means of passage into glory.

One thing I had almost forgotten, to press you to thankfulness to Christ. Oh! bless your Redeemer, that hath delivered you from the fear of death; admire his love and condescension, that he should come down from heaven and substitute himself in our room and place, and take the horrors of death into his own soul. It is said, Mat. xx. 28, 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' Christ was a prince by birth, heir of all things, yet he came not in the pomp and equipage of a prince. If he had come in state to visit us, and to deliver comfort to us by word of mouth, it had been much; but Christ came not in this way, not in the pomp of a prince, but in the form of a servant, to minister to our necessities, and that in the highest way of self-denial; he gave his life as a ransom for many. Other princes are lavish of their subjects' blood, and care not how many lay down their lives for them: many give their lives as a ransom for the prince, but here it is quite otherwise, this prince layeth down his life to redeem the subjects, and he suffered death that it might not be terrible and destructive to us. Oh! blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ for this love for evermore.

Some may expect that I should speak something concerning the servant of God, our dear brother now departed, but I need not say any

more than what I have spoken already all along the discourse. I have indeed spoken of him, and that in the judgment of your consciences ; the duties which I pressed upon you he performed ; the comforts which I have propounded to you he enjoyed. I shall not make any particular rehearsal of the passages of his exemplary life : I judge it not convenient. Only to you of this place I may take liberty to commend his doctrine, and entreat you to be careful of those precious truths which he sowed among you while the Lord used him here as a skilful seedsman. God looketh for some increase, and taketh special notice of the time that you have enjoyed his labours : there is an exact account kept in heaven, as in that parable, ' These three years came I seeking fruit,' Luke xiii. 7 ; probably the three years of Christ's ministry are intended, for then he was entering upon his last half-year. God reckoneth how many years, how many months, your minister hath been with you, and accordingly doth expect fruit. Your pastor, a little before his suffering, professed high and worthy thoughts of you ; let him not be deceived. It will be sad for you in that great day of separation, that when he expecteth to find you among the sheep, and to be his crown and rejoicing, he should see you among the goats. He will know you there ; memory in heaven is not abolished, but perfected. I say he will know you, though without any lessening of his own happiness, or repining at God's righteous judgments.

THE BLESSED ESTATE OF THEM  
THAT DIE IN THE LORD,

OPENED IN A

SERMON AT THE FUNERAL OF MISTRESS  
JANE BLACKWELL,

WIFE OF MASTER ELIDAD BLACKWELL, PASTOR OF ANDREWS UNDERSHAFT,  
LONDON.



## THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

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To my Reverend and much-beloved Friend and Brother, Mr ELIDAD  
BLACKWELL, Preacher of God's Word at Andrews Undershaft,  
London.

SIR.—I have at length sent you the copy of the sermon preached at your wife's funeral ; dispose of it as you shall think good, either to your closet or the press. My judgment is for the former, but my affection will not suffer me to oppose, if you resolve upon the latter. If it may be any allay of your sorrow for your great loss, or of any use to the public, I shall not repent of the transcription of it. This, I may say with modesty enough, that the subject is useful and proper to the occasion. At the interment of my godly friend, who had so long waited on my ministry with savour and profit, what could I insist upon more seasonably, for your comfort and mine own, than the blessedness of those that live and die in the Lord ? Now the blessing of the Lord go along with this discourse, whatever becometh of it, and make up this great breach to you with the more abundance of spiritual refreshings, which is the unfeigned desire of, sir, your true friend and fellow-servant in the Lord's work,

THO. MANTON.

## S E R M O N.

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*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*—REV. XIV. 13.

THE chief wisdom of a man is to live well and die well, to live godly and die blessed. The same corruption of nature that makes us unwilling to live well makes us unwilling to die. To forsake our corruptions, and go out of the world, are both displeasing to flesh and blood; therefore we need to be pressed often both to the one and the other, for the one maketh way for the other.

Upon this occasion I know not a more seasonable argument. In autumn, when we see one leaf or a few leaves fall, we conclude the rest will follow afterwards. Every funeral should put us in mind that our death is not far off. Some of us have cause to expect the next turn. Old men, in scripture account, are as good as dead already, Heb. xi. 12. Those that lived longest died at last; Enos lived 905, Cainan 910, Seth 912, Adam 930, Jared 962, Methuselah, 969 years, but they all died. All must die; the great care should be to die well; none can die well but those that die in the Lord, for they are blessed; so it is proclaimed from heaven. Every divine truth comes from heaven; but some are more solemnly proclaimed from thence, as the mortality of man and the blessedness of the dead: the mortality of man, Isa. xl. 6, our affections are against the thought of that; the blessedness of the dead, in this place, against which carnal reason opposeth,—nature will so hardly believe that the dead can be blessed, that we need a voice from heaven to confirm it.

The context speaks of many troubles to try the patience of the saints. Now the comfort propounded is the blessed estate of the departed. The worst that wicked men can do to the saints is but to help them the sooner to heaven.

In the words observe a preface and a doctrine. The preface shows it is a matter of weight. Here is a voice from heaven, and a command to write, for the more assurance, an open publication.

In the doctrine you have an assertion and an amplification. In the assertion, the qualification: the dead *which die in the Lord*; the privilege: *are blessed*. In the amplification you may observe:—

1. The season: ἀπ' ἄρτι, *from henceforth*.

2. The confirmation: *saith the Spirit*; the Holy Ghost maketh affidavit.

3. The parts of this blessedness, which are two—a release and a reward. A release: *they rest from their labours*; a reward implied: *their works follow them*. Death to the godly is not only an end of misery, but a beginning of glory and happiness. Philosophers could look upon it as the end of misery, but Christians look upon it as a beginning of glory and happiness.

Because I shall not be able to discuss the amplification, let me open some of the circumstances.

'*Ἀπ' ἄρτι*, 'from henceforth.' Those that died in the Lord in former ages were blessed; but these times did require this singular comfort, because of the dreadful persecution, and that from those who carried the name of Christians. Now, saith the Holy Ghost, not only those that suffered by heathens are blessed, and counted the Lord's martyrs, but those that suffer also under pseudo-Christians. Some indeed carry it in another sense, as if it were said, before Antichrist be cast down, it will cost the church such a world of trouble that from henceforth you will count the dead happy, as being taken from the evil to come, Isa. lvii. 1. Others thus: 'from henceforth,' that is, after salvation offered to the Gentiles in the gospel, the dead shall be known to be happy; as the apostle saith that, 2 Tim. ii. 10, 'Life and immortality is brought to light in the gospel.' Others apply this 'from henceforth' to the time of their death, as if the saints were here asserted to be immediately happy upon their dissolution. But I think the first exposition most simple and genuine.

