

THE SERMONS
AND OTHER
PRACTICAL WORKS

OF THE LATE
REVEREND RALPH ERSKINE, A.M.,
DUNFERMLINE,

CONSISTING OF
ABOVE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY SERMONS,
BESIDES POETICAL PIECES.

ALSO,
FOURTEEN SERMONS ON PRAYER.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE AND WRITINGS.

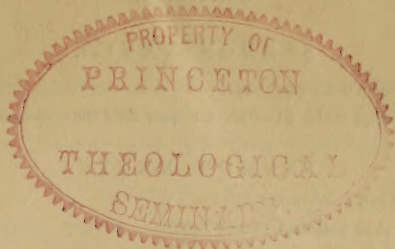
"By these he, being dead, yet speaketh."—HEB. xi. 4.

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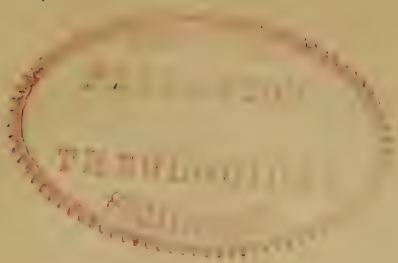
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RALPH ERSKINE'S SERMONS.

SERMON XXIV.—XXVII.

LAW-DEATH, GOSPEL-LIFE: OR, THE DEATH OF LEGAL
RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE LIFE OF GOSPEL HOLINESS.¹

"I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."—GAL. ii. 19.

A GODLY life is what we are all obliged to live, especially if we have been at the Lord's table; but it is a mystery that very few understand in their experience, if they will judge their experiences, by comparing them with this of Paul in our text, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."

Our apostle, in this epistle, is vindicating himself from the base aspersions cast upon him by the false apostles: with respect to his calling, as if he had been no apostle: and with respect to his doctrine, as if it had been false and erroneous. From the beginning of this chapter, to verse 11, he tells us what he did at Jerusalem; how strenuously he opposed the false brethren, that he might maintain the truth of the gospel, which they sought to overturn. From the 11th verse to the 17th, the apostle tells us what he did at Antioch: how zealously he opposed and reproved even Peter himself, for his

(1) This was the substance of four Discourses, the first two whereof were delivered upon the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, at Carnock; the other two were an enlargement upon the same subject, on an occasion of the same nature, at Orwel.—The precise time when these discourses were delivered, cannot be positively ascertained; however, from some passages in the Discourses themselves, it is probable they were preached some time in the year 1724, and the first edition being printed that year, seems to determine it.

dissimulation, in compelling the Gentiles to Judaize ; giving thereby such offence, that the Jews were confirmed in their Judaism, ver. 12. " Other Jews dissembled with him, and Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation ;" and hereby occasion was given both to Jews and Gentiles, to desert Christ, to deny grace, to return to the law, and seek justification by the works thereof. So that we may see here, that great and good men may dissemble, and do much hurt by their dissimulation, both among ministers and people. We have here a wonderful example of it in the greatest of men, and such as were pillars of the church : but it would seem that Peter and Barnabas, and other Jews here, did not see their fault and sin, but thought they did right enough ; but Paul saw it, ver. 14, " When I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel," &c. This might seem a very bold and imprudent attempt, for Paul, the youngest of all the apostles (I mean, of whom Christ was last seen, as of one born out of due time) for him to take upon him to accuse and condemn Peter as well as Barnabas, and the Jews for their practical error, not walking according to the truth of the gospel. But we see, that as people may have the gospel, but not the truth of the gospel ; so these that have the truth of the gospel, may be guilty of not walking according to the truth of it, even as Peter, Barnabas, and others here, whose dissimulation did not consist with the truth of the gospel, which they preached, but tended to establish the law, and so to overturn the gospel. But God hath sometimes very few witnesses to stand up for the truth of the gospel ; here Paul was alone, Peter was against him, and Barnabas, his own intimate associate, was drawn away with the dissimulation ; Jews and Gentiles were infected, and therefore Paul alone must fight against them all, for the cause of Christ, and the doctrine of the gospel, which was endangered, " I said unto Peter before them all," &c. Not by teaching of any erroneous doctrine did Peter err, for that is a principle we maintain, that the apostles never erred in teaching, or in their doctrine delivered to the church ; but his error was in practice, compelling the Gentiles to Judaize ; whereby he gave them occasion to think, that the observation of the law was necessary to justification : whereas he adds, " We that are Jews by nature," &c., ver. 15, 16. We apostles, might he say, though Jews by nature, yet we seek not justification by the works of the law ; and therefore we ought not to drive the Gentiles to the observation of the

law, that they may seek righteousness and justification thereby. Why? because, 1, We know that a man cannot be justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ. 2. Because therefore having renounced the law, in point of justification, we have embraced Christ by faith; that through him we may be justified. 3. Because by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified.

Now, from verse 17 and downward, the apostle returns to the Galatians; having told how he reproved Peter, and what he said to him concerning justification without the works of the law, he now comes to shew this doctrine to be no wise opposite to the doctrine of sanctification, but of absolute necessity to true holiness, verses 17, 18, *q. d.*, If we Jews, who lived formerly under the law, and now seek righteousness in Christ alone, are thus accounted as sinners, when we followed the law, it would seem that Christ did disapprove the law, and approve sin: "God forbid," says the apostle; this he denies, and rejects with abhorrence.—To object thus, might he say, against the doctrine of free justification, were egregious blasphemy against the Son of God, as if he were the minister of sin, who came to destroy sin, and to destroy the works of the devil; and by this gospel which I preach, might he say, Christ is held out as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world; not to take away righteousness, truly so called, unless it be that false vizard of legal self-righteousness with which we formerly covered and masked ourselves: nay, he came to bring in everlasting righteousness, a true and perfect righteousness for justification; he came to make an end of sin by the sacrifice of himself, and thereby to purchase the Spirit, as a Spirit of holiness and sanctification, to destroy the power of sin and corruption; and, therefore, it is a base calumny to say that this gospel-doctrine does open the door to sin and licentiousness; this he proves by two arguments, 1. Because the faith of Christ does not destroy itself, verse 18, "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Sin is like an old house which I have razed and destroyed by my doctrine of free justification by faith, and not by works of the law, for by this doctrine I preached freedom from sin through Christ; and, therefore, if I should build up these old wastes of sin again, it is not Christ, but I that would be the sinner, or minister of sin; nay, I would be a madman, to build with one hand what I destroyed with the other. 2. Because liberty to sin is contrary to the very scope of the gospel, and to the design of this

doctrine of justification by faith, without the works of the law ; " For I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God," verse 19.

This is a very strange and wonderful text, that flesh and blood can hardly hear without suspecting that it savours too much of a new scheme of doctrine ; and, if it were not the divinely-inspired words of the apostle, it would hardly escape being taxed as an Antinomian paradox. I remember Luther upon the text says, " The false apostles taught, unless you live to the law, you cannot live to God ;" and therefore Paul here must be the most heretical of all heretics ; his heresy is unheard-of heresy, reason and human wisdom cannot receive it, that, if we will live to God, we must be dead wholly to the law : yet so it is here, he declares it of himself, and in the name of all believers in Christ, yea, as the very doctrine of faith, " I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."

In which words you may notice two remarkably different things, Death and Life ; mortification and vivification. 1. A wonderful DEATH ; " I, through the law, am DEAD to the law." 2. A remarkable LIFE, proceeding out of that death : " That I might LIVE unto God."

1st, You have a wonderful DEATH, or Paul's strange mortification ; " I, through the law, am DEAD to the law : " and of this mortification we have here three things ; 1. The general nature of it, it is called a DEATH, " I am dead." 2. The object of it, The law. 3. The means of it, The law ; " I, through the law, am dead to the law ;" all very odd things to carnal reason.

1. The general nature of it, it is called a DEATH ; " I am DEAD." There are several sorts of death commonly spoken of, viz., temporal, spiritual, and eternal ; but this is none of them. Temporal death is a separation betwixt soul and body ; but this death takes place where there is no such separation : Paul was thus alive, when he said here, " I am dead." Spiritual death is a separation betwixt God and the soul ; but this death is a mean of joining God and the soul together. Eternal death is an eternal separation betwixt God and the soul ; but the death here spoken of makes way for eternal communion with God.—This is a strange death, a strange death, a strange mortification : especially if you consider,

2. The object of it, The LAW : " I am dead to the law : " not only the ceremonial law, but even the moral law itself, as under the

form of a covenant of works, and as a condition of life. I renounce, might he say, the righteousness of the law, seeking no salvation in the works thereof; nay, in this respect it is dead to me, and I to it; it cannot save me, and I cannot expect salvation by it; nay, "I am dead to the law." To be dead to sin, is a mortification that people may think they can easily understand; but the mystery of it, in being dead to sin, by this means of being dead to the law, is what cannot be so well understood; for one would think, that to die to the law, were to live in sin: nay, says the apostle, it is quite otherwise; that I die to sin, "I am dead to the law."

3. You have the means of this death, which is strange, namely, The law; "I through the law am dead to the law." As to this mean of death to the law, viz. THE LAW, I find some divines understand it a different law from the other; as if the apostle should say, "I, by the law of Christ, am freed from the law of Moses; or, I, by the law of faith, am freed from the law of works." But I incline to join with the current of sound divines, who understand both of the same law, *q. d.*, I am dead to the law, THROUGH the law: the law hath taught me that I am a sinner, that cannot be justified by the law, which curses and condemns sinners: "By the law is the knowledge of sin; and having thus by the law known myself to be a guilty wretch, I am dead to all expectation of righteousness by the law. The law then, having thus killed me, and all my hope of life by it, hath been a blest mean of drawing me out of myself, and all my legal righteousness, to seek life and justification in Christ, and his righteousness received by faith. Thus you have a wonderful death here spoken of.

2dly, You have a remarkable LIFE proceeding out of that death; you may call it Paul's vivification, which was not peculiar to him, but is common to all believers: "That I might live unto God." Where again you may notice three things.

1. The general nature of this vivification; it is called by the name of Life; while a man is alive to the law, he continues dead; but whenever he is dead to the law, then he is alive; the breath of life is breathed into his nostrils, and he becomes a living soul; for the Spirit of God, the spirit of life enters into him.

2. The object of this life, or vivification, it is God; a living unto God, that is, a new life, a holy life, a divine life; a living to God, to God's honour, to God's glory. Before this, the man lived to himself as his end, as well as for himself as his principle: but

now he lives from God as his principle, and to God as his end, which only is a holy life, and wherein true sanctification lies.

3. You have the Influence that this death hath upon this life, or this mortification hath upon this vivification; or, the influence that justification by faith alone, and not by the deeds of the law, hath upon sanctification of heart and life, or living to God, in the particle THAT: "I am dead to the law, THAT I might live unto God." Now, might the apostle say, How falsely do you charge my doctrine, as opening a window to licentiousness, while I in the name of all believers declare, that this doctrine of justification by faith alone, or our being dead to the law, in point of justification, does open the door to true holiness: for none can live unto God, till they be dead to the law. "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."

But I shall endeavour further to explain the words upon the following observation.

DOCT. "That to be dead to the law, in the point of justification, is necessary, in order to our living unto God, in point of sanctification: 'I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.'"

Now, upon this doctrine, I shall endeavour, through grace, to explain the several branches of the text; and the general method shall be.

- I. To clear and confirm the doctrine.
- II. To speak of the believer's DEATH, or mortification, here intended; "I, through the law, am dead to the law."
- III. To speak of the believer's LIFE, or vivification; his living unto God.
- IV. Of the necessity of this death, in order to this life; or the influence that our being dead to the law hath upon our living unto God.
- V. Make some Application of the subject, in sundry Uses.

I. To clear and confirm the doctrine: "At the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established." But, to shew that we are not straitened to find out witnesses to attest the truth of this doctrine, I shall produce more than two or three.

The first witness that I cite, is that, Rom. vii. 4, 5, 6, where you see, that to be dead to the law, and married to Christ, is necessary, in order to living unto God, bringing forth fruit to him, and serving him in newness of spirit.

The second witness I cite, is very like to this, Isa. liv. 1, 5, compared: "Sing, O barren, that did not bear.—For more are the children of the desolate [Gentles] than the children of the married wife." Why? ver. 5. "Thy Maker is thy husband." Being dead to the law, and divorced from it, and married to Christ, the barren woman becomes a fruitful bride. And, lest you think I put a wrong gloss upon this text, and mistake the meaning of it, you may compare it with,

A third witness that I cite, whereby this very gloss that I give it, is confirmed, Gal. iv. 27. "For it is written, Rejoice thou barren, that bearest not: break forth and cry, that thou travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." Now, we would consider what is the subject here spoken of; the apostle is setting forth believers' freedom from the law by the gospel, or their justification by faith, without the works of the law; and he confirms it by an allegory, shewing, that our liberty from the law, was prefigured in the family of Abraham, that we are not children of the bond-woman, or bond-men to the law, but children of the promise, as Isaac: And the apostle explains the prophet, and shews his allegory to be founded, not only on the former historical, but also on this prophetic Scripture. The gospel-church, including all believers among Jews and Gentiles, is called the bride, the Lamb's wife: and as this bride in general, being divorced from the law, and married to Christ, is a fruitful bride, bearing many children, many sons and daughters to Christ, and more under the new dispensation of the covenant of grace, than under the old legal administration thereof before Christ's coming; so every particular believer, being dead to the law, and married to Christ, is, by this means, fruitful in bringing forth the fruits of holiness and righteousness, to the glory of God; as the apostle, in prosecuting this discourse, further shews, ver. 30, "Cast out the bond-woman and her son." Strange! that the law should be called a bond-woman; and then, "Cast out the bond-woman;" this was strange language; nay, but in the case of justification, "Moses and his tables must give place to Christ," as Luther says. Yea, he adds, in this sense, "I will say to thee, O law, Begone: And if it will not begone,

thrust it out by force: Cast out the bond-woman." Further, the apostle adds, chap. v. 1., "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Read also, ver. 4, 5, 6, where you see, that the believer, being free from the law, and having the spirit of life, and the spirit of faith, bringing forth fruit to God; of which fruits of the Spirit of Christ, in opposition to the fruits of the flesh, you read, ver. 16, 17, and downward.

The fourth witness that I cite, is, Col. ii. 13, 14. "You being dead in your sins,—hath he quickened." Now, by what means does this quickening, or being made alive to God, come about? It is by the "Blotting out of the hand-writing—nailing to his cross:" Intimating, that there is no living unto God, without being dead to the law, and having the law dead to us, by viewing it crucified with Christ, and nailed to his cross.

The fifth witness is, Col. iii. 3, 4, 5. "For ye are dead, [that is, dead to the law, as he had cleared before, and so dead to sin, self, and the world,] and your life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." The believer is said to be dead with Christ, ver. 20, of the preceding chapter, and so dead to the law, which was nailed to the cross of Christ. And, ver. 1, of this chapter, the believer is said to be risen with Christ and so he sits together with Christ in heavenly places: but though his best part is above, even his glorious Head, whom he will follow; yet he hath members on earth, which he is called to mortify; which mortification of sin is, you see, the native fruit of his being dead with Christ, and risen with him.

The sixth witness that I cite, is, Rom. iii. 28, 31. "We conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law; and so he is dead to the law." Now, does this doctrine destroy our living to God? Nay, "Do we make void the law, through faith? God forbid! Yes, we establish the law:" We establish it as a covenant of works, while we believe in Christ for righteousness, to be imputed for our justification; and we establish it a rule of life, and holiness, while we believe in Christ for strength, to be imparted for our sanctification; and so being dead to the law, in point of justification, we live unto God in sanctification.

The seventh witness that I cite, is, Rom. vi. 14. "Sin shall have no dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but

under grace." Where you see, that a man's being under grace, and not under the law, is the very means by which he comes to be delivered, and freed from the dominion of sin, and so lives unto God. Here is the privilege, deliverance from the dominion of sin; and the means of it is, by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, by which we are delivered from the law: for, as the motions of sin, Rom. vii. 5, are said to be by the law, so the law being dead to us, and we by grace, being married to another husband, we bring forth fruit unto God; "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, teaching us to deny ungodliness," Titus ii. 11. While the law hath power over a man, he cannot but be bringing forth fruit unto death, Rom. vii. 5.—There was never yet an effectual course taken for the mortifying of sin, but by the gospel, and the grace of Christ, which yet some ignorantly think lead to licentiousness, as they thought in Paul's days, Rom. vi. 15. Nay, while we are under the law, we are the servants of sin; "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," verse 22.

The eighth witness that I cite, is, Rom. viii. 2, 3. "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Why? How comes that about? Verse 3, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak, through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh; and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." Where you see the quality of every believer; he is one that lives to God, and walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit: And now, what is the foundation of this? Even freedom from the law, which through our weakness, could not justify us; but our help was laid upon One that is mighty, who, having come under the law, did, by a sacrifice for sin, condemn sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, both in point of justification and sanctification.

The ninth witness that I cite is, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, "For the love of Christ constrains us,—that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them." There is true sanctification, and living unto God; but how came it about? The means thereof is the death of Christ, which we have been celebrating in the sacrament of the supper; this both the means and the motive thereof. What stronger motive than this, to live to him that died for us; and, by his death, redeemed us from the law? "For we are dead to the law by the

body of Christ," Rom. vii. 4; that is, by the death of Christ, the sacrifice of his human nature: and hence comes true spiritual life, or living to him.

The tenth witness that I cite is, 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57, "The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law." Where the law is called the strength of sin, not only because by the law is the knowledge of sin, and sin would not have power to condemn us, but by virtue of the law, which discharges sin, but also because sin gets strength from the law: "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence; for, without the law, sin was dead," Rom. vii. 8. Sin and corruption are so irritated by the law, that thereby the sinner becomes to be more sinful: which is not the fault of the law, for it prohibits, reproves, and condemns sin: but the fault of corrupt nature, which is so intent in perpetrating evil, that the more any thing is forbidden, the more impetuously it follows after it; like a mad horse, the more he is checked with the bridle, the more mad and furious is he. Now, "the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which gives us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Victory over the law, which is the strength of sin; and so, being freed from the law, or dead to it, in this way I am freed from sin, and put in case to live unto God.—These are ten witnesses, instead of twenty, that might be adduced for the confirmation of this doctrine, That to be dead to the law in point of justification is necessary, in order to our living unto God in point of sanctification.—Receive this truth, then, in the love of it.

II. The Second thing proposed was, To speak of this strange DEATH of the believer; "I, through the law, am dead to the law." Now, here four things are to be touched at; 1. What the law is that the believer is dead to. 2. What it is in the law that he is dead to. 3. What it is to be dead to the law. 4. The means of this, that, through the law, he is dead to the law.

1st, What the law is that the believer is dead to. I know I have need to be cautious what I say in this captious age, especially upon such a subject as this; but it is in the fear of God, to whom I am accountable, and without regard to any man, that I desire to deliver the truths of the gospel.—What is the law, to which Paul said he was dead? I shall not trouble you with the several acceptations of the law, nor the distinctions of it into judicial, ceremonial, and moral. But here, though the apostle speaks sometimes of the

ceremonial, and sometimes of the moral law in this epistle ; yet in this text, I suppose, with the current of sound divines, that he understands especially the moral law, or the law of the ten commandments, considered under the form of a covenant of works. The law is to be taken two ways : 1. Materially, for its mere preceptive and directive part. Or, 2. The law may be taken formally, as it is a covenant, whether of works or grace. Now, the law, materially taken, is still the same, whatever form it be cast into, and it is the transcript of the divine image, after which man was created at first so that, long before the law was written in tables of stone, it was written in the tables of man's heart ; and man was obliged to give obedience to this law, as a creature to his Creator, though there never had been any covenant made with him ; and this obligation to obedience is eternal, everlasting, and unchangeable.—But this law was afterwards cast into two different forms, namely, that of the covenant of works, and afterwards that of the covenant of grace.—Now, here, I say, it is meant of the law, or covenant of works ; in which law there were three things, a Precept, a Promise, and a Penalty. 1. The Precept, which is perfect and personal obedience by our own strength, and in the old covenant form, Do. 2. The Promise, which is life eternal, Do and Live. 3. The Penalty, which is death temporal, spiritual, and eternal ; if you Do not you shall Die, Genesis ii. 17. The covenant of works commands good, and forbids evil, with a promise of life in case of obedience, and a threatening of death in case of disobedience : and so this law of works hath a twofold power ; a power to justify, and a power to condemn ; to justify if we obey, and to condemn if we disobey. The command of the law, abstractly and materially considered, is, as I said, eternally binding upon all rational creatures, so long as they continue to be creatures, and God the Creator ; but the command of the law, formally considered, or under the form of a covenant of works particularly, binds no longer than the form continues. Now, the commanding power of the law, as a covenant of works, is a power calling us to obey (or enjoining us to do) but by our own strength : to obey, as a condition of life ; and to obey, under pain of damnation.

2dly, As to the second thing here, what it is in the law, the believer is dead to. Here it must be observed, That it is only the believer that is dead to the law, all others are alive to it ; and the believer's being dead to the law, imports, that he is wholly set free

from it ; or, as the words of our Confession bear, "They are not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby either justified or condemned." Thus they are dead to the law. The law is compared, in our text, to a hard and cruel master, and we compared to slaves, and bond-men, who as long as they are alive, are under dominion, and at the command of their masters ; but when they are dead, they are free from that bondage, and their masters have no more to do with them. Here then, to be dead to the law, is to be free from the dominion and power of the law. Now, I think the power of the law may be considered, either as accidental or essential. It hath an accidental power or strength ; for example, by reason of our sinful, corrupt, and depraved state, even an irritating power, whereby, as an occasion, it provokes, and stirs up the corruption of the heart in the unregenerate, Romans vii. 8. From this the believer is free, so far as he is dead to the law.—But, next, There is a power that the law hath, that may be called essential to it, as a covenant of works : and that is, a justifying and condemning power, as I said before ; a power to justify the obedient, and a power to condemn the disobedient : Now, believers are dead to the law, so as they are not under it, to be justified or condemned thereby ; they are wholly, and altogether free from the law, as it is a covenant of life and death, upon doing, or not doing.

But, for the further clearing of this, I told you upon that question, What law is here meant ? That in the law, as a covenant of works, there are three things.—1. The precept of obedience. 2. The promise of life. 3. The threatening or penalty of death ; all which the believer is dead to.

1. The precept of obedience, as a condition of life, is one part of the covenant of works ; "Do and live ;" or, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments : " This the believer is delivered from, and so dead to the precepts of the law as a covenant or condition of life. Take heed to what I say here ; I say not, that the believer is delivered from the precept of the law simply, but as a condition of life : for the command of perfect obedience, is not the covenant of works ; nay, man was obliged to perfect obedience, and is eternally bound to obey the law, though there had never been a covenant : but the form of the precept, or command in the covenant of works, is perfect obedience as a condition of life. Now, it is the commanding power of the law, as a covenant of works, that the believer is free from ; and it hath no command-

ing power, but in this strain, namely, to command perfect obedience as the condition of life; and, under pain of the curse, Obey, and thou shalt live; otherwise, thou shalt die. Now, the ground of the believer's freedom from the precept of the law, as a covenant of works, or condition of life, is just Christ's perfect obedience to the law, in his room, in his stead, which is the true and proper condition of our eternal life and happiness: "By the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous:—that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace might reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. v. 19-20. There is an eternal truth in this, that life is not to be obtained, unless all be done that the law requires, "Do this and live;" and that is still true, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." They must be kept by us, or our Surety: now the Surety's obedience being imputed to the believer, as the condition of eternal-life, the believer is not obliged to obedience to the law as a condition of life; the precept of the law is, Do; but the precept of the law as a covenant of works, is under this conditional form, Do, and Live. Now, if any say, then the believer is delivered from obligation to do, or to obey the law, I deny that; for this Do, is eternally binding; but the precept of the law, as a covenant of works, is not simply Do, but Do and Live: and this conditional form, which is properly the precept and command of the covenant of works, or as it stood in this conditional Do and Live: for he yielded perfect obedience to it, to procure life by it; and so the believer is wholly delivered from obedience to it; that is, to obtain life by it, or to procure everlasting life by his obedience. The precept, thus formed as the condition of life, by virtue of the annexation of the promise of life to the obedience of it, is the precept of the covenant of works; and from this precept he is freed, and so is dead to the law in respect of the precept of it, in and through Jesus Christ his Surety.

2. The promise of life is another thing in the covenant of works; and this runs in the same line with the former, being so connected with it. The promise of life in the law, or covenant of works, was just the promise of eternal life, upon condition of perfect obedience: now, the believer's freedom from the law, in this respect, flows from his freedom from it in the former respect: for, if he be freed from the Do, or obedience, as required in that old covenant-form, then he is not to expect eternal life as it is promised in that covenant: nay, the law is divested of its promise of life to

the believer : that is to say, his obedience to the law hath not the promise of eternal life, as the legal ground and title upon which he is to obtain it : he holds this title to eternal life in Jesus Christ, his Surety, in whom he hath a perfect obedience, to which eternal life is promised ; and which is now the alone sure ground upon which it is to be procured. The believer's own obedience to the law, or his gospel-obedience, and conformity to the law, wrought in him, and done by him, through the help of the Spirit of grace ; even this obedience of his, I say, hath not the legal promise of eternal life, as if it were the legal condition of his obtaining eternal life : no, his gospel-obedience hath indeed a gospel-promise, connecting it with eternal life, as it is an evidence of his union to Christ, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen ; and as it is a walking in the way to heaven, without which none shall ever come to the end ; "For without holiness it is impossible to see God."—But the legal promise of eternal life made to obedience, and which makes our personal obedience to be the cause and matter of our justification, and as the proper condition of salvation and eternal life, this is the promise of the law, or covenant of works ; and this promise it is now wholly divested of, as to the believer in Jesus Christ, who hath taken his law-room, and yielded that perfect obedience, to which the promise of eternal life is now made : and the reason why, I say, the promise of eternal life is now made to Christ's perfect obedience in our room and stead, is, Because, the law, or covenant of works, made no promise of life properly, but to man's own personal obedience ; it made no mention of a surety ; but now, in sovereign mercy, this law-rigour is abated, and the Surety is accepted, to whose obedience life is promised.

3. The threatening of death, in case of disobedience, is another thing in the covenant of works ; death, and wrath, and the curse, is the penalty of the law : death is the reward of sin and disobedience to the law ; "In the day thou sinnest thou shalt die ;" and this the believer is also freed from by the death of Christ, who died for our sins ; the law saith, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them ;" but the gospel saith, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 10-13. As the law then to the believer is divested of its promise of life, so as it cannot justify him for his obedience ; so it is divested of its threatening of death, and cannot condemn him for his disobedience to it as a

covenant, that covenant-form of it being done away in Christ Jesus, with respect to the believer. I think some will, perhaps object, saying, That the believer is delivered from the curse of the law, we understand ; but still we cannot fathom how he is dead to the command of the law : that he is dead to the condemning power of the law, is plain ; but, how is he dead to the preceptive, mandatory, commanding power of the law ? To which it might be replied, He is dead to, and delivered from the preceptive part of the law, not materially, but formally ; for the command of it materially, is, Do, or yield obedience : this he can never be delivered from, so long as he is a creature, and God his Creator : but the command of it formally, or under the form of the covenant of works, is, Do, and Live ; Do, by our own strength ; Do, as the condition of your eternal life ; and Do, under the pain of eternal death and damnation : this, I say, which is the commanding part of the law, formally considered, as it is a covenant of works, he is wholly and altogether delivered from. To preach the mandatory part of the law, as a covenant of works, is to preach the moral law, not merely as a rule of life, but as the condition of life eternal ; in which sense the believer is not at all bound to acknowledge it : and to say, that the believer is delivered from the law, that is, only from the curse of the law, would make some very strange glosses upon many scriptures : for example, Gal. iii. 10, " As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse ;" the meaning of it then would be, As many as are under the curse. It must therefore be meant of the precept of the law ; As many as are under the precept, are under the penalty thereof. The believer then is to, and delivered from the law in its commanding and condemning power, and that in, and through Christ. And I am not afraid, nor ashamed to say it, in the words of the famous Dr. Owen, " That the whole power and sanction of the first covenant was conferred upon Christ, and in him fulfilled and ended." And I think I say no more than what the apostle, a greater than he, saith, Romans x. 4, " Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."—Thus you see what it is in the law, the believer died to, more generally.

3rdly, The third thing here proposed was, What it is to be dead to the law, more particularly as it comes under the notion of death. And here, 1. I shall shew the Import of this death. 2. Some of the qualities of it.

(1.) To shew the Import of this death. The notion of death may here help us to the Import ; for,

1. As in death there is no relation takes place; it dissolves the relation betwixt master and servant, husband and wife, Job iii. 16, "The servant is freed from his master;" so here, the man being dead to the law, the relation betwixt him and it is dissolved, Rom. vii. 1—4. He is now married to Christ, and divorced from the law; while the man is alive to the law, the relation stands; "For I testify to every one that is uncircumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law," Gal. v. 3.

2. In death there is no care or thoughtfulness, Eccl. ix. 10, "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest;" intimating to us that in death there is no care nor thoughtfulness, nor concern about doing any thing; so the man that is dead to the law, he hath no more care nor concern about the works of the law, in point of JUSTIFICATION, than a dead corpse about the work in which it was occupied whilst living: while the man is alive to the law, all his care and concern is about the works of the law; "Do and Live."

3. In death there is no hope; "The land of the living is the land of hope," Eccl. ix. 4: even so the man that is dead to the law hath no hope nor expectation from the law, or from his obedience thereto.—The man that is alive to the law, he hath hope that God will pardon him, and pity him: why? because he does so and so: he is a good neighbour, he wrongs nobody, he is just in his dealings, and careful in his duties; and, touching the righteousness of the law, he is blameless; he hath a good heart toward God, and he hath a good life too; and therefore he hopes to be justified and saved of God, for Christ's sake: for he hath learned, it may be, to make so much use of Christ, as to think he cannot be saved without him, but still his hope and expectation is founded upon the law. But now, the man dead to the law, he hath no hope from the law; nay, he despairs of salvation by the deeds of the law; as he sees he cannot do anything without grace and strength from above, so even, when he does any thing by the help of grace, he sees it so lame and imperfect that God cannot justify or save him, to the honour and credit of his justice, unless he hath a perfect righteousness. He hath no hope by the law.

4. In death there is no toil, no turbulent passion or affection: natural death puts an end to natural affections, which take place in man's life-time; such as the weary pursuit of what we love, and the wearisome flight from what we hate, or fear; there is no such thing in the grave; "There the weary are at rest," Job iii. 19.

They that are alive to the law, and find the life of their hands, they weary themselves in the greatness of their way, as it is expressed, Isa. lvii. 10.—Many a weary night and day they may have in pursuing after their lovers, in establishing their darling self-righteousness. The law gives them a wearisome task, to make brick without affording straw; and loads them with heavy burdens of curses, in case the task be not performed.—But, when a man is dead to the law, then the weary are at rest: Christ is the rest; “Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Then the man gets rest to his conscience in the blood and righteousness of Christ, the end of the law; rest to his passions and affections; he rests from his fears, legal fears of hell, and wrath threatened in the law; the believer indeed may be filled with them, but so far as he is dead to the law, so far is he at rest from these legal slavish fears. He rests from his love and delight; the law affords its votaries much pleasure, sometimes in the performance of their duty in a legal way; but now the believer takes no delight in that way of justification; he is out of conceit with himself and his duties, because they are vile; yea, though they were not so vile as they are, but perfect, yet he is out of conceit with that way of life, and beholding the glory of the new covenant and way of salvation, joins issue with Job, chap. ix., 15—21, “Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge; though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul, I would despise my life.” In a word, he rests from his legal griefs and sorrows because he rests from his legal labours. As it is said of the dead in Christ, in another sense, Rev. xiv. 13, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, they rest from their labours, and their works follow them:” so I may say in this case, Blessed are the dead that die to the law, they rest from their labours, their toilsome, troublesome, wearisome, legal works, and yet their works do follow them; they are now created in Christ Jesus unto good works. But,

5. In death there is no sense: a dead man does not see, nor hear, nor taste, nor smell, nor exert any natural sense; so that they are dead to it, they do not now see the lightnings of Sinai all in a flame, as formerly they did; they do not hear the thunders thereof; they do not smell the sulphur of the burning mountain, they do not feel the terror of vindictive vengeance, the tempest that surrounded the mount, they do not taste the gall, the bitterness of the wrath threatened in the law; the bitterness of death is over with them, so

far as they see that Christ drank the gall for them; yea, so far as they are dead to the law, they are dead to all Sinai wrath: "They are not come to the mount that might not be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words, but they are come to mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God," Heb. xii. 18—24. But what? Have the godly no sense of law-wrath? Yea, so far as they are legal, and under the law (for they are never wholly freed from a legal temper while here) the dead ghost of the law may rise up and fright them; but, so far as they are dead to the law, it is not law-wrath, but fatherly wrath that affects them. Indeed, through unbelief, they may fear hell: but they cannot do so by faith, seeing there is no foundation for either that faith or fear in the Bible, that a believer shall be cast into hell, since there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

6. In death there is no motion; vital motion ceases when death takes place: thus, so far as a man is dead to the law, so far the motions of sin are killed; for, "The motions of sin are by the law," Rom. vii. 5. By the law occasionally and accidentally men running the more into sin, by how much the more they are forbidden to commit sin. Hence Musculus compares the law, in this respect, to a chaste matron in a brothel-house; which, by her good advice, does prove an occasion to some impudent whores to be more bold and impudent in their impiety; "Sin, taking occasion by the law (or commandment, saith the apostle), wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." But now, so far as a man is dead to the law, so far are the motions of sin killed, and his soul quickened to live unto God; of which more afterwards.

(2.) To shew some of the qualities of this death to the law.

1. It is an universal death; I do not mean that it is common to all the children of men; though it be a common death to the children of God, and to every one of them, yet it is a rare death among the children of men; "The whole world lies in wickedness, and are dead in sins and trespasses:" few are dead in this sense; but, what I mean by its being universal is, that the man is dead to the law in point of justification, he is dead to every part of the law in its old-covenant form, to the precept of it, to the penalty of it, so as he is not to be justified by the one, nor condemned by the other. He is dead to every legal form of the law; his gospel-obedience thereto is no part of his righteousness for justification before God, if

he should endeavour to make his gospel-obedience to the law as a rule of life in the hand of a Mediator, any part of his righteousness for justification, he so far turns the covenant of grace, and the duties required therein, into a covenant of works, and he seeks to live unto that to which he is, and should be dead. It is true, the form of the law in the gospel-covenant does not require obedience for justification, but yet this corrupt nature is prone to turn to the old bias, and abuse the proper form of it, by turning of the rule of obedience into a rule of acceptance.—If a man make faith itself an act, or any act or fruit of it the matter of his justification, he turns it to a covenant of works; the believer is dead to faith itself in this respect: yea, faith renounces itself and all things else, but the righteousness of Christ, for justification. In this sense he is dead to repentance, love, and other graces; he is dead to every obedience to the law, as a covenant of works; to his natural legal obedience before his conversion, and to his spiritual gospel-obedience after conversion; which, though it be a righteousness that God works, and is the Author of it, yet, because it is the believer that is the subject, and made the actor thereof, it is called his own righteousness, or conformity to the law; all which he renounced in the matter of justification, desiring to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, that is after the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith, Phil. iii. 9. So that I say, it is an universal death.

2. It is a lingering death. It is not easy to get the law killed; something of a legal disposition remains even in the believer while he is in this world: many a stroke does self and self-righteousness get, but still it revives again. If he were wholly dead to the law, he would be wholly dead to sin; but so far as the law lives, so far sin lives. They that think they know the gospel well enough bewray their ignorance; no man can be too evangelical, it will take all his life-time to get a legal temper destroyed. Though the believer be delivered wholly from the law, in its commanding and condemning power and authority, or its rightful power that it hath over all that are under it: yet he is not delivered wholly from its usurped power, which takes place many times upon him, while here, through remaining unbelief.

3. It is a painful death; it is like the cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye: The man hath no inclination to part with the law. It is as natural for him to expect God's favour upon his doing so and so, and to expect life and salvation by

his own obedience, or doing as well as he can, as it is natural for him to draw his breath : If we do our best, God will accept of us ! That is the natural language of every one, who is wedded to the Do and Live of the first covenant And, O what a pain is it to be brought off from that way ! To die to the law, is most unnatural, strange doctrine : and legal pangs, and pains of conviction, and humiliation must be borne, before a right thought about dying to the law can be brought forth.

4. It is a pleasant death ; it is painful at first, but pleasant at last : O how pleasant is it, to see self abased, and grace exalted ; self-righteousness cried down, and Christ's righteousness cried up in the soul ! "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness : " and this way, particularly, wherein no flesh does glory in his presence ; but he that glorieth, glorieth in the Lord : he rejoiceth in Christ Jesus, and hath no confidence in the flesh : he doth joy in God, through Jesus Christ, by whom he receives the atonement ; and grace requiring, through righteousness, to eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord, Rom. v. 11, 21. This death is a pleasant parting, when the man is brought to a parting with all his own rags for a glorious robe, Isaiah lxiv. 6, and lxi. 12, and xlv. 24.

5. It is an honourable death : to be dead to the law, is a death that brings honour to God, to Christ, to the law, and to the believer. It brings honour to God's holiness, which is now satisfied by Christ's doing ; and honour to God's justice, which is now satisfied by Christ's dying.—It brings honour to Christ ; for now the man values the righteousness of Christ, as being indeed the righteousness of God, and a full, sufficient, perfect righteousness.—It brings honour to the law, when, instead of our imperfect obedience, we bring to it an obedience better than men or angels in their best estate could give it, even the Law-giver's obedience ; which indeed doth magnify the law, and make it honourable.—It brings honour also to the believer himself : he is honoured and beautified with a law-biding righteousness, truly meritorious, and every way glorious : "This is the honour of all the saints."

6. It is a profitable death : it is a happy death : and a holy death : profitable both for happiness and holiness ; profitable both for justification and sanctification. Our legal righteousness is unprofitable : "I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works ; for they shall not profit thee." Isaiah lvii. 12. It is unprofitable for justification ; for, "By the deeds of the law, shall no flesh be justi-

fied." It is unprofitable for sanctification; for his filthy rags do rather polute him than purify him.—But the righteousness of Christ is profitable every way: they are happy that have it; for, they are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses: they are holy that have it; as will appear in the sequel of our discourse. Being dead to the law, is the way to live unto God.

4thly, The Fourth thing here proposed, is the means of this death; "I, THROUGH THE LAW, am dead to the law:" the means of death to the law, is the law. But then a question may be removed, How can this be, seeing the law is the cause of no good thing in us, and is the ministration of death and condemnation? 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, 9.—In answer to which, we may observe, That though the law is not the cause of this death to the law, and so death to sin; yet it is an occasion thereof, for it accuses, terrifies, and condemns us, and therefore occasions and urgeth us to flee to Christ, who is the true cause that we die to the law, and to sin: as the needle goes before, and draws the thread which sews the cloth, so the needle of the law goes before, and makes way for the grace of the gospel, that it may follow after, and take place in the heart. To be dead to the law, and married to Christ, is all one in Scripture-sense. Now, to be DEAD to the law, is by means of the law, to be led to Christ for justification, by faith in him, without the deeds of the law; "The law was our school-master to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith," Gal. iii. 25; where the law may be taken either for the ceremonial or moral law. If we take it for the ceremonial law, then it is true that the ceremonial law pointed out Christ to us truly: but then the ceremonial law was gospel, in the substance of it, though veiled over with types and shadows, which were to continue till the body was come: but if we take it for the moral law, then it brings us to Christ only occasionally; for to bring us to Christ, is no proper work of the law, only it is the occasion thereof, insomuch as it forces us from itself, and makes us to see that by it there is no hope of life; so it curses all sinners, and gives hope of life to none: it is the gospel only that shows us the salvation to be had in Christ. Now, the law, by the severity of it, is an occasion to us of seeking life, where it is to be found: like a child, knowing the tenderness of his father's love, and finding the school-master to be very severe and sharp, he runs from the severity of the master, to hide himself under his father's wings: yet not by

his master's teaching, but his severity is the occasion of it : even so it is through the law, and its severity, that the believer is dead to the law : it is then by a law-work, in some measure, a work of legal conviction and humiliation, that a man comes to be dead to the law.

Here I will name to you a few pieces of law-work, which are the occasion of the man's being dead to the law, when the Spirit of God makes use of the law for that end.

1. Through the law, a man gets the conviction of the holiness of God, and of the holiness, spirituality, and extent of the law itself; the Spirit of God enlightens the mind, to see the conformity of the command unto the will of God, and to the holy nature of God; this is called, The coming of the commandment, Rom. vii. 9. "For I was alive without the law once:" I thought I was holy enough; I found the life of my hand, while I was, "Touching the righteousness of the law, blameless: But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." When I saw the holiness and spirituality of God's law, sin revived, and I died; I saw that I was a sinner indeed, and I died to the law, and to all conceit of my own works, and obedience to the law. This conviction makes a man have a doctrinal approbation of the law as holy, just, and good: holy in its precepts: just, in its threatenings; and good in its promises; I consent to the law, that it is good. By this conviction, a man sees not only the holiness and spirituality, but the extent of the law; "Thy commandment is exceeding broad;" it is extended to all my thoughts, words, and actions; to all my affections, designs, desires, and inclinations. Now, when a man sees this, it kills his confidence, and makes him see he hath no righteousness conformable to the law.

2. Through the law, the man gets the conviction of sin; "By the law is the knowledge of sin," Rom. iii. 20. Conviction of sin is the consciousness of our transgressing of this holy law. This conviction makes a man see sin in its nature, that it is the transgression of the law, 1 John iii. 4, and so a contrariety to the whole nature and will of God. This conviction makes a man see the kinds of sin: it may be, the Spirit of God begins with some actual grievous sin: actual sin is the swerving of our actions, either in thought, word, or deed, from the law of God, either by omission or commission. From thence the conviction goes to original sin, letting the man see, that not only is his nature destitute of all righteousness, and conformity to the law, but that it is wholly corrupt, that he is just a hell of sin and enmity against God: and from thence

the Spirit of God by the law, convinces the man of the originating sin, even of Adam's sin, and says to him, as it is, Isa. xliii. 27, "Thy first father hath sinned," and thou in him.—This conviction makes a man to see also the aggravations of sin, how much light, and how many mercies he hath sinned against: And also the power and dominion of sin, what a slave he is thereto, and that the law is so far from freeing him therefrom, that it but exasperates corruption, and so is the strength of sin: Now when the man comes thus to see sin in its nature, kinds, aggravations, and dominion, what can more tend to kill his conceit of righteousness by the law?

3. Through the law the man gets the conviction of guilt as well as sin, that he is bound over to punishment according to the law: for guilt is properly an obligation to punishment. As by the precept of the law, the man comes to get the knowledge of the intrinsical evil of sin in its nature; so by the penalty of the law, he comes to get the knowledge of the consequential evil of sin, as binding him over to hell, death, and damnation; that the curse of God, the wrath of God, the vengeance of God is the retinue and train of attendants that accompany sin: and so the man is put in fear of hell and damnation. It may be, when he goes to bed, he shall never rise again; when he goes out, he thinks he shall never come in again; he is afraid his meat choke him, or the house fall above his head, or the earth open and swallow him up: sense of wrath haunts him like a ghost; the man is put in prison, and concluded under sin, Gal. iii. 22. Sin is the prison, the sinner is the prisoner, God is the Judge, and the curse of the law is the bond by which the prisoner is tied neck and heel; and from this prison there is no escape, without the mercy of God in Christ. Who can command this prisoner to come forth? The law cannot do it; it is weak through the flesh: man cannot do it, he is by nature without strength: only He, whom God hath given to be a covenant to the people, can say to the prisoner, "Go forth," Isa. xlix. 6-9. Now, when the man is thus convinced of guilt and wrath by the law, this hath a tendency to make him dead to the law, and to kill his confidence in any legal righteousness of his own. O! is there any poor prisoner here, that finds himself shut up in prison, under the power of sin, and under the guilt of sin, and wrath of God? O let this give you some comfort for the present, till God loose your bands, that this is the way God is taking to make you dead to the law, that you may live to God.

4. Through the law, a man gets the conviction of God's equity and righteousness, though he should punish and execute law-vengeance; and so he is made to justify God, though he should send him to hell. I do not say, that the sinner is made content to be damned; no: that, in some respect, were to be content to be an enemy to God, and to sin against him for ever; for, the state of the damned includes everlasting enmity and sin, and so it can never be the thing he is made content with; but the man is brought to a conviction of God's equity and righteousness, though he should send him to hell, as an everlasting punishment. "To justify God," says an eminent divine, "is to acknowledge on the one hand, that he does no wrong to the sinner in the execution of the curse; and, on the other hand, that he does no wrong to himself, or to his own justice, when he executes the judgment threatened against sin, but that he does that which is right." O, says the sinner, in this case, God does me no wrong, though he should destroy me; and he does not wrong his own justice, but is a just God in so doing; yea, I cannot see how the credit of his justice should be salved, and how he should be glorified in his justice, if he do not execute judgment upon me, either in myself, or in a surety for me, because I have offended such an infinitely glorious Being: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned—that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest; and clear when thou judgest," Psalm li. 4. Is God unrighteous, that takes vengeance? God forbid," Rom. iii. 5, 6. The offence done against the greatest of Beings, deserves the greatest of punishments, even the eternal destruction of the creature. It is true, God delights not in the death of a sinner; "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner," Ezek. xviii. 32; that is, as it is a destruction of the creature, though he delights in it, as it is the execution of justice: even so, the sinner convinced by the law, though he cannot take pleasure in this, to think of being destroyed, yet there is some secret kind of justifying that which God takes pleasure in, namely, the execution of justice. O how fit is it, that God's justice be glorified! And, how just is God, in executing infinite judgment upon such an infinite evil as sin is! And indeed the sinner would not see salvation to be free, if he did not see damnation to be just; but the sight of this, in the glass of the law, and in the light of the Spirit, tends, in a manner, to reconcile the man with the device of Salvation through Christ, whose bloody sacrifice gives justice full satisfaction.—He is now content

that God's justice be glorified by a satisfaction more glorious than that which the damned in hell can give; and so it tends to make him dead to the law, and to all other legal penances, and sham satisfactions, which those, who are ignorant of God's equity and righteousness, are ready foolishly to invent.

5. Through the law a man gets the conviction of his own inexcusableness, which is that effect of a legal work of the Spirit, whereby the soul is left without excuse of, or defence for itself: "Whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under it, that every mouth may be stopt, and all the world may become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19. Now the whole soul of man cries out, Guilty, guilty; his fig-leaves of excuses are blown away; his former shifts and cavils, in defence of himself, do now vanish: he hath not a word to speak in favour of himself. What said he formerly? Why, it may be, his heart said, if not his mouth, O I hope there will be no fear of me, Adam's sin was not mine; original sin is what I could not help, it came with me to the world; as for my actual sins, I see others guilty of greater; as for my omission of duties, and commission of trespasses, I see none but have their faults; and God is a merciful God, and I hope he will not be so unjust as to damn his own creatures.—These, and the like, shifts and excuses, formerly took place; but now he becomes speechless; his mouth is stopt. They see they will but deceive themselves, by these miserable shifts; and that they are guilty, guilty, and sinful wretches, blacker than the very devil, and have not a mouth to open for themselves; and so they die to all conceit of themselves, and their own righteousness.

6. Through the law the man comes thus to get a conviction of his absolute need of the gospel, or of the SAVIOUR revealed thereby; being convinced of his sinful and miserable state by nature, and humbled under the serious consideration and view of his sin and misery, fearing the wrath of God due to him for sin, beholding the equity of God, though he should cast him into hell; having his mouth stopt, and despairing of getting out of this condition, by his own power, or the help of any other creature; he is now convinced of the need of a Saviour: O I perish, I perish for ever, unless the Lawgiver provide a law-binding righteousness for me! Now, the soul is ready to cry out, not in Rachel's sense, "Give me children, or else I die;" but in her phrase, O give me Christ, or else I die; give me a Surety, or else I die. Now, he is content to be for ever

indebted to the righteousness of another: and thus the law is the occasion of bringing a man to Christ. And so you see how it is, that through the law, they are dead to the law, that they may live unto God.

III. The Third thing is to speak of the believer's LIFE, which is the fruit of this death; it is a living unto God. And now, in speaking hereto, I would, 1. Inquire what kind of life it is? 2. What are the scriptural designations of it? 3. What is imported in its being called a living in general? 4. What is imported in its being called a living unto God in particular?

1st, What kind of life is it that the believer hath in consequence of his being dead to the law? And,

1. It is not a natural life, either in a physical or moral sense. Natural life, in a physical sense, is that which we received from Adam by generation; and it is the function of natural faculties, in living, moving, using of sense and reason; that is a life that is common to all men, who yet may be dead; neither is it a natural life in a moral sense, such as heathens may have; the heathens may have common notions of God, and of good and evil, so as to render them inexcusable in their unnatural immoralities, Rom. i. 19, 20. They have a book of nature, both internal, in the remainders of the law in their heart, so as they do by nature the things contained in the law, Rom. ii. 14, 15, and external, in God's works of creation and general providence; "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work," Psalm xix. 1. Now, this natural life cannot be the living to God here spoken of, because this natural life flows only from a natural state, which is a state of death: by nature we are dead, legally dead under condemnation; spiritually dead in sins, wholly corrupt, and the tree being bad, the fruit must be bad also: a filthy fountain can bring forth nothing but filthy streams.—This natural life does proceed from natural principles, and these are corrupt; such as the desires of the flesh and of the mind; the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. At best their natural life flows from self-love, or love to its own honour, praises, profits, or pleasures: all nature's works are selfish, however heroic they may be. This natural life is directed by a natural rule, such as the light of nature inwards, or outward, accompanied with the counsels and examples of naturalists; neither does it ever come up to that same rule of nature's light, which therefore does condemn them as guilty. This natural life hath only natural designs, and ends: the natural

man acts from self as his principle, to self as his end, ascribing the glory of all his actions thereunto: thus Herod gave not God the glory of his fine oration, but took the praise to himself; but he was immediately smitten of an angel, and eaten up of worms.—This natural way of living, it is in a natural manner, after the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, Eph. ii. 2, which is nothing but a walking in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind: yea, in this natural life, nothing of Christ, or of his gospel, is either in the state, practice, rule, end, or manner of it; nay, they are without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise; having no hope, and without God, [or ATHEISTS] in the world, Eph. ii. 12.

2. It is not a legal life, either of Jewish conformity to the ceremonial law, or of perfect conformity to the moral law: It is not that legal life of Jewish conformity to the ceremonial law, or according to the Old Testament dispensation; for that ceremonial law is abrogated in Christ, the substance of all the old shadows; and so that Jewish life is unprofitable, and vain; yea, it is damnable, and prohibited under the highest penalties, Col. iii. 20, 21. And therefore, says the Apostle, Gal. v. 2, "If ye be circumcised, [or live according to the ceremonial law, or any other law of works, so as to expect justification thereby,] Christ shall profit you nothing." Neither is this living to God that perfect life of conformity to the moral law, according to the old covenant of works, which required perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience, as the condition of life; and threatened death upon the least failure: I say, it is not this life either: for man hath become guilty, and forfeited life, and incurred death by Adam's first transgression; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Rom. v. 12. Thus we are for ever incapable of that life, which Adam was capable of before the fall. It is also impracticable, because man is by nature without strength, Romans v. 6. We have no strength to give that obedience which the covenant of works requires, because we must be redeemed from the curse thereof, and restored to the righteousness thereof, before we can be capable to do what it requires.—And though Adam's sin and transgression were not imputed to us, as indeed it undoubtedly is, yet seeing every adult person at least hath sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; for, "No man liveth and sinneth

not ;” therefore he can never perform the perfect obedience therein required ; and, “ By the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified.” Besides, there is no article of the covenant of works, that provided for a remedy in case of a breach ; but all that the covenant of works doth, is, to promise life to perfect obedience in man’s own strength, and threatens death in case of failure, and so leaves the transgressor thereof under its curse.—In a word, the life according to that covenant cannot be the life here meant, because that covenant speaks nothing of Christ, or of his gospel, by whom, and by which, only we can now come to this living unto God ; and because this living unto God presupposes a being dead to the law, or dead to that covenant, otherwise we can never live unto God.

3. It is not a Pharisaical life of external, legal, but imperfect conformity to the law, and thereby endeavouring to establish a righteousness of their own, as the Jews, Rom. ix. 31, 32, and x. 3. Many reckon an outward moral conversation to be this living unto God, whether in performing the natural duties of civility and moral honesty, or in an external performance of religious duties, such as prayer, praise, reading, hearing, and waiting upon divine worship. The church of Laodicea was self-conceited ; they thought they were rich, and increased with goods ; but, behold the testificate that Christ gave them, that they were neither cold nor hot, such as God would spew out of his mouth, yea, that they were wretched, miserable, blind, and naked ; that is all the testimony that he gave them, who looked upon themselves as rich in legal righteousness, and good works. This Pharisaical life may be accompanied with a glorious profession ; they may profess soundness in the faith, and disown all these legal and unsound principles which others may have as their stated opinion : they may profess that righteousness and justification is not by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ, or by the works of Christ received by faith alone ; they may have a sound head, but no sound heart, nor a good conscience, nor faith unfeigned, for the end of the commandment is love, proceeding from these, 1 Tim. i. 5. People may be like the toad, that hath a precious stone in his head, but hath his belly full of poison ; they may have a head full of knowledge, and a heart full of enmity ; a filthy mud wall may be garnished with fine arras ; a rotten sepulchre may be whitened : they may have much of the matter and external form of godliness, and yet want the power and internal form thereof, a name to live, and be dead. Yea, this Pharisaical life may be

accompanied with many excellent gifts, and common graces, and high attainments (as well as all visible church privileges), as we find some apostates may have, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. Their understanding may be so far enlightened that they may attain to strange discoveries of Christ. Balaam was called a man whose eyes were opened, and that saw the visions of the Almighty, Numb. xxiv. 2, 3, 4, 15. Their wills may be so far renewed as to have a great many good purposes, like these who resolved to serve the Lord with all their heart, Deut. v. 27—29; Josh. xxiv. 18—21. They may be almost persuaded to be Christians; their affections may be greatly raised and enlarged; they may be raised to some sorrow for sin, like Judas, and like Esau, who sought the blessing with tears; to some joy, like the stony-ground hearers, who received the word with joy and pleasure, yet had no root; to some delight, like the Jews, of whom it is said, Isaiah lviii. 2, that they sought him daily, and delighted to know his ways; yea, to some fear and reverence, like these enemies that are said to submit themselves, Psalm lxvi. 3, and even to some extraordinary raptures, like these who are said to taste of the heavenly gift, and to be partakers of the Holy Ghost. On all which accounts their life and conversation may be changed in part. Thus many, “through the knowledge of God and of Christ, have escaped the pollutions of the world,” 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22. The common gifts and graces of the Spirit may warm, smooth, and wash their outward conversation; all this will not amount to this living unto God in the text. Well, what kind of life is this? We reply,

4. It is a spiritual life, being the action, motion, and gracious saving operation of the Spirit of God in us, causing us to walk in his statutes, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, it is the life of a spiritual man. It is impossible for one to have a godly life, whatever to the world he may seem to have, till he be a godly person, or in a spiritual state. A man must have a state of union to Christ by the faith of God’s operation, so that, being married with his Husband, he may bring forth fruit unto God. The branch of the old Adam cannot bear good fruit; it is only the true branch, planted in Christ by the spirit of faith that bears good fruit, John xv. 4, 5. A man must be in a state of reconciliation with God, justified, pardoned, and indemnified before God accept of any service off his hand; for two cannot walk together, or live together, unless they be agreed. God accepts no action from an enemy but his returning to him by faith in

Christ, and then begins all personal acceptance. Men must be in a state of adoption before it is possible that they can be followers of God as dear children; in a state of renovation, renewed by the Holy Ghost in the spirit of our mind. The godly man, that is in case for a godly life, is just a new creation; even the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before ordained that he should walk in them. If the heart be not right with God, a man cannot have a right life, or live unto God. But I shall go on to inquire,

2dly, Into the scriptural designations of this life. To give all the names that it comes under scripture, were too large a task: I shall only single out some of the most notable names it gets in scripture.—It is sometimes designed from GOD, sometimes from CHRIST, sometimes from the SPIRIT, and sometimes from these names that import the other special qualities and properties of it.

1. Sometimes it is designed from GOD; and it is called the life of God, Eph. iv. 18, from which all natural men are alienated; this is a wonderful name that it gets, the life of God; who can tell what this life of God is? God lives in himself and the believer lives in God: "His life is hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3. The best we can make of it is, that it begins in grace, and ends in glory, and is wholly in God, and in him.

2. Sometimes it is designed from CHRIST; and so it is called a living by faith on the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20, immediately following our text, where, when the apostle would explain what he understands by his living unto God, he says, "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Christ, might he say, is the ALPHA and OMEGA of my life, the beginning and the end of it; the author and finisher of it; Christ is the principle of my life, from whom I live: Christ is the end of my life, to whom I live; Christ is the pattern of my life, according to whose example I live: Christ is the giver of my life, the maintainer of my life, the restorer of my life; after decays, he restores my soul, and makes me to walk in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake: Christ is the food of my life; I would die, if he did not feed me with his flesh, which is living bread and water to me: Christ is the medicine of my life; it is by renewed touches of the hem of his garment, and renewed application to him, that my soul is healed: for, there is healing under the wings of this Sun of righteousness: Christ is the ALL of my life: "For to me to live is Christ;" he is my light, my

strength, my righteousness. It is the glory of the believer to acknowledge Christ the ALPHA and the OMEGA, and the ALL of his spiritual life.

3. Sometimes it is designed from the SPIRIT, and so it is called a living in the Spirit: Gal. v. 25, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." It is a living in the light and leading of the Spirit; "Thy Spirit is good: lead me to the land of uprightness."—It is a living in the graces and fruits of the Spirit, which are described, Gal. v. 22, and a bringing forth these fruits of the Spirit.—It is a living in the strength and power of the Spirit, which is therefore called a law: "The law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The power of the Spirit hath the force of a law within the man, insomuch that when he walks in the Spirit, he does not fulfil the lusts of the flesh: he sets the power of the Spirit against the power of sin. It is a living in the comforts of the Spirit, and joys of the Holy Ghost; and when he thus lives, the joy of the Lord is his strength.—It is a walking in the liberty of the Spirit; and, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." When a man hath this life, then he hath liberty to hear, read, pray, believe, mourn; and liberty to serve the Lord: "Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds."—In a word, it is a living in the love of the Spirit, and a constant dependence on the Spirit.

4. Sometimes it is designed from these names that import other special qualities and properties of it. And here I might bring in a multitude of scriptures. It is called a holy life; "Be ye holy as I am holy."—It is a humble life; "Walk humbly with thy God."—It is designed a heavenly life; "Our conversation is in heaven." The man is heavenly in his thoughts, and spiritually-minded: heavenly in his speech, desiring to edify these that are about him; heavenly in his affections, which are set on things above; his desire and delight being set upon heavenly things; heavenly in his hope; "Looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God:" heavenly in his trade, trading daily to the heavenly country by faith, prayer, and drawing bills of exchange upon Christ, as it were, for all that he stands in need of.—It is called an upright life; "No good thing will he withhold from him that walketh uprightly."—It is denominated a well-ordered life; "To him that orders his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God."—It is called a circumspect life; "See that ye walk circumspectly."—It is called

a gospel life : " Let your conversation be, as it becometh the gospel : " that is, as it becomes a gospel-state, gospel-principles, gospel-rules, gospel-patterns, gospel-motives, and gospel-ends ; and, under the influence of gospel-grace, " Adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour."—But, omitting all these, I only instance in one scripture, wherein this living unto God is described, in such a manner, as includes all other properties of it ; yea, and comprehends all the duties of obedience we are called to ; " The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," Titus ii. 11, 12 ; where you see, this living unto God comprehends all these duties of piety towards God, sobriety towards ourselves, and righteousness towards our neighbour, which we are obliged to by the law, as a rule of life and holiness ; and all under the influence of the grace of God, revealed in the gospel, teaching us these things efficaciously ; for the law teacheth them only perceptively ; but it is the gospel that teacheth them effectively ; worketh in us both to will and to do. O that we knew this life more than we do.

3rdly, The third thing here was, What is imported in its being called a life in general ? Indeed, this living to God is the only life that deserves the name of life. In vegetative life the trees of the field do excel men ; for, from little plants they turn to stately oaks. In sensitive life the beasts of the field do excel man, for they go beyond him in these natural faculties ; as the dog in smelling, the eagle in seeing, the hare in hearing, and other creatures in other senses.—In rational life many heathen philosophers may excel the Christian. So that it is not the vegetative life, whereby plants excel us, nor the sensitive life, whereby beasts excel us ; nor the rational life, which reprobates have, as well as we ; but the SPIRITUAL divine life, that deserves the name, without which our life is but a death. However, this spiritual life, or living to God, may be called life, because it hath all these things in it spiritually, which natural life hath in it naturally : as,

1. Life hath motion in it : and so here, this spiritual life imports motion ; wherever the Spirit of life comes, there is a motion among the dry bones.—Now, there are some duties he moves in, such as prayer ; " Behold, he prayeth," who never prayed to purpose before : he moves in the duties of hearing, reading, examination and mortification.—Now, there are some graces that move in

him : Faith begins to move, saying, "I believe, Lord, help mine unbelief." Hope begins to move; he is begotten to a new and lively hope. Love begins to move, may-be in sighs and groans, for want of love. Now he moves, and the term he moves from is sin, Satan, the world, self-righteousness; and the terms he moves to is God, and Christ, and heaven, and heavenly things. So far as this divine life takes place, so far all the faculties of the soul move towards God; the understanding, to see him; the will, to serve him; the affections, to embrace him: and all the members of the body move towards God; the eye is lifted up to heaven, in prayer and supplication; the ear is open to receive instruction; the mouth enlarged to sing his praises; the tongue will be no more the trumpet of idle communication; the hand and heart will be instruments of devotion; the knees will be bowed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the feet will delight to carry the man to the house of the Lord; all is in motion for God, so far as this life takes place. You may here see, by the way, whether you have or want this life, which is a living to God. Though I see an image lively representing a man, having eyes, ears, mouth, nose, hands, feet, yet I know it hath no life in it, because it hath no motion; so, if we see a professor without a suitable practice, we may say he is an idol, he is no Christian, but the image of a Christian. It is true, a hypocrite may have all those external motions, like a painted puppy, that may, by some engine, be made to dance, and move up and down, but from no vital principle of life.

2. Life hath breath in it; James ii. 26, "The body without BREATH is dead," as it may be rendered: so in this life there is breath. If a man's breath be held in a little while, the person cannot live; so the believer would die if he had not breath in a spiritual sense. What is the air he breathes in? It is just the Spirit of God; "Awake, O north wind; come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." What is the breath that is put within him? It is the Spirit of God: the Holy Ghost is that to the believer that breath is to the body; yea, that the soul is to the body.—God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he breathes on the believer, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost:—I will put my Spirit within you." What lungs does he breathe with? It is faith; we receive the promise of the Spirit of faith. And what things does he breathe after? Indeed, the earthly man breathes after earthly things, saying, "Who will shew us any

good?" But the heavenly man breathes after heavenly things; "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me." Many persons have a stinking breath; it hath the smell of earth; yea, the smell of hell: Some breathe out blasphemies and oaths, some breathe out cruelty and wrath, but the man that hath this life, and lives unto God, his breath is a sweet breath; so far as he lives unto God, his breath smells of heaven, and of God, and of Christ. But,

3. Life hath usually growth; even so this life is a growing life, this well of water springs up to everlasting life. Let a painter draw the figure of grapes never so artificially, yet they may be seen and discerned from natural grapes, because they grow not: thus the painted hypocrite may look well, but never grows. A man that hath this divine life is usually growing; if not upwardly in holiness, yet downwardly in humility; if not sensibly in outward fruitfulness, yet insensibly in inward sighs and sobs, because of his unfruitfulness; and in pantings of soul towards perfection: "He that hath clean hands waxeth stronger and stronger." Indeed, a winter-time, or season of languishing, may put the believer far back, and interrupt the growth; but a summer-reviving will make up all again.

4. Life hath appetite and sense; even so this life imports spiritual appetite and spiritual sense; there is appetite after spiritual food. Many pamper their bodies and starve their souls, but he that thus lives hath a hunger and thirst after righteousness; and, like new-born babes, desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby. The doctrine of the gospel is his life; for, "A man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He hath an appetite after these words of grace, and draws water with joy, out of these wells of salvation. Many are the secret longings and pantings of the living soul after the living God, who is his life; and, as life seeks its living soul continually, so does the living soul in the living God, in whom only his life is hid.—There is sense also: here life is sensible of whatsoever is an enemy to it, and resists it; the more life, the more sense; and the more sense, the more resistance: even so, they that live this life unto God, they feel corruption, and they fight against it; "For the Spirit lusts against the flesh, and the flesh against the Spirit;" they groan under the weight of corruption which they feel, and reckon themselves wretched on the account thereof; "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

They that have no feeling of sin, no fighting against it, do look like these that have this life.—They who have spiritual senses, at least who have them exercised, they have the seeing eye, they see the evil of sin, they see the beauty of holiness, they see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, they see God in his ordinances, they see an internal glory in the external administration of ordinances, which, others not seeing, they think very little of these things: also, they see God in his providences; in his judgments they see a just God, and in mercies they see a merciful God, and themselves less than the least of all his mercies.—They have the hearing ear; they hear the voice of God in the word, and rod: they smell the savour of his name, which is as ointment poured forth: they taste his goodness, and feel his power.—And thus you see what may be imported in its being called a life in general.

4thly, The fourth thing was, What is imported in its being called a living unto God: what is this living unto God? I have said several things about it already; but this living unto God, more particularly, may import these four things following.

1. The believer's living unto God imports his living suitably to the relations that God stands in to him, and he unto God, as being his God in Christ Jesus; and so it is a living to him as our Redeemer, both by price and power; as these that are not our own, but bought with a price; and therefore glorifying the Lord in our souls and bodies, which are his. It is a living to God as our Head: God in Christ is the believer's Head, and so, to live to him as our Head is to live as members of such a Head, drawing spiritual virtue, light, life, and comfort from him as the Head. It is a living to God as our Husband; "Thy Maker is thy Husband;" and so to live to him in this relation, is to live reverently, lovingly, affectionately, with submission and subjection to our Husband, as becomes the spouse of such a glorious Husband. It is a living to God as our heavenly Father, depending on him as children on their father; "Wilt thou not, from this time, call me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Jer. iii. 4. It is a living to God as our Judge, Law-giver, and King; and so it is as living as these that are accountable to, and as we shall answer at the tribunal of this impartial Judge: it is a sitting at the feet, and receiving the law from the mouth of this righteous Law-giver: and it is a yielding the tribute of praise, obedience, and subjection to this almighty King.—In a word, it is a living to God as the object of our worship

and adoration ; loving him as the Lord our God, with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.—Thus, I say, to live to God is to live suitably to all these relations he stands in to us.

2. The believer's living unto God imports his living suitably to these privileges and favours that he receives from God.—Hath he enlightened us in the knowledge of himself? Then, to live to him is to walk as children of light, and not as those that are yet in darkness and ignorance.—Hath he called us effectually? Then, to live to him is to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.—Hath he given us grace? Then, to live to him is to live, not as graceless, but as gracious persons ; not as those that are in a state of nature, but in a state of grace.—Hath he pardoned our sins, justified our persons, and brought us into peace with himself? Then, to live to him is to stand fast in the liberty wherewith he hath made us free.—Hath he renewed and sanctified us? Then, to live to him is to live as renewed and sanctified persons, whose lusts are mortified, and whose souls are transformed into the image of God.—Hath he poured in the promise into our hearts by the Spirit? Then, to live unto him suitably thereunto is, having these promises, to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh, and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.—Hath he made us heirs of glory? Then, to live to him is to live as candidates for heaven ; as pilgrims and strangers abstaining from fleshly lusts ; travelling to the other world, having our affections and conversation in heaven.

3. The believer's living unto God, imports, his living in communion with him, and comfortable enjoyment of him : In communion with him ; in the contemplation of him ; sanctifying the Lord in our hearts : in a constant affection to him ; having his love shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost : and in a constant dependence on him ; receiving all from him by faith, and returning all to him in duty and gratitude. It is a living in the comfortable enjoyment of him, as all our portion and happiness, all our salvation and desire ; renouncing all things in heaven and earth as our portion, but a God in Christ alone, saying, " Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee."

4. The believer's living unto God, imports, his living in conformity to God ; and, indeed, so far as we enjoy God, so far will we be conform to him. As it will be in glory, " We shall be like him, for, we shall see him as he is : " so it is in grace here : the more the soul sees and enjoys him, the more is he like unto him ; " Behold-

ing his glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory." And so this living unto God, it is a living in conformity to God's nature ; being holy as he is holy ; perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Is he a perfect God ? Then to live to him, is to go on to perfection, Heb. vi. 1. It is a living in conformity to his way of living : God's way of living is a holy, just, good, faithful, merciful way ; having a general good-will to all, and a special good-will to some ; and so ought our ways to be. It is a living in conformity to God's ends : God's great end, that he sets before himself, is the glory of his name, the honour of his Son, the advancement of Christ's kingdom, the ruin of Satan's kingdom, and in all, the praise of his rich and free grace : and surely we live to God, when we have these ends also which are God's ends. It is a living in conformity to his law as a rule, which is the transcript of his communicable nature, for our practice ; " If ye love me, keep my commandments ;" we do not love him, if we do not so. They then that live to him, they do, from love as well as conscience, obey him. These things might be greatly enlarged ; however, thus you see in short, what it is to live unto God. We are telling, and you are hearing, what this life is ; but, O that we could live this life, as well as speak and hear of it ! Look to the Lord, that he may make you know it to your experience. It is called a living to God, 1. Because it hath the Spirit of God for the principle of it. 2. Because it hath the word of God for the rule of it. 3. Because it hath the love of God for the motive of it. And, 4. Because it hath the glory of God for the ultimate end of it.

IV. The Fourth thing proposed was, to shew the INFLUENCE that this being dead to the law, hath upon living to God ; or the NECESSITY of this death, in order to this life. Here I might shew, 1. That it is necessary. 2. Whence it is necessary.

1st, That it is necessary that we die to the law, in point of justification, before we can live to God in point of sanctification : besides what was said upon the first head, for the confirmation of the doctrine, these following considerations, or remarks, may discover the necessity of being dead to the law, in order to our living to God.

1. Remark, That a man that is under the law, can perform no holy act : he may do some things that are materially good, but nothing can he do that is formally good, or holy : and his work,

instead of sanctifying him, does still more and more pollute him ; " To the pure all things are pure ; but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure ; but even their mind and conscience is defiled," Titus i. 5. He then that is alive to the law, and under the covenant of works, his works can never make him holy, but rather more and more unholy.

2. Remark, The man that is under the law, hath no promise of holiness or sanctification by that law. The law only promises life, upon perfect obedience, in our own person ; and if true sanctification may be in one that is under the covenant of works, then we must change the articles of the covenant, and promises of the covenant of grace, and make sanctification no promise of it : we must blot out these promises, " I will put a new Spirit within you, and, I will write my law in your hearts : " and all other promises of the like nature, must be razed out of the covenant of grace : If one under the covenant of works may attain to sanctification by his own works, there is no need of this promise.

3. Remark, That the man that is under the law, hath no principle of holiness. The grand principle of true holiness, is the Spirit dwelling in the man ; now, how does one receive the Spirit of sanctification ? " Is it by the works of the law ? No ; but by the hearing of faith," Gal. iii. 2. It is the doctrine of grace, not of works, that makes us partake of this Spirit. It is the new testament, or new covenant, that is the manifestation of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 2. Thereby the Spirit is ministered, or conveyed to us, but not by the law. It is the gospel that calls us effectually to sanctification, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. We received the promise of the Spirit through faith, and not by the works of the law, Gal. iii. 14.

4. Remark, That the man that is under the law, is without Christ, in whom sanctification only is to be found ; they that are saints, are saints in Christ Jesus, as the apostle designs them ; and sanctified in Christ : and our implantation into Christ, is only from grace, and only in Christ, who gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify it, Eph. v. 25.

5. Remark, The man that is under the law, is without strength, and cannot perform obedience to the law : the law is weak through the flesh, and cannot justify him, neither can it sanctify him. In order to sanctification, a new creation is necessary : the clean heart must be created ; and the man created unto good works ; creating power must be put forth ; and creation is a work of God. We must

therefore make a God of our works, and deify them, and endow them with a creating power, if we think, by the works of the law, to be sanctified; or ascribe such efficacy to them, as to work true sanctification in us. No man, then, that is under the law, or covenant of works, by giving himself to all holy duties and actions, and exercising himself in them, can come to attain true holiness, or to be truly sanctified.

6. Remark, That the man that is under the power of the law, is under the power of sin. Whence is it, that the believer is freed from the power and dominion of sin? It is because he is under grace, and not under the law, Rom. vi. 14. Shewing us, that these that are under the law, are under the power and dominion of sin. How so? Even upon the account of all reasons already assigned; and not only so, but because the law is the strength of sin, 1 Cor. xv. 56. Particularly as it irritates corruption, strengthening and stirring it up; "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Sin, by occasion of the resisting command, brake out the more fiercely. Hence the law is only the occasion, and sin dwelling in us the cause; as the shining of the sun is the occasion, why a dung-hill sends forth its filthy savour, it is the corruption and putrification therein that is the cause; so here, the light of the law shining, and discovering sin and duty, is the occasion of sin's irritation and increase, but corruption itself is the cause. Well, so it is, that a man being under the law, is under the power of sin; how then can he live unto God, while under the law? or, how can sanctification take place while he is alive to the law, or not dead thereto?—These things may make it evident, I think, that it is necessary that a man be dead to the law, and brought from under it, before he can have true satisfaction, or live unto God.

2dly, Whence it is necessary, that a man be dead to the law in point of justification, in order to his living to God in point of sanctification: These particulars already mentioned, afforded so many reasons of the necessity thereof: yet some things more may be said, for the further clearing of this point, namely, The influence that dying to the law, hath upon our living unto God. Here two questions occur. 1. What influence living TO the law, hath upon a man's living IN sin. 2. What influence a man's dying TO the law, hath upon his dying to sin, and living UNTO God

1. What influence a man's living TO the law, or being alive to

the law, hath upon his living IN sin.—This is a strange doctrine, some may think ; but it is as true as strange, that the law, and our works of obedience to the law, while we are under it, is the cause of destruction, instead of salvation, Rom. ix. 31, 32. There you see it destroyed the whole Jewish nation ; “ Israel missed righteousness, because they sought it by the works of the law.”—Now a man’s being alive to the law, hath influence upon his living in sin, and so upon his destruction, in the following ways :—

1. Because hereby he becomes hardened in sin and security, while he thinks he hath some good work to bear him out, Prov. vii. 14. What made the filthy whore more impudent and hardened in her sins ? Why ? “ I have peace-offerings with me ; this day I have paid my vows.” Thus the Pharisees, for a pretence, made long prayers ; and hereupon were hardened in their sinful courses, fearless of wrath : Why, I have done so and so.

2. Hereby they are kept from Christ, who only saves from sin. The works of the law step in betwixt them and Christ, and the man takes Christ’s bargain off his hand, promising the same that Christ promised, even obedience to the law : “ I delight to do thy will,” says Christ ; nay, I will do it myself, says the man that is under the law : he makes himself his own saviour.—What ! will not God accept of my good and honest endeavours ? This is what he sets up on Christ’s throne ; and if Christ be pulled down from his throne, will it be sufficient that we set up an honest prince in his room ; They have some things to say for themselves, which, they hope, will bring them off before God. Thus they reject Christ, “ The Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world ;” and how can they but live unto sin, whatever they may think of themselves ?

3. Hereby their pride and boasting is fostered, Rom. iv. 4, “ To him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt :” And the man expects his due for his work, which he glories in ; for, “ Boasting is not excluded by the law of works,” Rom. iii. 27. And therefore the man is loath to part with his own righteousness, which is by the law : because of his pride, he will not stoop to live upon another, while he can shift for himself. Self-love will not suffer a man to think the worst of himself, so long as he is alive to the law : nay, I hope I have a good heart to God, and I will do something that will please God ; and so it is no little thing will bring him to submit to the righteousness of God, Rom.

x. 3. Thus the law fosters his pride, and sure the proud man was never a holy man. But,

4. Hereby sin is strengthened and increased, as I said before: the motions of sin are by the law, Rom. vii. 5, "The law entered, that sin might abound," Rom. v. 20. Not only as to the knowledge of it, which is by the law, but as to the actual out-breaking of it from the heart; like a river being bounded and dammed up by the law, it swells and breaks out the more violently. The wicked nature of man, being reproved, swells and rises like a snake brought to the fire.

5. Hereby the man becomes desperate; for the law says, There is no hope without a perfect obedience; and the man having wearied himself in doing nothing answerable to what the law requires, comes at last, perhaps, to see there is no hope, and so he dies in despair; I mean, he dies in sin, saying, There is no hope; and therefore after idols I will go; he flies away from God, as Adam did.

6. Hereby he becomes slavish also; the fear, torment, and wrath, which the law brings along with it, when the penalty of it is seen, weakens the man's hands; and these lying like heavy loads upon the soul, it is thereby fettered and bound in prison, hence said to be held in the law; "That being dead wherein we were held," says the apostle. The man is held, and shut up in the prison of the law, and so out of case for service while his bands are not loosed; or at best his service is slavish, and not free; the law holds him in prison, he cannot serve God freely. The free Spirit of the gospel is what the world cannot receive, while under the law.—Thus you may see what influence living to the law may have upon men's living in sin, so as they cannot live unto God.

(2.) What influence a man's dying to the law hath upon his living UNTO God, or upon holiness and sanctification? To this we reply, It hath especially a twofold influence, both a physical and moral influence.—And,

[1.] It hath a physical influence upon a man's sanctification, in regard that a man that is dead to the law, is married to Christ, Rom. vii. 4; and so necessarily the man must be holy, being disjoined from the law, and joined to the Lord Jesus, who hath satisfied the precept of the law by his death: and in him, not only have they thus a full discharge of all the demands and commands of the law, but also, by the implantation and inhabitation of his Spirit, are created to a conformity to the image of God; and they cannot but live unto God. For,

1. In Christ they have life ; though, while under the law, they were dead in sin and trespasses ; now, in Christ, they have life, and have it more abundantly : they are quickened by virtue of their union to this everlasting Head ; because he lives, they live also. A dead person can produce no living action, but Christ is the life of his people : “ He that hath the Son hath life : ” and then, and never till then, is he in case for spiritual action and living unto God : “ He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. ” Vain men fancy within themselves, that they have not lost their life, and so they think they can do something that will please God, and profit themselves for justification and sanctification, even before ever they think of coming to Christ ; but we may as well expect, that a dead corpse will rise of itself and do the natural actions of life, as to expect that you should rise, and act spiritually, before you be in Christ. The natural conscience indeed may be roused a little, and prevailed with to set about this and that duty ; but there is no living unto God, till you get Christ : in him the believer hath life, even in his Head ; as a man cannot live without his head ; but, being joined to this new head, and disjoined from the law, he cannot but live.

2. In Christ, his new Head and Husband, he hath light as well as life : as you know, the eye is in the head, so the believer’s eye is in Christ his light, whereby he sees sin and duty ; sees to work, so as he may live to God. The man that is under the law, he is in the dark, and cannot see to work the works of holiness, which is a living unto God. He is blinded with self-conceit ; he sees not the vanity of his old covenant obedience ; and he sees not the way of the new covenant gospel-obedience, till he get the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, who is the light of the world ; a light to lighten the Gentiles : by whose light the believer sees how to walk in a way well-pleasing to God.

3. In Christ, his new Head, he hath strength : the man that is under the law, joined to it as his Head, he hath no strength for his work, and the law gives him none ; and so he cannot live to God ; but the believer can say, “ In the Lord have I righteousness and strength ; ” whereas others have no strength to produce spiritual actions ; sin domineers over them, and they have no ability to shake off the yoke of sin, their strength being but weakness. The believer hath strength in his head ; all things are possible to them that believe ; they can do all things through Christ strengthening them ; they can overleap a wall, and break bows of steel in pieces.

O, believer, be strong in the grace that is in Christ. O, it is strange the grace that is in him is in thee; as the life that is in the heart, is in the toe, the foot, the utmost members! There is a communication of vital strength and influences from the heart and head to all the members; the believer's grace is in Christ, and the grace that is in Christ is in the believer. Here is a mystery to the world but yet this mystery lies wrapt up in that word, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." If the grace that is in Christ, were not in the believer also, according to the measure of the communication, how could he be strong in the grace that is in Christ? "My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfect in thy weakness."

4. In Christ, his new Head, he hath liberty: under the law the man is under bondage, and severe bondage to the command of perfect obedience, upon pain of death and damnation; and so under bondage to the curse of the law, and fear of God's everlasting wrath and thereby he can do nothing; he hath neither heart nor hand to serve God; he is bound neck and heel, but in Christ he hath liberty; "If the Son make you free, you are free indeed;" free from service; "Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bands." Now, he walks at liberty, yea, runs the way of God's commandments, when he doth enlarge his heart. This is the glorious liberty of the children of God begun in time, whereby they are put in case to live unto God.—Now, he is at liberty to serve cheerfully, being delivered from the hands of all his enemies, to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of his life.—Now, he is at liberty to serve spiritually; the Spirit of Christ being put within him, and 'causing him to walk in God's statutes.—Now, he is at liberty to serve hopefully, knowing that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; though, while under the law, his labour was but vain labour.—Now, he is at liberty to serve acceptably, being accepted in the Beloved, Eph. i. 6, that is, not only for his sake; for there is much more in it, he being our Head, and we members of his body; and he, as our Head, having performed perfect obedience to the precept of the law, and given complete satisfaction to the penalty of the law; the Head having done it, the whole body is reputed as having done it, and so we are accepted in him; his doing is ours, because we are in him, as our Head, accepted in the Beloved; our persons are accepted in him, and next our performances and duties. O, what sweet liberty is here! what a sweet foundation

for spiritual and acceptable service and living unto God ! But this leads me, next, to shew,

[2.] That it hath a moral influence upon sanctification ; a man's being dead to the law, disjoined from it, and joined to Christ, hath not only a physical, but also a moral influence ; in regard that hereby he is constrained sweetly to live unto God ; "The love of Christ constraineth us," 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. If we have not love at the root of our actions, love to a God in Christ, we are but empty vines, that bring forth fruit to ourselves ; it is but self-love, which is not fruit unto God, or living unto him. The natural way of man's thinking is, we should serve God, that he may save us ; but the gospel-way is, he saves us, that we may save him. What made Paul say, "Being dead to the law, I live unto God ?" Why, in the next verse he enlarges on it ; "I live to him who loved me, and gave himself for me." Be persuaded, man, woman, of this, or else, as the Lord lives, you shall die in a delusion ; that, if you have not love to God, you have not a spark of holiness, though you should pray all your days, and work never so hard ; "I will circumcise their hearts to love me," is the promise, and this love is the heart and life of religious duties.—Now, you cannot have love unless you see somewhat more or less of his love to you ; we are naturally enemies to God, though we cannot get one of a thousand that will take with it ; they think they have a love to God. God forbid, say they, that we should be enemies ; nay, but I tell you, in the name of God, whether you will hear it or not, that, as you are enemies by nature, and born with a dagger of enmity in your heart and hand against God, so, till you get somewhat of the knowledge of God, as in Christ reconciling the world to himself, this enmity will never be killed. Now, I say it is the believer in Christ who, being dead to the law, and joined to the Lord, hath this love ; and this love constrains him, so that he brings forth fruit unto God, and lives unto him, Rom. vii. 3 ; being dead to the law, and married to Christ, he brings forth fruit unto God. The believer hath sufficient encouragement to make him live unto God ; he sees Christ hath satisfied divine justice, fulfilled all the righteousness of the law, that he hath done that which is imprestible, or unperformable by us ; and when, by faith, he beholds this, he is encouraged to serve God. Hence, says the psalmist, "There is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared."—Might he not have said, There is majesty with thee, that thou mayest be feared ? The

matter is, the majesty of God would put the sinner to flee from God, as Adam did when he heard his voice in the garden; but his mercy makes us fear and love him, serve and obey him; "Then they shall fear the Lord and his goodness," says the prophet, Hosea iii. 5. If a man hath no faith at all of God's goodness, no hope of his favour in Christ, where is his purity and holiness? Nay, it is he that hath this hope, that purifies himself, as he is pure. I know not what experience you have, sirs, but some of us know that, when our souls are most comforted and enlarged with the faith of God's favour through Christ, and with the hope of his goodness, then we have most heart to the duties; and when, through unbelief, we have harsh thoughts of God as an angry judge, then we have no heart to duties and religious exercises: and I persuade myself this is the experience of the saints in all ages.

But, that this moral influence, which, dying to the law, or covenant of works, hath upon living to God, or holiness and sanctification, may be further evident: let us consider how the law to the believer, having now lost its legal or old covenant form, and being put into a gospel-form, and changed from the law of works into a covenant of grace, or the law in the hand of Christ; how, I say, every part of it now constrains the believer to obedience and sanctification, in a most loving manner. The gospel-law, or the law of grace, that now he is under, is a chariot paved with love. The law, in the hand of Christ, hath now another face, even a smiling face, in all the commands, promises, threatenings, and in the whole form thereof.

(1.) The commands of the law, in the hand of Christ, have lost their old covenant-form, and are full of love. The command of the law of works is Do, and Live; but in the hand of Christ, it is, Live, and Do: the command of the law of works, is, Do, or else be damned: but the law in the hand of Christ is, I have delivered thee from hell, therefore do: the command of the law of works is, Do in thy own strength; but the law in the hand of Christ is, "I am thy strength: My strength shall be perfected in thy weakness," therefore Do. The command is materially the same, but the form is different: the command or the law of works is, Do perfectly, that you may have eternal life; but now, in the hand of Christ, the form is, I have given thee eternal life in me, and by my doing; and therefore do as perfectly as you can, through my grace, till you come to a state of perfection. The command, I say, is the same materially;

for I do not join with these, who insinuate, as if here less obedience were required than under the law of works ; though less be accepted in these who have a perfect obedience in their Head, yet no less is required, though not in the old covenant-form. And as the command is materially the same, so the authority enjoining obedience is originally the same, yet vastly distinct : in that the command of the law is the command of God out of Christ, an absolute God and Judge : but now, under grace, it is the command of a God in Christ, a Father in him : and sure I am, that the authority of the commanding God is not lessened, or lost, that the command is now in the hand of Christ : Christ is God, co-equal and co-essential with the Father : and as God's authority to judge is not lost, or lessened, in that all judgment is committed to the Son ; so his authority to command, is not lost or lessened, in that the law is in the hand of Christ : nay, it is not lessened, but it is sweetened, and made amiable, lovely, and desirable to the believer, constraining him to obedience, in that the law is in the hand of his Head, his Lord, and his God.—The end that he hath in commanding, and that they should have in obeying, is now distinct, and different from what took place under the law of works : the end that he hath in commanding, is not to lay a heavy yoke of duties on their necks, to be borne by their own strength : nor, though performed by his strength, to be a righteousness for their justification, or a condition of life ; but only to shew his holy nature, that he will not have a lawless people ; to shew his great grace, that condescends to seek our service ; to shew grace and beautify his people, their chief happiness consisting in a conformity to his will ; that his people may get good, which is necessarily joined to duties, and connected thereto by the promises ; that he may have something to commend his people for ; and that he may, without a compliment, have ground to say, “ Well done, good and faithful servants : ” and that by them he may have matter of condemnation against the rest of the world, who walk not in his commandments. In a word, he commands that his sovereignty may be kept up, and the sense thereof, in the hearts of his people : and that, by his word of command, he may, as many times as he doth, convey strength to do what he calls to ; and in case of short-coming, to force them out of themselves, under a sense of weakness and sinfulness, into Jesus Christ, the end of the law, for strength to sanctify, as well as for righteousness to justify. For these, and such like ends, does the

Lord command.—And then the end that they should have in obeying, is not to satisfy conscience, nor to satisfy justice, to purchase heaven, or the like ; but to glorify God, to edify our neighbour, and to testify our gratitude to God, and Christ, that hath delivered us from the law, as a covenant.