*Rest from their labours*: troubles, services, the labours of their callings, the troubles of their condition. The godly are taken away from evil, and the wicked are taken away to evil. From glorifying and serving God they never rest, but from weariness in serving God, from weakness, sin, and distraction.

*Their works follow them*. As it is said of wicked men, their iniquity shall find them out. We carry nothing out of the world with us but the conscience and comfort of what we have done for God; their wealth doth not follow them into the other world, but their works do.

*Doct.* The point which I shall prosecute is the assertion of the text, that they that die in the Lord are in a blessed condition. I shall inquire:—(1). What it is to die in the Lord? (2.) Show you how they are blessed. (3.) Whence it is that they who die in the Lord are sure to be in a blessed condition.

1. What it is to 'die in the Lord'? '*Ἐν κυρίῳ*', may be rendered 'for the Lord,' or 'in the Lord'; as Eph. iv. 1, 'Paul, a prisoner in the Lord.' We render it 'of the Lord,' or 'for the Lord's sake.' 1 Thes. iv. 16: 'We render 'the dead in Christ' shall rise first; and ver. 14, 'those that sleep in Jesus,' which is to be preferred? I answer—Neither is to be excluded; whether a godly man fall as a peace-offering or as a burnt-offering, he is still in a happy condition.

To 'die in the Lord' may relate either to the cause for which, or to the state wherein, or to the manner how, we die.

[1.] The cause for which we die. So the martyrs die in the Lord,

or for the Lord's sake; and are blessed of God, though, it may be, cursed of men. The text relates to the time of Antichristian persecution, when usually they died excommunicate or accused by the Roman synagogue. God hath a special regard to his champions that love not their lives to the death.

[2.] The state wherein we die. So to die in the Lord is to die in the favour of God, in a state of peace with him as members of Christ's mystical body: they die in the bosom of Christ; sleep in Jesus, 1 Cor. xv. 18; are reconciled to God in and through him. There are two notable expressions which I shall commend to you upon this occasion. One is in the 2 Peter iii. 14: 'That we may be found of him in peace.' To die before the quarrel be taken up between us and God, that is sad. When a town is surprised by force, they that are taken with their weapons in their hands die without mercy; but blessed are they that die in peace. The other is in the 2 Cor. v. 3: 'That I may not be found naked.' To be summoned to come before God, and to have nothing to cover our nakedness, that is sad: it should be our care to be wrapt in Christ's righteousness; that is the best shroud for a dying Christian.

[3.] As to the manner: they are said to die in the Lord who die in a gracious manner. It much concerneth us and the glory of God that we die well. A Christian is not only to live to the glory of God, but to die to the glory of God, for living and dying we are the Lord's, Rom. xiv. 7, 8. As to the manner, 'to die in the Lord' signifieth—(1.) Our perseverance in communion with him; to continue our blessed fellowship with Christ to the death and in the death. Into the vineyard, Mat. xx., some were called sooner, some later, but all continued to the end. Elisha would not leave his master till he was taken from him into heaven; so, till all be finished, we should follow our work close. 'Let us take heed,' saith the apostle, 'lest we seem to come short,' Heb. iv. 1. As we should not come short, we should not seem to come short. Enoch lived a long while, but all that while he walked with God; three hundred and sixty-five years, a long age, but spent in communion with God, Gen. v. 22. (2.) It implies the solemn actings of grace at death. The scripture takes notice of the last words of saints; 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, the last words of David. Death is a special season wherein to make use of grace, of faith, love, zeal, and obedience.

(1.) Faith: Heb. xi. 13, 'All these died in faith.' It is not enough to live by faith, but we must also die by faith. This is a grace always of use on this side the grave; in the other world there is no need of it. When we come to enjoyment, faith ceaseth; at death it doth us the last office; we see what it is then to put the soul into God's keeping, 2 Tim. i. 12; Luke xxiii. 46; Acts vii. 59. Then do we die in faith when we can resign our souls to God, and send our bodies to the grave in hope. While we are alive, we find it harder to depend upon God for daily bread than for eternal life, for herein faith is put upon a present trial; but when we come to die, the strength of our confidence is tried about the blessed recompenses. This then is to die in the Lord, when we can look beyond the grave and within the veil into the glory of the world to come.

(2.) Love. In our readiness and willingness to be with Christ: Phil.



i. 23, 'I desire to be dissolved, and be with Christ,' the 'Spirit and the bride say, Come.' Now God takes you at your word, and you draw back. Let him be afraid to die that would not go to Christ.

(3.) Zeal for God's glory. It is the last time you can do anything for God in the world. Put in a word for him, commend him to those about you, as Jacob doth the Mediator or the angel of the covenant, of whom he had such experience in the course of his pilgrimage, Gen. xlviii. 16; and Josh. xxiii., Josh. xxiv., 'I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and all your souls not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God hath spoken.' All is come to pass; not one thing hath failed thereof. Words of dying men are of most efficacy and authority, as being spoken out of all their former experience, with most simplicity, without self-seeking or sinister ends, with most seriousness; for men entering upon the confines of eternity are wiser and more serious. It is no time to dally and dissemble at the last gasp. Speeches of living men are suspected of partiality to their present interests, or neglected as having no weight in them; but the speeches of dying men are solemnly observed. Therefore Joseph's brethren, to engage him the more, urge him with his father's dying charge: Gen. i. 16, 'Thy father, when he died, said,' &c. Men, as they are returning *πρὸς τὸ πρόγονον θεῖον*, to the original divinity, as Plotinus speaks, are supposed to be more divine, and therefore their dying words are much regarded. Put in then a word for God, an amen to the promises. Carnal men cannot honour their principles when they die; the world fails them when there is most need: Job xxvii. 8, 'What hope hath a hypocrite when God comes to take away his soul?' When they are going out of the world, then they fall a complaining how the world hath deceived them; but a Christian, when he dies, he may honour his principles, commend the promises, give an account of the faithfulness of the Mediator, and plead for God at the last gasp.

(4.) Obedience. A Christian is not to die like a beast, to be merely passive; his soul is not taken away, but yielded up; there is a resignation and consent on his part. A carnal man suffers death, but a Christian gives up the ghost. The scripture useth this distinctness of speech concerning them, as concerning the wicked. God takes away their souls, Luke xii. 19, Job xxvii. 8; they would fain keep them longer, but the Lord puts the bond in suit, and perforce they are dragged into his presence. But now death to the godly, it is a sweet dismissal, Luke ii. 26. When they see the will of God, they hold out no longer; their souls are not taken away, but yielded up to God.

Thus you see grace stands by us when all things else fail; it makes us live with comfort, and die with comfort. When wealth fails, grace fails us not. So much of the first question.

2. How they are blessed. They are presently blessed upon the departure of the soul out of the body, but more blessed at the general resurrection of the just.