(2.) The promises of the law, in the hand of Christ, have lost their old covenant-form, and are full of love. The law of works promises eternal life, as a reward of our doing, or obedience ; and here the reward is a reward of debt ; but the law, in the hand of Christ, promises a reward of grace to gospel-obedience, especially as it is an evidence of union to him, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen. Eternal life was promised in the covenant of redemption to Christ, upon his perfect obedience, who paid that debt when he came under the law of works for us ; and now, eternal life being obtained to the believer in Christ, as the reward of Christ's obedience to the death, there is no other reward of debt than now takes place.—Rewards of grace are now come in fashion, and this encourages the believer to live unto God, that in the way of gospel-obedience, there is a gracious promise of sweet communion and fellowship with God ; “ He that loves me, and keeps my commandments ; I will love him, and manifest myself to him, and my Father will love him,” John xiv. 21. Here there is a fatherly promise of God's favour and familiarity with him ; yea there is a promise of heaven itself in the way of gospel-obedience, and sanctification : a right to heaven is purchased by the blood of Christ, and the believer is the young heir of glory : but his possession of heaven is suspended till he be fit for it ; till he do some business for his Father, and be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. This is sweet encouragement the believer hath, to live unto God.

(3) The threatenings of the law, in the hand of Christ, have lost their old covenant-form, quality, and nature, and are now turned to threatenings out of love ; there is no such threatening now to the believer, If thou do not, thou shalt die. The penalty of the law of works is condemnation and eternal death, which the believer hath no cause to fear, being dead to the law ; no more than a living wife needs to fear the threatenings of her dead husband : “ There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ. He that believes in him, shall never die.” Believers are under no threatening of external wrath, because under grace. It is a high expression that blessed Rutherford hath to this purpose, “ The gospel, says he,

forbids nothing under pain of damnation to a justified believer, more than to Jesus Christ.”—Though the sins of believers deserve hell, and the intrinsic demerit of sin is still the same; [yea, I think the sins of believers being against so much love, and so many mercies, they deserve a thousand hells, where others deserve one;] yet, being dead to the law, he hath no vindictive wrath to fear, the blood of Christ having quenched the fire of God’s wrath, Rom. v. 9, “While we were sinners, Christ died for us; and much more now being justified by his blood, we are saved from wrath through him;” and sure he is not to fear that which God calls him to believe he is saved from: his slavish fear, therefore, is from unbelief, and weakens his hands in duties. But now the law, in the hand of Christ, hath threatenings and punishments, but they are fatherly and loving: a short view of them you may read, Psalm lxxxix. 30-35, “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments: if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail; my covenant will I not break.—Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David.” *q.d.*, Though I will not send them to hell, nor deprive them of heaven, no more than I will break my great oath to my eternal Son; yet, like a father, I will chastise them; I will correct them for their faults: I will squeeze them in the mortar of affliction, and press out the corrupt juice of old Adam that is in them; yea, I will hide my face: I will deny them that communion and fellowship with me that sometimes they had, and give them terror instead of comfort, and bitterness instead of sweetness. A filial tear of these fatherly chastisements will do more to influence the believer to holiness and obedience, than all the unbelieving fears of hell and wrath can do: fear, lest he want that sweetness of God’s presence, which sometimes he hath had, will make him say to his sins and lusts, as the fig-tree in Jotham’s parable, “Shall I leave my sweetness, and be king over you?” O! shall I leave all the sweetness that I have enjoyed with God, and take on with base lusts and idols! And hence, when the believer hath gone aside and backslidden, what is it that brings him back to God? He finds the Lord breaking him many ways, and he reflects, through grace, upon this sometimes. O! how am I deprived of these sweet interviews that once I enjoyed? “Therefore I will go and return to my first husband,

for then it was better with me than now." Yea, his freedom from law-threatenings, and being only under fatherly correction, when he sees this, it breaks his heart, and melts it more than all the fire of hell could do.—The slavish fear of vindictive wrath discourages him, weakens his hands in duties, and makes him run away from God: but the filial fear of God's fatherly wrath, which is kindly, is a motive of love that encourages him to his duty. Which of these motives think you will work up the believer to most obedience? viz. This legal one, O! my wrathful Judge will send me to hell, if I do so and so; or this gospel one; O! my God and Father in Christ Jesus will be angry at me, and deny me his love-tokens? I suppose the former works upon enmity, and raises it, but this works upon love, and inflames it.

But here a question may be moved, Ought not the believer to live unto God, even without respect to the threatening of fatherly chastisement and punishment? To this we answer,

No doubt, the more perfect his obedience be, the better and the more like to the obedience of the saints in heaven, where no chastisement is feared; but, while he is here, he carries a body of sin about with him, and needs to be stirred up by fatherly correction. He should indeed serve God purely out of love and respect to the command itself, and because he commands it; but thus the matter stands, that as on the one hand, being perfect in his Head, Christ Jesus, it is not his duty to have respect to what the law of works either promises, or threatens; so, on the other hand, being imperfect in himself while here, it is his duty to have respect to what the law, in the hand of Christ, promises and threatens; which indeed is a loving respect, tending to advance holiness.

(4.) The whole form of the law, as a covenant of works, being thus altered, the law in the hand of Christ, is all love, all grace, and so influences the man to sanctification. The man that is under the covenant of grace, he hath a principle of grace within him, causing him to walk in God's statutes; he hath the promise of grace to be sufficient for him; if sin prevail, and pollute him, he hath daily access to the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness, to which he runs; if his backslidings increase, he hath Christ engaged by promise to heal his backslidings: which, when he views by faith, it doth not encourage him to sin, if he be in right exercise of his senses, but draws him to his duty, like a cord of love, and brings him back to his kind Lord. In a word, being dead to the

law, he is married to Christ, who is like a green fig-tree, from whom all his fruit is found.—Thus you see what influence a man's being dead to the law, hath upon his living unto God. And so much for the fourth head proposed.

V. The Fifth thing in the method, was the Application, which we shall essay in an Use of Information, Examination, Lamentation, and Exhortation.

Is it so, that being dead to the law, in point of justification, is necessary, in order to living unto God in point of sanctification? Then for Information, hence we may see,

1. That the doctrine of the gospel is not a doctrine of licentiousness, or carnal liberty, however it be reproached in the world: and if the preachers thereof, who would bring people from the law of works, and from their self-righteousness, be reproached as if they were enemies to holiness I will venture to say it with confidence, in a place where falsehood should be an abomination, that it is a vile slander; for whatever sinful weakness and imperfection may cleave to the preaching or practice of these, who desire to publish this gospel-doctrine, yet the Lord God of gods is witness; yea, the Lord God of gods knows, and all Israel may know, and all whose eyes God enlightens shall know, that this doctrine of dying to the law, in point of justification, is a doctrine according to godliness, and the very means of holiness itself, and of living unto God: if this be Antinomianism, I am content to be called an Antinomian.¹

(1) The rise and ground of this injurious accusation may be seen, in some measure, accounted for, Sermon IV.—The Baxterian *legal scheme* of doctrine had, by this time, spread itself abroad, and diffused its dangerous and pernicious influence and direful effects, not only among the clergy in England, but had even crept into many of the pulpits in Scotland: This paved the way for exhibiting the charge of *Antinomianism* against all those ministers who adhered to, and assiduously taught the doctrine of grace; especially those who maintained the absolute freedom of the covenant of grace; the unlimited grant that God hath made of Christ, and salvation with him to mankind; the necessity of becoming dead to the law as a covenant, and of faith to apprehend and appropriate Christ and his righteousness, for salvation. And though the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* was designed to vindicate the doctrine of grace, in opposition to *Antinomian* and *Neonomian* extremes: yet they who befriended this book, especially such who appeared in defence thereof, when attacked and condemned by the Assembly, were accused with being *Antinomians*, enemies to the law and holiness, friends to licentiousness, and branded with introducing and venting new schemes of Divinity. Though it is a notour fact, and well known to many yet alive, that there were not greater friends in the whole church, to evangelical doctrine, than those who befriended the Marrow Doctrine: They were justly allowed to be first-rate Divines. It is true, indeed, they were enemies to all previous legal qualifications, to be performed by us, in order to fit and qualify us for coming to, and closing with Christ. And with respect to

But, we see, who are indeed Antinomians, and enemies to the law and holiness; even all those who oppose this doctrine, whereby we give the law all the honour imaginable; "Do we make void the law through faith; God forbid; yea, we establish the law:" as a covenant we establish it, while we preach Christ as our righteousness for justification: and as a rule of holiness we establish it, while we preach Christ as our strength for sanctification of heart and life: and they that do not thus honour the law, do but disgrace and dishonour it, and are truly Antinomians, *i.e.* enemies to the law. And if this be called a new scheme of doctrine, by way of reproach, though I confess it is a new covenant scheme, in opposition to that of the old, yet I will grant to no man that it is new otherwise; seeing it is not only as old as Paul here, but as old as the first publication of the covenant of grace in Paradise; so that we see where it is, that the reproach of a new scheme should be lodged.—I would have reproachers to mind what Paul says of this doctrine of his, Gal. i. 8, "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach another gospel, let him be accursed." Here is the doom of such as preach another gospel, which yet, says the apostle, is not another; but there are some that trouble the Lord's people, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. To be dead to the law, is not to turn a loose Antinomian; it is to live unto God.

2. Hence see the reason why the devil opposes the doctrine of grace so much, and cares not though the law, as a covenant, be never so much preached up, because it is the gospel-doctrine that tends only to true godliness, while the law and legal doctrines tend to keep men strangers to the life of God. The devil cares not how

our worthy Author, it is obvious to every intelligent person, who either heard him preach, or have carefully perused his writings, that he had a peculiar talent in stating the difference between the law and the gospel, and put a respectable honour upon, and paid a due regard to each of them; and that he constantly urged conformity to the law, as a rule of life: and assiduously inculcate the practice of holiness.—Any who incline to see the justness of these observations, and have a complete view of this affair, may attain it, by perusing the *Marrow* itself, with attention, and carefully adverting to the judicious Mr. Boston's notes upon it; and the Brethren's Answers to the Assembly's Queries; and an Act concerning the Doctrines of Grace, by the Associate Presbytery: In which Act, the Doctrine of Grace, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and set forth in our Standards, is asserted and vindicated from the errors vented against it; the *Marrow* doctrine freed from the charge of *Antinomianism*, laid against it by the Assembly, and shewn to be founded on the Scriptures, consistent with our Standards, and agreeable to the sentiments of other approved Divines; and the Act of Assembly condemning the *Marrow*, evinced to be injurious to the Doctrine of Grace, contrary to many passages of Scripture, and diametrically opposite to our Standards.

much you be in duties, providing you keep off from Christ, who is the end of the law, for righteousness: for then he knows you would be holy also: but he is an unholy devil; and therefore he opposes the gospel, and its doctrine. The devil knows that he hath fast hold of you, so long as you cleave to the law; but that he hath lost you, if once you have laid hold on Christ: for, if once you get Christ for justification, as having fulfilled the righteousness of the law for you, then you will also get him for sanctification, to fulfill the righteousness of the law in you. The devil knows, that though in seeming holiness, you should be transformed to an angel of light, like himself, yet you lie under the heavy vengeance of God, and curse of the law, and under the power of sin too, so long as you are under the law. Therefore,

3. Hence see the reason why most part of the world are living to sin, living to self, living to the world, living to the devil: Why? because they are not dead to the law. They only that are dead to the law, do live unto God: and surely then, they that are alive to the law, and not dead to it, they are living to the devil. No man that is alive to the law, can be a holy man; nay, what is the reason of all the ungodliness and unrighteousness, all the profanity and wickedness of the generation! Why? people are strangers to Christ and are still under the power, the irritating power of the law, which is the strength of sin. The world is crying up morality, as if the preachers of Christ and his righteousness were enemies to the moral law, as a rule of holiness; and behold, in the righteous judgment of God, there was never a generation left to greater immoralities than the present; a just punishment of men's despising Christ, and his law-biding righteousness, through the faith whereof only true holiness, and conformity to the law can be attained. O when the believer comes to see by faith, that he hath nothing to do with the law as a covenant, this makes him delight in the law of God, as a rule of holiness; when he sees he hath not a farthing of debt to pay, either to the precept, or threatening of the law as a covenant, because that debt was paid by Christ's obedience to the death, this makes him find himself under the most grateful obligations to serve the Lord, in obedience to his law, as a rule; yea, under greater obligation than ever Adam was in the state of innocency; but the rest of the world that are utter strangers to this freedom, they are in bondage to the law, and so in bondage to their lusts.

4. Hence we may see the necessity of a law-work of conviction

and humiliation, and how much of it is necessary, even as much as will render the person dead to the law, that he may live unto God. So much conviction is necessary, as will unbottom the man from the covenant of works, and make him disclaim his own righteousness, and make him cry out, "Unclean, unclean;" guilty, guilty; that thus his self-confidence may be killed, and he, through the law, may be dead to the law, and may come under the covert of the blood of the Lamb, under covert of the righteousness of Christ for justification that, being dead to the law, he may live unto God. While men are without this law work, rendering them dead to the law, they are at best but establishing a righteousness of their own, which will keep them out of heaven, as much as their sins will do. And this makes the gate of heaven indeed to be a strait gate, because many seek to enter in, in a legal way, and shall not be able, Luke xiii. 24; and this makes the broad way that leads unto hell, so broad, that it lets in all that are out of Christ, but the openly wicked, and the self-righteous. There is but one way to heaven, and that is Christ; but there are many ways to hell: especially these two; some walk in a more cleanly way of self-righteousness, and others in a more dirty way of open wickedness; but both meet together at the end of the way, and that is the centre of damnation. O what need, then, is there of a law-work, to convince the wicked of their sins, and the self-righteous of their need of a better righteousness, that, being dead to the law, they may live unto God.

5. Hence we may see whence it is, that believers live so little to God, and are so untender, and unholy: it flows from this, that they are not perfectly dead to the law, nor perfectly freed from it: much of a legal spirit remains; the more that takes place, the more unholy they are. Though they have shaken off, in conversion, the authority of the covenant of works as a prince, which is a great matter; yet they are many times under the authority thereof as an usurper, and by reason of the old legal nature, which is but partly renewed in time; and hence the voice of the law speaks many times in the believer's conscience, and he is terrified at the voice of it; for it presumes to curse him, and to desire him to do, or else be damned; and so it weakens his hand, and makes him think God is a hard master: whereas the voice of the gospel in his conscience, is the still, calm voice, sweetly intreating, and alluring the heart to its obedience, and conveying a secret strength to obey, and making the soul to delight in the Lord's way; "Draw me, we will run after

thee," Song i. 3. But what should the believer do, when the law comes to charge him, and command him to obey upon pain of death, or to curse him for his disobedience? Why, he may even say in the words of Luther, who, upon the point of justification, was as sound as any since his day; "O law, Christ is my righteousness, my treasure, and my work; I confess, O law, that I am neither godly nor righteous, but yet this I am sure of, that he is godly and righteous for me." His obedience answered both the godliness required in the first table of the law, and the righteousness required in the second table. The believer may say to the law, O law, I am dead to thee, and married to another Husband, even Jesus Christ; and therefore, cannot bring forth any children, any fruit, any acts of obedience to thy threatening commands: but, behold, I run to my sweet husband, who hath sugared and sweetened the law, with a gospel-dress and form; which, giving strength to obey, and shewing the believer's freedom from the wrath of God, "encourages the believer, as our Confession of Faith speaks, being free from the curse of the moral law, and delivered from everlasting damnation, to yield obedience to God;" not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love, and a willing mind.

6. Hence see how it is, that holiness is necessary to salvation; why, it is the very life of the justified man, being dead to the law, to live unto God: he is not holy that he may be justified, but justified that he may be holy. I do not here middle with the question, Whether regeneration or justification be first in order of nature? For I am speaking mainly, not of habitual holiness, or the first habit of grace, but of actual holiness: whether internal in the exercise of grace, or external in the performance of duty. Thus holiness, I say, is necessary to salvation, as being the native necessary, and inseparable fruit of justification, or dying to the law; it is the justified man's way of living, or walking towards heaven. They that turn the grace of God into wantonness, they pervert the right end of grace, which teacheth us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts; and they that give up with the law as a rule of holiness, because they are, or think they are delivered from the law, as a covenant of works, they pervert the very end of that freedom, which is that they may live unto God; and no doubt, many among believers themselves are in danger of this sin: for I know no sin, but a believer is liable to it, if he be left to himself; and because many of them abuse grace, therefore God keeps the law spur at their

side ; for it is with many, as with dull lazy horses, so long as the spur is in their side, they ride quickly ; but when that is removed, they become dull and heavy, and are ready to stand still : so, while the law exacted rigid obedience, and threatened damnation and hell, they were diligent, and durst not neglect a duty ; they were tender in their walk : but now, being delivered from this spur, that was daily pricking their sides, and seeing that Christ hath satisfied the law, which now can neither justify nor condemn them, they imagine they have no more to fear ; and so they sin the more, and live securely, instead of living soberly, righteously, and godly. This is a turning the grace of God into wantonness, and a perverting of the very end of grace : and if any child of God here be guilty, remember that your heavenly Father will not let you pass unpunished ; though he pardon your sins, yet he will take vengeance on your inventions. It is to prevent this wantonness in some, that the spur is kept long in their side ; and they are kept many days and years, perhaps, under many legal shakings, fears, doubts, and tremblings, attaining to very little of any chearful gospel-obedience ; for the law cannot work that. And this leads me to another inference.

7. Hence, from this doctrine, we may see that the law can neither justify nor sanctify a sinner ; it cannot justify him, for he must be dead to it in point of justification ; it cannot sanctify him, for he never lives unto God, till he be dead to the law. On the one hand, " By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified : " why ? Because you are dead in sin by nature, and can do nothing that the law requires, in the way that it requires it ; and, though you would do any thing, yet your doing is imperfect, but the law requires perfection ; yea, though you could obey the law perfectly for the time to come, that will not make amends for former faults ; there must be satisfaction ; yea, suppose it were possible that you could do all this, and that, from your cradle to your grave, you never sinned ; and were as free from original sin, and had as good a nature as ever Pelagius thought any had, and strength to keep the law, and did actually keep it perfectly, from your youth up ; yet the law of works is broken in Adam, in him we all sinned, and that one sin is enough to damn the whole world, and would do so, if Christ did not redeem from the guilt thereof.—On the other hand, the law cannot sanctify any, it works wrath ; and, when the commandment comes, sin revives ; it is the ministration of death every way, as I said before. But here a question may be moved, If the

law can neither justify nor sanctify, what use is it for? We may answer, It is for many noble uses, both to the regenerate and unregenerate. To the unregenerate it is of use to conviction of sin; to break up the fallow-ground of the heart; to be a schoolmaster to lead to Christ, by convincing him of his absolute need of a Surety, and of his undone state without Christ.—And to the regenerate it is of use, to make them highly esteem Christ, whose righteousness answers the law in its commands and threatenings both; and it serves to give him a daily conviction of sin, that the man may more and more prize the pardon of sin, and seek daily unto the Lord, for pardoning and sanctifying grace; also, to let him see the intrinsic demerit of sin, while he sees hell threatened against it in that covenant; and thereupon may fear to offend that God who is a consuming fire, but rather that he may worship him with reverence and godly fear; not with a slavish fear, that he may be sent to hell, which is impossible; that is not his duty; he may have the over-awing fear and apprehension of hell, but should not have a slavish fear of it; this fear of it he should not have, but the faith of it he ought to have, and many times need to have it, to terrify him from sin; which, from its own nature, leads to destruction; as a man that is bound, with a great chain, to a stake on the top of a high tower, though he cannot but know that, by reason of the chain, he is sure enough; yet, when he looks over the battlement, and sees the dreadful precipice, it scares him from going near the edge of the battlement. It is certain that believers, when they know not that they are under grace, may unwarrantably apply to themselves the sentence of the law; unwarrantably, I say, because there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, yet God may, for holy ends, suffer his conscience to be troubled with the fear of condemnation, that, being humbled, he may make the more use of Christ for righteousness and strength. In a word, the commands of the law, not formally, as a covenant; but materially, as a rule of life, serve to be an active directory for his walk; and, whoever walks according to this rule, peace be on them, and on all the Israel of God. Thus it is of manifold use, though it can neither justify nor sanctify, which only the grace of the gospel can do.

8. Hence see what a mystery to the world religion is, and the difference betwixt God's judgment and man's; man thinks, to be dead to the law, is the way to live to sin; but God's word tells us, That to be dead to the law, is the way to live unto God. Why?

here is a mystery, a holy riddle; and we are decrying holiness, when we preach in this apostolic strain? God forbid; nay, we declare unto you, in the name of God, that the way to be truly holy, is to quit with your false legal holiness; the way to be truly righteous, is to quit your legal righteousness; yea, I tell you, man, that even in point of sanctification, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of God;" and you know they made long prayers, they fasted twice a-week, and gave alms of all that they possessed; and some of them were touching the law, blameless, and could say, "All these things have I done from my youth up;" and yet I say, Unless your holiness exceed their holiness, you shall never enter into the kingdom of God: and, till your unrighteous righteousness, and unholy holiness, be cried down in your heart, and the perfect righteousness of Christ cried up, true holiness you shall never have. Was Christ a friend to publicans or harlots? or, did he approve of their sins, when he said to these Pharisees, "Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you!" Mat. xxi. 31. O beware of such blasphemous thoughts of a holy Jesus; nay, so far from that, that we may hence gather his abhorrence of their sins; only he would give us to know, that if sin keep them out of heaven, as much and more will self-righteousness keep out the Pharisee, who must be rid of his' righteousness, as well as his sins, before he get there.—O but religion is a mystery! to be dead to the law, in order to live unto God.

9. Hence we may see the miserable state of these that are alive, and the happy state of these that are dead to the law. Their state is miserable who are alive to the law; for, though they have a name to live, yet they are dead; legally dead, bound over to the wrath of God, and under the curse of the law: spiritually dead in sin, having no holiness, no godliness, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. If they be any way awakened, and seeking life by the law, and the works thereof, what a madness is this, to seek the living among the dead? or to seek help where it cannot be had? God hath laid all our help upon Christ; and it is impossible to find justification or sanctification any where else.—But on the other hand, their state is happy who are dead to the law: for though they be dead, yet they live; they live a life of justification, and a life of sanctification thereupon; being dead to the law, they live unto God. O what a mercy it is, if God hath awakened your consciences, con-

vinced you of sin and self-righteousness, and brought you off from the law ! You see your extreme guilt, vileness, baseness, and wickedness ; and it may be are groaning under the sense thereof : but God may have a glorious design in this, to bring you more and more off from the law, and from any confidence in the flesh, that you may build upon a better foundation, and be married to a better husband, even to Jesus Christ, that you may bring forth fruit unto God.

10.—Hence see the malignity of a legal spirit : if we must be dead to the law, that we may live unto God, then a legal spirit and temper must be a wicked and ungodly spirit : it is an ignorant spirit ; if they were not ignorant of God's righteousness, they would never establish a righteousness of their own : but they are ignorant of the perfection of his law, the terror of his justice, the severity of his tribunal, and of their own natural weakness and wickedness, otherwise they would not dare to make any thing a ground of their acceptance with God, except the blood and righteousness of his Son, It is a proud spirit, that will not let grace be exalted, but puts self, in the throne of Christ, and his righteousness. It is a filthy and abominable spirit, and pollutes the man more and more : and God abhors it, as that which contradicts his most glorious plot. And it is a damning spirit, if it be not removed ; “ For the wicked shall be turned into hell : ” and this man continues wicked still, even under the pretence of holiness ; he is wicked and ungodly still, for he lives to himself, but not to God ; for it is only these that are dead to the law, who live unto God.

Use second, Of Examination. Try your state then, man, woman ; you should try after, as well as before a communion : and there two things you should try here, 1. Whether you be dead to the law in point of justification ? Whether you be living to the law, or living to God, in point of sanctification ? Two as necessary points as are in all divinity, and such as are of the utmost concern in time, and through eternity.

First, Try whether you be dead to the law in point of justification. I might here give you marks of these that are alive to the law, and then marks of these that are dead to the law ; but, seeing these will coincide, I join them together. I shall not multiply evidences, but you may try by these following :—

1. The man that is dead to the law hath got a sight of holiness in the glass of the law, and of his natural legal temper. Some

think they have a good heart to God, and they can do so and so ; but the believer dead to the law, he sees his heart, the worst piece in or about him ; and that he cannot believe, he cannot repent, he cannot mortify sin ; corruption is like the giants of Anak. The man sees he is vile, with Job ; " Behold, I am vile !" vile in every duty, in praying, communicating, " Behold, I am vile !" He sees himself, and he sees his own legal temper.—The man that is alive to the law never sees his legal temper, nor his strong inclination to self-righteousness ; the believer sees and finds something of this, even after he is made a gospel-saint ; but the legalist never sees it. What, say they, would you have us Papists ? Blessed be God, we are better instructed ; we have no merit, our righteousness is rags ! and yet, after all, there is a secret trusting in their own righteousness. Hath it ever been one exercise to you, how to get rid of your sins ; and another, how to be rid of your righteousness ?

2. The man that is dead to the law is tired and wearied out of it. Perhaps he hath been convinced of sin ; and thereupon falling to the law, to this and the other duty ; O ! I deserve hell, for my sin is great ; well, he endeavours to make amends, and to find peace, and so he runs to prayer and preaching, thinking he will get peace, he repents, he resolves, and wo to the man that finds all his peace there without going further. But, behold, the man whom God shews mercy to, he goes on in these duties, but finds no peace, no rest, no satisfaction, he is tired out of it ; his soul sinks with discouragement, and languishes and hangs down the head ; and God thus unbottoms the man of himself.—Whereas, he that is alive to the law, he that takes up his rest and comfort in his duty : he hath the fear of wrath to come, and then he runs to his duty ; the duty gives him ease, he is relieved, all is well ; as a husband comforts his distressed wife, so obedience to the law comforts him, and the law heals him ; it is the law that throws him down, and it is the law that raises him up again. But the man that is dead to the law, though the law terrify, yet it is not the law that satisfies him again.

3. The man that is dead to the law, he knows what it is to act from Christ as his principle ; and to him, as his end : he knows what it is to perform duty from a borrowed strength. The legalist may indeed speak soundly, and say, He can do nothing of himself without Christ ; and yet he reads, prays, preaches, hears, communicates, and does all as if he had the power in his own hand. Let a man have never such an orthodox head, if he be not a believer in

Christ, he is an Arminian and Pelagian all over; he knows not his own weakness; he looks not up for immediate influences. And as self is his principle, so to self he acts as his end; as he that is joined to Christ brings forth children or fruit unto Christ; so he that is joined to the law: he does duty, it may be, to hush the clamours of conscience, and give it ease; to keep himself out of hell, for he hath no will to be damned, and for the like ends. The believer being dead to the law, cannot perform duty, but by borrowed strength; he can do nothing till a gale of the Spirit come; he cannot bring forth children till the Spirit of God beget them in his soul: no, no; every act of grace flows from a creating power; and, when he acts, the love of Christ especially, and the desire of communion and fellowship with God, constrains him; and the glory of God in Christ is his great end.

4. The believer, that is dead to the law, he hath vilifying thoughts of all he does: the Legalist over-values his duties: "Wherefore have we fasted, and thou hast not seen? Wherefore have we prayed, and thou hast not heard?" They challenge God as he were unjust, for not giving them what they merit: "God, I thank thee," said the Pharisee, "I am not as other men:" it was like a proud boasting of what he had done. But let the believer spend days and nights in prayer, and that with much liberty and enlargement, yet the issue of the work is, O my righteousness is filthy rags, a menstruous cloth! Wo to me, if I be not found in Christ, for my best duties deserve damnation; I find my praying, my worshipping, my communicating, full of atheism, unbelief, formality, and hypocrisy.—The legalist over-rates his duties: he thinks more of what he hath done, than of what Christ hath done; and more of his praying on earth, than of Christ's pleading in heaven: he thinks more of his tears than of Christ's blood: he is proud of his humility, and never duly humbled.

5. The believer that is dead to the law, so far as he is dead thereto, his complaints and his comforts move in a gospel-channel. The legalist will complain more for want of holiness, than for want of Christ: seeing he hath taken up with a self-righteousness, it is his all, it is his happiness, it is his husband, it is his God; and when it is wanting, he cannot but be troubled. But the language of the man dead to the law is, O for Christ! O for a day of power! O to be wrapt up in the covenant of grace, to get an omnipotent power, determining me to comply with the gospel-offer! His com-

forts move in a gospel-channel.—But the legalist finds comfort in law-works, even in all his extremities in time: In the prospect of trouble, what comforts him? Even this, that he hath done many good duties; he wraps up himself in a garment of his own weaving. Upon challenges of conscience, what comforts him, and gives him peace? He even covers himself with the same robe. In the prospect of judgment, what comforts him, and gives him peace? Why he hopes God will be merciful to him, because he hath a good profession, and said many good prayers, and done many good duties. But O sorry peace-maker. The only thing that gives a believer peace and ease, in these cases, is the law-biding righteousness of Christ, under which he desires to shroud himself: he flees to the blood of Christ, saying, O I am undone, unless my soul be wrapt up in the mantle of Christ's perfect righteousness; "I desire to be found in him:" upon this righteousness of Jesus do I venture my soul; I have no shift but this.—The legalist, I said, comforts himself in all his extremities with the law, till the extremity come, and then he finds himself cheated, miserably deceived; and hence, O what a mercy is it, that the Lord drains a man of his legal comfort, that he may unhinge him off the law, and off his self-confidence! Oft-times, when God is bringing in his elect, he makes all the common work they had before to disappear. It may be, they had a profession, were morally serious, they had zeal, prayed with life, heard with affection; but behold now, all the streams of common influences are dried up; the poor soul finds he cannot pray, he cannot shed a tear, though he should be cast into hell: yea, he cannot think a right thought, though it should bring him to heaven; yea, he finds his heart hardened like a devil, and his mind bemisted with the darkness of hell.—Why? this is all in love, to induce him to relinquish himself, abandon the law as a covenant, and flee in unto and embrace the dear Son of God.

6. The believer that is dead to the law, is content to have his righteousness tried, and compared with the perfect law. As Christ is the Lord his righteousness, and this he knows is sufficient to answer all the demands and commands of the law, and he is not ashamed of this righteousness, but glories in it; so as to the works of holiness, whatever short-coming he is sensible of, yet he is content to be tried with the clearest light. Let omniscieny descend, and make a critical search; "Search me, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

I do not love to die with a lie in my right-hand : let all the inward corners of my heart be laid open before me : I am satisfied to know if I have a lawful husband, or not ; if Christ be my husband, or not : he is content to be tried.—But the legalist, the man that is alive to the law, a searching sermon is uneasy to him ; a gospel-sermon he cannot abide ; a narrow trial he cannot endure ; he thinks that the minister is too impartial to cast us all to hell ; he hath stolen goods, and therefore dreads the light. Yea,

7. The man that is dead to the law, he hath got a soul-humbling sight, and saving view of the glory of Christ's righteousness, that made him quit with all his legal rags as loss and dung ; even as the stars evanish out of sight when the sun arises. O hath Christ's glory ever shined into your heart, man, woman, and made you see thousands of worlds to be nothing to him ; thousands of righteousnesses of men and angels, to be nothing to his ? Have you seen an utter impossibility of obtaining God's favour by any righteousness of yours ? and such a sure ground of obtaining God's favour by any righteousness of yours ? and such a sure ground of obtaining God's favour here, that your soul hath been made to renounce all other ways of repentance ; and to see, admire, and rejoice in the glory of his way ; and to approve it, as a device worthy of God, and suitable to you ? And have you found rest here ? It is good.—The legalist is a stranger to such saving views of the glory of Christ, and his righteousness : having never got the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

8. The man that is dead to the law, is in love with the doctrine of the gospel : "How beautiful upon the mountains, to them, are the feet of these that preach the glad-tidings of peace !" Whereas he that is alive to the law, he always suspects the doctrine of the gospel, as if it were leading him away from the law, and away from holiness. Here is a mark that may well find out a Pharisaic generation ; they suspect the doctrine of Christ, and his righteousness, as if it were a doctrine tending to licentiousness, and opposition to the law, a sign they never felt the power of the gospel upon their hearts, otherwise they would feel the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, from faith to faith, to be the power of God to their salvation ; they would find, that never are they so much disposed to holy duties, as when they are under the influences of the Spirit of faith, discovering the glory of Christ, and his righteousness, to them. But an ignorant generation, that knows not the

power and virtue of the gospel, still suspects it as contrary to the law: this was the false charge against Christ of old, and against Stephen, Acts vi. 18, and against Paul, from which therefore he many times vindicates himself. See Acts xviii. 13.

9. The man that is dead to the law, can, in some measure, put a difference betwixt Christ and a frame: whereas, he that is alive to the law, can never distinguish between Christ in duty, and a frame in duty? I suppose this is a hard question, How shall we know the difference betwixt Christ in duty, and a frame in duty? I will answer, in a word, The man that hath only a frame in duty, and not Christ in it, he is only pleased with his frame, his tears, his enlargements; he makes that his righteousness; he is content with that, and exalted with that; and now thinks all is well: but he that hath Christ in duty, and not a frame only, he is ready to cry, O I would have Christ! tears will not do the turn; my own heart hath deceived me a thousand times; I and my tears do not wash me, my frame does not sanctify me: this flowing of affection may be but a natural thing; it will not do; it is Christ I want: nothing but his blood can wash me: nothing but this blood can pacify his conscience; nothing but some views of Christ can give him solid quiet. A sweet frame may indeed be the chariot, in which Christ may ride towards the soul; but the gospel-believer is not so much taken up with the chariot, as with the glorious King that rides in it.

10. The man that is dead to the law, is dead to sin: sin hath not dominion over him, because he is not under the law, but under grace. The views of Christ are of a transforming nature; "Beholding his nature, we are changed." It is true, here the believer fears most of all, because of his short-coming in point of sanctification and mortification of sin, because he finds iniquity prevailing against him; and how is it true that sin hath no dominion over him, he being not under the law, but under grace? Why, sin hath no righteous nor lawful dominion over believers; the first husband is dead, and they are married to Christ, the second husband; and therefore they are not debtors to the flesh; though still the flesh craves them to obey it, yet it hath no just power so to do. Sin's just authority is exauctorated; and Christ, by satisfying the law, which is the strength of sin, hath condemned sin in the flesh. Sin hath a sort of right to reign in wicked men, and these that are under the law; but none in the believer, who is delivered from the

law, which is the strength of sin. Though it actually exercise authority, yet it is but an usurped authority ; as sin hath no power nor authority to condemn the soul that is in Christ, so it hath no authority to reign ; and sin shall never reign unto death over them, Rom. v. 21. And the believer that hath cast off the authority to sin, as being no more his lawful king, may complain of its unjust oppression, and plead with a righteous God, that the power of sin may be more and more broken, and so it shall be. But the legalist, that is alive to the law, in regard that he is both under the commanding and condemning power of the law, he is under the commanding and condemning power of sin. The law commands him, and he obeys it as his lord ; and sin commands him also, and he obeys it too, and makes his legal duties a plaster to cure his conscience of his sin : like Louis XI. of France, who would swear a bloody oath, and, for a pardon, kiss a crucifix ; and swear again, and then kiss it over again ; and so runs the round. However, the believer is delivered from the power of the law, and the power of sin too ; having cast off the law as a covenant, and finding nothing to satisfy and still his conscience but the blood and righteousness of Christ, that satisfies divine justice ; as in this way he finds rest from the curse of the law, so also some rest from the rule and dominion of sin ; the faith of God's love in Christ does purify his heart, and kill his natural enmity, insomuch that he can attest, to his sweet experience, that the faith of the love of God in Christ is so far from leading him to licentiousness of life, or encouraging laziness, that he finds it the hottest fire in the world, to melt his heart for sin ; and the strongest cord in the world, to bind him to duty, while the love of God is shed abroad upon him.—Try by these things, if you be dead to the law.—In a word, if you be dead to the law, then you will be living unto God ; “ I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” He is led sweetly to the law, as a rule of life.

But here it may be inquired, How shall I know if I be living unto God ? This leads me to the other part of the examination

SECONDLY, Try if you be living unto God. Having enlarged so much upon the preceding head, and having offered several particulars upon this head already, in the doctrinal part, which may be improved by way of trial ; therefore I will offer you but these two marks of this.

1. If you be living unto God, then the Spirit of God will be

the chief principle of your life ; “ The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life,” John iv. 14. The man hath not only the water within him, the graces of the Spirit ; but the well itself, the Spirit himself dwelling in him. And as we know a springing-well, by seeing the water bullering and bubbling up ; so a man may know he hath the Spirit, by the springing and flowing out of this water now and then. None have a life unto God, but these that have the Spirit of Christ in them, causing them to walk in his statutes ; for, where the Spirit of life is, he is a Spirit of faith, and a Spirit of love ; a Spirit of faith, leading men to the obedience of faith ; which sets him to duty from the authority of God, and in dependence upon Christ, both as his strength for assistance, and as his righteousness for acceptance, in the performance thereof : a Spirit of love, leading the man to the obedience of love ; and this obedience makes a man serve like a son, and not like a slave ; and makes the service sweet and pleasant ; “ This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not grievous,” 1 John v. 3. This makes the believer’s obedience, while he lives unto God, a mystery to the world, that reckon it a burden to keep the Sabbath, a burden to wait on ordinances, a burden to perform duties : why ? on the other hand, when the believer is mounted up in the chariot of love, indeed it is a burden to him to leave off duty ; it is a burden to him to leave ordinances ; it is a burden to him to think of going back to the world again : Why ? the matter is, he is about the obedience of love, which makes the commands of God not grievous, but delicious. Try your obedience, and living to God, by this principle of it, the Spirit of God as a spirit of faith and love, leading to the obedience of faith and love.

2. If you be living unto God, then the glory of God will be the chief end of your life. But here a question may be propounded, How shall I know if the glory of God be the chief end in my obedience ? Indeed, it is a material question. I will just offer a thought upon it. If the glory of God be the chief end of your life, then you will have a continual conflict with Self, and see how to get self-ends mortified. O ! I see Self creeping in upon me, in all my preaching, praying, communicating ; how shall I get this enemy killed ? Here the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary the one to the other.—The believer finds a war here against Self, as his greatest enemy ;

and it is his joy, and the triumph of his heart, when he gets Self dashed to the ground, and debased; when the loftiness thereof is brought down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in him.—The man that hath God's glory in his chief end, he can sometimes trample even his own happiness under his feet, in a manner, when it comes in competition with the glory of God in Christ: the glory of God is of more worth than ten thousand heavens; and therefore the self-denied believer, before the divine glory should sink, would venture his all, though he had a thousand lives; "Blot me out of thy book," says Moses; "Let me be accursed," says Paul; and all was that God might be glorified, that Christ might be magnified, and have a glorious name in the world. There were some things indeed extraordinary in that measure that Moses and Paul attained to; but there may be something like it, I think, though in a smaller measure, that believers may know in their experience: O! whatever should become of me, let thy name be glorified; let Christ have a numerous train to praise him to eternity; let me decrease, and let him increase; let him be exalted, though I should be for ever abased; and, if it might contribute to his mounting of the throne, let me be even the footstool on which he may ascend.—The man prefers Christ's public interest before his own private interest; "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I do not prefer Jerusalem before my chief joy," Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6. In a word, the man that lives to God as his chief end, he acts in duties, because God is thereby honoured and glorified; and he hates sin in himself and others, because God is thereby dishonoured.

Finally, if you be living to God, your life, your obedience, will be influenced by the grace of the new covenant, being dead to the law, or to the old covenant: but of this I have spoken at large, on the fourth general head.—Thus much for the trial.

The Third Use may be for Lamentation over, together with Reproof of all Legalists, both doctrinal and practical.

1st, As to the doctrinal legalists, we might bewail and refute the legal schemes that take place in the world. I name these two.

1. The Popish scheme, denying the imputation of Christ's righteousness. The imputed righteousness of Christ is blasphemed by the Church of Rome; they call it an affectitious, imaginary air; a putative righteousness; contrary to the very strain of our Apostle

in his epistle. 'They talk of a twofold justification : their first justification is that, whereby an unjustified man becomes justified, or a wicked man becomes godly : where they confound justification and sanctification.—The second is that, whereby a man already righteous becomes more and more righteous, more and more holy. We know no justification but one justification by faith, in the day of closing with Christ ; laying hold on the blood of Christ, " 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. To declare, I say, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 25, 26. It is a complete righteousness, we have it all at once ; and it is not within us, but without us : it is in Christ inherently, but in us imputatively. They tell us that we are not justified by the works of the ceremonial law, but by the works of the moral law ; they tell us that we are not justified by perfect obedience, but by imperfect ; and, by an acceptilation, it is looked on by God as perfect ; and, in a word, they acquaint us that we are justified, not meritoriously, and simply by works done in our own strength, but by works acted and done by the strength and assistance of the Spirit of God.—There is the Popish scheme.

2. The Baxterian scheme is also opposite to this gospel doctrine ; they tell us that God hath made a new law with mankind, and obedience to that new law, and to its commands, is our righteousness : and obedience gives us a title to heaven, and gives us a title to Christ's blood, and to pardon ; and the act of faith is our righteousness, not as it accepts of Christ's righteousness, but as it is an obedience to that new law ; the very act and work of faith is, according to them, the righteousness itself ; and this faith takes in all kind of works, namely, repentance, love, obedience, and ten or twelve duties of that sort ; and all these together are our righteousness for justification. " Really," as one says upon this very head, " if the apostle Paul were alive, he would excommunicate such ministers."

2ndly, As to practical legalists ; this generation is full of these. I know not a more reigning sin among professors : a gospel-strain is almost lost, and a gospel-method is almost forgotten. If we would go back to our reformers, we would see a gospel-spirit among them ; but now the gospel-scheme is come under reproach, as if it were a new scheme ; and some preach against it, write against it, reason

against it, as if it were Antinomianism, and a going off from the law; as the Papists accused the Protestants of old: why, what is the matter? A hellish, unholy, legal spirit reigns in the world. Now, in prosecuting of this Use, and that we may see how much ground there is to lament over, and bewail a legal temper that takes place, I would here, 1. Shew some evidences of a legal spirit in the ungodly and unconverted. 2. Some evidences of a legal temper in believers themselves. 3. Shew the cause of this legal temper that is in the world. 4. Shew the evil and danger of it.

[1.] Some evidences of a legal temper, that is natural to the ungodly who, having no new nature, have no gospel-spirit at all. This may be evidenced in these four degrees of self, and legal pride.

1. While a man is just in the dead sleep of natural security, having no sight, nor sense of his sin, no conviction of, nor contrition for sin; even then, which is strange, he may imagine many times, that he is perfect, that he never breaks all the commandments of God, but keeps the whole law: the young Pharisee in the gospel is an eminent instance thereof; our Lord gives him an account of the commands of the law, and he had the insolent boldness to say to Christ, "All these things have I kept from my youth up;" and Paul, before his conversion, was stuffed with the same legal pride; "I was, touching the law, blameless." What means he by that? Why, it is as if he had said, I was such a staunch Pharisee, and religious zealot, that, as I never thought I broke any of the ten commandments, so I thought I had kept the whole law. Wonderful arrogance and ignorance, to imagine that a man in his fallen state can have a perfection, and keep the whole law! And yet the elect of God, before their conversion, have found that they have been filled with such pride and insolent thoughts, as you see in Paul; yea, and many think little less; though they say they are sinners, yet they see not sin, and fancy they are conformable to the law: they have a good heart, they wrong no body, they are just in their dealings, none can say, black is their eye; and here is their righteousness, being alive to the law.

2. Degree is, when men come to be convinced of sin and rebellion, and of their lost state, by reason of their having trampled the divine authority under foot, offended his Majesty, violated his law, provoked his anger; then, as if Christ were the most needless and useless thing in heaven or earth, they run to their repentance for an atonement, as Papists to their penances, and Pagans to their

sacrifices, to atone their offended deities ; as if there were no Day's-man, no Mediator betwixt God and man, to make atonement ; Christ the Propitiation is altogether slighted ; they hope to make atonement, and pacify God, by repenting seriously, and lamenting bitterly ; and so they fall to work, praying, fasting, mourning, confessing with an absolute neglect of Christ ; and, upon the back of all their legal fears, confessions and bitter lamentations, their awakened consciences are pleased and pacified. The storm that was raised there, is turned to a calm ; a false peace takes place, not founded upon Christ, or his atoning blood, but upon their confessions, tears, prayers, whereby they think to disgorge and vomit up all the sins of their life, and to save themselves from them, and from the wrath that follows them. To this purpose was that saying of Augustine (it looks like a harsh saying, but had a good meaning,) namely, "That repentance damns more than sins do." When people are under any fearful apprehension of the wrath to come upon them for their sins, they flee to their repentance instead of fleeing to Christ, and that effectually destroys and ruins them.

3. Degree is when a man not only repents, but amends ; he not only takes up resolutions of amendment of life, but actually studies obedience, reforms his way ; he is at pains to get his life changed ; but not to get his state changed : he is not taken up to get a new heart, but would have the old heart made a little better ; he thinks a little mends will do the business ; and what is all this, but as one says, like the gilding of a rotten post ; the post is rotten within, but it is finely gilded over without ? It is but like the whitening of a sepulchre, that however white it may be without, yet it is full of dead men's bones within : it is like the painting of a chimney without, that is all black and sooty within ; it is like adorning a dead corpse with sweet flowers.—The man is dead in sins and trespasses, notwithstanding all this.

4. Degree is beyond all this, gospel-light hath shined objectively upon them, and they are more illuminated than to be pleased with this : why ? they hear of Christ, and that there is no salvation, no justification, without him ; and therefore they act faith upon him in a legal way ; they believe in him, not by a saving faith, but a temporary faith. As believers do perform gospel-obedience to the law, so unbelievers may have a legal faith of the gospel, a legal faith upon Christ ; believing in their own strength ; believing before ever he sees his inability to believe ; before ever he sees

his unwillingness to believe, before he be humbled under a sense of his absolute need of Christ; and before he sees what right and warrant he hath from the word. However, he fancies he hath closed with Christ, laid hold on his covenant; and this is the most subtle part of self-righteousness; yet, after all, he is the old man, still wedded to the law; and hence he hath no sanctification; no new nature, no new principle of spiritual life, no living unto God.

[2.] Some evidences of a legal temper that remains in believers themselves.

1. When their comfort is always up and down with their frame: if their frame be up, their comfort is up; if their frame be down, their comfort is down; if their frame be gone, their comfort is gone, their joy is withered; herein the legal spirit discovers itself. Whereas a gospel temper of soul would lead the man to rejoice, even when the changeable frame is gone, that the unchangeable covenant still remains; and to say, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom,—yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Though grace be at a low ebb with me, yet the ocean of grace is in Christ; and herein I rejoice: though I find nothing but deadness in me, yet will I rejoice that there is life in him; though I be empty, yet will I rejoice that there is fulness in him; and this is to be communicate in his time and way.

2. It is a legal temper in the believer, when his assurance is lost by his challenges. It may be, the man attained some sweet measure of assurance, but behold sin prevails, conscience challenges him, and hereupon he razes all; this is an evidence of a legal temper, contrary to that gospel-spirit which we may see acting in David, Psal. lxxv. 3. "Iniquities prevail against me;" it is against my heart, against my will, against my prayers, against my secret groans and wrestlings, against my resolutions, against my inclination they prevail: Shall I raze the foundation of my faith upon this account? No: I flee to the blood of the Lamb of God, for cleansing and purging both from the guilt and power of sin; and therefore I will maintain my assurance and confidence in thee; "As for our transgressions, thou wilt purge them away."

3. It is a legal temper, when faith is marred, either by sins or graces; I mean, either by the prevalence of sin, or the pride of grace. On the one hand, when the exercise of faith is marred by the prevalence of sin; when their known sense and feeling of out-breakings, either make a man stand a-back from Christ, or make

him run away from him, by sinking discouragement or secret despair : this evidences much legality. Are you convinced of sin ? Well then, you have the more need to come to Christ, and believe in him, and the less need to stay away from him. Peter had a prayer once, that looked like a set form of the devil's composing, " Lord, depart from me ; for I am a sinful man." If it had run in a gospel-form, he would rather have said, " Lord, come to me ; for I am a sinful man." Yet many believers have learned Peter's form of prayer ; Lord, I am such a sinful man, I dare not come to thee, nor believe that thou wilt come to me : Why ? the more sinful thou art, the more need thou hast to come to him, and to employ him to come to you, and save you.—On the other hand, when the exercise of faith is marred by the pride of grace, this is a part of a legal temper ; when believers trust more to their graces than to Christ, the fountain of all grace : when they look more to the strength of gracious habits, and trust more to them, than to the grace that is in Christ, in which they are called to be strong ; " Be strong in the grace that is in Christ : " As by pouring of their sin, they are many times led off from depending on Christ, from constant incomes of actual influences. And hence, when a believer is lively, he is ready to think, he will never be dead again ; when he is spiritual, that he will never be carnal again : when he is up in the mount, that he will never be down in the valley again, saying, " By thy favour my mountain stands strong ; " he thinks it like mount Zion, that can never be shaken, and that he will never doubt again : but behold, " Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled : " my good frame was changed to a bad one : of a sudden my mount Zion was turned to a mount Sinai ; all fears, all frowns, all darkness. Never hath a believer more need to act faith, and close dependence on the Lord, than when his graces and frames are most lively, lest self-confidence creep in, and he confides more in created grace, than in the fountain ; out of whose fulness he is to have grace for grace. Let your frame be never so good, your faith never so strong, your grace never so lively, at any time, yet look up still for new influences ; for, without momentary supplies and breathings from heaven, your gracious habits cannot act, and will not hold out a moment.

4. It is a legal temper, when peace is always marred by short-comings ; short-comings in the exercise of grace, short-comings in the mortification of sin, short-comings in holiness ; when they pore upon these short-comings, upon the weakness of grace on the one

hand, and the strength of corruption on the other ; upon such a sin and lusts that prevails, upon such a plague and distemper that affects them ; insomuch that they cannot let in a word of comfort, they cannot hearken to the joyful sound of the gospel ; like Israel, who harkened not to Moses, because of the anguish of their spirit : they look inward to themselves, and finding nothing there but failings, and infirmities, and plagues, instead of holiness, their peace is wholly demolished ; because they do not, at the same time, look upward to Christ, to his blood and righteousness, and to his fulness ; here is a legal temper.—So also, to the same purpose, when a man's peace and comfort rests only and always upon his sanctification, as if there were no other ground of joy, but a righteousness inherent : surely, when the joy of sanctification is greater than the joy of justification, it is an evidence of a legal temper ; for the joy of justification is founded upon a law-bidding righteousness, the perfect obedience of the glorious Head, which is always the same unchangeable ground of joy to believers ; whereas his sanctification is imperfect here, and cannot afford such peace and joy, as faith in a perfect obedience will give. The true circumcision rejoice in Christ, and in what they have in him, more than in what they have from him. But behold, even the believer is ready to be taken up with his sanctification, which is inherent, and so to be lifted up, when he attains to a good gale, a great measure of sanctification ; corruption may abuse the privilege, and then he is proud and lifted up. It is true, communion with God, is of a humbling nature, and natively makes a man humble, and lively, and watchful ; but when the good frame is wearing off, and corruption beginning to work again, if this nick of time be not noticed, and the believer on his guard, a proud thought may enter in, were it even upon a Paul wrapt up to the third heavens ; “ Lest I should be exalted above measure, a messenger of Satan was sent ; a thorn in the flesh. O how does a legal temper run through every frame ! When a man is dead and dull, then he is in danger of murmuring ; and when he is active and lively, then he is in danger of swelling.

5. It is a legal temper, when a man's expectation of success, is built upon the minister that preaches : if the minister hath a weak gift, O they will not hear that man, at least they expect little good of him : if another hath great gifts, and a taking way, O now they expect heaven will come down : Why ? this is an evidence of a legal temper : for a gospel temper will expect nothing, but in

a gospel way; even by the powerful influences of the Spirit promised in the gospel. The gospel in any man's mouth is but a dead letter, without the Holy Ghost.

6. It is a legal temper, when the believer is under excessive discouragements, on whatever ground: it is an evidence he is too much under the law; for the law can give no encouragement, no settlement to the conscience; it is only Christ can give rest; "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What is it that discourages a believer, when he is under this legal temper? Sometimes he is discouraged when he performs duty, and cannot find that presence, that sensible help he would have: why, then, he is quite dispirited.—Indeed he hath ground of mourning, when the Lord is away; he should be deeply humbled, for the causes of it: but when he is so dispirited, that he loses his confidence, and is beaten quite away from his faith and hope, questions his state, and gives way to slavish fear, that weakens his hands in duties, and draws his heart from duty, it is a token he is secretly hankering after the law; for the language of the heart of him is, O if I could pray with as much life, and hear with as much attention, and perform duty with as much vigour as I would be at! O then I would have a good hope; and so it is not Christ, so much as the law, the old husband, that you desire to place your hope upon, while you are under that legal frame: the Apostle speaks of some believers that desire to be under the law, Gal. iv. 21. Sometimes their discouragements arise from this, that they dare not apply the promises; and why so? because they think they are not for the like of them; such a promise belongs to such and such a good person; it is for a holy man, but not for the like of me: what is this but a legal temper, apprehending, that if you had such and such a legal righteousness, then God would be some way indebted to give you the promise! But, O is not grace to be glorified in this new and gospel way! And therefore, the more of a gospel spirit you have, the more cheerfully will you embrace the promise, for this end, that having these promises, you may cleanse yourself, by sucking virtue from the breasts of the promise.

7. It is an evidence of a legal temper, when they are always straitened in duty. Sometimes they are discouraged, because they are so straitened in duty; and they are straitened in duty because they are so legal in it. Their discouragement flows from their

straitening, and their straitening flows from their legal spirit ; for a gospel spirit is a spirit of liberty. 1. When a believer is for ordinary straitened without life, without liberty, it is an evidence of a legal spirit ; for, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes the man free from the law of sin and death," Rom. viii. 2. When one is influenced by the covenant of grace, he runs in the way of God's commandments. Though you have once known what it was to run sweetly in the Lord's way, yet if now you find a habitual indisposition to duties and religious exercises to be a heavy yoke, a grievous burden, this indisposition testifies against you, that though you have once known the gospel of Christ, yet now you are hankering after the law. The Lord may indeed withdraw his presence from his people, for necessary ends, even from the man that hath much of the gospel-spirit ; and such a man, amidst all his trials of that sort, will triumph in Christ, and say, "Though I have little in hand, yet I have much in hope ; whatever my own wants be, I have enough in Christ ; however weak in myself, I am strong in him ; imperfect in myself, but complete in him. But when, for ordinary, the person does not find pleasure in duty, hath little heart to it, and finds it not easy and light, but grievous, it is a token, that he is bearing the yoke of the law, or old covenant : For Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light ; but this law yoke is heavy. The law, the first husband, requires hard, and heavy things, and does not help the sinner with strength ; but Christ, the new husband, requires the same things, but he gives strength to perform ; and what he requires of us, he works in us ; "I can do all things, through Christ strengthening me : " were it to over-leap a wall, and fight armies of devils in my way.

It is a sign of a legal temper when a poor creature finds always discouragement, except when about religious duties ; and finds no peace when about any other work, but is still racked, except when upon his knees, or going about some religious performance or other ; it is a token of being knit and wedded too much to the first husband, for the law drives hard and craves hard, but Christ is very tender and gentle in his commands and demands ; and a person under the influences of grace will find as much sweetness, even when eating and drinking, and when he is about his lawful employment sometimes, as when about religious exercises. Mistake me not here ; think not that Christ will indulge his people in the omis-

sion of duty, that is not what I intend, God forbid ; I know, and am persuaded that the sweetest hours the believer hath is when he enjoys communion with God in the ordinances and duties of his appointment : but yet, they that have much of a gospel-spirit can, with peace and freedom of mind, go about other things as the work of Christ ; though it be a piece of self-denial to them not to be always with him, they would notwithstanding incline to be every minute with him, and are longing for uninterrupted communion and fellowship with him ; yet the thing I say is, that their hearts are not disheartened, nor their spirit dispirited, when called to other things ; and it savours much of a legal spirit when the poor exercised creatures can find no peace about their other lawful duties, unless they be still about duties that are properly religious duties, such as prayer, and reading, and hearing, and the like ; for, in some sense, other duties, such as ploughing, and sowing, and the like, may be turned to religious duties, by a spiritual-minded man, and such as have a gospel-spirit, while they carry a heavenly mind to their earthly work.

9. It is a sign of too much of a legal temper, when a man is not satisfied with the measure of grace that the Lord allows him, but frets against heaven because he hath not so much as others. Let none mistake me here either : no man ought, in any different way, to be content with any measure of grace ; we are still to be going on to perfection, but, when we grudge and repine, and are pained at the heart, and murmur against God, because we have not this and that measure as others have, it is a symptom of hankering after the law. A gospel-spirit does not strive with God, but meekly waits upon the Sovereign, who will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and dispenses freely of his gifts and graces as he pleaseth.

10. It is a sign of a legal temper when a person is more taken up with the gifts of Christ than with Christ himself ; more taken up with any little thing they get from him than with himself. When they get any sensible grace, and sensible good affections, melting of heart, and melting of spirit ; any inclination to what is good, any gifts or graces, whether more common or special, they admire these, and are not so much taken up with Christ himself. But the person that is evangelical in his actings, by what he gets, he is led to the giver ; if this be sweet, O ! he is infinitely sweeter that sent it : I embrace the token, and it draws out my heart the more after him, from whom it came.

11. It is a sign of being too much under the influence of the law, when the believer is possessed with a fretful spirit, and is not content with anything, for the gospel sweetens a man's frame of spirit. If the believer go to the law, he is constantly pained and wounded, and a diseased person is always a repining person, and this fretfulness is a sign that they are not sound at the bottom; but the gospel is health to the heart, and medicine to all the flesh. A gospel-spirit is a spirit of faith, a spirit of love, a spirit of power, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. And hence, take a believer, when he is much under the influence of the grace of the gospel, ten thousand little difficulties that sometimes fret him and put him out of humour will not move him then when he is living near Christ, and under the influence of the covenant of grace; but when, at other times, every thing frets him, it is a sign that the law hath the ascendant, for "The law works wrath," Rom. iv. 15.

12. It is a sign of a legal spirit when, upon the back of religious duties, the man hath more freedom to sin; "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace." The law irritates corruption, raises the devil, but cannot lay him; but the grace of God in Christ teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. This grace only keeps down the devil, and lays him low, as it were; yea, bruises the serpent's head, and destroys the works of the devil. When a man performs duty in a legal way, to quiet his conscience, why, then, when conscience is quieted with the duty, lust gets a vent like the whore of which we read, Prov. vii. 4, "I have offered my peace-offerings, this day have I paid my vows: come, let us take our fill of love." But, when a man performs duty in a gospel-way, not merely to satisfy conscience, or pacify the judge, but to glorify God, to honour Christ, which is the great gospel end of performing duty; then this glory of God in Christ, that he hath in view, prompts him to desire, by the means of duty, to get the better of God's enemies in the heart; and, when he gets the victory, he desires to pursue his enemies, even to the death.

Now, my dear friends, if there be any believer here, I am sure some of these evidences, if not all, may find you out, to have too much of a legal temper about you. O, believers, you who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before you, will you consider what danger you are in from Christ's rival, the law, as a covenant, your first husband, and how much your following after that doth

undo you? You, it may be, think you are in hazard from carnal friends, or from the world; but you cannot understand how you can be in hazard from the law: but you may be in the greatest hazard from that which you are least afraid of. Paul tells the believers here, and elsewhere, to whom he writes, what hazard they were in, even from those that pretended to preach the gospel, who were but ministers of the old covenant, who pressed, and knew nothing but to press the people to yield obedience and subjection to their old husband, the law; pretending to the greatest holiness and strictness of life; and pressing nothing but Do, do, and live. Nay, but says Paul, I, and all believers, have another way of living to God, and his glory, than by living on, or by the law, as a covenant; "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." O, believer, arm yourself against all proxies that the law makes use of; study the nature, fulness, and freedom of the new covenant; and pray much for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and his gospel. I go on to

[3.] The Third thing here proposed, which was to shew the causes of this legal temper. Why is the world set upon the law, as a covenant, and so little upon Christ, as the Lord their righteousness? I sum up all the reasons into this one, which I shall draw out into some particulars: and it is gross ignorance, proud ignorance; "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. The world is ignorant of God, ignorant of the law, ignorant of the gospel, ignorant of Christ, and his righteousness.

1. Ignorance of God is one cause of this legal temper. People are ignorant of the perfections of God; more particularly, they are ignorant of the holiness of God: if men saw what an infinite holy God he is, and what an infinite hatred he bears towards the least sin, or violation of his law; if they knew that a proud thought were enough to damn a million of angels, and that a wandering thought is enough to damn a million of worlds, would they entertain a fancy of being justified and accepted upon the ground of any legal righteousness of their own, whether natural or gracious? Nay, they would not imagine to be thus accepted, if they did not think that God is such an one as themselves.—They are ignorant also of the justice of God, and the righteousness of that Judge, who will by no means clear the guilty; and if it were not so, that they were ignor-

ant of his justice, would any guilty sinner hope to be cleared, and acquitted any other way, than upon the account of a ransom of infinite value? They are ignorant of the wisdom of God, in the glorious plan of redemption, and contrivance of salvation, by the righteousness of another, even of the God-man Christ Jesus.—Ignorance of these, and the like attributes and perfections of God, is the great cause of their being joined to the law, and alive to it.

2. Ignorance of the law is another cause of this legal temper and disposition; and here,

(1.) They are ignorant of the precept of the law in the extent, spirituality, holiness and perfection thereof: the young man in the gospel thought himself perfect; Why? he did not know the law. Paul thought himself blameless, when he was alive to the law; men think it a narrow rule, condemning only some gross enormities of life, and commanding only some outward materials of obedience; but they see not the commandment to be exceeding broad; hence they imagine, they can observe it perfectly well.

(2.) They are ignorant of the penalty of the law, the sanction of it: they do not believe, that there is a curse entailed upon every disobedience; “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” Hence, they are foolishly fond of their own legal righteousness, not knowing the severity of the legal sanction.

(3.) They are ignorant of the end of the law, even of God’s end and design in giving it. God gave the law to Israel with fire and thunder; For what end? Even to be a school-master to lead them to Christ, Gal. iii. 24. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth,” Rom. x. 4. But behold so ignorant was Israel of the end of the law, that, like the legal spirit in our own day, they thought it was given for this end, that they might obey it as a condition of life, as it bore the image and representation of a covenant of works; so they turned it directly to a covenant of works, saying, “All that the Lord hath commanded, we will do,” Exod. xix. 8. If it had been possible or practicable, for them to have performed what they ignorantly promised, there would have been no need of Christ, or his righteousness either; “We will do,” say they; there is obedience: yea, “We will do ALL that the LORD JEHOVAH hath commanded us:” there is exactly and perpetually perfect obedience; yea, WE will do all; WE ourselves; there is perfect personal obedience resolved upon: as if they

had in their possession, all the power and holiness that Adam had in innocence.—What says Joshua to them, upon such a proud, ignorant and arrogant resolution as this? Indeed, he tells them, it was simply impossible for them; “Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God,” Joshua xxiv. 19. He is a holy God, and you are a sinful people; it is impossible for you to do what you say. The law was given them, to let them see their utter insufficiency and inability; to let them see their sins, and desert because of sin; that, under the fear of divine wrath, they might be obliged to have recourse to the Saviour. But they being ignorant of this great end of the law, set up an obedience of their own.

3. Ignorance of the gospel, is another cause of its legal temper; and here ignorance discovers itself in manifold instances.

(1.) They are ignorant of the promise of the gospel; such as that, Isa. xlv. 24. “Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” Here is a sum of the gospel-promise; a promise of Christ, and of faith in him: “Surely shall one say;” here is a promise of faith, and faith working out from the heart to the mouth; for, “With the heart men believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” ONE shall say; What! no more but ONE? what a pity is it, that only one should say so? Indeed it intimates, that very few shall be brought off from their legal temper: ONE shall say; not every one; well but what will he say? “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength:” Righteousness, for justification; strength for sanctification: righteousness, to make me happy; strength to make me holy; righteousness, to give me a title to heaven; strength, to give me a meetness for heaven. I have all this, shall one say, by the appropriating act of faith; applying all to himself in particular, with assured confidence, according to the measure of faith: I have righteousness and strength: where hath he it? It is in the Lord I have it: I have it not in myself, nor in my own natural power; I have it not in my own free-will; I have it not in my walk and conversation; I have it not in my zeal or profession; I have it not in my religious duties or performances; I have it not in my heart or life: nay, certainly I have it not there; but, “Surely in the LORD have I righteousness and strength;” in the LORD only: men are ignorant of this.

(2) They are ignorant of the method of the gospel, in the application of grace promised, particularly in the command of believ-

ing, which belongs to the dispensation of the gospel; wherein the law, in its commands and threatenings both, is used in a subserviency to advance the ends of the gospel. Though the law doth not teach us to believe in Christ, yet he being revealed, it obliges us to believe in him; though the law reveals not a Saviour, yet the gospel revealing him, the law obliges us to come to him.—But now this method of the gospel, and dispensation thereof, is not known in the world; hence come legal undertakings of it; men confounding the command of believing, with the gospel to be believed: the duty of faith, with the object of faith; and so turn the gospel to a new law, a new covenant of works; as if the act of believing were our righteousness for acceptance with God. Neither can they conceive the command of believing to be the great command, though God himself hath said, “This is his commandment, that ye believe in the name of his Son:” Nay, leaglists cannot understand that; they think it is God’s great command, that seeing they have sinned by breaking the law, they should repent by turning to it; seeing they have displeased God by their sins, they should please him by their repentance; seeing they have provoked him by their disobedience, they should pacify him with their obedience; seeing they have drawn down the curse by their transgressions, they should remove it by their reformation; They do not know that the great command is, To believe on the Son of God.

(3.) They are ignorant of the great end of the gospel, which is, to humble and abase the creature to the lowest, and to raise and exalt grace to the highest: that no flesh shall glory in God’s presence, but that he that glorieth, shall glory in the Lord; “In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” That is the great end and design of the gospel: but the legal spirit is ignorant of that design.

(4.) They are ignorant of the gospel-covenant; the doctrinal and practical confounding of the two covenants of works and grace, is the great reason of this legal temper. And here people discover ignorance of the condition of the covenant; they are ignorant of the condition of the covenant of grace and works; the condition of the covenant of works, was personal obedience; the MAN himself that does these things shall live in them: and perfect obedience was required: a perfection of parts, a perfection of degrees, a perfection of duration. The condition of the covenant of grace is Christ’s perfect obedience received by faith. There is much ignorance of this,

at the root of all the legality that takes place in the world. They are ignorant of the form of the covenant: how by the covenant of works we get strength within ourselves, and by ourselves we could obey it; how, by the covenant of grace, our strength is without us, as well as our righteousness; "In the Lord have I strength;" and we are to be strong in the Lord, not in ourselves, but in the Lord, and in the power of his might; to be strong in grace, not that grace that is in ourselves, but the grace that is in CHRIST JESUS.

4. Ignorance of Christ and his righteousness is a great cause of men's establishing a legal righteousness: "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3.—God was about to cast off a whole church, to reject them, and unchurch them: why? what is the reason? because they were such a proud pack, they would rather be damned with their own righteousness than saved by Christ's righteousness or obliged and beholden to him for it. They would not submit to it: why? because they are ignorant of it; they do not see the glory of it, as it is the righteousness of God; they do not see the necessity of it, because their own righteousness was reckoned sufficient; they do not see the fulness of it, as answering all the demands and commands of the law; they do not see the value of it, as sufficient to procure the favour of God, and purchase grace and glory; they do not see the acceptableness of it, as being the only righteousness with which God is well-pleased, and that thereby the law is magnified, and made honourable: they are ignorant of all this, and therefore they go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and will not submit to this. Their ignorance was a proud ignorance, and so it is with all by nature; we are filled with proud ignorance and ignorant pride, though our power be gone, our pride remains.

[4.] The Fourth thing here proposed was, The evil and danger of a legal temper, and legal obedience: why?

1. This legal way is a very unpleasant work, it is a wearisome work; "What a weariness is it," says the man. "He is wearied in the greatness of his way, and yet he says not, there is no hope," Isaiah lvii. 10.—It is true, the law hath sometimes its influences of comfort to its votaries, and stony ground hearers may receive the word with joy; and, no doubt, they may pray, and do other duties also with joy, but it is only a mood that soon evanishes, having no root in Christ. Can a dead man have pleasure in vital actions?

Can a heavy stone incline upwards? O, but the legal soul is a miserable creature! The law drags him to duties, conscience presses him to work, saying, Fast, pray; pray, man; work for your life, repent, reform, as you would not be damned: but, behold, he cannot, though they be good duties he is called to; and the legal covenant, the legal minister, the legal conscience of him cries, Make brick, make brick, make brick: but, behold, he hath no straw, no straw, no straw, nothing to make it of. He hath no strength, no grace, no communication; and so he tugs, he works, he sweats, but it is a heartless and unpleasant work.

2. Legal obedience is very unprofitable work, as well as unpleasant; "I will declare thy righteousness and thy work, for they shall not profit thee," Isaiah lvii. 12. The self-righteous Pharisee may fast twice a-week, give alms of all that he hath; he may make long prayers, many prayers; he may both preach and pray frequently and fervently; yea, the poor legalist may work at his secret devotion and family devotion; he may wait on ordinances, and frequent communions, and run the whole round of duties; and, when he hath done this thirty, forty, fifty years, all the profit is, he gets hell for his pains; "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices?" Isa. i. 2. All is unprofitable.

3. The legal obedience is very carnal, for it is a life wholly destitute of the Spirit: "This would I learn of you," says Paul, "if you would be doctors of the law, let me have a lesson from you, if you can give it; received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Gal. iii. 2. Was it by the works of the law? I suppose not: nay, the Spirit is not received in that way: it is in and by the gospel of Christ. The legalist is destitute of the Spirit; whatever affectionate holiness he may have, or real holiness he may pretend to, he wants a sanctifying work, sealing work: "Sensual, nor having the Spirit."

4. Legal obedience crosses the most glorious designs of heaven, particularly God's design in giving Christ, and Christ's design in coming to the world.

(1.) It crosses God's great design. What is that? It is even the exalting of his free grace: what is the great design of all the great works of God, viz., election, redemption, regeneration, providence?—Why does he choose one, and reject others? Why does he choose a wicked publican, and cast a righteous Pharisee to hell? Why does he redeem a poor, ignorant, ill-natured man or woman

from their miserable state, and let the rich and learned go to hell? Why does he regenerate an elect soul after he hath been twenty, thirty years in the devil's service? And, after they are regenerate, why does he, in providence, let them fall into straits, wants, sins, manifold temptations, troubles, affliction, desertion, and heavy complaints on these accounts? Why? All is to exalt free grace in the issue. But now the legalist crosses this design of God; he would have self exalted, his works exalted, instead of Christ, and free grace. He puts another righteousness in the room of the righteousness of Christ, and so takes the dung of his own righteousness, as Paul calls it, and casts it upon the face of free, rich, and sovereign grace, to cover, and hide, and darken it.—O, what a devilish design is this, in opposition to God's glorious design of making grace shine brightly!

(2.) It crosses Christ's great design in coming to the world: the grand intention of the Son of God, in coming from heaven, was "To bring in an everlasting righteousness," Dan. ix. 24. But, behold, the legalist's design in establishing his own righteousness, is to make all Christ's labour to be lost labour; he endeavours to frustrate the very end of Christ's death, and makes it vain; "If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii. 21. Instead of Christ's everlasting righteousness, he sets up a righteousness that cannot last half a day, nor half an hour; nay, not a moment.

5. Legal obedience hath the evil of blasphemy in it. It reproaches the righteousness of Christ, as if it were not sufficient, as if his atonement were not perfect, as if his satisfaction were not full, as if his obedience were not perfect, unless it be patched up with the rags of the man's own righteousness. Is not Christ's righteousness perfect without their addition? O, do not blaspheme the Son of God, and say in effect, his obedience was not a divine, perfect obedience, for thus you reproach his fulness and sufficiency.

6. Legal obedience issues in a terrible disappointment; the poor deluded man thinks, his prayers and duties, that he hath been performing for so many years, will make an excellent robe to cover him; I hope, says the man, I have something that will contribute to make me die in peace; I have something to make me stand in judgment, that others have not; for many a duty have I performed, many a prayer have I made, these twenty or thirty years; and many times have I prayed with very much warmth of affection,

and liveliness of frame, and therefore I have a good hope, that God will be pleased, and all will be well with me. But, O what a fearful disappointment does the man meet with ! Death comes ; and if he die in the same legal dream, he goes down to the grave with a lie in his right hand ; “The hypocrite’s hope is like the spider’s web ;” Why ! what comes of it ? The spider works it out of her own bowels : it is her house, it is her food, it is her fence ; there she dwells, there she feeds, there she secures and shelters herself for a while ; but at the close of the day, or the end of the week, the besom comes along, and sweeps her and her lodging, and all to the ground. Even so, the legalist, he works a web out of his own bowels, he wraps himself in this garment of his own spinning ; here he dwells, here he works, here he feeds, here he shelters himself from all challenges, and apprehensions of danger ; but behold the besom of death and destruction comes, and sweeps him, and his refuge of lies down to the bottomless pit. If his eyes be open on a death-bed to see hell, to see the justice of God, to see the spirituality of the law, the imperfection of his duties, the emptiness of his performances, and the sandy foundation he hath been building his faith upon, then his conscience roars, his heart despairs : he hath no peace, no comfort ; but finds himself miserably disappointed. If his eyes be not open : what then ? why, he dies in a delusion, as he lived, sinks into the lake of fire ; and in hell he opens his eyes, and finds himself eternally disappointed.—O see then, what ground there is to lament over this legal temper, which is indeed a damnable temper, where it hath a full reign.

Use Fourth, viz.—Of Exhortation, both to them that are alive to the law, and to them that are dead to the law, of whom the text especially speaks.

1st, To unbelievers, and all these that are alive to the law. O ! for the Lord’s sake, take no rest till you get out of that damnable state ! O consider what you are doing, so long as you are not dead to the law ; the best thing that you are doing, in that case is, that you are building your residence about the old rotten walls of the covenant of works. Perhaps you think you are a good Protestant, you are a good Christian, you have a good heart, you perform good duties, you have partaken of good ordinances, and what evil should you fear ?

1. I assure you, that you are under the curse of the law of works ; “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that

are written in the book of the law, to do them." And while you are under the law, and seeking to establish a law righteousness of your own, all the people of God are obliged to say, that God is in the right to curse you; they are obliged to say Amen, to all the curses of the Bible against you; Cursed is he that confirmeth not all the words of this law; and all the people shall say, AMEN," Deut. xxvii, 26. If you will take the old covenant of doing for life, and justification, then you must take it with a vengeance, unless you do perfectly, and do to purpose, which is impossible for you: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them:" And all believers can say AMEN to it, in the words of Paul; "Let him that loves not our Lord Jesus Christ, be ANATHEMA MÀRANATHA." [*i.e.* accursed until the Lord come,] 1 Cor. xvi. 22. While you are under the law, no blessing belongs to you, but all divine curses; if you will not get out of your legal righteousness, and get under the gospel covert of the blood of Jesus, nothing but terror belongs to you; and nothing but terrors and curses can I preach to you: for, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse."

2. I must tell you, as you are under the curse of the law, so you are under the command of the law; Do and Live. Though by the gospel-call, you are not obliged indeed to seek righteousness in yourself, in order to life, but to seek it in Christ; yet by your unbelief, you keep yourself under the command of the law; "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandment;" keep it perfectly, or else vengeance shall overtake you. It is not your little endeavours that will satisfy the law; though you should read, fast, mourn, and shed tears of blood all your days, it will not avail, or be to any purpose, in satisfying the law's demands: if you will pay any duty to the law, as a covenant, you are a debtor to fulfil the WHOLE law, Gal. v. 3. The law is a chain that is linked together, and if you take one link off it, the weight of the whole chain will be upon you; and so, if you will do anything in obedience to the law, that you may be thereby saved and justified, you are under bondage to the whole law; and bound to do every thing perfectly, that you may be justified. O the miserable bondage that you are under! You will never be able to satisfy the law; and so you are condemned already; yea, let me tell you more, you are a wicked, ungodly creature; whatever you seem to be to others, or think you

are yourself; yet, being alive to the law, you are a stranger to the life of God; for, till you be dead to the law, you shall never live unto God: though you look like an angel of light for holiness, yet, being alive to the law, you have no true holiness nor godliness. Ye that are still leaning to your works, then you will meet with a sad disappointment; for, "By the deeds of the law, no flesh living can be justified."—But there are others, who seem to be upon another extreme; they say, the law is now abrogated, and we are not to seek justification or salvation that way; and therefore we are careless about the law, or about any duty of obedience.—Yea, but let me tell you your doom out of the law also; you are a desperate sinner: because you cannot satisfy the curse of the law, therefore you run away from the commands of the law, and run away to the devil, instead of running to Christ. But I will tell you, though the law cannot justify, or save you, yet it can condemn you: it hath power to condemn you, though it hath none to save you; and it will condemn, and does condemn you, and all that are out of Christ; and therefore, for every sin that you are guilty of, you must answer; and every sin is enough to damn you, by virtue of the law. O then, may this be a mean to move you all that are under the law, to seek in to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth! Come, poor, cursed, condemned, ungodly sinner, if you would live unto God here, and live with him hereafter, come out from under the heavy yoke of the law: Christ hath a good and perfect law-biding righteousness to give you; though you have nothing to bring to him, but sin, and guilt, and misery, and hell about you, yet come to him; and if you cannot come, O go to him, and tell him that you cannot come; and plead, that, by his omnipotent power, he may draw you; and if you do so in truth, it is one to a thousand, if he does not meet you half-way. O man, you cannot be saved, to the credit of God's holiness, unless you join with Christ's righteousness, which answers also the threatening of the law, and satisfies the justice of God. In this way, mercy can take vent, to the credit and honour of all God's perfections. O man, woman, are you for this way of it? O then say, Farewell to the law of works for ever; here is a more noble and glorious way. O blessed be God for ever, if that be the bargain betwixt Christ's righteousness and your soul! O may the Lord draw you to it! But now,

2dly. To you that are believers, and have closed with Christ,

and so are dead to the law : Remember, you are not to live a lawless life for all that. My exhortation to you is, that, being dead to the law, you live unto God. Let me offer some motives and directions, and the rather that I have taken some pains to gather together and lay before you many things relative to a legal temper, for guarding you against the Neonomian extreme, on the one hand, let men beware lest your carnal hearts abuse this doctrine of grace to Antinomian licentiousness, on the other hand. Sure I am, the gospel-doctrine of itself hath no such tendency : though an ignorant world may suspect the doctrine of the gospel, the doctrine of Christ's righteousness, as if it were against a personal righteousness, or holiness ; I declare to you, in the name of JEHOVAH, that the contrary is true ; and assure you, that you will never live according to the law, as a rule of holiness, till you be dead to the law, as a covenant and condition of life : " He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." If the light of the glorious gospel, even the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, did once shine into your hearts, then, beholding this glory of the Lord, you would be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord ; yea, to believe the gospel savingly, is the way to fulfil perfectly. The true believer may be said to fulfil the law, both as it is a covenant, and as it is a rule : As it is a covenant, he fulfils it perfectly and legally in his Head and Surety, in whom he hath perfect, everlasting righteousness : And as it is a rule, he fulfils it perfectly also, with a perfection of parts here, and a perfection of degrees hereafter : and in both these respects may that word be explained, Rom. i. 3, 4, where the righteousness of the law is said to be fulfilled in believers, whose character is, That they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Now, I would press you to this spiritual walk, this holy life, which is a living unto God ; for, though your holiness be not necessary for your justification, that is the damnable doctrine of Popery ; though, I say, it be not necessary for your justification, because you are dead to the law, in point of justification ; yet it is necessary, because you are dead to the law, for this very end, that you may live unto God, in point of sanctification, and that you may be holy.

More particularly for motives, consider the necessity of holiness, in these following particulars.

1. It is necessary in respect of God ; and here (to use the method of a great divine on this head) consider how the will of God,

the love of God, the glory of God, obliges you in particular, believer, to live unto God.

(1.) The sovereign will of God obliges you to holiness ; “ This is the will of God, even your sanctification,” 1 Thes. iv. 3. It is the will of God the Father, he hath ordained it : “ We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before ordained that we should walk therein.”—It is the will of God the Son ; “ I have ordained you that you should bring forth fruit, and that it should remain,” John xv. 16. It is the will of God the Holy Ghost, whom we grieve by our sins, if we do not study holiness.

(2.) The love of God obliges you to holiness ; yea, this is the end of the electing love of the Father, the purchasing love of the Son, and the operating love of the Holy Ghost. It is the peculiar end of the electing love of the Father, who hath chosen us, that we should be holy, and unblameable before him in love, Eph. i. 4. “ He hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit.”—It is the peculiar end of the purchasing love of the Son, “ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Titus ii. 14. And who loved his church, and gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water, and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish,” Eph. v. 25, 26, 27.—It is also the peculiar end of the operating love of the Holy Ghost ; his whole work in us, and for us, consisting in preparing us for, and enabling us to the duties of holiness, and bringing forth the fruit thereof in us.—Believer, if you have any regard to the sovereignty of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; any regard to the love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it obliges you to holiness of heart and life.

(3.) The glory of God obliges you to holiness, and makes it necessary. Would you glorify the Father ? Then, “ Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify God. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”—Would you glorify the Son ? “ It is the will of God, that all men honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” And how is this done ? Even by believing in him, and obeying him : “ Ye are my friends [ye evidence yourselves to be so], if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Would you glorify the Holy Ghost ?

It is by studying holiness ; for we are his temple ; and holiness becomes his house and temple for ever ; and he is dishonoured, when his temple is defiled. Surely, believer, when I speak to you, I cannot be supposed to speak to one, that neither regards the sovereign will, love, nor glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; though your holiness should all be lost, and never regarded, which is impossible ; yet here is reason enough for it.

2. Holiness is necessary in respect of yourselves ; you are necessarily obliged to holiness ; your own honour and peace is concerned here : It is gainful ; “ Godliness is great gain, having the promise of this life, and that which is to come.” It is pleasant ; for, “ Wisdom’s ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked ; but the fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.” Yea, it is honourable, and the greatest honour you can be advanced unto ; to be holy, is to be like unto God.

3. Holiness is necessary in respect of others ; you are obliged to holiness : it may tend to the conviction and conversion of others. On the one hand, it may tend to their conviction, and to stop their mouths, who are enemies of God, and that both here and hereafter.

(1.) It may stop their mouths here in a present world, as you see, 1 Pet. ii. 15. “ This is the will of God, that with well-doing, you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” Ignorant fools may call you hypocrites ; they may call you Antinomians, and enemies to the law : now, by well-doing, you give them an unanswerable document, that though you be dead to the law, as a covenant, yet you put honour upon the law, as a rule of holiness : and so make them ashamed of their base calumny, according to that, 2 Pet. iii. 16, “ Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.” And, (2.) Holiness in you, believer, may tend to stop the mouths of God’s enemies hereafter, in the day of judgment : it is said, “ The saints shall judge the world,” not only as they will be assessors with the Son of God, and applaud him in all his judicial proceedings : but in regard their holiness and good works will tend to the confusion and conviction of the wicked. And indeed the good works of the saints will meet them one day, with a changed countenance, that they shall scarce know them ; they see them now to be all black, defiled, and deformed ; but they will then be brought forth beautiful and glorious,

to the shame of the wicked, Mat. xxv. 34-40. On the other hand, your holiness may tend to the conversion of others; "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation," 1 Pet. ii. 12. The holiness of professors hath sometimes tended to the conversion of the profane, who, when the day of their gracious visitation hath come, have glorified God on that account, 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2; and therefore, says Paul, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will, that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works: for these things are good and profitable unto men," Tit. iii. 18.

4. Holiness is necessary, in respect of your state; you stand obliged to holiness. Are you in a justified state, accepted into friendship with a holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Should you not evidence your justification by your sanctification? Is it not necessary that you should be holy, if you dwell in the presence, walk in the sight, and lie in the bosom of such a holy God? Are you in a sanctified state? Wherefore was you regenerate? Wherefore got you a new heart, and a new nature, and a holy principle of grace, but that you should be holy?—Are you in an adopted state? Why so? but that you should live like the children of God, and be followers of God, as dear children? O! was you not justified, adopted, and sanctified for this end, that you might live unto God? If we be believers, what a shame is it for us, to live unsuitably to our state, as many times we do? Is that all the thanks we give to God for his favours, that we should trample his statutes under our feet, dishonour his name, break his laws, and grieve his Spirit? It does not become you; it is not like you, believer: he hath loved you with an everlasting love, and drawn you with loving kindness: will you act like a devil, in enmity against him, because he acted like a God of love towards you? O fie for shame, believer! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph," 2 Sam. i. 20. Have we not the hope of glory? And shall we not, having this hope, purify ourselves even as he is pure?—Are we partakers of the precious promises? Then, "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord."—Are we heirs of glory? And

shall we not seek to have our right and title unto glory cleared? Rev. xxii. 14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates to the city:" That is, either that your right may be made evident, according to that word, "Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you:" That is, you thus evidence yourselves to be my friends; or concerning this right, know that there is a right of merit, and a right of meetness, both necessary: a right of merit, believer, you have not in yourself, but in Christ; and that is established in justification, through the righteousness of Christ: a right of meetness you must have in yourself from Christ, and that is in sanctification and holiness.—What shall I say? Are you not dead to the law, that you may live unto God? Are you not to testify your gratitude towards him that hath provided another law-righteousness than your own? Are you not to difference yourself from the world, that are walking in the broad way to hell and damnation, and under the curse of the law, and the wrath of God?—Are you not delivered from the wrath to come, and of all men in the world under the greatest obligations to be holy? Should you not study to please that God that hath pitied you? Hath he washed you in his blood? And ought you not, through his grace to study to let it be known to the world, that his blood hath a virtue to sanctify you?—Yea, hath he not promised, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace?" Should ye not study through his grace, to let it be seen, that his promise is verified in you?

5. Holiness is necessary in respect of the danger you are in, if you do not study holiness. If you be a child of God, you are indeed freed from the curse of the covenant of works, that penalty can never reach you; but, is it nothing to you, that your heavenly Father should chastise you, hide his face from you, deny an answer to your prayers, hide your evidences of heaven from you, give you up to the tyranny of your lusts, and then take vengeance on your inventions.

6. Holiness is necessary in respect of the advantage herein. You are obliged to holiness; why? in this way you may come to live joyfully, and die comfortably: in this way your integrity may be supported, as it was with Job; in this way you may come to have sweet communion with God, according to Christ's promise, John xiv. 21, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them,

he it is that loves me ;—and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” In this way you shall be fitted for serving him in your generation, 2 Tim. ii. 19. In this way you will have an evidence of your justification, 1 John iii. 9. In this way you shall bring down the blessing of God on every work of your hand, all that ye shall do shall prosper, Psal. i. 4. Yea, in this way you shall become a public good, a common good, a blessing, and a benefit to all about you, both in communicating good to them with whom you converse, and in diverting judgments from these that are about you, as ten righteous men would have preserved Sodom : O what a Sodom is the present generation ! And as it is like Sodom and Gomorrah, and perhaps a thousand times worse, in respect of sins against law and gospel light, which Sodom never had ; so, if the Lord do not leave us a remnant, we shall be like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect of judgments.—All these things, and a thousand more that might be adduced, should press you mightily to the study of holiness, and living unto God : you are dead to the law, that you may live unto God. But next,

For Direction. Now, here the question may be propounded, O, how shall I live unto God ? I shall offer you no directions but one, which my text leads me to, and it is this. If you would live unto God, O study to be more and more dead to the law. The more you are dead to the law as a covenant, the more will you live according to the law as a rule : what ! do you not find a legal spirit that remains with you, and weakens your hand in duties of holiness ? When you are wrestling at duties in your own natural strength, it is a legal, old covenant way : and do you not find it a hard, heavy, wearisome task ? I suppose there is little holiness there ; but, when you are leaning on the strength of Christ, do you not find your soul enlarged and quickened in duty ? When you perform duty from a principle of slavish fear, that is a legal way ; and do you not find your hearts weakened, and little heart to the work ?—But, on the contrary, when the love of Christ constrains you, is it not then that you run with pleasure in the ways of his commandments ? Yea, sin hath dominion over you when you are, and in so far as you are under the law, for the motions of sin are by the law ; the law irritates corruption, and cannot subdue it, for it is the grace of God revealed in the gospel that effectually teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. To be dead to the law is to be married to Christ, it is to be brought off from the first Adam

and united to the second Adam. And, believer, as you are in Christ, so you are to abide in him, if you would be fruitful, and live unto God; "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me," John xv. 4. Now, to abide in him is just to be strong in the grace that is in him, and to continue to be strong in him by faith, and this is necessary in order to fruitfulness; as, though an imp be grafted into the root, if it be not fastened and take firm rooting, it does not come to fruitfulness; so the sinner is made a Christian by being cut off from the law, and engrafted into Christ; but he is not a fruitful Christian if he do not take a strong grip of Christ, and draw virtue from him; therefore, "Abide in me, and I in you," says Christ, and O! but it is well said, for, if he do not abide in us, we cannot abide in him. We will never abide in him by the grace of faith, unless he abide in us by the Spirit of faith. If we provoke God to take away his Spirit, our faith fades, fails, and decays, and then we depart from the Lord by an evil heart of unbelief.—Here is the way, then, to live unto God, and to bring forth fruit to him; even to die more and more to the first husband, the law, and to live by faith upon your blessed Husband, Christ.