[1.] Presently the soul is where Christ is; carried by angels to Christ, and by Christ presented to God, as the fruit of his purchase. That the soul is where Christ is, appears by that of Phil. i. 23, 'I desire to

be dissolved and be with Christ; to be with him in glory; otherwise it were a loss, not a happiness, for St Paul to be dissolved. It is a sorry blessedness to lie rotting in the grave, and only to be eased of present labours; for God's people are wont to reckon much of their present service and enjoyment of God, though it be accompanied with troubles and afflictions. Paul was in a strait, and he saith it was *πολλῷ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον*—much more better to be with Christ. A stupid sleep, without the enjoyment of God, is not much better than our present condition, but far worse. What happiness were that to be in such a condition, wherein we do nothing for God, enjoy nothing from God? Surely Paul would never be in such a strait if this drowsy doctrine were true, that the soul lies in such an inactive state of sleep and rest till the resurrection. This is to be no more blessed than stones and inanimate creatures, that feel nothing. Again, Luke xxiii. 43, 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise,' saith Christ to the good thief. Some, to evade that place, refer *σήμερον* to λέγω, as if it were, I say to thee this day; but the pointing in the Greek copies contradicts it, as also the sense of the place: *σήμερον*, this day, answers to the thief's, 'when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.' Christ promiseth more than he asks, as God doth usually abundantly for us above what we can ask or think. He hath reference to Christ's words to the high priest: the Son of man shall come in his glory. Now, saith Christ, I will not defer thy desire so long, for presently shall heavenly joys attend thy soul. Others seek to evade it by the word 'paradise;' it is a Persiac word, but used by the Hebrews for gardens and orchards, and by allusion for heavenly joys; and possibly the allusion might be taken not from the delights of an ordinary garden, but from Eden, or that garden in which Adam was placed in innocency. That by paradise is meant heaven, and not those *secreta animarum receptacula et beatæ sedes*, some secret places for the repose of souls departed, which some of the fathers fancied, appeared by Paul's expression in 2 Cor. xii. 4. Speaking of his rapture, 'I was,' saith he, 'caught up into the third heaven,' which he presently calls paradise. Well, then, out of the whole we may conclude, that the souls immediately upon their departure out of their bodies are with Christ. Again it is said, Luke xvi. 22, 'The beggar died, and was carried into Abraham's bosom,' presently, in the twinkling of an eye, or turning of a thought. Thus it is with the saints, which is a great comfort. When you come to die, in a moment angels will bring you to Christ: agonies of death are terrible, but there are joys just ready; and as soon as you are loosed from the prison of your body, you enter into your eternal rest, the soul flieth hence to Christ. Once more, as the wicked are in their final estate as soon as they die, and therefore they are called 'the spirits now in prison,' 1 Peter iii. 19; so do the godly enjoy their glorified estate as soon as they die: 'The spirits of just men are made perfect,' Heb xii. 24. How can their spirits be said to be perfect, if they lie only in a dull sleep without any light, life, joy, delight, or act of love to God?

[2.] They are completely blest at the resurrection. What their blessedness shall be then, we cannot now know to the full. We shall understand it best when the great voice calls us to come up and see; only because

our ear hath received a little thereof, let me endeavour to lay it before you. In blessedness there must be:—(1.) A removal of all evils; (2.) A coacervation, and complete presence of all goods.

(1.) A removal of evil. As long as the least evil continues, a man is not blessed, only less miserable. Haman had all things that a carnal heart could wish for; he guided the affairs of one hundred and twenty provinces; only he wanted Mordecai's knee: therefore he saith, all this avails me nothing. Ahab had the kingdom of Israel, and yet falls sick for want of Naboth's vineyard. In engines of war, if one peg be missing, or out of order, all stops. In the body of man, if one humour be out of order, or joint broken, it is enough to make us ill at ease, though all the rest be sound and whole; so if there be the least evil, a man cannot be a completely happy man. Well, then, from this blessed estate of the dead in the Lord, all evil is removed. Now evil is twofold—either of sin or punishment: in heaven there is neither.

(1st.) To begin with sin, that is the worst evil; affliction is evil, but it is not evil in itself, but only in our sense and feeling; but sin is evil whether we feel it or no; it is worst when we feel it not. That is evil which separates from the chiefest good. Affliction doth not separate from God; it is a means and occasion to make us draw near to him. Many had never been acquainted with God but for their afflictions; but sin separates from God: Isa. lix. 2, 'Your iniquities have separated,' &c. Let a man be never so loathsome, yet if he be in a state of grace he is dear to God, the Lord takes pleasure in him; though he should be rough-cast with ulcers and sores, in a prison, yet God will kiss him with the kisses of his mouth: there is nothing loathsome and odious to God but sin. This grieves the saints most: Rom. vii. 23, 'O wretched man that I am,' &c. If any man had cause to complain of afflictions, Paul had; in perils often, in perils by land, in perils by sea, in perils by enemies, in perils by false brethren, whipped, imprisoned, stoned; but he doth not cry out, When shall I be delivered from these afflictions? but this body of death! Lust troubled him more than scourges, and his captivity to the law of sin more than chains and prisons. This is the disposition of the saints: they are weary of the world, because they are sinning here whilst others are glorifying God; not only that they are suffering here, whilst others are enjoying God. A beast will forsake the place where he hath neither meat nor rest; carnal men, when they are beaten out of the world, have a fancy to heaven as a place of retreat; but that which troubles godly men is their sin. Well, now, in heaven there is no sin, there is neither spot nor wrinkle upon the face of glorified saints, Eph. v. 27. They were once as black as you, but now Christ presents them to God as a proof of the cleansing virtue of his blood. There they are freed from all sin; here with much ado we mortify our lust, and yet nature will be ever recoiling; as the ivy in the wall, cut it never so much, it will be breaking out again. It is much here if the dominion of sin be taken away; there the being of it is abolished; the glorified saints displease God no more, and are freed from all the immediate and inseparable consequences of original sin, from distractions in duty. Here love is not perfect, and therefore the soul cannot be fixed in the contemplation of God, and that is the reason of wandering thoughts; but there the heart

cleaves to him without straggling; from pride, which lasts as long as life, and therefore called 'pride of life,' 1 John ii. 16. We cannot have a revelation now, but we grow proud of it: nor an influence of grace, but it lifts us up, 2 Cor. xii. 2. There is a worm in manna: but there, when we are most high, we are most humble. Christians, is not this a blessed hope, that tells you of a sinless state, of being like Christ for purity and holiness? 1 John iii. 2, 'We shall see him as he is, for we shall be like unto him.' What is it that you have struggled with and groaned under all your lives but sin? Now that is blotted out when the days of refreshing come; and as there is no sin, so there are no temptations. In paradise there was a tempter, but not in heaven; Satan was long since cast out thence, and the saints fill up the vacant rooms of the apostate angels. The world is a place of snares, a valley of temptations; it is the devil's circuit. Where did he walk to and fro but in the earth? But into heaven nothing enters that defiles, Rev. xxi. 27: no serpent can creep in there. Christians, lift up your heads; you will get rid of sin and displease God no more: here we cry, 'Lord, deliver us from evil;' and there our cries are heard at the full. Grace weakeneth sin, but glory abolisheth it, and old Adam is left in the grave never to rise more.

(2dly.) The next evil is the evil of affliction. Whatever is painful and burdensome to nature is a fruit of the fall, a brand and mark of our rebellion against God; therefore affliction must be done away as well as sin if we be completely happy. As in hell there is an evil, an only evil; a cup of wrath unmixed, without the least temperament of mercy; so in heaven there is happiness, and only happiness, sorrow is done away as well as sin; it is said he will wipe all tears from their eyes. The afflictions of the soul are gone; there are no more doubtings of God's love, nor sense of his displeasure; here, though we are pardoned, and the wound be cured, yet the scars remain. As Absalom could not see the king's face when he was restored, in wise dispensation God sometimes hides his face from us; we need to be dieted and to taste the vinegar and the gall sometimes, as well as the honey and sweetness. The world is a middle place, standing between heaven and hell, and therefore hath something of both, a mixture of pleasures and sorrows, both good and evil are to be received from the hand of God; but there there is fulness of joy for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11. Here we complain that the candle of the Lord doth not shine over us with a like brightness, but there our sun remains in an eternal high noon, without clouds and the shadows of this night. The afflictions of the body are done away; heaven is a happy air, where none are sick; there is no such thing there as gout and agues, and the grinding pains of the stone. The body here is called a vile body, Phil. iii. 21, as it is the instrument of sin and the subject of diseases. We have the root of diseases in the soul, and the matter and fuel of diseases in the body, peccant humours and principles of corruption. As wood is eaten out with worms that breed within itself, so are there in our bodies principles of corruption that do at length destroy them; but there we are wholly incorruptible. Yea, because deformity in the body is a monument of God's displeasure, one of the inconveniences introduced by Adam's fall, it is done away. The bodies rise in due proportion;



whatever was monstrous or misshapen in the first edition is corrected in the second. And for violence without, heaven is a quiet place. When there are tumults in the world, God is introduced, Ps. ii. 4, as sitting in the heavens; a quiet posture. There is nothing to discompose those blessed spirits. The company of wicked men is a burthen; Lot's righteous soul was vexed with it, 2 Peter ii. 7; but there they are bound hand and foot and cast into utter darkness; as when men will not be ruled, they are sent to prison. Here the children of God are subject to a number of infirmities, hunger, thirst, nakedness, cold, want; but there we have a rich inheritance, as well as a glorious, Eph. i. 18. The distinctions of poor and rich, as understood in the world, do not outlive time; we have enough of true riches, which is eternal glory, and the full fruition of God; labour ceaseth, though there be a continual exercise of grace. All things rest when they come to their proper place; so do those which die in the Lord. We still serve God, but without weariness; yea, we are freed from the necessities of nature, eating, drinking, and sleeping, to which the greatest potentates are subject; though they are exempted from hard bodily labour, they are not exempted from the necessities of nature. 'Meat is for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them,' 1 Cor. vi. 12. The use of meats, and of the stomach, and of the belly is abolished. It is a piece of our misery that our life is patched up of so many creatures, as a torn garment is pieced and patched up with supplies from abroad. Here the sheep or the silkworm affords us clothing, the beasts of the earth and fish of the sea serve for food; and all to support a ruinous fabric, ever ready to drop about our ears. But then we are above meat, and drink, and apparel; nakedness will be no shame, for glory will serve instead of a robe, and it will be meat and drink enough to do our Father's will; the body will not be a clog to the soul, but a help. That mass of flesh we carry about us is but the prison of the soul, where it looks out by the windows of the senses; but then it is no longer the prison of the soul, but the temple. In short, all that I have said upon this branch is comprised in Rev. xxi. 4, 'And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there is no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for former things are passed away.' There is quite another change; new dispensations; no distraction of business; our whole employment will be to think of God, and study God, but without weariness, satiety, or distraction.

(2.) In blessedness there is a confluence of all good necessary to the happiness of the creature. Our blessedness is full for parts, full for the degrees and manner of enjoyment; and all this continues for ever, without fear of losing it. Our crown of glory is a garland that will never wither; it is an eternal state of actual delights; we are blessed in our bodies, blessed in our souls, blessed in our company. Man is ζῶον πολιτικόν, a sociable creature; and therefore to his complete happiness it is necessary that he should not be only blest in his person, but in his company and relations. We are brought into the presence of God, who is blessedness itself, and to the sight and blessed fellowship of his blessed Son, and into the company of blessed angels and saints.

First, Let me speak of the happiness of his person, and then both of his body and soul.

1st, For his body, it is now a temple of the Holy Ghost. He cannot leave his mansion and ancient dwelling-place, and therefore he raiseth it up and formeth it again into a complete fashion, like Christ's glorious body, Phil. iii. 21, for clarity, agility, strength, incorruption. Solomon's temple, when it was destroyed, the latter house was nothing so glorious as the former; men wept when they saw it, Ezra iii. 12. But it is not so here; it is raised quite another body. For the present there is to be seen a beautiful fabric wherein God hath shown his workmanship; every member, if it were not so common, would be a miracle; all is ordered for the service and comeliness of the whole. But now it is a vile body, subject to diseases, fed with meat, humbled with wants, many times mangled with violence, dissolved by death, and crumbled to dust in the grave like a dry clod of earth. This is the body we carry about us, a mass of flesh dressed up to be a dish for the worms. But this vile body shall rise in another manner, like Christ's glorious body. When the sun appears the stars vanish, their lustre is eclipsed and darkened; but the Sun of righteousness, when he appears at the last day, doth not obscure, but perfect our glory. More particularly; if you inquire wherein our bodies shall be like Christ's glorious body, the apostle will tell us that in another place, 1 Cor. xv. 40-44. Let me single out three expressions: it is raised in incorruption; it is raised in glory; it is raised a spiritual body. (1.) It is an incorruptible body. Now it yields to the decays of nature, and is exercised with pains and aches, till at length it droppeth down like ripe fruit into the grave; but hereafter it shall be clothed with immortality, wholly impassible. What a comfort is this to those that are racked with the stone or gout, broken with diseases, or withered with age, to think that they shall have a body without aches, and without decays, that shall always be in the spring of youth! The trees of paradise are always green. (2.) It shall be a glorious body. Here it is many times deformed; at least, beauty, like a flower, is lost in sickness, davered or withered with age, defaced by several accidents; but then we shall be glorious like to Christ's body. The naked body of man was so beautiful in innocency that the beasts of the field admired it, and thereupon did homage to Adam; but we shall not be conformed to the first Adam, but the second. Christ in the mount, when he was transfigured, they could not endure the shining of his garments, it astonished the disciples, Mat. xvii.; his garments could not veil, nor their eyes endure, those strong emissions of the beams of glory. Paul could not endure the light that shined to him when Christ appeared to him from heaven, Acts ix., but was utterly confounded and struck blind. By this you may guess a little at the glory of the body when it is likened to Christ's glorious body. Moses, by conversing with God forty days, the complexion of his face was altered so that they were glad to put a veil upon it. In this low estate in which we are, we must make use of these hints. (3.) A spiritual body, either for agility. We shall not be clogged as now; we shall be caught up in the air to meet the Lord. Or rather a spiritual body, because more disposed for spiritual uses, for the enjoyments and the employments of grace. Here it is a natural body, an unready instrument for the soul: we are not in a capacity to bear the new wine of glory; but there we are made more capacious and