QUEST. But, by what outward means should we thus live? May we not neglect duties, since we are dead to the law? Nay, God forbid. It was the devil's temptation to Christ, to cast himself headlong from the temple, because God had promised to preserve him in all his ways; so, believer, God hath promised to preserve you; he hath promised that sin shall not have dominion over you; and that you shall never perish; and is the devil tempting you, therefore, to throw yourself down headlong from the temple, and from temple-means and ordinances, public and private? O, tell that abominable devil, as Christ did, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." If you neglect means you tempt the Lord your God, who hath commanded you to use means, and made this the method of the communication of grace and strength, to wit, in the use of such means as faith, prayer, reading, hearing, meditation, watchfulness; therefore, O be diligent in the use of these means: only, do not confide in the means, by putting them in Christ's room; give means their own room, and do not expect, without the grace of the new covenant, that means will do the business. Grace is the spring from which the living water does flow, and means are the channel and pipes through which the water is conveyed; and if

the fountain do not send out streams, all the conduits and pipes in the world can never convey it unto us. Therefore, in the use of means, be still looking to the Lord ; look to him, both for grace to use the means, and for grace to bless the means. If you lay any stress upon the means, they become unprofitable. In the use of these means, O cry, cry mightily to the Lord, that he would kill your self-confidence : cry for the Spirit of life, to quicken you, that you may live unto God ; for, till the Spirit of life enter into the dry bones, there will be no stirring, no motion, no living to God : cry for the Spirit of faith, so as you may say, with Paul, in the context, “ I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life I live is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” O, cry for faith, and the assurance of faith : no doubt, one may have faith, and yet want that assurance which we commonly call so ; but, whether there be some kind of assurance or persuasion in the nature of faith, is a question that I do not here enter upon : only, this I am sure of, from the word of God, that doubting is no part of faith, for faith and doubting are as opposite as light and darkness. Some believers, indeed, have many doubts : why ? because they have little faith, little faith, little faith : “ O, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? ” And I find the believer who walks in darkness, and hath no light, he is directed to faith, as the antidote against his darkness and doubting ; “ Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.” Cry, I say, for the Spirit, and faith will work by love : cry for a gospel-spirit ; for I testify, in the Lord’s name, that gospel-holiness will never flourish among us, or in the generation, till we be more free of a legal spirit ; and that we will not live unto God unless we be dead to the law.

S E R M O N X X V I I I .

THE BEST BOND ; OR THE SUREST ENGAGEMENT.¹

JEREMIAH xxx. 21.—“ For, Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me ? saith the Lord.”

My friends, after that the first Adam’s heart departed from the

(1) This was an Action Sermon, preached immediately before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, at Dunfermline, July 19th, 1724. To which is annexed, a Discourse on the same subject, delivered after the solemn work was ended.

Lord, so as to violate the covenant of works, never one heart of all his posterity could, or would have approached unto God again, but had remained in their natural enmity against him, had not the second Adam so engaged his heart unto God, in our favours, as to draw the hearts of many after him : and if we could this day see into Christ's heart, and discover his heart-kindness in this matter, so as to unite our hearts to him, and to God in him, and get the knot sealed in the sacrament with God's seal ; it would make this a day to be much remembered to all eternity. O then, let your hearts be looking up to the Lord, that you may see in to the heart and bosom of this scripture, and in to the mystery of this great question, " Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me ? saith the Lord."

The Lord, by the prophet Jeremiah, had been comforting his church, by several excellent promises relating to their return out of the Babylonish captivity, typical of the glorious things reserved for the church in the days of the Messiah ; particularly in the preceding verse, it is promised, that they shall be blest with an excellent government, " Their nobles shall be of themselves," they shall not have strangers and enemies to be their judges, but those of their own nation. " Their governor shall proceed from the midst of them." This hath a reference to Christ our Governor, David our King, as you may see by comparing this with verse 9, " They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King, whom I will raise up unto them." This Governor is of ourselves, being in all things made like unto his brethren : " I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me."—It is a single person that is spoken of, and the person is the GOVERNOR, and the GOVERNOR is CHRIST. God the Father did cause him, as Mediator, to draw near and approach to him ; he commanded and authorised him to do it ; he sanctified and sealed him for this end ; he appointed and anointed him for this purpose, and he accepted of him, and declared himself well-pleased in him ; and therefore he speaks of it with wonderful pleasure, " Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me ?" When God draws a person near to him, he is even delighted with that approach unto him, whereof he himself is the cause ; much more if it be such a person as here the Governor of Israel ; " For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me ?" Here is the issue of the excellent promises that were made to Israel, by way of anticipation of some objection that might be

made, How shall all this be done? Why, Christ the Governor hath engaged for all that either God calls for from you, or that he promises to you.—He is one that shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he hath set judgment in the earth, Isa. xliii. 4. Thus all the promises come to us in Christ; they come from God through him, and should lead us up to him, in whom they are all Yea and Amen. They are rivulets that sweetly flow out and run forth from the ocean to the city of God, to the house of the mourner, to the field of the withered and decayed, to the habitation of the hungry and thirsty, yea, to the grave of the dry bones, to make the dry land springs of water, and to make the wilderness to blossom as the rose. What these excellent promises are, that thus run forth, you may see in the preceding part of the chapter: For example, verse 17, though the wound seem incurable, God will make a cure for it; and though you be thrown off at all hands, and thrust out at every door, and none seek after thee, yet “I will put honour upon thee; yea, I will glorify thee, and thou shall not be small,” as it is verse 19. And the sum of all the promises is, verse 22, “Ye shall be my people; and I will be your God:” I will work in you all that you want; and that is, “You shall be my people;” and I will be to you all that you need; and that is, “I will be your God.” O! that we could take hold of this promise! It is as much as to say, I will make you holy, and what I would have you to be: for, “Ye shall be my people;” and I will make you happy; for, “I will be your God.” O! but upon what consideration, or on what account will he do all this? My text opens the ground, “For, who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord.”—Why will he do so much kindness to any poor worm of Adam’s house? Why, because Christ as Mediator, hath engaged his heart to approach unto God in their room, to do all that was requisite for making a vent to this kindness and favour of God towards man.

I know that some take the words to be spoken of the people of God their drawing near by faith, and in point of duty engaging themselves to approach to him through his grace. This is a consequent that follows upon the other; and therefore I shall not exclude it from its own room in the application of this subject, if the Lord will. But, with the best interpreters that I have seen, I apprehend it is spoken of Christ, holding out his undertaking for an elect world in the covenant of redemption, of grace, and becoming our Surety, engaging himself to the Father for us, in the view of our having

ruined ourselves, and broken our own credit and interest with God. The first Adam, our natural and federal head, in the covenant of works, he brake the covenant, and violated the engagement that he made of approaching to God, with his perfect, personal obedience; and so he, and we in him, lost all our power with God. But behold, the second Adam, having his heart filled and fraughted with love to a company of sinful miserable worms, such as are here present, he takes on the engagement that Adam brake: and he being a person of entire credit, it was a done bargain, and God issues out all blessings on his account: "For, who is he that engaged his heart?"

In the words you may notice these four things,

1. The proper work and office of our Lord Jesus as Mediator, viz., to approach unto God, and that for us, and in our room and stead, as the High-priest of our profession. The priests are said to draw near to God, Lev. x. 21, and xxi. 17, 18. It is said Exod. xx. 21, that Moses drew near unto the thick darkness, where God was. So did Christ, our great Moses, draw near and approach unto God.

2. Notice, in the words, his cordial compliance with his work: He engaged his heart to it; received a commandment of the Father, who caused him to approach; he being the original cause and spring, as the connecting particle FOR does shew; FOR, who is this that does approach? Could any do it without me? No: the Father was first at work; but Christ was as willing to the work, as his Father was to employ him: he engaged his heart to it; that is, he bound and obliged himself to it; he undertook for his heart, as some read it; he undertook for his soul, that in the fullness of time it should be made an offering for sin. His own voluntary compliance with his Father's will, and his compassion to fallen man engaged him; and he was hearty and resolute, free and cheerful in it, and made nothing of the difficulties that stood in the way.

3. You have here the singularity of this fact, and the wonderfulness of it, expressed in the question, "Who is this that engaged his heart unto me?" It points out the greatness of the person, the amiable nature of the work he essays. Christ is in all this matter truly wonderful; and when it is a God that expresses it in this manner, we may well ask it with admiration, Who is this that engaged his heart to such an undertaking? And then,

4. You have the divine testimony annexed to the whole, in

these words, "Saith the Lord." Here is a noble ground for faith, even the testimony of the God of truth : let the mouth of unbelief be stopt, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. God's testimony is our security ; and we need no better than the word of God testifying concerning his eternal Son, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me ? saith the Lord."

OBSERVE. That our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, cordially and willingly engaged himself to approach unto God, in the work and business of our redemption.

I shall endeavour to clear this doctrine, and upon it speak to the several parts of the text, in the following method ; after that we have cleared the truth of the doctrine, we shall,

- I. Shew what a wonderful person this is, that engaged his heart to approach unto God : as seems to be pointed out in this question, "Who is this?"
- II. The nature of the work that he engages himself in, while it is an engagement to approach unto God.
- III. The singularity of the fact, included in the manner of the expression, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto God?"
- IV. The reasons of the doctrine ; or, why Christ came under this engagement : together with the reasons of our faith concerning it ; or, why it is, that JEHOVAH'S testimony is added in these words, "Saith the Lord."
- V. Draw some inferences by way of application of the doctrine, as the Lord shall please to assist.

Now, before I proceed to the method here laid down, I would offer you some scriptural proofs of the doctrine. That Christ willingly engaged himself herein is evident.

1. From his accepting of the work and office ; "When sacrifice and offering would not, then, said he, Lo I come," &c., Psal. xl. 7, 8, compared with Heb. x. 5, 6, 7.

2. From his reckoning it his glory and honour, that he hath taken this office upon him at his Father's call ; as is plain from that expression, Heb. v. 4, 5, "No man takes this honour to himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron : So Christ glorified not

himself, to be made an High-priest ; but he that said to him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee : Thou art a Priest for ever."

3. From his promising to depend on his Father for his help and assistance in the work, Isa. xlix. 5, " Though Israel be not gathered, says Christ, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." Isa. l. 7, " The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded ; therefore will I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Hence it was, that he endured the cross, and despised the shame. " I will put my trust in him," says Christ, Heb. ii. 13.

4. For his promising subjection to his Father's will, in bearing reproaches, and laying down his life for those that were given to him. Isa. l. 5, 9 : I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair : I hid not my face from shame and spitting." And John x. 17 : " I lay down my life ; and this commandment have I received of my Father." And,

5. According as he promised, so did he accomplish the promise : His heart was set upon the work in the hardest part thereof ; " I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till all be accomplished ? " And never did he rest, till he could say, " It is finished : I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," John xvii. 4.—Thus he fulfilled the engagement he came under. And then,

6. He expects the glory promised to him, and the accomplishment of the glorious promise that was made to him upon his fulfilling his engagements ; " I have glorified thee on earth : and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was, John xvii. 4, 5. Yea, he challenges it as his due every way, verse 24 : " Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me ; for thou has loved me before the foundation of the world."—And thus in all these things you see the truth of the doctrine cleared ; and so we proceed to the illustration of the general method.

I. The first thing I promised, was, To show what a wonderful person this is, that engages his heart to approach unto God ; as is pointed out by the question, " Who is this ? " There are these following things wonderful in this person engaging :—

1. "Who is this?" I answer, Who but the eternal Son of the Eternal Father, one God with him and the eternal Spirit; even the King eternal and immortal, who is said to be, "Over all, God blessed for ever, Amen."—Rom. ix. 5. AMEN, says the apostle; and AMEN let your hearts say to it, by putting the crown of absolute divine Sovereignty and supreme Deity upon the head of our LORD JESUS this day, in opposition to the damnable error of Arianism, that is like to take deep root in Britain and Ireland, and spread like a gangrene, and eat like a cancer. Who is he as to his person? He is the Son of God: and who is he as to his nature and essence? He is "the same in substance, equal in power and glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost." He is "God over all, blessed for ever;" and cursed is the communicant that shall not say, AMEN. Under the great seal of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we make the apostle's confession of faith, 1 John v. 20. That if any ask, "Who is this?" We answer, "This is the true God, and eternal life." This glorious engager, the Lord Jesus, whose death we commemorate, is, with respect to his divine nature, the true God; and he hath upon his vesture and upon his thigh written this name, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." This is the eternal Word, that was made flesh; he took upon him our nature, and became man, that he might appease God. The infinitely great quality of the person does highly commend his loving undertaking and engagement. But,

2. "Who is this?" It is One, "Who, though he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. It is he, who though his generation cannot be declared, his goings forth having been from of old, from everlasting; yet engaged to be made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, and was cut off out of the land of the living. It is he, who, though he was the Prince of the kings of the earth, and the King of kings, yet engaged to become a servant of servants, and accordingly girds himself to serve them, and wash their feet, John xiii. 4, 5. It is he, who, though he be admirable in his sovereignty his kingdom being over all, yet is matchless in his condescendency. —Though he is one that could never have been known, unless he had made himself known; yet he hath shown himself to be one that

is mighty in word and deed, saying "It is I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save,"—Isa. lxiii. 1. It is he, who though he be the only Son, and dearly beloved of God, yet engages to quit his Father's company, and take on his wrath and indignation. If it had been a simple privation of his Father's countenance for a little, it had been more than all the sons of men were worth; for he was daily from eternity his Father's delight, rejoicing always before him, Prov. viii. 30. But it must be more: he engages to take on our sin and guilt, and to bear our griefs; and, which is still more, to undergo his Father's wrath; insomuch, that though the Father's delight in him was never changed or altered, yet he engaged to become such a strange object of his delight, as that he should delight to bruise him, and take pleasure in making him a sacrifice, Isa. liii. 10. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him," he took pleasure in bruising him in the mortar of his infinite vengeance, till he bruised his blood out of his heart and veins, and his soul out of his body; for he swate great drops of blood in the garden; yea, bled to death on the cross, and then gave up the ghost. "Who is this?" Who but he who was the pleasant object of God's infinite love? Christ was loved of the Father in his dying, and for his dying in our room: he loves him in himself, and loves him as a sacrifice; for it was a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God, Eph. v. 2. But, O dear bought to Christ, was this love!

3. "Who is this?" Who but that glorious One, whom we have infinitely disobliged by our sin, and had disengaged to do us any favour, by our revolt from him, by breaking our engagements in the covenant of works, and by continual rebellion against him, and vexing his Holy Spirit, Isaiah lxiii. 10. "Who is this?" Even he whom the party that he engages for on the one side, doth most loath and despise; for, "He is despised and rejected of men: we hid as it were our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not;" and yet he engages for these that were in actual opposition and enmity to him: for, while we were yet enemies, he engages for us; "He died for the ungodly," Rom. v. 6. And, "God commends his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," ver. 8. And, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," ver. 10. He loved them, that loathed him. Again,

4. "Who is this?" He is one that stood in no need of us, being infinitely happy in himself, and had lost nothing, though all man-

kind had perished for ever ; and yet before we were not happy, he would expose himself to the greatest misery, resolving that he would not be happy without us. He would rather come and endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, reproach, blasphemy, and all manner of indignities : “ Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor ;” and though he was exalted to the highest, yet he would be humbled to the lowest. Let all the excellencies of heaven and earth be put together ; let all the perfections that ever the world heard of, and infinitely more ; let them be all gathered together, and infinity added to them, and all shining in one person, and that is Christ, O how rich ! How glorious ! And yet this person engages to die for vile worms, whom he might have trampled under his feet for ever.

5. “ Who is this ?” Why, he is one that could lay his hand upon both parties that were at variance, God and man ; and so lay hold on both, and bring them together in himself, though at an infinite distance from one another : He hath made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled heaven and earth,” Col. i. 20, 21. He is one that was able not only to remove the partition betwixt Jews and Gentiles, man and man, but to take down the partition-wall betwixt God and man, to bring the sinner to God, and God to the sinner ; “ Christ hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,” 1 Pet. iii. 18 ; “ God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself :” and so he is one that brings both together, by his almighty arm ; “ This man shall be the peace ;” this God-man is our peace, being a friend to both parties : being God, he is such a friend to God, that he would let him want nothing of his due ; he will give justice every farthing, and retrieve the whole glory that sin defaced : and, being man, he is such a friend to man, that he will pay all our debt, recover all our loss, yea, and gain much more to us than ever we lost.

6. “ Who is this ?” He is one whose name is called WONDERFUL, Isa. ix. 6. But who can tell the wonders of his person, the wonders of his perfections, the wonders of his offices, relations, appearances, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession ; the wonders of his righteousness, the wonders of his purchase, the wonders of his love in its height and depth, length and breadth ; in its eternity, efficacy, and constancy ? He is one whose name is WONDERFUL, whose followers, that bear his name, are for signs and wonders, Isa. vii. 18, “ Behold, I and the children which thou

hast given me, are for signs and wonders ;” Zech. iii. 8, “Thou and thy fellows, that sit before thee, are men wondered at.” And, indeed, the more of Christ that they have about them, the more they do become a world’s wonder, as Christ himself was. What shall I say? Time would fail to speak of these things, and to mention his wonderful acts, his wonderful counsels, his wonderful way upon the earth, and in the hearts of his people, his wonderful works towards the children of men, both in judgment and in mercy, and his wonderful conduct towards his own children. Let it suffice that this is he whose name is, and shall be called **WONDERFUL**.

II. The Second thing proposed was, To speak of the nature of the work he engages himself in, while it is said, “He engaged his heart to approach unto God.” The priests under the law, their approaching unto God did but adumbrate and shadow forth our High-priest his approach unto God, in our room and stead.—In order to clear this point, then, in the general, I premise these two things :

1st, All mankind were barred out from the presence of God, so as they could not approach to him in their own persons : and that by a threefold bar.

1. The bar of a broken and violated law, or covenant of works. The covenant of works, you know, was, **DO** and **LIVE**, otherwise ye shall die : in which covenant the precept was **DO**, and the promise was **LIFE**, and the penalty was **DEATH**. Man, by his sin, hath broken the precept of doing, forfeited the promise of life, and incurred the penalty of death. Now, if we were to approach God in mercy, this broken precept must be repaired, this forfeited life must be redeemed, this incurred penalty must be executed, and endured. Here is a bar that neither men nor angels can draw and take out of the way, in order to our approach unto God.

2. The bar of God’s injured perfections, particularly God’s infinite holiness, which stands up for the defence of the precept of the law : insomuch that none can approach to a holy God, unless his holiness be vindicate by a perfect obedience. Again, God’s infinite justice, which stands up for the penalty, or threatening of the law ; insomuch that none can approach to a just God, unless his justice be satisfied by a complete sacrifice. Now, as our natural want of conformity to the law makes the holiness of God stand in the way of our approach to him ; so our natural want of ability, to give satisfaction, makes the justice of God to be a bar against our approach. O ! who will draw this bar of God’s injured perfections !

3. The bar of natural enmity and sin on our part; Isa. lix. 2, "Your iniquities have separate betwixt you and your God," so as we cannot approach to him. We are enemies to God, by wicked works. This is a bar that cannot be broken, but by an almighty arm.—Thus, I say, all mankind was barred out from the presence of God; no approaching to him.

2ndly, I premise, That the work of him who shall approach to God, in our room, and as our representative, must include the breaking of these bars. He that will engage to approach unto God as our head, to bring us back to God, must engage to break these bars: And so,

1. To break the bar of a violated covenant of works. And, accordingly, Christ comes; and, by his obedience to the death, he magnifies the law, and makes it honourable: The precept of the law that we had broken, he must fulfil, by obeying perfectly; the promise of eternal life, which we had forfeited, he must recover, by redeeming the forfeiture, bringing in everlasting righteousness; the threatening and penalty of eternal death he must endure, or the equivalent, by coming under the curse of the law.

2. To break the bar of God's injured perfections, by vindicating the holiness of God, and satisfying the justice of God, that so these and the like injured attributes of the divine Majesty may not stand in the way; for, while they do, there is no approaching unto God.

3. To break the bar of man's natural enmity against God, otherways he that engages himself to approach unto God, cannot bring us to God with him.

These things being premised, we may the more easily see what is the work that the Lord Jesus engaged his heart unto, in approaching unto God: he comes to God in our room, who could not approach in our own persons. It is below the majesty of a great king, to treat and transact immediately with a guilty rebel and traitor: and so it is below the majesty of the great God, to transact immediately with wretched sinners: and who then will approach? Therefore he transacts immediately with Christ, a person of equal dignity with himself, as to his divine nature; and a person able to break these bars, and so make an open door for himself as Redeemer, and then, for all the Redeemed at his back, to approach unto God, as their eternal rest and happiness; and all this he does by fulfilling the broken law, for he came to fulfil all righteousness

by satisfying God's injured perfections, insomuch that God is well-pleased, for his righteousness' sake : and by destroying man's natural enmity, insomuch that they are reconciled to God by the death of his Son.

But, more particularly, I would shew here, 1. What engagements Christ came under. 2. What approach did he make to God, under these engagements. 3. Under what considerations are we to view God, to whom he engages to approach. 4. In what station did he engage to approach unto God.

1st, What engagements did Christ come under, when he engaged himself to approach unto this God? He came under engagements about the whole work of our redemption. And,

1. He engaged to put himself in the form of a servant, by taking on our nature, and taking our place in law, that so the law might reach him in the room of the guilty sinner ; otherwise the law-curse due to us could never have reached him. Now, to this engagement belong several things, which I shall shortly deliver in so many spiritual expressions.—He engaged to be made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.—He engaged, even he who knew no sin, to be made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And thus,

2. He engaged to satisfy, not only the law, in all its commands and demands, but also all the injured attributes of the divine Majesty, by bringing in everlasting righteousness.—He engaged to give himself a sacrifice ; and to give his soul an offering for sin ; and to give his life a ransom for many.—He engaged to make peace by the blood of his cross, and so to repair the breach betwixt God and man, making way by his blood, to the holy of holies, that we might have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, consecrate to us through the vail, that is to say his flesh, that we might come again to God with full assurance of faith. And in order to this,

3. He engaged to redeem by power as well as by price, and to make a willing people in the day of his power ; and that, having bruised the head of the serpent, and destroyed the works of the devil, he should bring forth his prisoners out of the pit wherein there was no water.—He engaged to lead captivity captive, to take the prey from the mighty, that the lawful captive might be delivered, Isa. lxix. 24-25 ; and so to restore the lost image of God upon man, and to make them partakers of the divine nature. And thus,

4. He engaged not only to destroy sin, and to condemn it in the flesh, because it tended to destroy God's law, to darken his glory, and to strike at his being, as well as to ruin the sinner; but also, to destroy death, and bring life and immortality to light:—He engages to come, that we might have life, and that we might have it more immediately.—And in all these Christ becomes engaged to the Father, for our debt, for our duty, and for our safety. And as he became engaged to God for us so he became engaged to us for God; that having engaged to God for our debt, we should be justified; having engaged for our duty, we should be sanctified; and that having engaged for our safety, we should be glorified, and safely brought to heaven, to be for ever with the Lord.

(1.) He engaged for our debt, that it should be paid every farthing, to the uttermost that the infinite holiness of God could command in the precept of the law, and to the uttermost, that the infinite justice of God could demand in the threatening of the law; and so he is able to save to the uttermost, because he ever lives to make intercession, upon the ground of that complete payment that he made by his obedience unto death. And here stands the ground of our justification before God; this ground he engaged to God for us to lay down, and upon this ground he engaged to us that he shall be justified, saying, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

(2.) He engaged not only for our debt, but for our duty: having engaged to God to make purchase "of all grace and holiness for us, he engages, in his promise to us, to give us the new heart and the new spirit, to make us know the Lord; and to put his Spirit within us, and cause us to walk in his statutes; to put his fear in our hearts, that we shall not depart from him; and consequently that we shall not sin th^o sin unto death, nor live and die under the power of sin: and that sin shall not have a final dominion over us: but that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, shall free us from the law of sin and death.—And in consequence of these two engagements for debt and for duty,

(3.) He also engages for our safety, saying to his Father, "I give them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," John x. 28. He engages to the Father, "That of all that he hath given him, he shall loose nothing, but shall raise it up at the last day; and that they shall all be with him, where he is, to behold his glory." And hence issue all the

promises wherein also he engages to us for God, such as, that he will save us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; and that though we may be sometimes carried captive of our enemies by constraint, yet that we shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and sit with him on his throne, even as he overcame, and is set down with his Father on his throne: And that no cross shall come, but what shall be for our advantage in the end, whatever for the present it seem to be to our sense; but that all things shall work together for our good, who love him, and are the called according to his purpose.

This leads me to a question; Why, say you, who may expect a share of this engagement of Christ; Does he engage in behalf of us all? I answer in such a manner as concerns all that hear me, that he engaged in behalf of all that were given him of the Father: and that none of all that hear this gospel, may look upon themselves as shut out, he expresses it thus, John xi. 37, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out; And consequently he engages in behalf of all that shall not exclude themselves from the benefit of this glorious engagement, by their final unbelief, in rejecting this Christ, and refusing to be saved on these terms, which Christ engaged to fulfil. And so the door is open to you all, to put in for a full share of all that Christ hath engaged to do; especially if you think that your own personal bonds and engagements, vows, promises, and covenants, are not so good and sufficient as Christ's personal engagement in your room: think you so, man, woman? O then, here is a good bargain for you; you that have no money to pay your debt; no grace to perform your duty; no strength to secure your safety; O here is a Christ engaging to God for your debt, your duty, and your safety? O let your heart say with application, AMEN, it is a good bargain for me; and if so, God hath before-hand said AMEN, so let it be. In a word, the sum of Christ's engagement, that he came under, in his approach to God, was to fulfil God's law, to vindicate his holiness, to satisfy his justice, to bear his wrath in our room, and to be made sin for us, and so to be made a curse for us, 2 Cor. v. 21, Gal. iii. 13. He engaged to be made a sacrifice, a ransom, a propitiation for us, and to be all that the glory of God's perfections in the matter of our salvation required.—Thus he engaged himself to approach to God.

2dly, What approach did he make to God under these engagements? In short,

It was a near approach, by God's own allowance and appointment : See the context ; " I will cause him to draw NEAR, and he shall approach to me." We behoved to have stood at an infinite distance from God to all eternity, had not Christ been allowed to come near in our room. But behold, he made a near approach under the shadow of lawful authority ; his Father authorised him therein, and caused him to approach : God the Father is the primary cause of our salvation ; " This commandment," says Christ, " have I received of my Father," John x. 15.—It is his Father's will that he came to do, Psalm xl. 8. And how near Christ approaches to God in our room, under this authority, allowance, and command, who can tell among men or angels ? For he came so near, as to lay his hand upon God ; yea, to take God and all his glorious perfections, all his seemingly jarring attributes in his arms, as it were, and reconcile them one to another, and bind them together with the bond of infinite amity and harmony, to the highest glory of each of them, in the matter of our salvation : And hence, upon this near approach it was said, " Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Therefore,

2. It was a bold approach, by God's own assistance ; as well as near, by his allowance. This is evident also in the text, " I will cause him to draw near ;" and " Who is he that engaged his heart to approach unto me ? saith the Lord." It was a bold and courageous approach indeed ; but it was by his Father's help and assistance, Isa. l. 7. " The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded ; yea, therefore have I set my face like a flint." It was such a bold adventure, as none could have made but himself. And yet,

3. It was an humble approach : for, " Though he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 8. He became his Father's humble servant in the work of our redemption ; " Behold my servant whom I uphold." He served him in a state of humiliation, from the time of his incarnation to the time of his exaltation. He was meek and lowly while he offered his humble service to God for our sake, stooping down to wash our feet, to wash our hearts, to wash our consciences, to wash our souls in his own blood, saying, " if I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." His approach to God was an humble and reverential approach, with holy filial fear and regard of his Father ; there-

fore it is said, Heb. v. 7, that in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, to him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. How humbly did he cry to his Father in the garden, when he said, "Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done: Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say: "Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I to this hour: Father glorify thy name." It was in the saddest earnest, and deepest humility, that he approached to his Father in this work.

4. It was a solemn approach: "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me?" It is I, says Christ; and he says it with a solemnity, "Lo I come." Psalm xl. 7. "Lo I COME, in the volume of thy book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." Lo I COME; as if he had said, Let heaven and earth be witnesses to this approach of mine; let God and all the creatures of God attest it; for I am not ashamed of this work which the Father had given me to do: "Lo, I come."—Other characters of this approach may fall in upon the next general head; therefore I go to the next particular here premised, which will also further illustrate the nature of this approach.

3rdly, Under what consideration are we to view the God to whom he approached? "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto ME?" What ME? It is to ME, says Jehovah. And here we would consider the God to whom he approached in our room, in these following respects.

1. He engaged to approach unto God as an absolute God. Christ, the second Person of the adorable Trinity, personally considered, engaged in our name to approach to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, essentially considered; to approach to the throne of infinite Majesty. We have to do with a God in Christ, in all our approaches; and may not approach to a God out of Christ, otherwise we would be confounded: but Christ had to do with a God by himself. Christ is the Mediator betwixt God and man, but there was no mediator betwixt God and Christ: Christ must approach, as well as he could, to God himself immediately, that we, through his mediation, might have access to God.—It was a saying of Luther's *Nolo Deum Absolutum*; Lord, deliver me from an absolute God, a God out of 'Christ;' for as he is terrible to sinners, so, in himself considered, he dwells in light to which no man can approach, 1 Tim. vi.

16. But this inaccessible Being is the God to whom Christ did approach.

2. He engaged to approach unto God as a commanding God, commanding perfect obedience, according to the tenor of the covenant of works ; commanding perfect obedience in man's own person, as the condition of life ; and now, seeing, in the covenant of grace, a change of persons is allowed, but no change of the terms or conditions, but that our holy God will still be a commanding God, Christ accepts of the terms, and engages to fulfil the condition of life, be the command what will : " Lo, I come, to do thy will." Father, what is thy command ? I come to thee as a commanding God, a Law-giver, to obey thy law ; yea, " Thy law is within my heart ;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, IT IS IN THE MIDST OF MY BOWELS None, that had any blemish, was to approach or come near unto God, Lev. xxi. 21. If there had been any blemish in the person or righteousness of Christ, he could not have approached to an infinitely holy and commanding God ; and his coming to God under this consideration, is just his coming under the law, or under the command, in our room.

3. He engaged to approach unto God as a threatening God, threatening death and wrath to the transgressors of his command, and saying, as Lev. x. 3, " I will be sanctified by all that approach, or come nigh unto me ;" I will either be sanctified by them, or sanctified upon them : and thus he had God to deal with, not only as a Commander and Law-giver, requiring obedience ; but as a Judge, requiring satisfaction when the law is broken. He approaches to God, not only as a God of infinite holiness, whose command must be obeyed ; but as a God of infinite justice, whose threatening must be execute : and therefore, he coming to God in the room of these that had broken the command, and incurred the threatening, it must follow, that,

4. He engaged to approach to God as an angry God, an offended Deity, and an Avenger of blood : " The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all ;" and under this load of sin and guilt, he approaches to the God that was to take vengeance upon sin in his own person, and all the vengeance that sin deserved : He engaged to approach to God as a displeased and incensed God, that he might please him by his obedience, and pacify him by his satisfaction. He engaged to approach to that God, who is a consuming fire to sinners ; and, taking their sins along with him, he goes in to the very midst

of that devouring fire, which would have devoured and destroyed the sinner himself eternally, that he might quench the flame of that fire with his blood ; though he was burnt to death in the cause, that we might not burn for ever in hell.—What is hell, but the fire of God's wrath? It is just God himself, as a consuming fire, that is the hell of hell. It was a lamentable moan of a man upon his death-bed once, "We have some in this life that will go to a quire for us, some that will say mass for us, some that will ploug for us, and some that will pray for us ; but, O where is there one that will go to hell for us !" But, behold, here is one that engaged his heart to approach to God, as a consuming fire, and so to go to hell, and quench the fire of it for us ; yea, and to drink off the cup of God's red-hot boiling vengeance to the bottom. For he engaged to approach to God as a God of terrible Majesty, being content that infinite justice should act upon him a tragedy of blood and wounds, that our salvation might be obtained without any detriment to divine justice, and to the highest glory of all the other divine perfections.—When Christ approached to God as an absolute God, he came near, as it were, to the seat of his Majesty, to present himself in our room ; when he approached to God as a commanding God, he came near, as it were, to the throne of his holiness, and there he was an obedient subject in our room ; when he approached to God as a threatening God, then he came near, as it were, to his bench of judgment, and there he was a condemned pannel at the bar in our room ; and when he approached to God as an angry and offended God, then he came near, as it were, to the tribunal of justice, the fiery tribunal of his indignation, and there the sentence was execute upon him, while he gave himself to incensed justice in our room.—Now, Christ having thus approached to God, according to his engagement, the God to whom he approached is so well-pleased with this approach of his, that now, by an act passed at the same tribunal of justice, where he was solemnly condemned to death in our room and stead, he is as solemnly justified and absolved in our room ; therefore he is said to be justified by the Spirit, 1 Tim. iii. 16 ; and Christ himself says, he is near that justifies me," Isaiah l. 8. And therefore the Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness sake : and when the Spirit of Christ convinces of righteousness, he will demonstrate this from that argument, that Christ hath gone to his Father, John xvi. 10.—And now the approach that he makes to God, is to a God whom he hath pleased and pacified in our behalf, whose

Majesty he hath allayed, whose command he hath fulfilled, whose threatening he hath sustained, and whose wrath he hath endured, and for whose loving-kindness he hath made a vent ; and, accordingly, it is vented by an audible voice from heaven, saying, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." Whatever approach now it is that Christ makes unto God, as an Advocate at the Father's right-hand, it is in the virtue and value of that engaged approach that I have mentioned : and so it is now to a God whom he hath pleased and pacified : and whatever approach we make to God in him, it is to a God reconciled in him, Rom. v. 10. Thus you see under what considerations we are to view the God to whom Christ did engage to approach, and, " Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me ? saith the Lord."

4thly, In what station did he engage to approach unto God ? Why,

1. He engaged to approach unto God in the station of a surety, therefore he is called, " The Surety of a better testament : " a surety for God to us, that all that he hath promised in his word shall be made good : for in him are all the promises Yea and Amen, and he is engaged to see them accomplished : also, as a Surety for us to God, having given his hand to his Father, that all our debt should be paid ; Christ says to his Father, in a manner, as Paul said to Philemon concerning Onesimus, Phil. 18, 19, " If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that to mine account ; I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it."—So says Christ, Since these poor sinners have wronged thee, O Father, by their sin, and owe thee an infinite sum, a debt of obedience and satisfaction, Put it to mine account, I, JESUS, have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it : I give my bond for it, subscribed with my own hand : " Lo, I come to do it ; in the volume of thy book it is written of me." And indeed he is a Surety that gets all the debt to pay, and all the duty to perform for the debtor and bankrupt.

2. He engaged to approach to God in the station of a Mediator, therefore called the Mediator of the new covenant. He is sent of God to negotiate a peace betwixt God and man ; and, accordingly, he is our peace, and travels betwixt the parties in order to their reconciliation. He is a repairer of breaches, and a restorer of that which he took not away, Psalm xlix. 4. For, as Mediator, he restores that glory to God which he took not away ; that obedience to the law which he took not away ; that holiness to man which he

took not away; that beauty and order to the world which he took not away; that agreement and concord betwixt heaven and earth, betwixt man and man, which he took not away.

3. He engaged himself to approach unto God in the station of an Ambassador, to serve him in that station; and hence he is so frequently called the Sent of God. Christ magnifies his office as being the Sent of God, John iv. 34, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work;" John v. 40, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." Christ magnifies the faith that believes on him as the Sent of God; "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Yea, I have observed that Christ is spoken of as the Sent of God betwixt forty and fifty times in that one gospel according to John. He is sent as the Father's Ambassador, with the Father's seal appended to his commission: "Him hath God the Father sealed."

4. He engaged to approach unto God in the station of a mean Servant: for, "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant;" yet a faithful servant, faithful in all his house; a Servant according to God's heart; and as righteous as God would have him to be; "By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many." A Servant whom God glories in; "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold: mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth." I might here show you how he engaged to approach to God in the Station of a Prophet, Priest, and King; a Witness, Leader, and Commander, Isaiah lv. 4. But what I have said is sufficient to give us some view of the nature of the work he engaged himself to in approaching to God. Therefore I come,

III. To the Third general head proposed, which was, To speak of the singularity of the fact intimated in the expression, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me?" Now, that this was a singular engagement, will appear, both from the matter and the manner.

1st, Consider the matter of this engagement, and we will see the singularity of it, especially if we notice the mysteries that lie in the bosom of this engagement; particularly these six.

1. The first mystery in this engagement is, that herein we may see the glory of the eternal God veiled with flesh, and dwelling in a tabernacle of clay; "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh." To see the sun in the

firmament converted to a clod of dust, or the highest seraph in heaven to a crawling worm, had been but a small matter, if compared to this ; for here we have heaven and earth, time and eternity, finite and infite together in one person.—Here is the Ancient of days becoming a young child ; “ To us a Child is born.”—Here is the everlasting Fountain of joy, becoming a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.—Here is the greatest beauty of heaven and earth, with his visage marred more than any man, and his form than the sons of men.—Here is the Creator of the world, to whom the earth and its fulness belong, yet destitute of house and hold ; “ The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath no where to lay his head.”

2. The second mystery wrapt up in this engagement, is, that here we may see the glorious Law-giver, whose will is a law to men and angels, subjecting himself to his own law, and that in the room of rebels, that had violated his law, and contemned his authority ; for, “ He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.”

3. The third mystery here to be seen is, that which might make us faint away with wonder and amazement, that the blessed God should, in a manner, become a cursed sinner, that cursed sinners might be blessed in him ; behold the ever-blessed God becoming a curse, Gal. iii. 15. And, to be made a curse is a stronger word yet than cursed.—Behold the ever-holy God becoming sin, 2 Cor. v. 21 ; and to be made sin, is a stronger word yet than to be a sinner. He became a sinner by imputation, even he who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him. He put his name in our bond, and wrote down himself the sinner, that our name might be put in his bond, and we might be righteous through his righteousness. But, for the blessed God to become a curse, and the holy God to become sin, is more than if all the angels in heaven should become devils. Is there not somewhat singular here ?

4. The fourth mystery wrapt up in this engagement is, that here we see the Creditor becoming Surety for the debtor, and paying the debt that was owing to himself. The eternal Son of God was as much injured by our sin as the Father was, and yet he engaged to come and satisfy his own justice.

5. The fifth mystery here involved is, in this engagement we may see the Judge of all the earth brought under condemnation condemned by his own Father, whom he never offended ; condemned

by the law, which he never broke ; condemned by sinners, whom he came to save from condemnation ; condemned to death though he be the Lord of life, and hath the keys of hell and death in his hand and at his girdle.

6. The sixth mystery to be seen in this engagement is, that here we may observe justice raging against the innocent, and absolving the guilty, and yet without any iniquity or injustice ; a God of love and a compassionate Father forgetting, as it were, his bowels towards his only son, and taking pleasure in his death ; “For it pleased the Lord to bruise him :” and yet receiving these into his arms and bosom who had violated his law, and contemned his authority, and grieved his Spirit.—And, by this means, here we see the righteousness of the law fulfilled in these that had broken the law, and never obeyed one of its precepts.—Here we may see the poor guilty sinner, that stands condemned by the law, condemned by justice, condemned by conscience, yet put in case to challenge the whole world to lay anything to his charge, Rom. viii. 33.—By this mean also we see the debt paid and yet pardoned, the guilt of the sinner punished and yet forgiven.—In a word, there was this singular in it, that he engaged to bring the greatest good out of the greatest evil. Sin is the greatest of all evils, and that whereby, of any thing in all the world, God is most dishonoured ; and yet there is nothing by which God brings greater glory to himself than by the fall of man : Upon these ruins mercy shall be built up for ever says God ; and mercy magnified to the highest, in a way wherein justice is satisfied to the uttermost ; sin being condemned by a sacrifice, life bought by a death, and the gates of heaven opened by a cross. The mysteries contained in this engagement shew it to be singular.—And thus the matter of the engagement discovers the singularity of the fact.

2ndly, Consider the manner of it, and here the singularity thereof will further appear : how did he engage ?

1. He engaged alone, He alone ; there was none that would or could engage to do this but himself ; Isa. lxiii. 3, “I have trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me ;” among all the creatures of God there was none to take a part with him in treading the wine-press of his Father’s wrath : “He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor ; therefore his own arm brought salvation, and his righteousness it sustained him,” Isa. lix. 16.

2. He engaged fully to do all, to suffer all, to purchase all, to apply all, and to be all in all; he engaged not only to do, but to suffer, 1 Pet. iii. 18, "Christ hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God: not only to suffer, but to die, and to die for enemies, rebels, and traitors, such as were given him of the Father; and not only to die, but to continue for a time under the power of death; though he was life itself, and could, in the first instant of time, have risen up from the grave that he was laid into."

3. He engaged freely; his Father's causing him to approach, did not hinder the freedom of his engagement; for as God, "He and his Father are one," and have but one divine will; and, as man, his will is sweetly subject to the divine will. He engaged so freely, that there was nothing in us that could move him but misery: there was none of us could desire him to do it; he engaged before we had a being: there was none in heaven or earth that could compel him to it; and there was nothing that he had to expect from us for his pains; we could never reward him for his work; and all that we shall do to eternity, is only, through his grace, to bless him for what he hath done.

4. He engaged firmly, and that both in point of constancy and courage. In point of courage: he engaged in the work courageously, though he had justice, and wrath, and hell, and heaven, and all on his top; yea, and poor man also, for whom he engaged; yet, how courageously did he go through with his work! so firmly, as not to be moved with discouragements. He went and set his face up to Jerusalem, where he was to be crucified; and you see where-with he encouraged himself, Psal. xvi. 8, compared with Acts ii. 25. "Because the Lord is at my right hand, I shall not be moved:" God's hand was upon the Man of his right hand, upon the Son of man whom he made strong for himself; and therefore the right hand of the Lord did valiantly; "The right-hand of the Lord was exalted: the right-hand of the Lord did valiantly."—As he engaged firmly in point of courage, so also in point of constancy: he never took his word again, but stood to the bargain: neither fear of the wrath of his Father, nor sense of the unworthiness of the sinner, nor yet the frequent falls and relapses of his people, could make him alter: he foresaw all their relapses into sin, and into the same sins, yet could it not move him to break the bargain; therefore, "Return ye backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings,"

Jer. iii. 22; yea, "I will heal your backsliding, and love you freely." Hos. xiv. 4. Your inconstancy, might he say, shall not make me inconstant too; he hates putting away, and continues in his love.