stronger vessels to contain all that God will give out. The disciples fainted at Christ's transfiguration, Mat. xvii. 6. We cannot receive such large diffusions and overflowings of glory as we shall then have ; every strong affection and raised thought doth upset us, and cause ecstacy and ravishment ; but there it is otherwise : God maketh out himself to us in a greater latitude, and we are more able to bear it.

2dly, For the blessedness of the soul, which is the heaven of heaven. Our happiness is called 'The inheritance of the saints in light.' Col. i. 12, for which we must be prepared. It is not for them that know no other heaven but to eat, drink, and sleep, and wallow in filthy and gross pleasures ; it is an inheritance in light, and for saints that know how to value intellectual and spiritual delights. Wherein, you will say, lies the happiness of the soul ? in knowledge or love ? *Ans.* Divines are divided ; certainly in both. Our happiness consists in the love of God, and knowledge of God, from whence results union with God, and fruition of God. It is hard to say which is to be preferred, to know God, or love God. In one place the scripture tells us, 'this is life eternal, to know the only true God,' John xvii. 3 ; so that it seems to be the heaven of heaven to have the understanding satisfied with the knowledge of God : Ps. xvii. 15, 'When I awake I shall be satisfied with thine image and likeness.' On the other side : 1 John iv. 16, 'He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.' The embrace of the soul is by love, the possession of God is by acts of love. One saith (it may be not modestly enough), *Libentius sine aspectu, et te diligere, quam te videndo non amarem*<sup>1</sup>—that he had rather not see God than not love him. Here in the world the hatred of God is worse than ignorance of him ; and therefore, it should seem, love should have the pre-eminence. But we need not make a faction between the graces ; by knowing we come to love, and by loving we come to know. As light is, so is love, and so is enjoyment. Here we love little because we know little : 'If thou knewest the gift,' &c., John iv. 10 ; and the more we love, the more we know. This is a fire that casts light. But to speak more distinctly :—

(1.) There is the perfection of knowledge. All the faculties must be satisfied before we can be happy ; especially so noble a faculty as the mind is. There is a natural inclination to knowledge ; the soul takes a great deal of contentment in the contemplation of any truth. The knowledge of wisdom to thy soul (saith Solomon) shall be as the honeycomb when thou hast found it, Prov. xxiv. 13, 14 ; Right and clear thoughts of God breed a rejoicing, Ps. xix. 10. Well, then, this is no small part of our happiness, to have more light and knowledge of God and of his ways. We shall know many mysteries of salvation that we are now ignorant of ; as the nature of God : Ps. xvii. 15, 'I shall be satisfied with thy image and likeness ;' the union of the two natures in the person of Christ : John xvii. 24, 'They shall behold my glory ;' our union with Christ and by Christ with God : John xiv. 20, 'In that day they shall know that I am in the Father,' &c. ; the course of God's decrees and providences for our good : 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 'We shall know as we are known ;' that is, we shall be able to see how the unchangeable counsels of God for our salvation have been

<sup>1</sup> Stella de Amore Dei.

carried on through all the passages of the present life, to bring us safe to the heavenly state. These are the deeps of God, and now there is darkness upon the face of these deeps. The church is but a grammar-school; heaven is the university. We shall have other eyes, and other light. Prophecy is but in part now, our intuition shall be then immediate: 1 John iii. 2, 'We shall see him as he is;' now we see him not as he is, but as he is pleased to reveal himself; now we see what he is not—not corruptible, not mortal, not changeable—rather than what he is. Now we see him as he is in us, and as he is in other creatures. We track him by the effects of his power and wisdom and goodness; but then we shall see him as he is in himself, we shall see him face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. In the creatures there is *vestigium*, the track and footprint of God; in the law there is *umbra*, a shadow; in the gospel, *imago*, an image, a fair draught of God as in a picture; but in heaven, face to face. We have excellent books to study the large manifestations of his glory, the majesty of Christ's person; we shall always sit about the throne, and behold God in the face of the Lamb; there God makes out himself in the highest manifestation that we are capable of.

(2.) Complete love. There is a constant cleaving of heart to God, without change and weariness; a love that never ceaseth working, and yet God in communion is ever new and fresh to us. If we delight in anything here, we soon grow weary and have a change of objects. Here are distractions and startings aside to the creature; but there is an eternal solace and complacency in God, a continual sabbath that never grows burdensome; all the heart and bowels run out after Christ; we never want the actual breathings of the Spirit. The Spirit came upon Samson at times; so it doth upon us here. Motions are fleeting and vanishing; but there Christ is a more lovely object, and the delights of the soul are carried out to him without any satiety. They are outward things that cloy the appetite; as soon as we have them we despise them; we sip, as the bee doth of the flower, and then goeth to a new flower. But there is an eternal complacency in Christ. Here we are troubled when we want outward comforts, and cloyed when we have them; because curiosity is soon satisfied, and fruition discovers the imperfections of the creature, so that the more enjoyed they are, the less beloved; as Amnon hated Tamar, &c. Imperfections that before lay hid, are then laid open to view, and so our affections are confuted by experience. But there the more we enjoy God, the more his infinite perfections are manifested, and the pleasure is augmented by enjoyment.

(3.) Complete union with God and fruition of God: see 2 Cor. v. 6, Phil. i. 23. Here we are united by faith; but that is nothing to sight and immediate tuition. We lay hold upon Christ, but have not such an absolute possession of him; he is a head that gives out himself not by necessity, but choice and pleasure; therefore our communion with him is not so high and sweet as then. The iron that lieth long in the fire seems to be changed into the nature of it; we are, then, more conformed and changed into the likeness of Christ. All the comforts that we have in this life, we enjoy in God's absence, and by the ministry of the creatures. Now, the creatures are not vessels capacious enough



to convey so much of God to us as we shall receive when he is all in all immediately, 1 Cor. xv. 24. There is no temple nor ordinances, but God is instead of all, without means or the intervention of such supplies. We feed among the lilies, but it is but till the day break, and the shadows fly away.