5. He engaged timeously and speedily; he did not linger, for the matter could not admit of a delay: when our neck was on the block, and the axe of divine judgment coming down, as it were to give the fatal stroke, he cries speedily, Hold, hold thy hand. What, might God say, will you come and be a sacrifice in their room? No sooner is the motion made to him, than presently he was on fire of love to be thus employed and substitute in our room as a sacrifice; "Lo, I come:" he speaks like one ready to run. When the plague was begun, Moses commands Aaron to go quickly into the congregation to make an atonement, Num. xvi. 46. The sentence of divine wrath, which is a terrible plague, was gone out; and therefore Christ does speedily engage to make the atonement.

6. He engaged heartily; he engaged his heart to approach unto God. This being the main particular, with respect to the manner of the fact, or that branch of the singularity of it, expressly mentioned in the text; therefore let us especially take notice of this, "He engaged his heart to approach.—He engaged his heart;" that is, not only did he engage for his soul, as some understand it, that his soul should be made an offering for sin; but also, he engaged his heart, that is, he engaged willingly; and so it was with a thousand good-wills: Lo I come, Father: thy will is my will.—"He engaged his heart;" that is, he engaged cordially, cheerfully, and affectionately; "I delight to do thy will, O my God!" We never read that Christ had a sad heart to quit, for a while, that joy and pleasure that he had in heaven: Why, what was the matter? You see it, Prov. viii. 31; he had so much pleasure and satisfaction in the work he was engaged in, that it is said, "His delights were with the sons of men, rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth," even the places where his sick patients lay. It was not for any pleasure that he took in habitable places; nay, it was not places, but persons in such and such a place; some of my sick patients lie in this corner of the world, and some of them in that corner; some of them lie among the isles, and uttermost parts of the earth; some of them lie in yonder isle of Britain; some of them in Scotland; and, may not I say, some of them lie in Fife, and some of them in Dunfermline? He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, where he had patients to heal:

"His delights were with the sons of men;" For his heart was engaged in his work, he heartily consented to it from all eternity. And though eternity cannot be divided into parts, yet, to speak after the manner of our conception, he spent the rest of that eternity in rejoicing in the thoughts of it.

But more particularly, that his heart was engaged, will appear, if you consider,

(1.) That not only did he give his hearty consent from all eternity, but so soon as ever he had created the world by his almighty arm, then presently he falls about his work and business : for he was slain from the foundation of the world. It is true he came not personally for the space of about four thousand years, from the beginning of the world : but though he came not in person, yet he came by proxy : The infinite wisdom of God thought fit to order matters so, that many a sacrifice was sent to be a shadow of this good thing that was to come ; and many a servant did he send to assure them that he was a-coming.

(2.) When the fulness of time was come, that he appeared on the stage of the earth, he shewed, in the whole course of his life, how much his heart was engaged in his mediatorial work. When he was yet a child, and his parents lost him, and found him in the temple, and began to chide with him ; what says Christ ? Luke ii. 49. "How was it that you sought me ? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?" Never did a hungry man delight more in meat, than Christ delighted in the work of our redemption : It was his meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him.

(3.) That his heart was engaged in the work, appears from his zeal against every thing that had a tendency to hinder his going on to the hardest and highest part of his work. What can be more expressive of a heart engaged in the work, than the passage you have, Mat. xvi. 23. There Peter began to rebuke Christ, when he spake of his sufferings ; "Be it far from thee, Lord." One would think, that Christ would have taken this in good part, and that it was love in Peter ; but we never read that Christ took any thing so ill : he turned about, like a man in the greatest passion, and says, "Get thee behind me, Satan : " Never was such a word heard from the mouth of Christ, and that spoken to a saint. It is Peter's voice, but the devil hath tuned it : What would become of an elect world, if I should stop here ? "Get thee behind me, Satan." His heart was engaged to the work.

(4.) It appears from his longing to pay the debt which he had engaged to pay: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be finished!" He longed to be plunged over head and ears, as it were, in the ocean of divine wrath: and when it came near to the time of his death, it is noted, Luke ix. 18, "He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem;" as a child, that is going with his friends to a place where he desires to be, runs out before, as being fond to be forward; so Christ went before, and all the way talked of it to them, as we use to talk of what we pant after: Yea, when it came near to his suffering, he cannot forbear telling his disciples, That with desire he desired to eat that pass-over; wherein he saw, as in a glass, how he was to suffer. And when Judas went forth to betray him, he said, "What thou doest, do quickly," John xiii. 37; and when he was gone, he rejoiced, and said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him:" He reckoned the work done, because the instrument that set all a-work was gone out. And, at the end of the 14th chapter of John, he brake off, as it were, in the midst of the sermon, and says, "Arise, let us go hence." Of all works, preaching was most pleasant to him; but, behold, he breaks off, and goes out, that he might be taken and crucified, that the occasion might not slip. And then he does not stay till Judas found him out; no, he goes forth to the place where Judas and his band were, and offered himself a willing sacrifice. When they said, "We seek Jesus of Nazareth:" he answers, "I am he," John xviii. 4, 5: and when Peter would have rescued him, he bade him put up his sword, saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" Yea, when he was beaten and buffeted, how did he give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair? "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Yea, when hanging on a cross, he had enough to provoke so great a spirit to have rescued himself, when they cried, "Come down, and we will believe thee: If thou canst save thyself, we will believe that thou canst save others:" Nay, say they, "He saved others, but himself he cannot save." He might, like a Samson, have broken down the pillars of heaven and earth about their ears: but he bears all patiently. And then, how his heart was engaged, appears in the very last act; "He bowed his head," and cried out with a joyful heart, "It is finished;" the work which my Father gave me to do,

is finished ; the work which I engaged my heart unto, is finished : And so he gave up the ghost, committing his spirit into his Father's hand, as a pledge and token that the engagement was fulfilled. And now, this work being accomplished, shall we not think that his heart is as much engaged to the work of redemption by power, as it was to the work of redemption by price? Yea, "He hath entered into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us," Heb. ix. 24. "If, when we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ; how much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life?" Rom. v. 10. "He that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore ; and he ever lives to make intercession for us." He lives to apply, by the power of his Spirit, what he purchased by the price of his blood.—Thus you see the singularity of the fact, both to the matter and manner of it ; and how his heart was engaged to approach unto God : And so far is he from being dissatisfied with the bargain, that never a repenting thought was in his heart to this day, with respect to the whole of his work.

IV. The Fourth thing proposed, was, To give the reasons of the doctrine, why Christ did so heartily come under the engagement ; together with the reasons of our faith about it ; or, why it is that JEHOVAH's testimony is added in these words, "Saith the Lord." "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? SAITH THE LORD."

Now, as to the first of these, viz., the reason why Christ did so cordially engage in this work. There are these four reasons especially that I would offer.

1. He engaged his heart, from obedience to his Father's command ; "I delight to do thy will, O my God." God the Father choosed him to this service : "Behold my Servant, whom I have chosen ; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth." And he authorized him in it, and caused him to approach : "This commandment have I received of my Father."

(2.) He engaged his heart from zeal to his Father's glory. Though the whole creation of men and angels had been offered up as a whole burnt-offering, it would not have repaired the honour of God for one sin whereby his honour is impaired ; but Christ's engagement is what brings more glory to God, than if all mankind had stood, or yet fallen a sacrifice to divine justice : therefore Christ, from a zeal to his Father's glory, did come under this engagement ; "The zeal of God's house did eat him up." By his engagement all

the attributes of God are glorified.—God had a mind to set out his love and mercy to the utmost, and herein it is done more than any other way; “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. We may behold here the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of God, in taking his Son out of his bosom, where he lay from eternity, and giving him for us. He looked over all the copies of his love, grace and mercy that he had written in all his former works, and found them short of the thing; therefore it is his will, to write his love in letters of blood, upon him who is an infinite Spirit with himself: and, that this may be done, he gives him a body; “A body hast thou given me,” that this body, this human nature, might be a sacrifice for sin.—God had a mind to set forth the glory of his justice to the utmost, and by this engagement it is done. What though the whole world were drowned in a deluge of water, or, as Sodom, burnt to ashes? What though all the posterity of Adam were doomed to everlasting burning? What though every spire of grass, or atom of dust were a rational creature, and for sin thrown into hell: This would be indeed an act of excellent justice: but what is all this to the justice executed upon Christ, when he stood in our room? What are all other judgments to his bloody sweat in the garden, and his expiring groans upon a cross? Here is the highest act of justice imaginable, to make the soul of his dearly beloved Son an offering for sin, when imputed to him. See Rom. iii. 23, “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.” Here the awakened sword of justice is drunk to full and complete satisfaction with the most noble blood that ever was or could be.—God had a mind to set forth his holiness to the utmost: now the perfect obedience of men and angels might set forth his holiness; but what is all this to the obedience of the Son of God, whose obedience does indeed magnify the law? God’s law was never honoured, and his holiness never shone with such a sparkling lustre.—God had a mind to set forth his power to the utmost; and now the arm of omnipotency was not so much manifested in laying the foundation of the earth, and stretching out the heavens as a curtain, and turning the wheels of providence, as in bringing about the salvation of sinners by Christ; the power of God supporting Christ under that load of wrath, which would have crushed ten

thousand worlds: "Once have I heard yea twice, that power be-
longeth unto the Lord," Psal. lxii. 11.—Once have I heard it in the
work of creation and providence, but far more gloriously in the work
of redemption, wherein he spoiled principalities and powers, bruised
the head of the serpent, destroyed the works of the devil, disarmed
death, and knocked off the fetters of our spiritual captivity.—In a
word, God had a mind to set forth his wisdom to the utmost. Wis-
dom shines every moment in the work of creation, it glitters every
day in the work of providence ; but all the treasures of wisdom are
hid in Christ. Here is the wisdom of God in a mystery ; the mani-
fold wisdom of God ; particularly in uniting the most divine ex-
tremes: the divine and human natures are united in one person ;
the justice and mercy of God united in one joint harmony, for the
salvation of sinners, without robbing each other of their right, and
so God and man united in an eternal fellowship ; stubble is
made to dwell with devouring fire, without being destroyed ; and
weakness to behold glory, without being overwhelmed ; yea, straw
is made to dwell with everlasting burnings ; "Who among us
shall dwell with devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with
everlasting burnings?" Isa. xxxiii. 14. Why, even the believer
can dwell with a God of terrible majesty and infinite justice, and
dwell there with satisfaction, and without hazard of being con-
sumed, because of this engagement of Christ, whereby justice is in-
finitely satisfied.—Thus I say, God had a mind to set forth the
glory of his perfections ; now, zeal for this glory of God engaged
the Mediator's heart to this work.

3. He engaged his heart, from a view of his Father's reward :
"For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross,
despising the shame, Heb. xii. 2, and now is set down at the right
hand of God," Heb. ii. 9. His Father promised him, that, having
drunk of the brook in the way, he then should lift up his head ; and
accordingly, he having humbled himself, and become obedient unto
death, even the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly
exalted him, Phil. ii. 8, 9. In a word, it was the Father's promise
to him, that, upon his making his soul an offering for sin, he should
see his seed, and see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. And
therefore his heart was engaged to the work.

4. He engaged his heart to this work : why ? It was even
out of love and pity to lost sinners ; he saw us helpless and hope-
less, and lying in our blood : and then our time was a time of love.

Christ was drawn to this work ; but what was it that drew him ? even a cord of love ; Love brought him out of heaven, and love nailed him to a cross, and love laid him in a grave, and love made him rise again, and mount up to heaven to agent our cause. On what design came he to the world ? It was a design of love. What sickness died he of ? He was even sick of love, and died in love. O ! shall not this love beget love, and engage our hearts to him, whose heart was engaged to this work, out of love to us ? In a word, it was to engage the hearts of sinners to him, and so to make way for their approaching unto God in him.

2dly, As to the reason of our faith, in the last word of the text ; it is built upon, "thus saith the Lord ;" "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me ? SAITH THE LORD." There is JEHOVAH's testimony ? and why is this added ? Why ?

1. Because nothing is more quieting to the conscience of a sinner, than the testimony of a God concerning a Saviour ; God, by his holy Spirit in the word, testifying of Christ to the conscience, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." True peace of conscience is grounded upon this testimony.

2. Nothing is more securing to the soul ; for God's testimony is our security ; Psal. xix. 7. "The testimony of the Lord is sure." It is VERY SURE, Psalm xciii. 5. Here is ground for the assurance of faith ; the sure word and testimony of a God that cannot lie.

3. Nothing is more rejoicing to the heart, Psal. xix. 8, and Psal. lx. 9. "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice." Why ? Nothing speaks out more love than this, when JEHOVAH says the word, as well as does the work. The soul cannot but rejoice, when the Lord speaks to it ; at least, here is ground of joy unspeakable : John xv. 11. "These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

4. Nothing is more silencing to unbelief than this : Why ? Here is the very utmost length that unbelief can go ; for, says the unbelieving heart, if God would say it, then I would believe it. Well, "Thus saith the Lord," comes in here to ruin and silence your unbelief. Here is the reason of our faith : for you are to notice two things in the next : the one is, the glorious Object of faith, a Christ engaging himself in our room : The other is the convincing reason of faith : it come with a "Thus saith the Lord." Now, in order to get our faith fixed, and brought to a full assurance and certainty, we are not so much to look to the object of faith, or

the thing to be believed, as to the reason of faith, and the ground of it, namely, God's testimony; He says it: his truth and veracity is at the stake to give us security; it is the great word of the great God. It is not the greatness of a promise that draws our faith, but the fidelity of the promiser: nay, the greater the promise is, the more will we doubt of it, unless there be a ground for believing it. If a man of undoubted integrity come and tell you never so great things that he is to do for you, and give to you, the greatness of the things promised is not the reason of your believing him; nay, the greater they are, the further will you be from believing: but the reason of your believing is, because the man is honest and able, and a person of entire credit, whom you can trust. Even so it is here; there is a great thing proposed to our faith, that Christ, the Sent of God, is engaged for our complete salvation; and upon this ground he promises in the context, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." But, the greater it is, the further are we from believing it; and therefore we must have a reason for our faith: well, it is here, the God of truth says it, and we are to take it upon the testimony of the God that cannot lie. When Abraham was strong in the faith, and against hope believed in hope, was it the greatness of the promise that supported his faith, or the reasonableness of it! No, no; his body and Sarah's both were dead: but he considered the veracity and ability of the God that promised; "He was fully persuaded, that he that had promised was able to perform," Rom. iv. 21. When Moses was sent to Israel in Egypt, to tell them that the set time was come, that they were to be delivered from their Egyptian thralldom and bondage, and to be brought to a land flowing with milk and honey: here is a great promise: but O, says Moses, "How will they believe this?" Why, says God, "Go tell them, I AM hath sent you;" even the God of beings, that can give being to what I say. I was known to their forefathers by the name, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY: because I did mightily for them, viz. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: and now I am come to accomplish my promise that I made to them concerning their seed; therefore I will be known now to them by the name, I AM THAT I AM. I have all Being in myself from eternity, and can give a being to my promise. Here is a good ground for their faith. If we look not to this ground, the greatness of the promise will upset our faith, while the man says, O! it is too good news to be true. It is too great for me! and so we reason ourselves out of our faith: But O!

see who says it, and that it is the word of JEHOVAH, and here is firm footing for your faith.

V. The Fifth thing proposed was the Application of this doctrine in some Inferences. Is it so, that Christ, the eternal Son of God, did thus cordially engage himself to approach unto God in the work and business of our redemption! Then hence we may infer the following particulars. We may see,

1. The greatness of our ruin by nature, and the sad case that mankind is in; that not one of all the posterity of Adam can or dare approach unto God, or come under engagements for this end. If we do, we engage ourselves to what is impossible to perform, and we approach to a fiery tribunal, where we are doomed to eternal death, unless we come under the wings of this glorious Engager and Approacher to God. This God will shew no regard to any personal bond or engagement of ours; for our personal credit is cracked and broken, not only originally in Adam, by the violation of the covenant of works, but actually in our own persons; we never kept a word that we promised to God; we never kept our engagements to God one day to an end; and therefore God will not trust us. I am far from disallowing of personal covenanting and engaging, when it is put in its due place; that is, after a man hath once closed with Christ as the principal Engager; and then vows, through his grace, and under the covert of his engagement, from gratitude, to serve the Lord, and walk in his ways; but, for all other kind of engagements, let us know that God will take none of our bonds without a cautioner. And we are blind if we do not see that our credit is cracked: look to our national engagements, our COVENANTS, NATIONAL and SOLEMN LEAGUE; and sure our national credit is cracked and broken: never a nation was more solemnly engaged to God, and yet never any national engagement was more solemnly broken and buried; the credit of our ministers and people, of our nation and church are sunk into the depth of defection, division, error, security, and carnal compliances. And, whereas our forefathers transmitted to us their posterity, precious truths, and pure Confessions of Faith, worthy of the name of Reformers, how are we like to transmit to our posterity a world of trash and lumber, instead of precious treasure? While, among other things, old Reformation principles and doctrines are like to be carried down to succeeding generations after us, under the tash of wildness, new

schemes, and Antinomian cant.¹ And, as we ought to be humble this day for the breach of our National Covenant and Solemn League, so we may see what is necessary in order to the reviving of a Covenanted Work of Reformation, and of our Solemn Engagements, even that the generation be brought to acquaintance with Christ as the first and foremost Engager in their room ; and then that, under the acceptable covert of his engagement, they come under obligations, through his grace, to approach unto God, by returning to him and to their duty. O that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ were poured out for this end ! However, as our national engagements are sadly broken, so look to your baptismal engagements, your communion engagements, and all your other particular engagements to duty ; and see that, as our national so our personal credit is cracked ; for an evil heart of unbelief causes your departure from the living God every hour of the day. And this is such an universal disease that there is not one of Adam's race that God can now trust without a cautioner, nor allow to approach to him without a midsmen.

(1) This affair may be seen cleared up by referring to Sermon IV., Sermon XX., and the whole of Sermon XXIV—XXVII. Although among the many peculiarly important and singularly interesting doctrines of Christianity there is scarce any that hath a greater tendency to promote holiness than the believer's being freed from the law as a covenant in point of justification, in virtue of the meritorious obedience of Christ in his room ; yet in regard this doctrine is eminently calculated to advance the glory of God, in the manifestation of the freedom of his grace, and to debase the creature in levelling pride and self-confidence, there is hardly any that is more spurned at than this, in the age we live in, and by more than the self-sufficient Legalist, who prides himself in, and vaunts mightily of his legal righteousness ; and so speaks, writes, and reasons against the Scripture-doctrine of free justification through the merits of Christ ; yea, so much is he in conceit with his legal turn of mind, and external conformity to the law, that he sticks at nothing that he thinks will bring a reproach upon his opponents ; and, therefore, let their abilities be never so great, and their character never so high, he is determined to calumniate their name, and depreciate their reputation ; for this purpose he hesitates at nothing he imagines will gain his end, and hence we find that introducers of new schemes in Divinity, disturbers of the peace of the church, enemies to holiness, friends to licentiousness, advocates of Antinomianism, and what not are the usual epithets and appellations we meet with conferred upon them. But what period of the church produced more eminent divines, greater lovers of our Reformation-principles, truer patrons of genuine piety, more shining examples of true holiness, greater promoters of external purity, and stronger opposers of licentiousness, than the friends to the Marrow-doctrine, of *dying to the law in point of justification, in order to living unto God in point of justification* were, who were, and still are thus impeached ?—But they, being fully persuaded that this is a doctrine agreeable to the inspired writings, and peculiarly calculated to promote holiness, (Gal iii. 19 ; Titus ii. 11, 12) they bore all this unjust calumny and defamation patiently, accounting it their greatest honour to suffer reproach for the truth's sake.

2. Hence see the glorious excellency of Christ, and the sufficiency of this wonderful Engager for his people, in that he was able to approach to an unoffended God, and able to stand there in the sinner's stead, and to plead for their good; able to stand the trial of infinite holiness and impartial justice, and, where nothing was to be forgiven, was able to satisfy all that the law and justice could demand, and to finish every thing that was necessary to be done, in reference to man's salvation, and the work of redemption. O see his glory! see his glory! O glorious Engager, glorious Approacher! Behold his glory, and the glory of God in him! If you see any thing of this glory to captivate you, then, "The God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ."

3. Hence see what is the gospel-way of a sinner's engaging to duty, and approaching to God: Why, it is just to take on with this Engager, and so to engage under him; and to take on with this blessed Approacher, and to approach to God in him. In the old covenant of works, man got a stock of created grace in his own hand; and if he mis-spent his stock, and became bankrupt, he was to answer for himself; he had no surety or cautioner to stand up for him, or to pay his debt, or to approach to God for him: but the covenant of grace is better ordered than so, and therefore called a better testament, whereof Christ is the mediator, in whose hand the principal stock is; and whatever small measure of grace believers have bestowed upon them, yet their stock can never be spent, and they can never break, or become liable to a law-pursuit, for the Cautioner keeps them and their stock both; and he being the Engager, they may engage to do any thing, yea, all things, upon this score; "I can do all things, through Christ strengthening me:" and he being the leading Approacher to God, they may approach to God with boldness, when he goes before them; "We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus." Here then is a test of right engagements; you cannot be trusted, if you engage alone; you must match with one that can make good your engagements. In your common affairs in the world, you know that no man will take a person's bond or engagement for a sum of money; for example, if he know the person to be insolvent, that can never make payment, but rather is always taking on more and more debt; but if that person, be he never so poor himself,

will provide you a sufficient cautioner, that will give his bond of suretship for him, then you will accept of the person's bond under this cautionary ; because, though the principal, whom you have good ground to suspect, should break the next hour, and become utterly insolvent, yet you are secure, because you can pursue the cautioner when you will, upon his engagement and bond of suretship. Well, just so is it here ; poor broken bankrupt that thou art, there is no trusting of thy bond or engagement ; God will not trust any of the race of Adam ; since the time that he brake, when he violate his first covenant-engagement. Nay, the Lord knows, you are so far from being able to pay your debt, that you are but every moment taking on more and more : but, be you never so poor and insolvent, if you once accept Christ for your Cautioner, then God will accept of any bond off your hand, that hath his name as the Engager in it ; for, if you fail, your cautioner is liable, and he is a rich and opulent Cautioner, sponsable enough ; and God seeks no better than his bond, though you be never so unable to pay : yea, God reckons himself secure, and that all shall be well enough paid, when Christ is the Cautioner and Engager, accepted by you. He is secured of his honour ; obedience to his law is secured, satisfaction to his justice is secured, glory to all his attributes is secured ; and herein lies the triumph of faith, over all charges and challenges from the law or justice of God, Rom. viii. 33-34. What is the charge ? Why, says the law, you owe me a debt of obedience ; yea, says justice, and you owe me a debt of satisfaction, because of your disobedience : nay, but says bold faith, you may produce what charges you will, but there is a discharge to counter-balance it. If you had my single personal bond for payment, then I confess I would be liable : but as I can elude any law-pursuit against me, with the defence of my Cautioner's full payment in my room, so if you have any thing further to say against me, go to my Cautioner, who is engaged for all : he is able to answer all that you can say : and therefore let all challengers and him reckon the matter betwixt them.—In a word, right engagement is to engage upon Christ's engagement.—What is that ? It is just, as it were, to lay a wager upon Christ's head. I will wager upon his head, that I will get to heaven, in spite of all the devils in hell ; I will wager upon his head, that the head of the serpent shall be bruised ; I will wager upon his head, that sin shall not have dominion over me ; I will wager upon his head, that I shall perform duty, and do all

things through him strengthening me ; I will wager upon his head, that my sins shall be forgiven me ; as the Jews, you know, confessed their sins upon the head of the sacrifice shadowing Christ ; and what was the gospel of it ? Why, when it was done in the faith of Christ, the great sacrifice, it was in effect to say, I will wager upon the head of this sacrifice, that as it is sufficient for the expiation of my sins, so all my sins shall be pardoned upon this ground. What say you, man ? Will you venture all that concerns your holiness and your happiness, grace and glory, duty and dignity ; will you venture all upon Christ ? Will you wager and engage upon his head ? Then in God's name you shall gain the day. But here also is a test of right approaching to God in all duties and ordinances, and at a communion-table ; why, it is just, as it were, a coming to the chamber of divine presence, so as to come in at Christ's back, setting him before you, as the first Approacher to usher you in ; " I am the way : and no man cometh to the Father but by me." It is to come to God in the faith of Christ's having approached to him before you, and to come boldly, never fearing that his infinite holiness shall dash such a filthy sinner, nor that his infinite justice shall confound such a guilty sinner. Why, your Usher, that hath gone before you, to the presence of this holy and just God, hath gratified his holiness, and satisfied his justice both.—Here, I say, you see the rightengaging and right approaching.

4. And, lastly, passing all other inferences that might be drawn from this doctrine, hence see the duty of all that hear this gospel, and what the Lord is calling you to this day ; it is even this, that your heart be engaged to approach unto him whose heart was engaged to approach unto God in your room ; that so, approaching heartily to Christ, you may approach confidently to God in him, for there is no approaching to God but by taking Christ by the way. O, then, let your hearts be engaged to approach unto Christ, this is the very design of all that we have been saying, even to engage your hearts to the Son of God. And O, sirs, what in all the world will engage your hearts if the engaged heart of Christ do not do it ? He is come here this day to court your hearts ; the very heart of a Saviour is come down to court the heart of a sinner, and to court you with this argument, That his heart is so much upon you, that he engaged his heart to approach unto God in your room. Away with the devil's logic, " Maybe it was not for me that Christ engaged, nor for me that he approached unto God, for there is but a

select number that were elected from eternity, for whom he engaged and approached." In order to shut this objection out of the way, let me tell you, man, that "Secret things belong to God, but to us the things that are revealed." Let an infinitely wise God answer for his own decrees, as well as he can; but you dare not be answerable to God for meddling with them; and you meddle too far, if the thoughts thereof discourage you from coming to Christ this day. Will it be a good answer for you before the bar of God? Lord, I thought, perhaps, I was not elected, and therefore my heart could never be engaged to Christ. What answer can you expect from God but the like of this? Wretch that thou art, had you not my revealed will to be a rule of your duty? And did not I reveal, That upon the peril of damnation you was to close with my Christ? And what had you to do with my secret decree? How durst you attempt to be wise above what is written? Who but the devil could suggest that to your heart, that you was not an elect? And he was a liar for saying so, for he told you what he did not know himself. How does the devil act herein like himself, while he would carry you up to the pinnacle of the temple of eternal predestination at the first instant, that you may thence throw yourself down from the battlement of heaven to the bottom of hell, which was the way himself went, and he would have you along with him? O! will you regard the ruining suggestions of a black devil more than the kindly motions of a Saviour? O! will you rather outshoot the devil in his own bow, and draw an argument for faith, from what was done from all eternity? Titus i. 2. Was eternal life promised in Christ before the world began; was all engaged for from eternity? Then there is the less ado for me, when this promise of eternal life comes directed and offered; for, "To you is the word of this salvation sent," that Christ hath engaged for all that concerns our salvation; and we have nothing ado, but, through grace, to consent that this Engager be ours, to do all for us. From all eternity the Mediator's heart was engaged to the work of our redemption; and from this infinitely high and eternal tower there are ropes of divine promises hanging down, for us to lay hold on with our hearts; "For the promise is to us, and to our children, and to all that are afar off." And when our hearts embrace any of these promises that are fastened to Christ's engaged heart, then our hearts are carried up, in God's order, to the knowledge of the divine

counsels, and go up the scripture stair ; while Satan would have us begin at the top, that we may fall down headlong. Now, among these promises that are let down from Christ's engaged heart, for us to embrace with our heart, there is one, Jer. xxxi. 2 : " I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness will I draw thee." O sirs, here is a cord of love let down, and the upper end of it is fastened to Christ's heart, and the lower end of it hanging down the length of your hearts : And, O ! shall not Christ's heart and yours be knit together this day. Here is a cord to bind his heart to your heart, and your heart to his heart. O ! strong cord, of God's making ! O ! shall not the Saviour's heart and the sinner's heart meet together this day ? Will the heart of Jesus gain no heart in this house to-day ? Yea, we hope there shall be a meeting of hearts betwixt him and a remnant here. O then, sinner, come into his heart, for his heart is open ; and I have a commission to tell you, that his heart is open to you, and opened so wide, that you may all go in to his opened heart.—It is not a hard heart like yours : No, no ; If he had been as hardened against you, as your hearts were hardened against him, he would never have engaged so heartily to approach to God for you, nor ever sent us to tell you his heart's love towards you. O believe it upon his word, Jer. xxxi. 20. He is not hard-hearted ; no, his heart is a melting heart, saying, " I do earnestly remember you still ; my bowels are troubled for you ; I will surely have mercy upon you." From the very time that I engaged for you, which was from all eternity, I do earnestly remember you still ; and now the time of love is come, the time of letting out my heart toward you : my bowels are sounding for you, and my heart is melting over you, and warm drops of love are falling down from my melted heart to your hard hearts, that they may be melted and dissolved, so as both mine and yours may be melted into one ; and being run together with the fire of my everlasting love, they may be engaged to each other for ever. O sinner ! sinner ! sinner ! O enemies ! enemies to God, enemies to Jesus ! O hard-hearted sinner ! Words and rods, calls and threatenings, sermons and sacraments have not melted your heart ; and if you go to hell, the flames of hell will never melt your heart : but here are the flames of infinite love from the heart of a God-man ; what will this do ? A God of love is come down, and must not the mountains melt before him ? Yea, mountains of enmity and unbelief, and the hard flinty heart will melt like wax before him. A live

coal from the flaming altar of Christ's engaged heart, is come down to put fire to your coldrife heart. O! is the blessed fire kindled? Is your heart engaged to him or not? If not, will you consider,

(1.) What a sad thing it is, if your heart shall not be engaged to approach unto him: It says, the heart is engaged to some others than to Christ, that your heart is engaged to idols and lusts, and you cannot find in your heart to sign a bill of divorce from these.—But, O! will you tell me, if your heart be engaged to the devil, engaged to the world, engaged to the flesh, and the lusts thereof, engaged to wicked company, engaged to corrupt courses, and that you cannot be disengaged from them, nor break these engagements, nor your covenant with hell? O! will any of these lovers to whom your hearts are engaged, will any of them engage to approach to God in your room, as Christ hath done? Will any of them engage to bring you to heaven, or to keep you out of hell? Nay, are they not engaged rather to ruin your souls for ever, if they can? And why should your hearts be engaged to your greatest enemies, that would lead you to destruction; and not engaged to Christ, who engaged his heart to approach unto God for your salvation and redemption? If your hearts be not engaged to Christ, it says you are, at best, married and engaged to the law: you are going about to establish a righteousness of your own; hoping to please God, and procure salvation to yourselves by your prayers and good duties: Your language is like that of the wicked servant, that said, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all." You are not yet pleased to have one to undertake for all in your room; and therefore, O sad is your state! for you stand under a personal obligation to pay all indeed: You are a debtor to do the whole law; and yet because of your failure, you are under obligation to bear the whole curse of the law. O terrible! If you stay there, you must approach to the tribunal of God, in your own person. O! how will you approach to God without him! You will find God out of Christ a consuming fire.

(2.) Consider how sweet it is to have your hearts engaged to him, whose heart was engaged to approach to God for you: his heart was engaged to you before ever yours were engaged to him: yea, from all eternity; and you may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Though your debt be never so great, he is engaged to pay it; though your sins be never so heinous, he is engaged to pardon them; though your corruptions be never so strong, he is engaged to subdue them; though your enemies be

never so mighty, he is engaged to conquer them ; and though the promises be never so precious in themselves, and unlikely to be accomplished to you, yet he is engaged to fulfil them ; only, while you are here, on this side Jordan, he will accomplish them in his own time, and in his own measure, and according as you need, your work, and his glory do call for it. Yea, he is engaged to perform all your work, in you and for you, and to perfect strength in your weakness ; he is engaged to guide you by his counsel, and bring you to his glory, and to lead you safe through the valley of the shadow of death into IMMANUEL'S land ; he is engaged for your debt, your duty, your safety and all. O what a load-stone is this, to draw the heart and engage the affections of any rational soul, to engage with one that engages for all that you can need through time, and through eternity ! Why, say you, But must I engage to do nothing ? O that old covenant, Do and Live, sticks fast to you : in the covenant of works, man was engaged to do all, but O, in the covenant of grace, Christ is engaged to do all. Why, man, if you can do anything without Christ, you may try your hand ; but why will you give Christ the lie, who says, " Without me ye can do nothing ? " And if that be a truth, O how sweet is it to have a heart engaged to him, that has engaged to do all ! You may know from your experience, how sad a thing it is to take any engagement upon yourself alone, and on your own head : for it never abides a touch ; and when you break your engagement, then you are quite dispirited, as if the covenant of grace was broken : and thus you turn your covenant of duties to God's covenant of grace, and so the covenant of grace to a covenant of works ; and in that case, no wonder that you find the law a hard and heavy task-master. But the covenant of grace is Christ's engaging to do all ; it is not a bargain that God is making with you ; for he will not make a bargain with the like of you ; God knows you are a bargain-maker ; but it is a bargain made with Christ, wherein Christ hath engaged to God to do all for you, because you can do nothing : and now he courts your heart to fall in with this device of glorious and free grace.

(3.) Consider who it is that is courting your heart : It is he to whom the heart of God is engaged ; Behold my Servant, whom I uphold ; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth." God's heart was engaged to Christ from all eternity, not only because he was his eternal Son, but also because he engaged his heart to approach to him on your account. God's heart is so much engaged to him for that very reason, that he declares three times, with an audible voice from heaven, " This

is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased ; and all that he seeks is, that you be well-pleased too. And, O you are ill to please, if that which pleases God, will not please you ; and your heart is ill-disposed, if it be not engaged to him to whom God's heart is engaged. God the Father put him upon this work, out of goodwill to you : he caused him to approach on your account ; and he is pleased with his engagement and approach ; and nothing in the world will please God so much, nor make him take so much pleasure in you, as your being well pleased with Christ and his undertaking, so as to find your heart engaged to him for it : for then you will please him more than ever your sins displeased him ; and you will honour him more than ever your sins dishonoured him ; Yea, then he will get full satisfaction for all your sins ; because that glorious Engager, whom you close with, hath fully contented his heart ; and so you will satisfy his justice more than your eternal damnation in hell could do.—O ! the heart of God is engaged to him, and the hearts of angels are engaged to him, and the hearts of all the redeemed are engaged to him : O ! shall all hearts be engaged to him but yours ? O there would be joy in heaven, and it would be a day of the gladness of Christ's heart, and it would give a glad heart to God, angels and saints, if your hearts were engaged to Christ !

(4.) Consider whose heart he is courting : You perhaps think, surely it will be some very good heart that will please him : indeed I know none that have a good heart by nature ; and you that think you have a good heart to God, do but deceive yourselves : But, O he is even courting the love of that heart that is full of enmity against him ; his love is seeking to break your enmity this day. What for a heart have you, man, woman ? Be what sort of a heart it will, he is seeking it ; My son, give me thy heart." Is it a wicked heart, and a wandering heart, an unbelieving heart, a deceitful heart ? Is it the heart of Manassch in compact with Satan ? Is it the heart of Mary Magdalene, out of whom were cast seven devils ? Is it the worst heart in all the world, and the worst heart that ever was in the world ? a hard heart, a stout heart, a heart full of hell, and a heart like the devil ? It is even the heart that he is seeking and courting this day : he engages to give you a new heart and a new spirit ; and if you sign his engagement with your heart, saying, Content, Lord ; he will make your heart to his mind by degrees ; and your heart shall be according to his

heart. What say you, is that possible that he is courting such a heart as mine? Would it not be presumption for such an one as me, vile, filthy, black, and ugly me, to trust for so much good at the hand of such an one as Christ? What man! when God calls, is it presumption in you to answer his call? No; it is the greatest presumption in the world to sit his call, and refuse his kind embraces, when he offers to take you into his very heart. When Christ offered to wash Peter's feet, O did it not ill become him to say, "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet," John xiii. 8. Be your feet never so dirty and your heart never so black, you have the more need to let Christ wash you.

(5.) Consider that the present opportunity is a special season of letting out your heart upon him, when he is coming so near to you in this work. It is a dangerous thing to miss the tide when it is flowing: some of your friends and neighbours are in eternity since the last communion here: and you may never hear another action-sermon all your life: and though you may hear other sermons, yet it is but now and then that the wind blows, and that the Spirit breathes; and it is dangerous to resist the motions that blow you into the happy harbour of Christ's engaged heart: if there be a gale of heaven just now blowing, yet it may be over before an hour go about. O shall not your heart be engaged unto Christ! What if death approach to you, and snap the thread of your life in two? O! you would be more miserable than the devil to all eternity; for he never had such an offer as this. Death is approaching, judgment is approaching, eternity is approaching, and your heart not approaching to Christ: wo is me! what will come of you!

(6.) Consider, that Christ hath fulfilled his engagement to the Father for you, by bringing in everlasting righteousness; and God hath accepted it, and is well-pleased with it, as the condition of the covenant, and all the promises thereof: and, upon this account, the promise is made to you, as follows immediately upon the text, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." I WILL and ye SHALL, is the tenor of the promise; because Christ hath fulfilled the condition of it, so as you have nothing to do, but to say with the heart, "Thy will be done." And if your heart be engaged to him, and made willing, the God who commends Christ so highly to you in the words of the text, will turn it over to your commendation, saying, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?" Now, say not, that you want such and such

qualifications and conditions requisite in these that give their heart and hand to the Son of God : if your heart stand off from him on this account, it argues a heart in league with the law as a covenant of works, which is but a black bargain now, for any of the fallen race of Adam ; but the better testament is a better bargain, where Christ hath engaged for all fully, and you are only to take all freely : and never a good qualification will you have acceptable to God, till your heart be engaged to him whose heart was engaged to give all. If your heart be not thus engaged to Christ, to be obliged and indebted to him for all, then, though you had a thousand times more qualifications than you would be at, yet you shall go to hell with them, and perish eternally : and if your heart be once engaged to Christ, then though you had ten thousand good qualifications, you will count them all but dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, as Paul did. It is said of the creditor, concerning his two debtors, Luke vii. 42, " When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them all." So long as you think you have something to pay your own debt, or hope that you shall have something to make payment with, you are not in God's way of forgiveness : but when you have nothing to pay ; not a penny in your purse, either to pay your debt of obedience and satisfaction to the law, as a covenant ; or your debt of duty to the law, as a rule, and are content to take a cautioner, then he frankly forgives all. And so the best qualification is for you to see that you have nothing ; no money nor money-worth, that you may be obliged to Christ for all.

What say you, man ? Is your heart engaged to him ? I think so, may some say ; but it may be only a flash, because I have a deceitful heart. Why, man, be your heart never so deceitful, yet if there be such a heart-warming in your breast, as makes you subscribe to his engagement to do all for you, and to make you holy as well as happy, and to free you from sin as well as hell ; if it be such as makes you come out of yourself, saying, I dare engage for nothing, but my heart goes in to Christ, as engaging to God for all ; then, in God's great name, I will say, it is a good flash indeed ; even a flash of heavenly fire, kindled at Christ's warm heart towards you, which will never cool to eternity, though your live-coal should come under the ashes again.

What shall I say ? O ! is there any here, whose hearts are not yet engaged to Christ ? O many, many ! but, wo is me that there should be any ! O drunkard, swearer, Sabbath-breaker, whoremonger, mocker, here is a good bargain for you, even you

whom we cannot allow to come to a communion table; yet we allow you, yea God allows you and commands you, and we in his awful name and authority command you to come to Christ, and take a full pardon of all your sins, and subscribe to Christ's whole engagement; and you shall have a title not only to the communion table below, but to the communion table above that shall never be drawn. Away, man, away with all objections against Christ; let your objections be ten thousand times more and greater than they are, there is no room for one of them here; for Christ's engagement to do all things for you, answers all difficulties to you: and, therefore, be you never such a wretched sinner, there is no objection you can make, but it is answered here, if your heart be not engaged to some other lovers. O, say you, I have not power, I cannot get my wicked heart engaged to him. O doleful and miserable case. What is this, that infinite love and everlasting kindness, flaming out of Christ's heart upon you, cannot engage your heart to him! O! is there no power in this love? Is not love strong as death, and the coals thereof coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame? O! here is a strong flame, that is able to melt the hardest heart to the sweetest compliances; and, therefore, O will you bring these strong cords of death, by which your heart is held, bring them to this fire, and it will burn and burst them asunder! Do not resist the powerful love and precious grace of God, but be content to let it in to your heart, and it will draw and engage it. And, therefore, seeing no argument will do but an argument of power; and seeing Almighty power uses to ride in the chariot of this gospel of grace; O then, will you join with me, and say, "O powerful arm of JEHOVAH, come and draw, come and draw: O exalted JESUS, come and draw, by the power of thy Spirit. Awake, O arm of the Lord, put on strength, and let the right hand of the Lord do valiantly." Let all the heart-leagues with lusts and other lovers than Christ be broken this day, and Christ alone have the whole heart engaged to him; and let all the people say, AMEN, So be it, LORD. And if your heart say, AMEN, I hope your heart is engaged and made willing in a day of power: and being made willing to come to his Christ, you shall be made welcome to come to his table; having signed his engagement to approach to God in your room to do all for you, you may approach with boldness to God in him, and expect the same welcome with your Cautioner that goes before you. "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto God? saith the Lord."

A DISCOURSE

UPON THE SAME SUBJECT, AFTER THE SOLEMN WORK
WAS ENDED.

Now, my friends, after the great work is over, I would ask you, (whether you have been communicants or not), Have your hearts been engaged to Christ this day, as the glorious Engager and Approacher to God for you? I would tell you, if your hearts have engaged to him, then your hearts have been disengaged from all things besides him; you have been brought to forsake your father's house, and the people that are yours, and to "What have I any more to do with idols? There hath been a mutual donation betwixt Christ and you, as man and wife give up themselves to one another. Ye have rendered up your love to him, instead of all other lovers to whom your hearts were engaged before; and ye look upon yourselves as bound in love and gratitude, never to give a back-look to any other lover, so long as your present Husband lives; and behold he lives for ever and ever: whereas your former husband, particularly the law, is dead, and ye are dead to it, Rom. vii. 4, and are to expect nothing from it, because you have all, and more than all, in him to whom you are now engaged, and whose heart is engaged to you. Yea, as ye have rendered up your love to him as your Husband, so ye have rendered up your arms to him as your Lord: ye have surrendered all the weapons that have been weapons of unrighteousness, to be weapons of righteousness unto holiness, never to fight against him any more, but rather to fight under his banner against all his enemies, especially under his banner of love; for the love of Christ will constrain you both to work and war. Now,

First, A word to you whose hearts have never yet been engaged to Christ. O do ye know what for a case ye are in? and whence it is that your hearts are not engaged to Christ? Why, ye are even ignorant of glorious Christ: for, "They who know his name will love him, and put their trust in him;" but you are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in you; and enemies in your minds by wicked works: your carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God; and your darkened mind is enmity against Christ, and is not subject to the righteousness of Christ. Thus you are enemies to the Lord of life,

and care not for him to be your Lord ; ye are enemies to the word of life, and care not for that word to be your rule ; ye are enemies to the Spirit of life, to the grace of life, the light of life, and the way of life : ye are dead, and under the power of death and sin, under the power of security and heart-obduration, having no savour of Christ about you : under the power of a sordid choice, whereby ye set up the basest of objects above our Lord and Master, whom yet the tongues of seraphims are not worthy to adore ; behold, ye are choosing some base lusts and idols in his room, or else insolently capitulating with him upon the most ignoble and ignominious terms, to engage your heart to him, and to your lusts both, to him and to the world both, to him and to other lovers, to be hugged in your bosoms with him, as if he were a minister of sin, and a slave to serve your lusts ; or at best, ye put him off with trifling delays from your heart, and let him stand at the door and knock, without ever having your heart engaged to come to him, or to let him come to you. Well, is that the matter with you ? What is this that thou art doing, poor soul ? Shall there be no gathering of the people to Shiloh for your part ? Shall never our Lord's train and retinue be any whit the more for you ? What ! shall he have no train ? Glory to him, that he will have a retinue to attend him, and no thanks to you ; there shall be a number to follow the Lamb to heaven, though ye should follow the devil to hell. But, Oh ! may I yet bespeak you in the name of Jesus ! And, O Jesus, may I beg thy leave to be thy spokesman, to tell them thy words ? And now, since he hath set me here, and given me leave to speak for him, I must tell you some of his words to you.

And, First, I will tell you what is his complaining word upon you ; “ Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life : All day long have I stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

Again, I will tell you what is his lamenting word over you, “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (O Dunfermline, Dunfermline,) how often would I have gathered you as a hen doth her chickens under her wings, but you would not, you would not ! ”

Again, I would tell you what is his astonishing word ; “ Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be ye horribly afraid ; for my people have committed two great evils, they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.” They reject fulness itself, and turn

to an empty world, as if it were their heaven and their happiness.

Further, I must tell you what is his weeping word, O shall he weep alone, and none drop a tear with him, while he is grieved at the hardness of your heart ; and with the tear in his eye, weeping over the city, and saying, " O if thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace ! " but the time approaches when they shall be hid from thine eyes ; the time of desolation is coming, because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation. Do ye expect that these days will always last with you, and that you will never be deprived of sermons, and ministers, and sacraments ? Nay, they shall be hid from your eyes : " Your fathers where are they ? and the prophets, do they live for ever ? " Nay, since the last communion here, one of our dear helpers, in this presbytery, from whose lips you used to hear the joyful sound, he is gone away to the communion-table above ; and glory to God, that he got a full gale of heavenly wind, to drive him in with holy joy and triumph to the harbour of glory. But now, O sinners, have ye no regard to Christ weeping over you, and saying, O if ye knew the day of your visitation, before the shodows of the everlasting evening be drawn upon you ! And, O that ye knew the things that belong to your peace, before they be hid from your eyes !

But again, I must tell you what is his wrathful and threatening word ; " If you believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins ; " and, " How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation ? " If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.

And O ! what if we come to his farewell word ! " I go my way, and ye shall see me no more, " till he come in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him ; and then you will come to that word with it, who live and die with a heart never engaged to him ; you will come, I say, to that word with it, " O mountains and hills, fall upon us, and hide us from the face of the Lamb. "

And how dreadful will his last word be to you, " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ! " Ye did eat and drink in my house, and at my table, but I know you not ; " Depart from me ; " ye adventured to approach to my table, but your hearts were not engaged to approach to me ; nay, your hearts departed from me ; therefore depart with a vengeance ; " Depart from me, ye cursed. "

But, because it is not come that with you as yet, nay, it is yet a day of salvation; I would tell you next, his expostulating word, or his intreating word; he would gladly take his word of wrath again, that ye whose hearts are saying, Away with him, may yet take your word again: he is saying, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel? As I live, I have no pleasure in your death; O turn ye, turn ye:" Come, come, the door is yet open, the door of salvation is cast wide to the walls, that ye all may run in; the draw-bridge of mercy is not yet taken up: the day of mercy is present; the day of judgment is but coming, and now I am looking to you, and ye are looking to me; and if ye be not looking on me, ye that are behind the pillars and lofts there, I hope ye are hearing me: and therefore, in the view of that most awful day, when we shall hear and see at another rate, before the flaming tribunal, I take witnesses here, in the presence of the great God, and all this numerous company, that I am giving you a new offer of Christ; as an Engager to do all for you; and that if you will but consent to take him, and give him employment, yea, that if ye do not reject him, you shall have him. None here shall have it to say, they got nothing at this communion: for, lo, you have got an offer of Christ, and if ye go away without him, we shall be witnesses against one another at the great day of his appearance. O! "Now is the acceptable time, and now is the day of salvation." O! are ye pleased? Are your hearts pleased with one to be a Cautioner for you, to save you both from sin and hell, and that will engage for debt, and duty, and safety, and pave your way for approaching to God's glorious presence for ever? Will ye have him for your head and captain? I allude to the words of Jephthah, Judges xi. 9. "If I fight for you and prevail, shall I be your head?" O yes, yes, say they; well, so says Christ to you, If I engage to satisfy justice for you, and answer all law demands for you, and take away all your sins, and fight all your battles, and do all your work in you and for you, shall I be your head? O! is your heart engaged to say, yes? O man, woman, old and young, that are here, do your hearts, say, AMEN, AMEN; content to have him as a Prophet, to take away the darkness of my mind; content to take him as a Priest, to take away the guilt of all my sins; and content to have him as a King, to take away the power of all my lusts and idols, and to make me holy and happy in himself, that his name may be glorified in me, and his grace magnified for ever: O then,

I hope, the day of salvation is begun, that shall be celebrated with joy to eternity. Therefore, let me close with a word, in the next place,

2dly, To you whose hearts are engaged to the Lord Jesus, whether ye have been communicants or not; and because some such may be in doubts, whether ever they have believed in Christ truly and savingly. Why, if your hearts be truly engaged to Christ, never make a question about your believing; for a heart engaged to him is the best believing in the world, Rom. x. 10. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and if your doubt remain, the best way of getting it resolved is to let your heart go out upon him anew, as the glorious Engager and Approacher to God in your room. Are you afraid you come short of heaven? So ye may indeed, unless Christ had engaged to bring you there; but if ye lay stress upon his engagement, there is no fear. Are ye frightened you come short of duty? So you may, if you be the only engager: but will ye trust Christ for nothing? Where is your faith in his engagement to do all for you and in you? What, may some say, would you have us all to turn Antinomians, to do nothing, and engage to do nothing, but leave all to Christ? The Lord pity a poor deluded world, that is wedded to a covenant of works. Will you tell me, man, is that Antinomianism, 'to come out of yourself to Christ for righteousness, to answer all the demands of the law as a covenant of works; and to come out of yourself to Christ for strength, to answer all the commands of the law as a rule of life and holiness, and so to engage for nothing in your own person alone, because God cannot trust your personal bond, but to take Christ for your Cautioner, and to lay stress on his engagement?'—And seeing you cannot approach to a holy and just God in yourself, look to Christ as the first Approacher for you, and then to approach to God in him. If you thus engage upon Christ's head, according to his promise, then engage to what you will; and if you approach to God in his name, then you may approach with boldness.

If you think of engaging and approaching in your own name and person, that is the old covenant way of engaging and approaching; and therefore no wonder then, if that be your way, that you be overwhelmed with fear, and doubts, and discouragements.

But let gallant faith come in and say, Christ hath engaged, and therefore I have nothing ado but to trust him for all, and in the

use of means depend upon him : Christ hath approached before me, and therefore upon the red carpet of his justice-satisfying blood, I will go in to the holy of holies, even into the presence of a just and holy God. O have you thus approached to God, at this occasion ? I know not, say ye ; I would be glad to know. Why, if ye would judge of your approach to God in Christ, judge of your approach, not by the measure of it ; for believers are only admitted, sometimes as it were, to wash his feet with their tears, like Mary, though at other times they may be privileged to lie in his bosom, like the beloved disciple.—Judge not of your approach, by the matter of that which he gives you ; for sometimes you may be seeking one thing, and he may give another : It may be ye were seeking a feast of joy ; but if he hath given you a feast of godly sorrow, that is as good for you.—Judge not of your approach by your former experiences : It may be, some time a day you was like a lamb in his bosom, saying, under a sense of his love, “ This is my Beloved : ” and now, perhaps, you must lie like a dog at his feet, saying, under a sense of sin, “ Truth, Lord, I am a dog : ” well that is a token of more a coming.—Judge not of your approach by your own sense and apprehension ; for David was not in a desperate case when he was crying, as Psal. xiii. 1, “ How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord for ever ? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me ? ” When your longings are increased, though your strength be small, yet it is a notable feast ; for, “ he will satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry with good things.” Be thankful if you get as much as holds your soul in life, though you get not much. Know, that though he will be faithful to the accomplishment of all his promises, and to do all that he hath engaged for, yet the times and seasons are in his hand, and he hath his own measure of communication : if some of you received what you would be at, you would grow giddy, and be ready to cry with Peter, “ It is good for us to be here,” and forget the other work that God hath for you in the world.—He is engaged by promise ; but know, moreover, that he accomplishes his promise according to your need, and as it is for your good and advantage, and according as he hath work and business to put in your hand. Now, some here, I hope, have got their hearts engaged to approach to a God in Christ upon the ground of Christ’s engagement to approach to God in their room ; and I hope they can say it with holy confidence, that their hearts have been drawn, and they have been caused to approach to God ; and if so, then I hope you

can say of the water of the well of salvation, O sweet, sweet! "O how sweet are thy words to my taste! sweeter than honey to my mouth!" And that all other things in a world are but empty trash, loss and dung, in comparison of him. O the gallant fops of the world would think shame of themselves, if they knew how much contempt the poorest saints on earth do pour upon them, and all earthly glory and gallantry, when they get near to God! Surely, if you have been favoured with this approach to a God in Christ, it hath brought you to a great wondering at the grace of God. "O what am I? And what is my father's house?" Why did he pass by my neighbour, my husband, my wife, my brother, my sister, and fix his love upon me, the vilest of them all?—It hath brought you to great humility and abasement; "Now, mine eyes have seen thee, therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."—And also to a great longing after more fellowship and communion with him; "O when wilt thou come unto me! O when shall I come and appear before thee! O to depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!" O to be among the four and twenty elders that are before the throne! O to be drinking at the fountain head! Why, what means this language, poor soul? It seems you are just lying in his lap; "He hath loved you with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving kindness hath he drawn you." His heart is engaged to you, and your heart is engaged to him; the Spirit hath been sent to fasten Christ's heart and your heart together, and the knot shall never be loosed; "Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out."

And now, that he is engaged to do all for you, O does not equity and gratitude require, that you be wholly engaged to him, and that for ever? Let your hearts be more engaged to him than ever; let your affections be engaged to love him; let your wills be engaged to obey him in his preceptive and providential will; let your thoughts be engaged to think upon him and his loving kindness; let your tongues be engaged to speak to his praise; "In his temple shall every one speak of his glory:" let your whole life be engaged to his service, and all so engaged as to depend on him for all. He hath engaged for all, that you may depend on him for all: and all the service you perform will be vain and to no purpose, unless it be done in the faith of his engagement to do all in you and for you. The believer hath two hands, the one a holding hand, and the other a working hand; like a woman spinning at the wheel, (to use a homely simile) the one hand holds the thread and draws it

down, and the other hand goes round and sets about the wheel ; now, if she do not hold the thread constantly with the one hand, it is to no purpose though the other hand go round with the wheel ; even so it is here, the one hand of the believer is the hand of faith, whereby he takes fast hold of Christ, and draws grace and virtue from him ; the other is the hand of obedience and service, which is accepted only in Christ, and upon the score of his engaging for all, and to do all our work in us and for us. Now, if the hand of faith let go the hold of Christ, so as not to draw virtue from him, nor depend upon his engagement, it is in vain that the other hand of obedience and service doth go its round ; but, when faith keeps fast hold of Christ's engagement, then there is profitable service and obedience ; for, "We are accepted in the beloved." Let faith take a view daily of your privileges in Christ ; O how strengthening for your work and warfare, would it be to you, if you had the lively faith of his engagement ! It would make you approach to God in every duty with boldness. Did you believe that his honour is engaged for your through-bearing, till you arrive at glory ; that his faithfulness is engaged, his power is engaged, his name is engaged, his truth is engaged, his credit is at the stake ; for he hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee ; I will put my Spirit within thee, and cause thee to walk in my statutes." Is he thus engaged ? Then let faith keep a fast grip of his engagement ; and when faith is like to lose the grip, remember, that he who hath engaged for everything that concerns you hath engaged for faith too, having promised to keep your faith that it fail not, and to keep you, by his power through faith unto salvation. Therefore, in the want of faith look to his engagement for it ; and, in the weakness of faith, look to his engagement to strengthen it ; and, in the trial of faith, look to his engagement to support it. Let not your faith depend upon your faith, but your faith and dependence be wholly on Christ, for all that you need with respect to work and warfare, duty or difficulty, soul or body, grace or glory, time or eternity ; then will God put your name and Christ's together, saying, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me ?"

S E R M O N X X I X .

THE LAW OF GOD'S HOUSE.¹

EZEK. xliii. 12.—“This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy: behold, this is the law of the house.”

IT is most suitable and necessary that these who have been making a solemn profession of their being of the household of faith, who have been eating and drinking in God's house as fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, should know the order and law of the house; and, therefore, I lay before you a short sum of it, very emphatically here expressed,—“This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy: behold, this is the law of the house.”

In the beginning of this chapter we have an account of the glory of God filling the temple, particularly ver. 5, and then a promise of God's continuing his presence in his church, ver. 7, 8, to the purging them from their idolatry, corruption, and defilement, which here they are put in mind of, for their conviction and humiliation. From ver. 10, and downward, we have Israel exhorted to faith and repentance; “Shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquity.” The temple was a token of God's kindness, and symbol of presence, as well as a type of Christ the true temple, and of the New Testament church. And, when he enjoins to shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed, we may remark, that the way wherein a gracious God shames people for their sin is to shew them his kindness and gracious presence: thus he puts them out of countenance, and sets them a-blushing, ch. 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.”—Again, ver. 11, “If they be ashamed of all that they have done, then shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and all the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof,

(1) This sermon was preached on the Sabbath evening immediately after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dunfermline, July 16th, 1732.

and all the laws thereof; and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them." When his kindness makes them ashamed of their sin, then he shows them more and more of his kindness, and grants them more and more of his gracious presence. In the close of verse 11, "Write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them." Here remark that the privileges of God's house and people do not supersede their duty, but bind them more sweetly and strictly thereunto; and, therefore, obedience is here enjoined, and thereupon here is the rule laid down, "This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy: behold, this is the law of the house."

In which words we may notice the four following particulars:

1. What is the matter of the law of God's house, namely, Holiness; that all the inhabitants be holy, for "Holiness becometh God's house for ever."

2. The degree of that holiness which becometh his house, viz., that it be Most Holy; the perfection of holiness is required.

3. Notice the extent thereof, "From the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about." Formerly only the sanctuary was most holy, but now, in the gospel-times, to which this prophecy hath a reference, the whole mount of the house shall be so, and the whole limit thereof; all the courts, all the chambers, and every part of the house shall be as the most holy place.

4. The double assurance given us concerning this ordinance of God's house, "This is the law of the house;" and, again, "Behold, this is the law of the house."

By the most holy in the next, we are to understand, either the privilege of the house of God in the gospel-times, namely, that all believers in Christ have access unto the holy of holies, and boldness to enter into the holiest, Heb. x. 19; they being all spiritual priests, a royal priesthood, they have access not in the virtue of the blood of bulls and goats, but in the virtue of the blood of Jesus, and with this advantage also, above the high-priest under the law, that wherever we are, we have access through Christ to the Father: or by the most holy, we are to understand the duty of the church of God, or children of his house, that they be most holy; and indeed the former privilege lays the strongest foundation for, and brings them under the strictest obligation to, the duty.

According to the view we have here of the most holy, accordingly we are to understand what is to be meant by the law of the house.

If by most holy, we understand the privilege of access to the most holy place ; then by "the law of the house," we are to understand the law of grace, the law of faith, the gospel, or God's act of grace towards us, expressed in the promise.

Again, if by the most holy, we understand the equality of the church, and the duty of all the children of the house, that they be most holy ; then, by "the law of the house," we are to understand the precept of the moral law as a rule of holiness, duty, and obedience toward God. Both these, I suppose, may be included ; and the former as the means of the latter. Gospel-privileges making way for gospel-holiness, according to the order of the covenant of grace, in opposition to that of works, where Do, and Live, made duty go before the privilege : whereas here, Live, and Do, makes the privilege the foundation of duty, and the strong basis on which all gospel-holiness stands.

By the top of the mountain, and the whole limit thereof round about, we are to understand the universality of this holiness, and the extent both of that privilege of admission to the holy place, and of that obligation upon the privileged to be a holy people.

OBSERV. "That universal holiness is so much the established law of God's house, that the whole family, being privileged with access to the most holy place, are thereupon under the strongest obligation to be the most holy people."

The proof of this doctrine I refer to the prosecution of it in the following method, as the Lord may assist :—

- I. I would speak a little of the house of God.
- II. Hint at the nature of that holiness that is peculiar to the house of God.
- III. Show that this is the law of the house ; and why it is said to be so, again and again.
- IV. Touch at the extent of this holiness required by the law of God's house, "upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about."
- V. Consider a little the privilege of access to the most holy place.

VI. Show that this privilege obliges the whole to be the most holy people. And then,

VII. Make application of the whole in several uses.

I. I am first to speak a little of "the house of God." The church is the house of God; "If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" 1 Tim. iii. 5. And it is so called on several accounts:

1. God is the builder of it; "He that built all things is God," Heb. iii. 4. The church is as glorious a piece of work as the building of heaven and earth; yea, more glorious. It is the work of glorious Omnipotence, to make life out of death; he makes these that were dead in sins to be living stones, 1 Pet. ii. 5. "What shall one answer the messengers of the nations? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it," [or, betake themselves to it,] Isa. xiv. 32.

2. Because God is the repairer of it; it is he that repairs the waste places, and the desolations of many generations, Isa. xli. 4. And this is also a glorious work: "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory," Psal. cii. 16. It is too glorious for a creature; he that is God as well as man hath the honour of it ascribed to him; "He, even he, shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory," Zech. xi. 13. He may raise up instruments, but he himself is the principal agent. Saints may weep for Zion, but the Lord must rebuild and repair it.

3. Because God is the dweller therein: he dwells there where he sets up his ordinances, though he confines not himself to places: "In all places where I record my name I will come to thee, and bless thee," Exod xx. 24. God is known by his ordinances, as we are known by our names; "The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it," Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14.

4. Because God is the governor thereof: He alone gives laws of everlasting consequence, to destruction or salvation: "There is one Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy, James iv. 12. The Lord is our Lawgiver." Popes and patrons may usurp a government of the church; but the Lord alone is the God of conscience, and the government is on his shoulders.

QUEST. Who are the Members of this house of God?

ANSW. The church is either visible or invisible. To the

visible church on earth, belong all that have a visible and credible profession ; and it is meet for us to judge that they are saints, as the apostle speaks to the Philippians, chap. i. 7. But we may be deceived ; we know not the heart ; therefore it concerns every professor to examine himself. The invisible church is known to God only ; “ Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are his,” 2 Tim. ii. 19. Well, but how shall I know myself to be one of them ? Why, it follows, “ Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.” To be of the household of God, is not to be a member of the Presbyterianial government, nor a communicating member of such a congregation ; but to be a member of Christ.

QUEST. What sort of a house is the church unto God ?

ANSW. As it is, 1. His dwelling-house ; of which already ; so,

2. It is his pleasure-house ; for, “ The Lord taketh pleasure in his people.” O wonderful !

3. It is his treasure-house ; for, “ The Lord’s portion is his people, and Jacob the lot of his inheritance ;” though he cannot be enriched therewith, yet he reckons them his riches, his jewels, which he will make up at the last day.

4. The church also is his magazine-house ; built for an armoury, whereon hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. God’s church is his castle ; and, “ Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” Again,

5. It is his vessel-house, wherein all the vessels of mercy are hung ; and Christ is the nail fastened in a sure place, on which they hang, Isa. xxii. 23, 24. Weak and strong are there.

6. It is also his banquetting-house, Song ii. 4, where he and they feed together ; he feeds among the lilies, till the day break : and he sups with them, and they with him, Rev. iii. 20.

II. The next thing proposed, was, To hint at the nature of that holiness that is peculiar to the house of God. Holiness in the ordinary sense wherein it is attributed to the church and children of God, may be viewed,

1. In its definition. And, I think, it may be thus defined, “ A full renovation of our natures, into the image of God, through Jesus Christ, by the holy Spirit.” It is called a new birth, a new creation, a new creature : “ If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 21. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” It is the image of God, who is

holiness itself. It is a grace ; yea, the conjunction and constellation of all the graces. It is a duty, and the sum and substance of all duty.

2. We may view it in its spring ; it is neither natural nor acquired. It is not to be taken up by the strength of reason, nor the power of free-will, nor by the force of conviction and resolution from within or without : nay, " He that hath wrought us to the self-same thing is God." It is not to be ascribed to the virtue of ordinances, nor the worth of instruments, but to the powerful efficiency of the holy Spirit of God ; the sanctifying Spirit. Art, nature, education, can do nothing here ; it is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. vi. 11.

3. We may view it in the subject of it, and that is the believer in Christ, his whole man ? " The God of peace sanctify you wholly ; soul, body, and spirit," 1 Thes. v. 2. If ye ask, Where is the seat of holiness, in the head, or the heart, or the conscience ; in the inward or outward man ? We reply, The seat of holiness is not in any one of them, but in all of them : it is a leaven that leavens the whole lump. The holy man hath a sanctified enlightened understanding, to discern spiritual things, which before he understood not : a sanctified will, inclining to spiritual things, which before he hated ; a sanctified memory, to mind heavenly things, which before was only earthly ; a sanctified conscience, awakened to check for sin, and excite to duty ; a sanctified lip, to speak of God, and to speak to him, and for him ; a sanctified life, to glorify God.

4. We may view it in the parts of it, which are two ; a ceasing to do evil, and a learning to do good. The former is the privative, and the latter the positive part of it.—There is the privative part of holiness, which is called mortification : that is, a heart purged from the love of every sin, and a life purged from the practice of every sin ; sin is left in the heart, but is not loved nor liked ; nay, it is hated and disliked ; it may remain, but it cannot reign where holiness is.—There is the positive part of holiness, which is called vivification, or a living unto God, by a life of dependence on him, and a life of obedience to him. The man not only ceases to do evil, but he learns to do well. It is, in short, a walking with God, a walking in Christ, and a walking in the Spirit.—After this hint of the nature of holiness, I proceed,

III. To the third thing, which was, To shew that this is the law of the house ; and why it is here ingeminate and doubled, with

a "Behold, this is the law of the house." For clearing this head, you would consider three things: 1. What law it is that is called the law of the house. 2. How holiness is the law of the house.

The reason why this is redoubled.

1st, What law it is that is called "the law of the house." For the clearing of this, ye would consider three laws that the house of God hath always had some concern in.

1. There is a law from which the house is delivered; that is, the law of works, or the covenant of works; this is the law they are delivered from; "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14. They are not under it, to be either justified or condemned; they are neither under the command of it, to be justified by their obedience; nor under the threatening of it, to be condemned for their disobedience. Their title to eternal life stands upon Christ's doing and obedience; therefore they have nothing to do with the Do and Live of that covenant; their security from eternal death, stands upon Christ's dying and suffering; therefore they have nothing to do with the penalty of that covenant, "If thou doest not, thou shalt die." Christ has delivered them from the curse of this law, being made a curse for them. The law of works required holiness, indeed, in perfection; but in such a form, and under such a penalty, that, if there were no other law but this, we sinners and breakers of the law, would be irrecoverably lost. By this law, holiness is lost, because the law is violated; and therefore, by the deeds thereof, no flesh can be justified in God's sight: for sinners to be justified by works, or by the law, is a contradiction; the law can never justify a breaker of it, unless he hath a perfect righteousness from another quarter and source than himself: Therefore,

2. As there is a law from which the house is delivered, viz., the law of works; so there is a law by which the house is recovered and relieved, namely, the law of faith, or the covenant of grace. Of both these laws, which are clearly distinguished by the apostle, you read, Rom. iii. 27, "Where is boasting then? it is excluded; By what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith." This law of faith is nothing else but the covenant of grace and the doctrine of the gospel. In a word, it is the promise, Gal. iii. 21. And it is called a law, both in opposition to the covenant of works, to show that believers are not under the law of works, but the law of grace; and also to show, that the free promises of the gospel are a law that God makes to himself in the behalf of sinners, or an act

of the parliament of heaven. Acts of grace past there require no condition on the sinner's part, but only of the Surety, whose blood and righteousness is the condition of all the promises of God ; which, therefore, are said to be Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God. And it is called a law of faith, because the gospel, properly, is not a law to be obeyed ; but a law to be believed. It is not a law of commands, to be fulfilled by us ; but a law of promises, to be fulfilled upon us, in a way of free grace ; and therefore, here nothing is to be wrought or expected by works, but all things to be expected by grace, or believed upon the faithfulness of a promising God ; " To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5.—This law of faith is so much the law of God's house, that this is the very law that erects the house ; it stands upon the law of faith ; I mean, upon the free promise of God, which is the object and ground of faith. All the privileges and immunities of the house are owing to the law of faith.—By the law of faith, or gospel promise, sinners are warranted to come into the most holy place, and so they come to be made the most holy people.—In this law, holiness is promised ; by it, holiness is wrought. In this law of faith, faith itself is promised, or grace and strength to believe ; " Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," Psalm cx. 3, " When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me," John xii. 32. This absolute promise is indefinitely dispensed to sinners, that they may look into and rely upon this conquering power-drawing grace of God. By this law of faith, I say, the house is delivered. Again,

3. There is a law by which the house is governed ; namely, the law of love : I mean, the moral law, as it is a rule of life and holiness, not a rule of acceptance, (this were to make it a covenant of works) but a rule of obedience, in the hand of Christ. This is the law, which, by Moses, is reduced to ten words, ten commandments ; and I call it a law of love, because our Lord Jesus reduced it into two words ; namely, love to God, and love to our neighbour : And the apostle reduced it to one word, viz., Love ; " The end of the commandment is love," 1 Tim. i. 5. And again, " Love is the fulfilling of the law," by which the house is governed. It may be called a law of love, because, as love is the cord, by which God draws his household to obedience ; so love is the motive that engages them to obey it : they obey, not from slavish fear, like these

that are under the yoke of the law, as a covenant : but love, which casts out fear. Christ's yoke is easy, because it is a loving yoke ; not driving by violence, but drawing them kindly by the cord of love in every duty : not requiring rigorously, under pain of death and damnation, but constraining sweetly with delight to do the will of God. It is not a grievous law requiring obedience, but giving no strength, and seeking brick without straw ; but a gracious law, lined with love and grace, promising strength to obey, working in them both to will and to do. Hence his commandments are not grievous ; duties are not gravamenous ; ordinances are not a heavy burden ; but rather like a chariot paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. This is the law by which the house is governed pleasantly and peaceably ; for he that hath the government upon his shoulders, is the Prince of peace.

The consideration of these three laws, may clear your view about the law of the house ; the law, from which the house is delivered, is the law of works, or covenant of works ; the law, by which the house is delivered and recovered, is the law of faith, or covenant of grace ; and the law, by which the house is governed, is the law of love, or moral law, as a rule in the hand of a loving Jesus. Now, by the violation of the first of these, holiness was lost ; by the publication of the second, holiness is restored : and by the promulgation of the third, holiness is required and established as a rule for directing the household in the way of holiness. This leads me,

2dly, To the second question here, viz., How holiness is the law of the house ? For clearing this, it is necessary to remember, that the threefold law that I have mentioned, is fitly presented to us in the word of God. For by the first, we are convinced of our unholiness ; " By the law is the knowledge of sin." By the second, we are enlightened to see where holiness is to be had, namely, in the holy covenant of the holy Jesus, whom God hath given to be the covenant of the people, as the gospel declares : By the third, we are directed in the way of holiness. The first is not the law of the house ; for they are delivered from it ; only God makes use of it as a mean subservient to bring sinners to Christ, or to bring them to his house where the only law is the two last ; the law of faith, and the law of love. Now, the spiritual house of Christ is a holy building, where holy faith and holy obedience, comprehend all the holiness of the house ; and because it is to be built up in the

most holy faith, therefore the law of faith, or covenant of grace, is the law of the house, discovering the object and the ground of faith; and, because it is to be built up in a most holy obedience, therefore the law of love, or moral law as a rule, is the law of the house, directing and binding them to this obedience; in the former, holiness is promised; in the latter, holiness is enjoined.

1. As to the law of faith, or the gospel, holiness is to be considered as the privilege of the house, as a promised privilege; and by this law of faith it is viewed as a purchased privilege, as a privilege freely continued.

2. As to the law of love, or moral law, holiness is to be considered as the duty of the house; for, holiness is the matter of the law; holiness is the end of it; holiness is the sum of it; it forbids nothing but unholiness, it requires nothing but holiness; "As he that has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 15. The law of love must be a holy law; for, as all unholiness is comprised in enmity to God and man, so all holiness is comprised in love to God and man.

3dly, The third question here was, Why is it ingeminate and doubled? "This is the law of the house; Behold, this is the law of the house:" Why is it twice proclaimed in the text?

1. It imports, That this law of the house, respecting holiness, is an indispensable law: therefore it is notified; and again notified with a behold, that none may pretend ignorance. The moral law, materially considered, is eternally binding.

2. It imports, That ye are deaf and dull of hearing; or, "Hearing, we do not hear; but, like the deaf adder, stop our ear at the voice of the charmer:" and at the best are ready to forget that this is the law of the house. Therefore we are assured of it again and again.

3. It imports, That there is danger in neglecting this advertisement; and, in being remiss and slack in the study of holiness, it endangers the house; for, though the household of faith are all well entitled to heaven, and well secured from hell, yet the law of the house hath a sanction suitable to the children of the family; "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes," Psalm lxxxix. 30-32. The rod of God is terrible, even to his children.

4. It may import, That this is the beginning and end of true religion: therefore, that this is the law of the house, is both at the beginning and the end of the text. Here is the preface, "This is the law of the house;" here is the conclusion of the whole matter, "Behold, this is the law of the house." This boundary is set round about the house of God; and, "Holiness to the Lord," must be the motto of the house, from the top to the bottom thereof. This leads,

IV. To the Fourth thing proposed, namely, The extent of this law of holiness: "Upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy."—I think, in general, this speaks out the universality of that holiness God calls for in his house.—It should be universal subjectively, the whole heart and all the faculties of the soul should be engaged in the study of holiness; we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind.—It should be universal objectively, with respect to all the commands of God; "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments," without exception, without limitation. It should be universal intensively, with the utmost intense-ness of soul; "Following the Lord with full purpose of mind. I said, I will take heed to my way. I have sworn, and I will perform it, That I will keep thy righteous judgments." And it must be universal extensively, with respect to all times and seasons, companies and occasions, places and circumstances. The law of the house binds to holiness universal in all these respects.

But, more particularly, the extent of this holiness in the house of God, as here expressed, "Upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about," seems to me to import an universality respecting everything that relates to the house of God, the church of God: the expression suits the Old Testament dispensation, while the material temple stood upon the top of the mountain; but the gospel meaning thereof, as it respects the New Testament church, seems to be, that everything about God's house, from the top to the bottom, shall be most holy, as becomes the spiritual temple of God. It says,

1. That all the officers shall be most holy; ministers, elders, deacons, all that bear any vessels in God's house; "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord," Isa. lii. 11. And hence, when God comes to purge and purify his church, he is said particularly to purify the sons of Levi, Mal. iii. 3. Surely we, whose

office is to go to the top of the mount, ought to have holy feet to tread such a holy place, that it may be said of us, "How beautiful, on the mountains, are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace!" Alas, many officers in God's house among us, that have most of the beauty of holiness about them, God is fast taking them away. He seems to be taking away the gold and silver, and leaving the dross; and, when he is taking down such as were props and pillars in the house, what shall we think but that the house is like to fall about our ears, and heavy judgments at the door, when the righteous are taken away from the evil to come. But,

2. It says that all the members of the house shall be most holy, all the children of the family; "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; and they shall call them the most holy people, the redeemed of the Lord," Isa. lxii. 11. Every inhabitant of the house, every believer, every member of Christ, every professor of Christ, every one that nameth the name of Christ must depart from iniquity. It says that not only ministers should be holy, but people should be holy; not only the top of the mount, but the whole limit thereof round about. All that enter within the walls of Zion must be holy, otherwise they are not indwellers, like children, but only incomers, like dogs that shall be banished out with disgrace, and never admitted to the higher house.

5. It says that all the courts and judicatories of the house should be most holy; Synods most holy, and General Assemblies of the house most holy; "Upon the top of the mount, the whole limit thereof round about." When these courts and judicatories of the house, or Assemblies of the Church, whether inferior or superior ones are most holy, and purged with the spirit of judgment, and spirit of burning, then they are entitled to Heaven's protection; "The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place in Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night," Isa. iv. 4, 5. But when, in days of degeneracy, corruption, and defection, like ours,¹ they become most unholy, then they are exposed to ruin and desolation.

4. It says, That all the acts and statutes of the house are to be

(1) At the time when this sermon was preached, matters, both in the church and state, were in a most deplorable condition; error in principle and immorality in practice everywhere abounding, a relish for true religion and genuine piety much on the decline, a deviating from attained to Reformation purity and a falling from first love greatly upon the increase.

most holy. And indeed the acts of Assemblies and Judicatories of the church are to be regarded only according to their holiness and agreeableness to the holy word of God; "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa. viii. 20. Acts issued even from the top of the mountain, if they be not according to the law of the house, are to be rejected, opposed, and protested against, as the commandments of men, and not the commandments of God; "In controversy they shall stand in judgment, and they shall judge it according to my judgments; and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies," Ezek. xlv. 23, 24. And indeed, it is but a dismal time, when the children of Zion are obliged to plead with their mother, and even protest against her acts and statutes.¹

5. It says, That all the forms and ordinances of the house be most holy; I mean, the form of doctrine, the form of worship, the form of discipline, the form of government, that they be according to the scripture-pattern; as it was said to Moses concerning the

(1) This was a very remarkable year in the church, and gave era to a very memorable event—viz., The SECESSION. Our Author here has his eye upon the conduct of the Assembly this year [viz., 1732]. He usually noticed any remarkable transactions that occurred at the time when he composed and delivered his discourses; and, therefore, as a key to this and some other similar passages, both in this and some subsequent discourses, it may not be improper briefly to open up the matter. The church was, at this time, in imminent danger, for not only a pernicious scheme of Arian, Arminian, Socinian, and Neonomian doctrine was prevailing, but several arbitrary Acts and Decisions had been framed and passed in the Supreme Judicatory, and the Lord's heritage much oppressed and grieved by the settlement of reclaiming and dissenting congregations. To clear up the passage now before us, we may observe that the Assembly's conduct this year was very singular, and extremely arbitrary in a double respect. Several ministers (forty-two in number), among whom our Author was one, gave in a subscribed representation to the Assembly, for the redress of many of the steps of defection which the church had gone into. This representation, though just in itself, was refused so much as a hearing by the Assembly; whereupon, such of the ministers as were present offered a protest for their exoneration, which was also refused to be marked. There was a petition of the same nature, signed by many hundred elders and Christian people, given in to the same Assembly, and shared the same fate. The Assembly did not sist here, but passed an Act concerning the planting of vacant churches, which lodged the decisive power of electing ministers in a conjunct meeting of elders and heritors (and so depriving the Christian people of their just right), no other qualification being required of said heritors but their being Protestants, however much disaffected to the government both in church and state. This was matter of deep regret to many, and truly afflicting to several ministers, who accordingly protested against the Assembly; some of whom were afterwards severely sentenced for their faithfully testifying against these corruptions and encroachments.

form of the tabernacle, "Look that thou make it after the pattern that was showed thee in the mount," Exod. xxv. 40, compared with Acts vii. 44, Heb. viii. 5. The doctrine, sound and lively; worship, pure and spiritual; discipline, pure and impartial; and government, beautiful and orderly, is the outward glory of the church: and God hath said, "Upon all the glory there shall be a defence," Isa. iv. 5. But in so far as the fences are taken away, in as far is the glory departed from Israel, and the ark of God taken by the Philistines, within or without the house. The holiness of doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the house, comprehending the top of the mount, and the whole limit thereof, ought to be defended, and contended for, that it be not spoiled, corrupted, and defaced by these who make themselves famous for lifting up hammers and axes upon the carved work; and the rather, that the Church of Scotland, particularly, has been so often in our Reformation-days, solemnly sworn, by National Covenant, to the defence thereof, against all anti-christian, unscriptural, and unholy forms and orders whatsoever.

6. It says, That all the chambers and rooms of the house should be most holy; I mean, all the ordinances of the house, whether public or private, or secret; which are like so many chambers and rooms of the house to be kept clean and most holy; for, "He will be sanctified of all them that come nigh him," Lev. x. 3. The outer rooms and public chambers of solemn ordinances, words, and sacraments; the more private chambers of spiritual conference and family-worship; and the secret chambers of retired devotion, the chamber of meditation, the chamber of prayer, shall all be most holy, and occupied in the most holy manner. Not only all the public rooms, but all the secret closets of the house shall be most holy, not only the top of the mount, but the whole limit thereof round about; whatever part of the house we enter, is to be most holy, in the exercise of faith, love, and all the holy graces of the Spirit, and in spiritual endeavours, through grace, to get all that are about the house made holy, and all things that are within the house, and without the house, and round about the house, the top of the mount, the whole limit thereof round about; this is the law of the house. The Lord knows how little it is observed now!

V. The next thing proposed, was, To touch a little at the privilege of access to the most holy place. This being a special part of the gospel that lies in the text, hid under this Old-

testament phrase ; I would open it up in these two or three remarks.

1. "That access to the most holy place, is nothing else but access to the most holy God, and therefore, it is the most glorious privilege that a sinner can be advanced unto." The sanctuary, or holy of holies in the Old Testament temple, was a symbol and type of the gracious presence of God ; and to come to that, was to come to God : and the holy of holies is in the New Testament, called a throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16. And what is it to come to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat, but just to come to a merciful God, a gracious God in Christ ? Therefore it is there said, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Where will we find mercy or grace, but with a merciful and gracious God ? This is then the most holy place to which there is access.

"Remark 2. "That access to the most holy place is by the blood of Jesus." The priests, under the law, went into the holy place with blood of bulls, and goats ; but Christ, our High Priest, having entered, by his own blood, into the holy place, Heb. ix. 12, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," Heb. x. 19, that is, in the faith of his blood ; a justice satisfying blood, and sin-expiating blood ; even we guilty sinners have freedom to come to a just and holy God, and boldness to expect grace and glory, as the purchase of that blood ; even that blood which is God glorifying, sinner-sanctifying, heaven-purchasing.

Remark 3. "That access to the most holy place is the privilege of the whole church." The whole family, all within the house, have access either proclaimed or obtained : All within the visible church though but in the outer-court, have access proclaimed ; "Whosoever will, let him come." And all within the church invisible, viz., Believers being in the inner court, have access obtained, and daily admission to the holy place. Only the high-priest under the law had access to the holy place, and that once a-year only ; but now all believers, being a royal priesthood, and made kings and priests unto their God, have access, not once a-year, Heb. ix. 7, nor once a-month ; but, perhaps, once a-week, once a-day ; yea, several times a-day ; perhaps, twenty times in one communion-day ; even as oft as they get grace to act faith upon a God in Christ. This privilege of the whole church is here repre-

sented by the top of the mount, and the whole limit thereof round about, having the privilege of the holy place.

Remark 4. "The privilege of access to the most holy place, is not only now extended to all persons within the house, but also every-where, in all places where the church or children of God are." Not only the top of the mount, but the whole limit round about, is the most holy place. Under the law, only the sanctuary was the most holy, but under the gospel the whole mountain shall be so, and the whole limit thereof round about; in as much as, wherever the believer is, in public or in secret, there he hath access to the most holy place, the most holy God; according to what our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 21, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father; but the true worshippers every-where shall worship him in spirit and in truth." The holy place was formerly hid in a corner of the temple; for, the holy God hid himself in a corner as it were, under the dark dispensation, but now the holy place, the holy God, is everywhere to be seen and enjoyed in Christ. The vail of the temple is rent in twain, by the death of Christ; and the holy of holies is exposed, that whosoever will, may come and see, come and partake, come, and enjoy God through Jesus Christ through whom the door of access is opened to us Gentiles, as well as it was to the Jews; "Through him we have both access, by one Spirit, unto the Father," Eph. ii. 8. The most holy place is not now confined to the top of the mountain, where the temple stood, but extended to the whole mountain, and the whole limit thereof round about. This is the law of the house, the privilege of the house, according to the law of faith or covenant of grace, wherein the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men. O, has it so appeared unto you this day as that you find that you have got access to the most holy place! Then surely you are obliged to be the most holy people. Hence,

VI. The Sixth head proposed was, To show that this privilege of access to the most holy place obliges the whole household of God that are thus privileged to be the most holy people. This grace of God that hath appeared to all men does not, cannot lead to licentiousness, but teaches to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, Tit. ii. 11, 12. This privilege of access to the most holy place, brings us not only under greater obligations to holiness than Pagans

that are far from the most holy place ; not only under greater obligations to holiness than professors, who only are admitted to the outer court, and not to the most holy place ; and not only under greater obligations to holiness than Jews, who were only admitted by their high-priest to the holy place in the material temple ; but also it lays us under greater obligations to holiness than Adam in a state of innocency, suppose we were as innocent as he was before the fall, and that the covenant of works were on the field, promising life to our perfect obedience ; for, when you are admitted to the most holy place, then you see everlasting righteousness, and perfect obedience wrought to your hand, and eternal life purchased to your hand ; and therefore are obliged by the law of love and gratitude, to serve the God that hath saved you, and not to work hard for your life. And which of these are the strongest ties to love and obedience, namely, to find God saying, Do, and do perfectly, and you shall have eternal life for your pains ? Or, to find God giving you life, salvation, righteousness, and all in Christ ; and, from the faith thereof, kindling love in your soul, and constraining you to serve him in gratitude ? If this be the strongest obligation to holiness, then believers in Christ are under stronger obligations to holiness, than ever Adam was in a state of innocency.

Access to the most holy place obliges us to be the most holy people, both effectively and argumentatively.

1. Effectively and powerfully ; for, when one hath access to the most holy place, then he sees the glory of God ; and, beholding this glory, he is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Thus, what the law teaches preceptively, the gospel teaches effectively. It is said of these that are mounted to the upper story of the house of God, to heaven, They are like him, because they see him as he is. Being come to the most holy place, they see the most holy God, and are made like him in holiness. This privilege is commenced in the lower house ; the more that believers see the most holy God in the most holy place, or the glory of God in the face of Christ, the more they are like unto him. When they come boldly to the throne of grace, or to the holy of holies, then they obtain mercy, and find grace to help them, and grace to strengthen them in all the duties of holiness. All their holiness comes from that most holy place to which they have access. And thus it obliges them to holiness, sweetly, powerfully, necessarily, and effectively.

2. Argumentatively ; it obliges them to be the most holy peo-

ple, for access to the most holy place furnishes them with an argument drawn from equity ; " What ! shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein ? " Rom. vi. 2. Have we, by access to God, got a dead stroke given to the tyrant sin, and shall we return to slavery ? God forbid. Access to the most holy place furnishes with an argument drawn from gratitude ; " Shall I thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise ? Is not he my Father that hath bought me ? " Deut. xxxii. 6. Has he allowed me access to him, and shall I spurn at such bowels, and spit on the face of such love ? At the most holy place the man sees that there is mercy with God that he may be feared and obeyed, and so is encouraged to duty ; and there he sees that it is God that worketh in him both to will and to do : there he sees that the law he is under is not a law of works, but a law of love, where all the commands are love commands ; " If ye love me, keep my commandments ; " and the threatenings, love-threatenings, not of vindictive wrath, but of fatherly displeasure. The law-threatening of hell and vindictive wrath works wrath and enmity, which is the height of disobedience, while the man fears that God will damn him, he flees from God as an enemy ; but gospel-threatenings, if we may so call them, work upon love, and inflame it, while the believer fears, in a filial manner, saying, " O ! shall I incur my Father's displeasure, and provoke him to hide his face, and deny me that gracious presence of his which is even a heaven upon earth to me ? "—At the most holy place the believer sees God clothed with a garment of salvation, compassed with love and grace, and riding, as it were, in the chariot of a free, gracious promise ; not a promise of life upon our doing, but a promise of grace to do, and of glory to crown our doing : and of grace and glory both, as the reward of Christ's doing all.—In a word, when we have access to the most holy place, we see the place encircled with blood, the mercy-seat sprinkled with blood, and that by this blood the infinite justice of God is fully satisfied, and that we have to do with him as a reconciled God and friend, and therefore our obligation is not under the authority of an angry Judge, but the authority of a loving Father, testifying his everlasting love to us by drawing with loving-kindness ; and shall we not kindly run when thus kindly drawn ?—Why, then, this privilege of access to the most holy place lays us under the strictest and strongest obligation to be the most holy people. " And, behold, this is the law of the house ; " the bond of love is the strongest bond.

VII. I come now to the application of the subject. And we shall apply it, in the first place, by deducting a few inferences for information. Is it so, that universal holiness is so much the established law of God's house, that the whole family, being privileged with access to the most holy place, are under the strongest obligation to be the most holy people? Then,

1. Hence see, that God's house is not a lawless house, and believers in Christ are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ; as the apostle expresses it. The doctrine of grace is no doctrine of licentiousness: though many reproach gospel-doctrine with a flourish of words, in their harangues on morality, under pretence of putting honour upon the law, while yet they neither understand law nor gospel, but miserably confound and blend them together. "Do we make void the law through faith?" Are we lawless Antinomians,¹ because we declare the freedom of the house from the law of works? Alas! many, in their ignorant zeal for this law, discover their little acquaintance with the law of the house.