3dly, In our company we must be blessed. There is God, and Christ, and saints, and angels, Heb. xii. 26. We shall see God in Christ. The bodily eye, that cannot look upon the sun, shall be perfectly sanctified, glorified; though it cannot see the essence of God, yet it shall see greater manifestations of glory. How will the Father welcome us as he welcomed Christ? Ps. ii. 8, 'Ask of me and I will give thee,' &c. So 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' We shall not come into his presence with shame; sin causeth shame, and maketh us shy of God. As the eye cannot endure the light if it be wronged, so wronged conscience makes us afraid of the presence of God. But when sin is done away, we shall have boldness in that day. As we shall have the company of God, so of Christ: he cannot be contented without your company; you should not be satisfied without his: John xiv. 3, 'I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am you may be also.' Oh! what a joyful meeting will it be between us and our Redeemer, much sweeter than the interview between Jacob and Joseph. Christ longs for the blessed hour as much as you do. The wise men came from far to see him in a manger; Zaccheus climbed up into a tree to see him in the days of his flesh. He is another manner of Christ in heaven than he was in the days of his abasement. When Joseph discovered himself to his brethren, 'I am Joseph,' it revived their hearts. When Christ shall say, I am Jesus, your brother, your Saviour, your Redeemer; when he shall lead us to God in a full troop and goodly company, and say, 'Behold I and the little ones which thou hast given me,' Heb. ii. 13, what a blessed sight will that be! Then the angels, what welcome will there be between you and them! When Christ entered into heaven, Ps. xxiv., they entertained him with applauses and acclamations: 'Stand open, you doors, stand open; here is the King of glory, the Lord strong and mighty in battle.' So will they welcome the saints to heaven with acclamations. They delight in the good of men. When man was created, 'The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy,' Job. xxxviii. 7; that is, the angels rejoiced and praised God. When Christ came to redeem man, a heavenly host fell a-praising God, Luke ii. 13, 14. When man is converted, the scripture tells there 'is joy in heaven,' Luke xv. 7. So when we come to be glorified, Christ shall come with troops of them to conduct us into those everlasting mansions. The saints, your acquaintance, with whom you prayed, suffered, familiarly conversed—memory is not abolished in heaven, but perfected—those whom we knew here, we shall know again. A minister shall see his crown, and the fruit of his labours: 1 Thes. ii. 19, 'You are our crown,' &c. And those that have been relieved by us shall welcome us into heaven, who, therefore, are said to receive us into everlasting habitations, Luke xvi. 9; yea, we shall know those whom we never saw; why else is it made a part of our privilege to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob? Mat. viii. 11. As Adam

knew Eve, and, in the transfiguration, Peter knew Moses and Elias, dead many hundred years before, so shall we know one another. We shall not go to a strange people, where we know nobody. As men at a feast are social and familiar one with another, we shall be discoursing of God's wisdom, mercy, justice, in the work of redemption—so did Moses and Elias with Christ, Luke ix. 31—of the wonderful providence of God in conducting us to glory, as travellers in their inn take pleasure to discourse with one another of the dirtiness and dangers of the way. And these saints are clothed with majesty and glory, more lovely objects than ever they were upon earth; and there is an innumerable company of them. They were rapt for joy when they saw but two prophets, Moses and Elias, Mat. xvii. 4. But heaven is not only called a palace, but a city, a world to come. There is a multitude which none can number.

3. Whence it is that they who die in the Lord are sure to be thus blessed.

[1.] From their union with Christ.

[2.] From the covenant of God with them.

[1.] From their union with Christ, which can never be dissolved. Death severeth body and soul, but not Christ and the soul. From this union there result two things—conformity with Christ in every estate, and the communion of the Spirit; both which do imply the blessedness of the saints even after death. They that are united with Christ do share with him in every estate, in grace here and in glory hereafter. As to both, they are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, Rom. viii. 29. And where the Spirit once dwelleth, there he dwelleth for ever; and therefore, from the indwelling of the Spirit of holiness doth the apostle infer our resurrection to a glorious estate, Rom. viii. 11. And that losing nothing which Christ speaketh of, John vi. 39, I would interpret of his not losing one member or joint of his mystical body.

[2.] From the covenant of God with them. Christ proves the resurrection from God's being the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Mat. xxii. 32. The argument stands upon three feet:—(1.) To be a God to any is to be a benefactor; for the tenor of the covenant on God's part is, I will be thy God, as on our part, you shall be my people; (2.) That God would be an everlasting benefactor; it implies an external<sup>1</sup> communication of grace and glory, as Christ proves from Exod. iii. 6, that God assumed this title after their death; (3.) This covenant was made with the whole man, not only with the soul but the body, and therefore they bore the mark and the sign of it, which was circumcision, in their bodies. And in Heb. xi. 16, the apostle saith that because God had a heavenly inheritance to bestow upon the patriarchs, therefore he was not ashamed to be called their God, implying that if they had no other reward than what they enjoyed in the present life, God could not with honour (such was the slenderness and contemptibleness of their present condition) have owned such a glorious title and appellation as to be called the God of Abraham. What needs further arguing? the phrase itself imports what we assert. When God promiseth to be a God to any, he maketh over his whole self, his eternity and infiniteness, for their comfort and use; and so in

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'eternal'?—Ed.

effect saith that he will be an everlasting benefactor to their whole persons in the way of an infinite power.

Let us now apply all.

1. Because this privilege is expressed with a limitation, it informeth us that the wicked are excluded ; they must expect a quite contrary estate ; as they that die in the Lord are in a blessed, so all others in a cursed condition. It is a sweet close when the body and soul part, but God and the soul meet ; when conscience shall become our compurgator, and bear us witness that we have spent our time well, in fearing God and obeying God ; then may the body and soul take leave of one another with an expectation to meet again in glory. But it is a sad parting when conscience falls a-raving, and the body and the soul accuse one another. The body accuseth the soul as an ill guide, and the soul the body as an unready instrument. And at the day of their death, which is the time of separation, they curse the day of their birth, which was the time of the first union between them both, when they shall wish that they had been stifled in the womb, and had never seen the light, rather than to have lived together in such a fashion, and to part in such manner. Now, this many times is the case of wicked men at their death ; death cometh to them as a double evil ; as a natural evil, striking the body and dissolving the confederacy and union between it and the soul ; and as a penal evil, or the curse of the first covenant, wounding the conscience, and reviving their bondage and fears of a worse judgment to ensue. And then, though physicians and ministers be sent for, they may both prove of no value, either to prevent the dissolution or to give ease to the conscience.

2. It presseth us to provide for this hour, that when we come to die we may die in the Lord. Get an interest in Christ, that you may die in the Lord as to your estate. Security will not hold out when you launch into the other world ; a wicked man comes to himself when he comes to die ; at his latter end he shall be a fool, Jer. xvii. 11. He was ever a fool, but then he shall be one in the conviction and acknowledgment of his own conscience, his own heart will make him cry out, O fool, madman that I was, to be contented with such slight evidences for eternity ! You see, then, it is good to be upon sure terms, and to get our union with Christ so clear and sensible, that when we walk in the valley of the shadow of death we may not be afraid, Ps. xxiii. As to the frame of your hearts, it is a harder matter to die well than you are aware of. If you would die well, live well, otherwise you do but provide matter of despair and sorrow for your latter end. It is every one's wish, Oh, that I might die the death of the righteous ! Num. xxiii. ; but it is not every one's happiness.

If you would die in the Lord, you had need to have promises ready, and your faith well exercised, that you may have good proof of it before it comes to stead you in death. *In bello non licet bis peccare.* As in war, so in death ; there is no erring twice ; then you are to throw your last cast for everlasting woe or weal, to do that which you never did before : you had need of armour of proof to deal with the last enemy. How foolishly do they deal that defer all to this hour, and are then to get faith when they should reduce it into practice ; faith is a grace wrought by degrees to strength and perfection. Now to put

it to the hardest trial at first is absurd and irrational. You should have your evidences clear, your promises ready, your experiences at hand, that you may be able to comfort yourselves and to plead for God, and to speak to the standers-by of the long proof you have had of his being a good Master and a gracious Father to you. How is it, then? Are all things set at rights between God and your souls? Have you laid up comforts for this great day of expense? Is your dying speech ready? Are you provided of experiences whereby to commend the mercifulness and faithfulness of your Redeemer? Can you say that you have tried him often, and he never failed you all your days? If it be so indeed, your great work is done.

3. *Use.* To encourage the children of God to be more willing to die. Are you afraid to enter upon your own blessedness and glory? Will you shun Christ's company when he desires yours? Love brought Christ out of heaven that he might be with us; he thought of it before the world was, Prov. viii. 31, and longed for the time, in effect saying, When will it come? We are to go from earth to heaven, from conversing with men to converse with angels, and why so loth to remove? What could Christ expect upon his coming into the world but hard usage? but labour, and griefs, and shame, and death? He came to taste the vinegar and the gall; we are called to the feast of love, to taste of hidden manna, and the rivers of pleasure that flow in his presence. If you love Christ, why should you be unwilling to be in the arms of Christ?—to be there where he is, beholding his glory. Love is an affection of union, it desireth to be with the party loved; and can you be unwilling to be dissolved and be with Christ? Death is the chariot that is to carry you into his presence. Jacob's spirit revived when he saw the waggons which Joseph sent to carry him into Egypt, Gen. xlv. 27. What is there in the world to be compared with heaven? Either there must be something in the world to detain us, or we are frightened at the terribleness of the passage, or else there is a contempt of what is to come. You cannot say anything in the world is more worthy than Christ; in this sense you renounced father and mother, brothers and sisters, wife and children and friends, when you were first acquainted with him. It was the language of your souls then, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee,' Ps. lxxiii. 25. Did you dissemble then? or have you found cause since to retreat and begrudge your affections to him? Christ puts you to the trial when sickness comes; he hath sent his waggons to see if you will stand to your word. Is it the terribleness of the passage? Doth nature grudge at the thought of a dissolution? Where is your faith? Death is yours, 1 Cor. iii. 18, your friend, your advantage; Christ hath assured you of it. Will you trust his word? You love him little when you have no confidence in what he saith. Or is it contempt of things to come? Then why is all this cost? why came Christ to lay down his soul to purchase that which you care not for? what needs all this waste? Christians here for the time to come, we know not how soon we may be sent for and put to the trial. It is good to be resolved, that we may say the sooner the better.

4. Let this comfort us concerning our friends that die in the Lord :



1 Thes. iv. 18, 'Comfort one another with these words.' This is proper, Christian, scripture comfort. Heathens, to comfort one another, can only say that death is the common passage out of this world, that all that are born must die. But Christians can comfort one another upon better terms, that they that sleep in Jesus are blessed; and shall we whine at their preferment? that we shall all meet again in the other world; that a day will come when the Captain of our salvation will have his great rendezvous, and the head of the church call all the saints into one congregation, Ps. i. 5; and the whole flock shall follow the great Shepherd of the sheep into their everlasting fold, triumphing and saying, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' These are comforts proper for Christians; especially for ministers, that are messengers of comfort to others, that have more frequent advantages of meditation upon those privileges than others have. Shall we murmur and yield to sinkings of heart when God hath made a breach upon our relations? How will this disparage our doctrine, and make others suspect the comforts which we reach forth to them upon like occasions? 'Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees; but now it is come upon thee and thou faintest; it toucheth thee and thou art troubled,' Job iv. 4, 5.

To comfort others and faint ourselves is to bring a discredit upon what we propound to them. Remember the glory of God is concerned in your behaviour under this trial, and the honour of your ministry. Let your Christian friends know there is a reality in what you have held forth for their support in like case. Let them see you make it your care to practise your own doctrine. We are set forth for signs. God's eyes and men's are upon us; do worthily and becoming your station.

It is true, God comes near when he separates those that are so near and dear one to another, and we ought to lay it to heart; but that wherein you are like to err is in too much sorrow and dejection of spirit; which may be your wisdom to labour to prevent, as being seemly for a Christian and a preacher to show his moderation. We find that Abraham mourned for Sarah; and he had great cause so to do, for she was a very good companion to him in all his travels and troubles; she was very pleasing in his eye in regard of her beauty; she brought him a child in his old age, the son of the promise; she is honoured in scripture above all other women of her age; the time how long she lived is set down, which is not done for any other woman. At her death Abraham mourns, but very moderately; he wept for her, but we find no excess in the measure or in the time of his grief; and he is a good pattern. David weeps for the death of his child while it was alive, for he feared it would die; and the thing he feared came upon him: but when they thought that upon the death of his child his tears would have risen to a flood, it was suddenly a low ebb; and he gives herein instruction to all mourners, and to you, teaching you to say, 'Wherefore should I now fast and weep any longer? I cannot bring her back again: I shall go to her, but she not shall return to me;' and plainly asserts that none should mourn more than they can give a good reason for: 'Why should I now mourn?' You know it is no

other than we ought daily to expect and look for here below,—vicissitudes, namely, and changes. And you will soon meet her again in heaven, where (as I conceive with Austin) she shall be *notissima tibi*. And in the meantime, in your enjoying Christ you enjoy her still in him. And all the helps, advantages, sweetnesss, counsels, consolations, satisfactions, defences, carings, cordials, contentments, whatever was lovely in her, whatever you loved her for, you still enjoy in him, either by the administration of other mediums, or immediately from himself; and what comes from God immediately is much sweeter. You have cause rather to be thankful you enjoyed her so long, than sorrowful you can on earth enjoy her no longer. I know not whether her religion, worth, and holiness, will serve more to aggravate your loss, or to allay your sorrow. It is sad to think you have lost such a loving, humble, godly, and meet companion. But remember, that because she was such an one, you have the more confidence that she is blessed, and is gone from you to better company, even to the company of saints free from all sin and all sorrow, full of holiness and happiness; of angels too; of Jesus Christ too, the King of saints, the Lord of angels; he that so loved us; he that did so much, suffered so much for us; he whom the fathers before his incarnation so longed to see; he whom every believing soul so pants and breathes after. Which that it may the more sensibly appear, I shall here take occasion to subjoin her just and true character.

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### THE CHARACTER OF MRS JANE BLACKWELL.

SHE was a gentlewoman born, of the house of the Wintringhams, a family of eminency and note in Yorkshire. Educated and trained up from her childhood, till married, under Dr Chaderton, Master of Emmanuel College in Cambridge, that famous godly man, and her near kinsman; by reason whereof she was, even in her younger years, so grounded in knowledge, seasoned with grace, and accomplished with abiliments and endowments every way, that 'she was a most rare and incomparable companion for a minister.

Some things there were wherein she was exceeding exemplary. As she was a woman of a marvellously humble spirit; that all who knew her and conversed with her, admired in her; and it was abundantly evident and apparent in her countenance, speeches, gestures, apparel, and every way.

A simple, single, plain-hearted woman; 'An Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile.'

A merciful, pitiful, charitable woman. Open-hearted, open-handed too, to her power, yea, and beyond her power—spared it from her own back and belly to clothe and feed others—gladly embraced occasions when offered, yea, greedily sought out occasions. Her love was not verbal only, such as that James speaks of, 'Go and be clothed, go and be warmed,' &c., but real. She refreshed the bowels of many. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon her, and she made

the widow's heart to sing for joy. When the Scots were shut up and starved by thousands at Westminster, she very frequently visited them, and ministered to them; yea, bought divers of them with her own money, gracious good men, whom she fed and clothed, and disposed of into families and ways wherein they live to this day very comfortably. When the Scotch ministers and others were under restraint in the Tower, she was not ashamed of their chain, but diligently sought them out as soon as she heard of them, and was all the time of their long confinement a great support and comfort to them. She had not only learned the heathen's lesson to lay up, but the Christian's lesson too, to lay out according as the necessities of the poor members of Jesus Christ called for it.

A true mourner, one that laid to heart, and was affected, deeply affected, with the sins and abominations of the times, with the miseries likewise and distresses of the church and people of God—made the church's sorrows her own sorrows—had bowels of compassion in her to lament and mourn over the afflicted condition of the church, as if it were her own condition—remembered them in bonds, as bound with them, and them that suffered adversity, as being herself also in the body. The heart-breaking miseries of poor Scotland broke her heart. She could not speak of them without many tears.

A fixed, established, grounded Christian; not like those the apostle speaks of, Eph. iv. 14, that were *κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι*, like clouds in the air, or like ships on the sea, tossed and hurried up and down with every wind and wave, driven to and fro, this way and that way, but like a house built upon a rock, like a tree firmly rooted, a fixed star; no wandering star (wandering from one opinion to another, and from one way to another, but a fixed star), kept to her old principles and to her old practices, the good old way, the way the patriarchs and the prophets, and the apostles and the holy men and women in the old time (1 Peter iii. 5) went to heaven in—the way of sanctifying God's sabbaths, the way of frequenting public ordinances, the way of performing family and closet duties, the way of reading the scriptures, meditation, self-examination, &c. And for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, she received it constantly, as oft as it was administered in the congregation whereof she was—never missed once.

One that filled up her relations to the very utmost that it is almost possible to do. One that did abound in love to God, to his ways, ordinances, truths, people. 'Hereby shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another,' says Christ; and this evidence she had in visible characters. Wherever she saw *aliquid Christi*, as Luther speaks, there her love was fixed; were it in rags or robes, poor or rich, all one for that. All that were dear to God were dear to her soul.

No wanderer from house to house, and idle squanderer away of her precious time in complimentary visits. Had learned to keep at home; and that is the duty, the wisdom, the honour too of a woman. Sarah was found in her tent still, and Jael in her tent.

This I mention because she was much blamed by many for not going to christenings and burials, &c., as if she did it out of pride and

self-conceitedness, and contempt and disdain of others, or out of a sullen retiredness and affected privacy; whereas she did it out of mere conscientiousness of her duty. And she had many reasons why she did it; as, partly, because her eldest daughter dying in childbed, she and her child both, about eight years since, she found that such meetings renewed upon her afresh the remembrance of that very great loss; partly because she saw so much gallantry and bravery in apparel, &c., at such meetings, as did not a little trouble her; but especially because she saw it to be so much a waster of much precious time, which she knew how to make a better improvement of.

What shall I say? In a word, she was a pattern of mortification, of self-denial, of contempt of the world, of strictness and holiness, and close walking with God, both in her general and particular calling, to all that were about her while she lived.

And in the time of her sickness, so patient, so contented, so willing to be at God's dispose, either for life or death, so fearful lest there should be so much as in her heart any the least risings against God's dispensations, so full of sweet, holy, heavenly instructions, exhortations, counsels to her husband, to her children, to her friends. Her lips were like a well of life, feeding many, as Solomon speaks, dropping like a honeycomb.

I might enlarge; but shall conclude all with that of our Saviour (John xiv. 28), when his disciples sat blubbering and weeping and taking on, because he had told them he must now leave them in regard of his bodily presence, and go to heaven, go to his Father: 'If you loved me,' saith he, 'if you loved me, you would rejoice, because I go to the Father.' Oh, how well it were if you could do so! And do it. You say you loved her, show it; and show it in this way—show it in rejoicing rather than in mourning—in rejoicing in her gain, rather than in mourning in your own loss. It is true the loss is great. The family, the city, the nation, the whole world, indeed, has a loss. Good men and good women, such as have an interest in God, and a heart to improve that interest, as they are a public good whilst they live, so their loss is a public loss when they die; and in that respect you have cause to mourn. But otherwise, in regard of her, no cause at all, but rather to rejoice. For why? Though she is dead, she is dead in the Lord. And this blessed condition we have been speaking of all this while, it is undoubtedly her condition.

THE END OF VOL. II.







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