2. Hence see, that if universal holiness be the law of the house, because of the universal access there is to the holy place; then, how few appear to be of the household of God in our day, which is a day of universal unholiness, universal wickedness, universal profanity and impiety. Oh! how few in our day go in to the most holy place, since few appear to be a most holy people! Where there is no access to the most holy place, there is no holiness: where little access, little holiness.

3. Hence see the difference betwixt the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, in respect of the place that holiness hath in the one and the other. The former being, Do and live; therein duty opens the door to privilege, and man behoved first to be holy, before he could be admitted to the holy place: but the latter being, Live and do, therein privilege opens the door to duty, and men must first have access to the holy place, before they can be a holy people; for they must first come to Christ, or to God in Christ, which is the holy of holies, and from hence bring all their holiness. That is one of the reasons why gospel-ministers preach so much upon gospel-privileges, and upon faith in Christ entering into the

(1) It was formerly noticed that a legal turn of mind, and strain of preaching was much upon the increase in Scotland, and the patrons and promoters hereof, boldly accused and virulently lampooned the champions for, and defenders of, the doctrine of grace, as enemies to the law, and friends to licentiousness.

holy place, because this faith works by love, and is the root of all true holiness ; for, when faith looks into the most holy place, there it sees the law hidden in the ark, Jesus Christ, and safely kept there ; and the believer finds, that, by lying in the warm bosom of Christ, it is turned into a law of love.

4. Hence see, That it is not safe to be without the church of God : for, as it is the house where God dwells and it is best dwelling where God dwells ; so there is access to the most holy place to be found there, upon the top of the mount, and the whole limit thereof round about. As long as God dwells in a church, and gives evidence of his presence in these ordinances, let us bless him for the day of small things, and wait upon him, who yet hides himself, in many respects, from the house of Jacob. Let us pity those who are without the church ; for, without are dogs, and they can have no view of the holy place ; and, "Where no vision is, the people perish." And pity these who are only within the outer walls of the church, in the outer court, and never got grace to enter into the most holy place ; and also these who have been within and have gone out, and separate from the church ; I mean, even separatists from the church of Scotland, some upon a kind of Independant footing, and others affecting novelties, betaking themselves to English popish ceremonies, and new modes of worship. At the same time, many true friends to Presbytery are on the very borders of separating from this established church, upon a disgust at the defections of the day ; and it is to be lamented, that many stumbling blocks have been laid in people's way : and it is sure, when a particular church like Romish Babylon, comes to be wholly corrupt, then that rule for separation will hold, "Come out from among them, my people." This was what justified our glorious Reformation from Popery. In this case, it is not a sinful separating from the church of God, but a dutiful separating from the chapel of the devil. And I own, that as matters stand at present in the church of Scotland, we seem to be on the very brink of a schism : but, whatever tenderness I desire to show to weak consciences, in many circumstances, I have never as yet, seen ground to preach separation,¹ whatever ground I see to

(1) Our Author, at this time, was not so clear for withdrawing from the present Judicatories, as he afterwards came to be. And, indeed, all the habile methods had scarcely as yet been used within doors, by Representations, Petitions, Remonstrances, Expostulations, and Protestations ; but when all these were used to no valuable purpose, and a deaf ear lent to them ; nay, sentences inflicted for so doing, he saw just ground to withdraw from the present corrupt Judicatories, while carrying on a course

testify against the corruptions and defections of the day, I hope God hath not yet left the house; he is yet to be found in these galleries of his house, the ordinances of his worship. Meantime, I have a concern particularly for these that are mourning over the defections and defilements of the house and keeping the cleanest rooms they can find therein, and whose lot is to have officers obtruded upon them, and have not the gospel, but the law, or mere moral harangues, preached to them; and I desire to pray they may be directed to their duty in an evil day. This leads me to

A word of lamentation which is the next use I would make of the doctrine. Even on a communion-day, when we are holding communion in the house of God, we may lament the disorders and irregularities therein, contrary to the law of the house. Surely the house of God in our day is a ruinous house, and needs to be repaired and reformed. If this be the law of the house, that every member, every part, every room of the house be most holy; then surely the law of the house is broken and violate in our day; for we may see the reverse of this law, even unholiness, upon the top of the mountain, and the whole limit thereof round about. Behold, this is the sad state of the house; and, since you cannot be duly concerned with knowing the circumstances of it, I shall hint a little at the visible defects of the visible part of the house among us.

1. Oh! where is personal holiness (to begin at home) among the visible members of the house! The law of faith, or the covenant of grace, proclaiming access to the most holy place, is the law of the house; and yet, alas! how little faith is in the house! how little believing or entering into the holiest by the blood of Jesus! The law of love, or moral law, as a rule of obedience, is the law of the house; but, Oh! how little love to God or man issuing from that faith! Does not iniquity abound, and the love of many wax

of defection; but never did separate from the Church of Scotland in her Constitution. We have his full sentiments on this head, in his Secession from the Judicatories, about five years after this: in which, after stating the nature and grounds of his Secession, we have these words: "So that," says our Author, adopting the sentiment of an eminent Light in this church, "here is no separation from the Church of Scotland, either in her doctrine, worship, discipline, or government; but rather a cleaving more closely thereto, by departing or going forth from her backslidings and defections, as we are commanded by the Lord, and from some Judicatories, because of these; and only a negative, passive, and conditional withdrawing; not importing any resolution never to join with them in any circumstance, but a present refusing to follow the declining part of the church, while carrying on these defections, and a choosing rather to stand still and cleave to that part, though smaller, that is endeavouring to retain and maintain a covenanted Reformation."

cold? There is little to be seen of faith's working by love, but much to be seen of hatred working by unbelief. It is the law of that house, that we love one another; but, behold, how many are devouring one another, through malice, envy, pride, and contention! It is the law of the house, more particularly, that we have no other god but the most holy God, that we perform no other worship but most holy worship; that we reverence his name as the most holy name; that we sanctify his Sabbath, for a most holy rest all the day. It is the law of the house, that we be most holy in every relative capacity and station, that we be, according to our place, holy magistrates, holy ministers, holy parents, holy children, holy masters, holy servants. It is the law of the house, that there be no murder, in thought, word, or deed: no whoredom, in thought, word, or deed; no false witnesses, no covetous heart in the house; nothing but the most holy place, and the most holy people: but, ah! where is the spirit of holiness? Where is the exercises of holy graces, holy faith, holy love, holy penitency? Where is holy preaching, holy hearing, holy singing, holy praying, holy communicating, holy walking? I suppose, when matters are thoroughly canvassed, and seriously considered, there is little to be found among us, but unholy thoughts, unholy words, unholy actions; and little holy lamenting over our unholiness. Again,

2. If we look to the public may we not find matter of lamentation? While it is the law of the house of the God of heaven that nothing be done therein but according to the will of the God of heaven, yet many things are done contrary to his will. It is the law of the house that the house be kept in repair, and do not lie waste; but, behold the walls are broken down, and the carved work demolished. It is the law of the house that none be reckoned members of the family but these that are a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a spiritual people, 1 Pet. ii. 9; at least, with reference to the visible church, that they have a visible and credible profession: it is not these that have worldly lordships, lairdships, and heritages, that have, upon this account, any title to be the members of Christ's spiritual house and kingdom; for, his kingdom is not of this world; his house is distinct therefrom: such may be members of God's house, but not as they are lords, lairds, heritors, gentles, nobles; some such may be called of God into his house, but, "Not many noble, not many great men are called," 1 Cor. i. 26. Not many stocked with worldly riches or worldly wisdom; yet such, under the

name of heritors, if they be but Protestants in profession, though they were Pagans in practice, seem, in our day, to be declared members of God's spiritual house. But, notwithstanding, it is the law of the house of God, Acts i. 23-26; vi. 3; xiv. 23, as CHEIROTONESANTES, the original word here demonstrates, that only the true member of the family, wherein every member is a master, a king, and a priest to his God, should chuse out from among them, by common suffrage, the servants and officers of the house. And, indeed, it is the law of every house, that no servant be obtruded upon them by foreigners, against the mind of the house, or against the will of the family; much more is it the law of God's house that neither prince, patron, nor heritor, as denominate only from their temporal estate, should have power over God's spiritual house, chusing and electing of their spiritual servants and officers, to the excluding of the voice and vote of the proper members of the family: yet this law of the house is manifestly violated by some late Acts in our day.¹—Again, it is the law of the house, that the doctrine of the gospel be maintained with zeal, and damnable doctrine be rejected with indignation; yet, how much hath gospel-doctrine been condemned and darkened in our day;² and damnable doctrine, such as that of Arianism, slenderly censured;³ and many corruptions in doctrine either looked over and tolerated, or not sufficiently testified against, and that in a time when the house within is polluted with a boundless toleration of errors without doors?—It is the law of the house, that the oath of God be inviolably maintained; and nothing contrary to it be admitted or allowed; yet how have our solemn oaths to the great God and Master of the house, viz. our Covenants, both national and solemn league, been solemnly violate, broken, burnt, and buried, and a multitude of sinful and unnecessary oaths received and allowed in the room thereof?—It is the law

(1.) Our Author here, without doubt, has his eye upon the Act of Parliament made in the 10th year of Queen Anne's reign. Restoring Patronage, and the Act of Assembly, 1732, concerning the Planting of Vacant Churches. Though it be consonant both to Scripture and reason, and the practice of the Church of Scotland, since the Reformation, that the Lord's people or multitude of disciples, have a right to choose their spiritual guide, (Acts i. 23-26; vi. 3; xiv. 23) yet these acts denude the Christian people of this liberty to elect their spiritual overseers; the first, by lodging the power solely in the hands of the patron; and the next, by vesting heritors and elders with the along right of election.

(2.) It is probable, our Author means the Acts of Assembly, Annis 1720-1722, condemning the doctrine of the Marrow of Modern Divinity.

(3.) This hath a reference to the Process against Professor Simpson.

of the house, that the worship of God be most holy, and agreeable to the word and will of God; and that no threshold be set up beside his threshold, and posts by his posts, Ezek. liv. 8. And yet behold abjured superstitious worship, and English Popish ceremonies set up in several places of the nations; and the guilt hereof is chargeable upon the house, in as far as it is not duly regretted, and so far as possible remedied. It is the law of the house, that the discipline therein do not degenerate into cruelty towards the children of the family; and yet, what ground to complain, in our day of ecclesiastical tyranny exercised towards the people of God, in settling many congregations? And thus Christ, in his members, is wounded in the house of his friends, and his poor despised people obliged to say of the watchman, "They smote me, they wounded me, they took away my vail from me." It is the law of the house, that the government therein be beautiful, orderly, and holy; and that the several under-governors of the house have an orderly walk and conversation, both in their private families and in their public managements; and that they be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord; yet, how many officers and elders in the church live very loosely, and neglect the worship of God in their families? And some of them sit in our National Assemblies, that yet join with the Church of England in their superstitious worship, when in that nation, to the reproach of the Presbyterian profession. It is the law of the house, that fasts and thanksgivings be appointed therein, when providence calls for it, and yet, how is this turned disuetude, and the church losing ground and seeming to give up with, instead of asserting and exerting her intrinsic power: and seemingly surrendering it to the hand of the civil magistrate, whose power ought not to be privative, but cumulative in this matter? Secular power and spiritual, in a Christian land, ought to be sweetly subservient one to another, but ought not to be blended or confounded together, not destructive one of another. It is the law of the house, that the Lord and king of the house be exalted, and that his royal headship and sovereignty be asserted, in opposition to all that assume to themselves a sovereignty, in all causes, civil or ecclesiastical:¹ yet this duty hath been fearfully neglected, and the

(1.) Alluding to the wicked Act of Supremacy made Anno 1661, after Charles the II.'s Restoration, declaring him head over all persons and in all causes, civil and ecclesiastic. Inconsistent both with the Scriptures and our Standards. See Confession of Faith, ch. 30, § 1 2; ch. 25, § 6; ch. 23, § 3, with the Scriptures quoted.

Lord of the house many ways affronted in his own family.—It is the law of the house that, since God orders his own children to plead with their mother when any confusion takes place in the family, in order to the redressing of what is grievous, that the mother regard the pleading, and redress accordingly; and yet, when the children have done so in our day, she hath given a deaf ear and deeper wounds,¹ instead of favourable answers. O, if this may set them a-pleading with their Father in heaven, who hath said, “When he builds up Zion he will appear in his glory, and he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer; this shall be written for the generations to come, and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.” In a word, it is the law of the house that there be no schism nor division there, because, “A house divided against itself cannot stand;” and yet, how many divisions take place? And, how many grounds are daily laying down for schism, and matter of offence given by multiplied recessions from reformation-principles and practices? “Offences must come, but woe to them by whom they come.” It were endless to speak of all the particulars wherein the law of the house is violate; only these are some of the most obvious to me, which I speak of as matter of lamentation that ye may know on what account you need to be concerned for the house of God, and to pray for the welfare of Jerusalem, and the reparation of her walls.

This is the state of the house visible in our day, “Upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof,” is become most unholy; behold, this is the state of the house. And yet, for all this, there remains some good thing in the church of Scotland, notwithstanding all the evils that take place: as,

1. There is a goodly number yet of worthy, faithful, and able

(1.) Our Author here, no doubt, alludes both to the conduct of the Assembly, Annis 1720-1732. By the first (viz. 1720), the Assembly, by their fifth Act, concerning the Marrow, condemn a bundle of propositions, containing doctrines of the greatest importance. Which conduct induced several ministers, among whom our Author was one, to give in a Representation to the Assembly 1721, setting forth, That it appeared to them, that the foresaid condemnatory act and sentence wounded many gospel-truths; yet the Assembly 1722, though partly convinced of the fact, were so far from repealing the Act 1720, that they by their seventh Act, rather farther explained, corroborated, and confirmed the said fifth Act, and so gave a deeper wound to truth. The Assembly 1732, not only lent a deaf ear to the Representations and Petitions that were presented to them, for the Redress of Grievances, but utterly rejected them: and gave deeper wounds by their Act lodging the sole power of election of ministers into the hands of a conjunct meeting of heritors and elders.

ministers of the gospel, whereof some, perhaps, are but betrayed by the power of temptation, and the strength of carnal reasoning, to fall in with these measures in the Lord's house, which, after calm and sedate consideration, they will be loath to justify, and will be sorry for: therefore,

2. There are not a few yet who are and will be witnesses for God, against all the corruptions of the Lord's house, and ready to give their testimony against the defections of the day wherein we live.

3. There are pure ordinances administered in the house: the word and sacraments administered according to the gospel institution, and the doctrine of the gospel preached in purity.

4. There are some signs and evidences, now and then, of the Lord's presence in these ordinances, and of his power in the sanctuary, reviving and strengthening the hearts of his hidden ones, and bringing them to the chambers of the King, even to the holy of holies, under the covert of the blood of Jesus.

This leads me to an Use of Examination, for trying whether or not ye be such members of the house of God as have been privileged with access to the invisible part of the house, the most holy place; and what effect this has wrought upon you to make you holy, as the Lord your God is holy.

1st, Have you been admitted to the most holy place? Have you got boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus at this occasion, or formerly? If so, then I will tell you,

1. You have lost all boldness and confidence in the flesh, Phil. iii. 3; all confidence in yourself, all confidence in your own righteousness and worthiness; nothing keeps you in countenance before God but your view of the worthiness and righteousness of Jesus. Again,

2. What way got you into the holy place, or into the presence of the most holy God. Surely it is not without blood. Can you say that you was carried into the holiest, as it were, in a chariot paved with love, and the covering thereof was purple? Can you say, I saw something like a rainbow about the throne of grace, and not only a purple covering over my head, but also a purple pavement under my feet; a pleasant pavement, laid partly with the white marble of the love of God, and partly with the red marble of the blood of Christ; and, upon this pavement, laid before me in the gospel, my heart went forward to the most holy place; and I saw

that the most holy God was a reconciled God in Christ, a well-pleased God in Christ.

3. Have you seen that the holy of holies is nothing else but a throne of grace, having grace above it, and grace beneath it, and grace round about it; and that, therefore, the most holy place is a place meet for you to come to, meet for you to rest in; for you, unworthy you, that cannot be saved any other way but by grace, free grace, venting through that blood of Jesus?

4. Have you seen, in that holy place, that the promises of God are all Yea and Amen in Christ: that they are the New Testament in his blood; and that, therefore, every promise is sure, being dipt in blood, sealed with blood, with justice-satisfying blood; and, that, therefore, justice requires, as well as mercy, that they be accomplished?

2dly, What sanctifying effect hath this access to the most holy place had upon you? Do you find yourself more sweetly bound to universal holiness? Why, say you, I find myself under an obligation to be a most holy person: because I think I have been admitted, in some respect, to the most holy place, but I tremble to think of what you are now to say, because I find the lamentable want of holiness, and cannot think you will give me a mark that will argue my being holy; and therefore fear my access to the holy place, that sometimes I thought I had, to be but delusion. I must tell you,

1. If you have been in the most holy place, and got some holy impressions there, then you will see yourself to be most vile: when Job was let in to the most holy place, then he cries out, "Behold I am vile," chap. xl. 4. It is a sight of the holy God that makes us to see ourselves to be unholy creatures. You that value yourselves as good and holy, you have never seen a holy God in the face; but thou that hatest thyself, and lothest thyself as an unholy creature, saying, "Truth, Lord, I am a dog: so foolish I am, and ignorant; I am as a beast before thee;" thou art a holy person.

2. Try your holiness by a question or two; What is your desire? Is it, O, to be holy! O to be like unto Christ! What is your hope? Do you love to think of getting to heaven, because there you will be like him, by seeing him as he is? What is your delight and love? Can you say you love the law, because it is a holy law, and because it is a law of love? What is your lamentation? Is it, oh! unholy sinner that I am? "O wretched man

that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" What is your how long ? Is it, " O how long shall I sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar." What is your regard to the law of the House ? Are you grieved to see that it is violate by yourself and others ? What is your regard to the members of the house ? Do you love the saints, because they are holy ? Some chuse a drinking club and cabal before the company of the godly that lay them under a restraint ; but is your delight with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth ? Again, what is your regard to the Lord of the house ? Can you say from the bottom of your soul, that, however unholy you are, yet you love him because he is holy, and can rejoice in him as a holy God that hates sin ? This is a sweet mark that you have been in the holy place, and got the print of God's holiness stamped on your soul. A hypocrite may love God because he is good and merciful, but I do not think he can love him, because he is a holy God that hates sin. Is that the language of thy soul, " O give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness ?" In a word, what is thy resolution through grace ? Is it, that you will endeavour, in his strength, to glorify God by a holy walk, and yet are you feared to rest on your resolutions, and therefore turn your resolutions to prayers, saying, " Lord, let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, the Son of man whom thou hast made strong for thyself, and henceforth we will not go back ?" After trial, see your duty.

My last use, therefore, shall be by way of exhortation. 1. To these who are without the house. 2. To those who have been admitted into the holy place.

1st, To you that are without the house, that are not members of God's family, but are unbelievers. I exhort you to come into the house of God ; " For without are dogs," unholy dogs, Rev. xxii. 15. Why, may some think, are you calling us to come into the house, where there are so many disorders, as you have been mentioning ? It is best to stay without doors : why, man, woman, when I call you to come into the house of God, it is, not only to the outer house, but to come into the most holy place, and to enter into the holiest by faith ; that is, come to God in Christ. The outer house is only the visible church, and the visible glory is indeed much defaced in our day ; but there is an invisible part of the house, the most holy place, that we call you to come to : not to an outward visible profession only ; not to outward ordinances only ;

for, by your being within the walls of the house, you are seemingly come there already ; but you may be visible church-members, and come to ordinances and sacraments, and yet strangers to God, if you have never come in to the most holy place by coming in to God in Christ. And, Oh ! why stand you without doors, contrary to the law of the house, inviting all to come in ! Rev. xxii. 17. Let me tell you, while you stay without doors, you are without hope, and without God in the world ; neither fellow-citizens with the saints, nor of the household of God in a spiritual sense ; and the visible outward advantages you enjoy, while you are only in the outer court, will aggravate your condemnation if ye come not in. I must tell you, while you are not within the house, in a spiritual sense, you are not under the law, “the law of the house ;” I mean, the law of faith and love, but under the law of works, and so under the curse ; for, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” The wrath of God abides on you, while you abide in unbelief, without coming in to the Surety, and closing with his law-biding righteousness. While you come not in to the most holy place, you remain in a most unholy state and way ; for, it is this holy place that makes a holy people : Christ is the true temple, the holy place, the house where God dwells ; and how can you see God, if you come not to his house ? How can you speak with God, if you come not to his house ? How can you draw up acquaintance with him, or attain conformity to him ? If you do not behold the glory of God in the face of Christ, you can never be changed into his image, from glory to glory. Without coming to Christ, you shall never have holiness ; and without holiness, you shall never see God in heaven.

Consider, O sinner, The law of the house, with reference to you that are without.—It is the law of the house, that the door be open for all comers ; “Whosoever will, let him come.”—It is the law of the house, that all comers shall be welcome ; “He that cometh, I will in nowise cast out.”—It is the law of the house, that all that come in shall be children of the family ; “We are the children of God by faith in Christ : Without are dogs,” but within are children.—It is the law of the house, that no objection be sustained as lawful against your coming into Christ, or to the most holy place ; for the law of grace is calculate, of infinite wisdom, for answering every objection : it is not lawful to object any thing against coming into the holy place. Fear of God's infinite justice is no lawful ob-

jection ; for, here is a sacrifice, satisfying justice. Your great sin and guilt is no lawful objection : for, here is guilt-expiating blood. Your total want of all good in yourself, is no lawful objection ; for, here is all fulness to supply you. Your unworthiness is no lawful objection ; for, the worthiness of the Lamb is the only thing that is regarded in the most holy place. Your poverty is no lawful objection ; for, here are the unsearchable riches of Christ, both to pay your debts, and bear your charges. Your rags and nakedness is no lawful objection ; for, here is the robe of righteousness to cover you, that the shame of your nakedness may not appear. Your fear of God's having some secret purpose against you, is no lawful objection, but a horrid thought ; for, The law of the house makes nothing but God's revealed will your rule. Your weakness and inability is no lawful objection ; for, "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary ; strength is within his holy place," to which you are called to come ; and drawing power is put in the promise, such as that, "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me ;" that you may take his help, and look to his promised power and grace. Your unholiness is no lawful objection ; for, you are invited to come to the most holy place, that you may be incorporated amongst the most holy people. In a word, distance is no lawful objection ; for, the most holy place is at hand ; since you cannot go up to the holy of holies, the holy of holies is come down to you ; it is on the top of the mountain, and the whole limit thereof round about. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." And the question is, Do you welcome a Jesus, that is come to you in the gospel, to make you holy as well as happy for ever ? Can your heart say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ?" It is one good way of coming to him, to welcome his coming to you. Is there an echo in your heart ? When he says, Sinner, come thou to me ; does your heart say, Lord, come thou to me, for I cannot come to thee without I be drawn ? When he cries, Come ; and you cry, Come ; ye are not far from meeting together. Well, sinner, the door is open ; O tarry not till the door be shut. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Say not, To-morrow, thou fool, lest this night thy soul be required of thee, and then to all eternity you shall not have another offer. O may the arm of power accompany the offer of grace, in the evening of a communion day !

2dly, I would close with a word to you that have been, either now or formerly, drawn in to the most holy place. Surely it is

your duty to be a most holy people ; for, universal holiness is the law of the house ; on the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about. I should exhort and direct you in a word.

O sirs, are you come into the sanctuary of God ? O then, put off your shoes ; for the place whereon your stand is holy ground ! Put off your filthy shoes, for the room of the house you have entered into is a clean room, a holy place ; the Lord of the house is most holy. Holiness is the name of God ; he is the Holy One of Israel. Holiness is the will of God ; “ This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” Holiness is the work of God ; and, “ You are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Holiness is the nature of God ; and you are made partakers of the divine nature. Holiness is the glory of God ; and he is glorious in holiness.

Consider, the house of God is a holy house, and the church is not God's house, but in so far as it is holy. His word is a holy word ; his ordinances are holy ordinances ; his table is a holy table ; and, “ Holiness becometh his house for ever.”

Consider the beauty of holiness ; the beauty of faces is but skin-deep, a rotting beauty ; the beauty of clothes and ornaments is but a patch upon a sore, a screen to cover your nakedness ; but the beauty of holiness is what makes a man all glorious within and without. All pleasure without holiness is but grief, for the pleasure of sin is what man must either repent of here, or be damned for hereafter. All profit without holiness is but loss, “ For what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? But godliness is great gain.” All honour without holiness will end in shame and disgrace.

Consider the opposite of holiness, namely, SIN ; that sin is a reproach to any people, much more to such a professing and privileged people as you are. The profane world, that see your works, and not your faith, if you be vile, vain, wanton, and profane in your walk, they will say, There is your religion ; and thus you will bring a reproach upon your holy religion. And who, that ever was admitted to the most holy place, would not blush and be ashamed to bring it under such undeserved reproach.

Consider what regard is owing to the glory of God, the honour of Christ, the work of the holy Spirit, and the credit of our holy religion.

Consider what is the end of God in all his great works towards you ; this is the end of election ; “ He hath chosen you, that you

should be holy;" this is the end of redemption, "That he might redeem you from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works:" It is the end of sanctification by the Spirit, that you should be holy.

What is the end and design of ordinances, but to be means of holiness? What is the end of merciful providences, but that you may fear the Lord and his goodness? What is the end of crossing and afflicting providences, but to purge away your dross, and make you partakers of his holiness? What is the end of all the graces of the Spirit, if you have the faith of Christ, or the hope of glory in him? Why, then, faith purifies the heart; and "He that hath this hope, purifies himself, even as he is pure."

Consider what obligations you are under, beyond all persons in the world, to be the most holy people, in the midst of this unholy age.

All the direction I offer is, See that you be much in the exercise of faith, entering again and again into the most holy place; for this will, as I said, have both an operative and argumentative, both a physical and a moral influence upon your holiness. When you come to the most holy place, and see the most holy God, you will find yourself under the strongest obligation to be holy, and such bonds laid upon your heart, as will bind you sweetly and strictly to holiness, even the bond of love constraining you. In the most holy place you will see something wonderful, even your salvation and justification, lying between two everlasting breasts, Rom. iii. 24, between the everlasting grace of God, and the everlasting righteousness of Christ; "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And what do you think of seeing yourself lying, as it were, between these two everlasting breasts of God; and, at the same time, his everlasting arms holding and embracing you in his bosom? This is the notable sight of faith to be seen in the most holy place; and when you come to see this great sight, the warm bosom of God's everlasting love will give you a warm heart, and will leave a strong impression of the law of love and holiness upon you. "This is the law of the house." If you get to the top of the mountain with Moses, O how should your face shine, even when ye come down to the bottom of the mount, and go into the company of others round about the mount! Not only a communion-table, but your common tables should be holiness to the Lord. In every company, in every place, let this be your motto,

“Holiness to the Lord.” “This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy: behold, this is the law of the house.”

S E R M O N X X X.

THE LITTLE CITY BESIEGED AND DELIVERED; OR, THE DELIVERANCE OF THE CHURCH BY CHRIST, AND THE INGRATITUDE OF MEN TO THE GLORIOUS REDEEMER, REPRESENTED.¹

ECCL. ix. 14, 15.—There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it; now, there was found in it a poor wise man; and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city: yet no man remembered the same poor man.

It is questioned, amongst interpreters, whether this be a history or a parable. I am not here to dispute the matter, but take it to be parabolical; and reckon the Spirit of God hath left the application thereof for us to make, which I would essay to do, both in an agreeableness, I hope, to the analogy of faith, and in a suitableness to the present occasion.

The verses contain news from heaven: and particularly, 1. Here is a city described; “There was a little city, and few men within it.” 2. The city besieged; “There came a great king against it, and besieged it; and built great bulwarks against it.” 3. The city delivered, and the siege raised; “Now there was found in it a poor wise man; and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city.” 4. The ingratitude of the citizens, “Yet no man remembered the same poor man.”

1st, Here is a city described, both from the quality of it—a little city; and from the paucity of its inhabitants—few men within it. Now, what are we to understand by the city? Why,

1. If by the city we understand the world in general, it might seem strange that the world should be called a little city; but he that walks with God, as Enoch, and, as the prophet Isaiah expresseth

(1.) This Sermon was preached at the Queensferry, on Monday, October 8th, 1732, after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper there.

it, dwells on high, sees this world to be nothing but some shadow ; yea, before God, " All the nations of the earth are as nothing ;" and as it is little, so there are few men within it ; because these we call men cannot, according to scripture, be distinguished from beasts and vipers, a generation of vipers ; and of these there are many ; but a very few men are to be found in the world ; none but these that are transformed, and turned from beasts to men ; " The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragon and the owl. This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise," Isaiah xlvii. 20, 21.

2. By the city we are to understand the church of God in particular. The name of the city is JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, the Lord is there ; the wall of the city is salvation, which God hath appointed for walls and bulwarks ; the food of the citizens is the word of God, and the bread that came down from heaven. But in what respect the church is compared to a city so frequently in scripture, we may afterwards consider. It is but a little city, and a few men in it, in comparison of her enemies, and all the rest of the world, that are without the church.

2dly, Here is the city besieged. Where we may notice,

1. The greatness of the besieger : " There came a great king against it, and besieged it." Whether we take this great king for God, in one respect ; or for the devil, in another respect ; and for sin and death that attend him ; these, in various respects, lay siege to the city.

2. Notice the greatness of the siege : " He built great bulwarks against it." God, in his awful justice ; the devil, in his desperate malice ; sin, in its destructive subtilty ; and death, in its dreadful terrors. A great king raising great bulwarks against a little city, and few men in it, they must be in a very dismal situation. But,

3dly, Here is the little city delivered, and the siege raised : " There was found in the city a poor wise man ; and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city." Where notice also two things, namely, How the deliverer is described ; and how the city was delivered by him.

(1.) How the deliverer is described : " There was found in the city a poor wise Man." I think it is not only highly agreeable to the analogy of faith, but very probable to be the intent of the words, to give a description of Christ, the Deliverer and Saviour of his Church ; whom we may here view as described,

1. By his humanity, a man; for, "He was a man of sorrows: The Word was made flesh."

2. By his divinity, a wise man; for, he was, and is, the essential Wisdom of God.

3. By his humiliation, a poor man; for, "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor."

4. By his destination to this work; he was found in the city: Who found him? God, who says, "I have found a ransom; I have found David my servant." Where was he found? Even in the city, among men: "I have laid help upon One that is mighty, says God; even One chosen out of the people," Psalm lxxxix. 19.

(2.) How and in what manner he delivered the city, even by his wisdom: "He, by his wisdom, delivered the city:" By his Deity; for, if he had not been the infinitely wise God, he could never have relieved the city; even he who, by his wisdom, stretched out the heavens, when he made the world; by his wisdom, fulfilled the law, and appeased the wrath of God; by his wisdom, outwitted the old serpent, and destroyed the works of the devil; by his wisdom, finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and vanquished death: and so by his wisdom delivered the city from justice, Satan, sin, hell, and death; in his wisdom he delivers the church, the city of God, by the price of his blood, and by the power of his spirit.—Thus the city is delivered, and the siege raised.

4thly and lastly, Notice in the words the ingratitude of the citizens, or the citizens upbraided for their unkindness: "Yet no man remembered the same poor man." Where you have,

1. The nature of their fault, and the aggravation of their ingratitude; they were so far from requiting him kindly, saying, "What shall we render to the Lord, for his benefits towards us?" that they did not remember him, they never so much as minded him. Their disease was that of sinful oblivion; they forgot him, and his kindness: "They soon forgot his mighty works."

2. The universality of this ingratitude: "No man remembered the same poor man;"—none remembered, no, not one; they are altogether become ungrateful.—Thus you have the history opened, and a short hint at the mystery contained in it.

From the words, thus opened, we may lay down this doctrinal proposition—

OBSERV. That though the work of redemption, or the deliverance wrought by Christ for sinners, be a very great and memorable work, like the raising of a great siege against a little city; yet there is a proneness in man to forget the Redeemer or Deliverer, and all his work of kindness toward them.

We need go no further for the confirmation of this doctrine, than the institution of the Lord's Supper, which you have been celebrating, "Do this in remembrance of me;" as if it had been said, Ought you not to remember me, your Redeemer; me, your Deliverer, that hath raised the great siege that was laid against you; yet you are prone to forget me, and all the kindness that I have done to you; therefore, I have instituted this ordinance to keep you in mind, "Do this in remembrance of me." But I shall refer the farther confirmation, to the prosecution of the doctrine, in the following method, according to the former division.

- I. I would speak somewhat concerning the little city, and the few men in it.
- II. Concerning the great siege laid against it.
- III. Of the deliverance thereof, and the reasons of the siege.
- IV. Of the ingratitude of the citizens, and their proneness to forget the Deliverer.
- V. Make application of the whole.

I. I am to speak of the little city: "There was a little city, and few men within it." There are four things remarkable concerning the church, which this part of the text presents to us.

Remark 1. "That the church of God is comparable to a city, and often compared thereto in Scripture, Psalm xlv. 4, 'There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.'"¹ The church, in allusion to a city, is a place of security and defence: "We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks;" and it hath watchmen upon the walls. It is a place of society; where the saints have fellowship one with another, exhort and comfort one another.—It is a place of unity; where they are to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.—It is a place

(1) See the Author's sermon on this text, where he, at length, states the comparison and runs the parallel between the church and a city.

of trade and traffic ; where we may trade with heaven, and buy gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and eye-salve, exposed freely there for sale.—It is a place of freedom and liberty ; where all the true citizens are freed from the law as a covenant ; from the curse of the law, the wrath of God, and all subjection thereto ; also from the guilt of sin and the rule of it.—It is a place of order and regularity ; where men are regularly entered burgesses, and are to come in by the gate of the city, even by Christ, who is the door.—It is a place of rest, commodious to live in ; and there is no resting-place for the soul but here.—It is a place of pleasure and joy ; “ Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth ; ” there is the joyful sound, through the silver trumpet of the gospel ; and the song of Zion.—It is a place of pomp and splendour, the seat of the King ; where is the King’s court, the King’s throne, the throne of grace, and daily access to see the King in his beauty.—It is a place of privileges, a privileged place ; where there are privileges belonging to the church visible ; they have the fountain open to them ; they have a sealed right in baptism to the covenant ; having the promise, they have right to the seal of the covenant of promise ; and thus a sealed warrant to come to Christ, a general adoption, and thereon many fatherly acts of pity shewed to them ; God instructs them by his word, corrects them by his rod, reproves them by his servants, and when they go aside directs them by his word, saying, “ This is the way.” They have ordinances, sacraments, ministers, and a right to choose the ministers and officers of the city : this is the privilege of every city, much more of the city of God ; and, if the city want this, it is so far a city robbed and spoiled. There are privileges belonging to the church invisible, such as pardon of sin, peace with God, sanctification, eternal life, access to the King’s table, the Lamb, the light of the place, and the temple ; the Lord himself is the temple they come to ; they have a title unto the new Jerusalem, the King’s pass for heaven, “ I appoint unto you a kingdom.”

2. Remark 2. “ That the church is a little city, it is a little flock, Luke xii. 31. It is but a small spot, compared with the vast wilderness of this world ; it is an inclosed garden, Song iv. 12.” The church is compared to a little city in comparison of this world, and but a little city in the eyes of the world ; little and contemned. And, indeed, the true citizens are but little in their own eyes, “ Less than the least of all saints ; less than the least of all God’s mercies ; ” yea, nothing in their own account, and less than nothing, worse

than nothing. The church is a little city, a little stone cut out of the mountain, yet many great cities and kingdoms have fallen before it. This little city has outlived the great city Nineveh; the magnificent Tyrus; and trampled upon the graves of many famous and remarkable cities, because, though it be but a little city, yet it is the city of the great God; and "Glorious things are spoken of this city of God," Psalm lxxxvii. 3.

Remark 3. "That it is a city of men; "a little city and MEN in it." The infinite wisdom of God hath seen fit to make this famous little city consist, not of fallen angels, but of fallen men; "Wisdom crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, saying, To you, O, men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men," Prov. viii. 3, 4. And happy we the men whom wisdom determineth and prevaieth on to enter themselves burgesses of this little city, by coming not only into the suburbs thereof, by a profession of Christ; but enter in through the gates into the city, while the King of the city stands at the door of our hearts, and knocks, and assures us that he is the door of the city; "I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved; and shall go in and out, and find pasture," John x. 9. It is a city of men, a city for mankind, a city of refuge for mankind sinners; therefore, let none stand without, saying, It is not the like of me that God is calling to come in. If you be of the posterity of Adam, and of the children of men, Christ is offered unto you, and you are called to accept of the grant of freedom and liberty; the grant of all the privileges and immunities of God's city, and of being free men there: O, sirs, "If the son make you free, then are ye free indeed." But yet we have it to remark,

4. "That this little city hath but few men in it, even the visible church." I mean, these that have a visible and credible profession of faith are few in comparison of the rest of the world; and the invisible church, who have the power of religion, and the truth of faith, are but very few in comparison of the bulk of professors. This little city then, has but "few men within it," as the text says; many are without the city, and many are about the city, but few are within the city, and they only, are safe; for, "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, idolators, murderers, and whosoever loveth or maketh a lie," Rev. xxii. 15. Without are drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, profane persons; yea, beside the openly profane, without are formalists, hypocrites, unbelievers; but within are saints, believers, lovers of God; "many are called,

but few are chosen." Yea we may say, there are many bycomers, but few indwellers; many incomers like dogs, that go out again; "They go out from us, because they are not of us," 1 John ii. 19, but few indwellers, like children of Zion, and fellow-citizens with the saints, Eph. ii. 19. The rest of the world, whether they be bycomers or not, they are not to be reckoned men, but rather dogs and beasts; for thus, all that are out of Christ, and so out of the city, are called, Isa. xliii. 20. Thus, in the vast populous city of Jerusalem, a man could not be found; "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof if you can find a man." Why, not a man? No: they were only to be reckoned men who execute judgment, and sought the truth; but such could not be found: they were all degenerate into beasts; all transformed through brutish affections into unreasonable creatures: yet of Zion it shall be said, "This man and that man was born there;" but they are but here and there one; a "little city, and few men within it."

II. The second thing in the method, was, To speak of the great siege laid against the little city.

I shall here consider both who the great king is, that came against the city; and what are the great bulwarks built against it. And here, according to the view I gave in the explication,

1. By the great king we may understand the Great God, in his awful justice, who upon the sin of man, became an enraged enemy to the whole city of mankind; and to whose wrath the little city, which he chose out of the world, is by nature as much exposed as the rest; for, being all children of disobedience, they are by nature children of wrath even as others, Eph. ii. 2-3, and therefore, his first appearance to them, even when he has a mind to make them a city for himself to dwell in; his first appearance, I say, to them, is in terrible majesty, laying siege to their souls, and building great bulwarks against them. But possibly you may say,

What bulwarks? Even the great bulwarks of law-curses and law-threatenings: for, in a work of conviction and compunction, and legal humiliation, which usually precedes any gospel-work, and saving change, he applies the curse and threatenings of the law to their conscience, saying, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things, written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. In so much, that the soul finds itself to be an accursed creature; a condemned creature; and is put in fear of everlasting damnation.

The rest of the world, who shall eternally feel this heavy wrath of God in another world, yet lie sleeping, without fear of it, in this world; but the little city, that shall for ever be delivered from it, are now in this world awakened and alarmed with the fear of it mercifully, that they may prize the Saviour and Deliverer of the city. The great God storms the city with his terrible artillery, like great warring cannons, surrounding a little city; he thunders from Sinai, and builds great bulwarks against it; the great bulwark of a broken law; the great bulwark of a threatened curse; the great bulwark of offended holiness; and great bulwark of enraged justice; and, in a word, all the infinite perfections of God injured and dishonoured by their sin, appear planted about the city in battle array. When the great God himself appears an enemy, breaking them with breach upon breach, and running upon them like a giant sometimes, and saying, as Deut. xxxii. 40, "Who can deliver out of my hand? for, I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold of judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies;—I will make mine arrows drunk with blood." Yea, not only in the first awakening work doth God thus appear formidable to them, for their humiliation and conviction: but even afterwards, he sometimes appears formidable to them for their trial and correction. Thus Job found the great bulwarks of God's terrible majesty built up against him, when he said, chap. vi. 4, "The Arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirits; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." Thus Heman, "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted: thy fierce wrath goes over me; thy terrors have cut me off," Psalm lxxxviii. 15. But,

2. By the great king we may understand the devil in his desperate malice against the little city: he is called a prince, the prince of the power of the air, [or, of darkness,] that rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2. This mighty and malicious prince, in the beginning of the world, came against the little city of mankind, when there was but few men in it; yea, when there was but one man, and one woman in the city, in a literal sense; and he besieged it and built great bulwarks of flattering falsehoods, and lying temptations against it; and conquered the city, and destroyed it: as you read, Gen. iii., concerning the sin and fall of our first parents, through the powerful subtilty of the serpent; and he continues still to besiege and destroy sinners by

his malice and subtility, force, and fraud ; and especially he raises great bulwarks against the little city.

What bulwarks ? Why, even his manifold temptations, devices, and fiery darts ; "We are not ignorant of his devices," 2 Cor. ii. 11. We are called to take, above all things, the shield of faith, that we may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked : for, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers," Eph. vi. 12-16. The devil attacks the city both by high bulwarks and deep mines ; we read of the depths of Satan, Rev. ii. 24, and being the prince of this world, for so he is called, John xii. 31, and elsewhere. He has thousands of wicked instruments by which he batters and besieges the little city. He has a deceitful party for him within, as well as without the little city ; within the church as well as without it : within the church visible, he has his treacherous Judases, to betray the city into his hand, and to betray the interest of the city, and the liberties and privileges thereof. We read of the devil's armour, Luke xi. 22, where he is called the strong man armed, keeping his palace ; but when a stronger than he, comes upon him, and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armour. And what that armour is, we may partly know, from 2 Cor. iv. 4. "The god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not," hellish darkness excluding and opposing gospel-light ; the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of error, and the darkness of delusion. This is a great part of the devil's armour, together with high imaginations, carnal reasonings, pride, prejudices, and exalting thoughts, mentioned, 2 Cor. x. 5. These are part of his armour, and his great bulwarks.

3. By the great king we may understand sin ; sin is the great king that reigns in, and over us naturally ; therefore says the apostle, Rom. vi. 12, "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies." Sin and Satan are always confederates together ; and their power is very great, in so much, that all men are subject to the rule and government thereof ; and as all the children of men are slaves unto sin, as their king ; so all the children of God, in this world, are many times captives to it : "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin that is in my members," Rom. vii. 3. The power and authority of sin is called a law, even the law of sin and death, which nothing can free us from, but the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, Rom. viii. 2.

Now, what bulwarks does this great king build against the little city? Indeed, sin has the strongest bulwarks in the world. It hath self for a bulwark; and hence, for a man to destroy sin, is to destroy himself in effect, and the best and most useful parts of himself, his right-hand, his right-eye, his members, Col. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members that are upon the earth." When a man destroys his lusts, he denies himself; and self is so mighty, that it competes with King Jesus, and fights for the throne, even after Christ has taken possession of the heart. Self-ease, self-pleasure, self-will, self-wisdom, self-love, self-esteem, self-righteousness, are the bulwarks of sin. It hath also the law for a bulwark: "The strength of sin is the law," 1 Cor. xv. 56. The law of sin is strengthened by the law of works; the strength of sin being a grand part of the curse of the law of works, in so much, that no power can destroy that bulwark, but the power that can give full satisfaction to the law; hence the strong bulwark of sin is never broken down, till a man has, by faith, closed with the law-satisfying righteousness of Christ. Again,

4. By the great king we may understand death, the king of terrors, Job xviii. 14. Death is a mighty king, that all the sinful race of Adam are lawful captives unto; and such is the constant battle that death gives, even to the true-born children of Zion, the little city, that when all other enemies are defeated and destroyed, death is the last upon the field: "The last enemy to be destroyed, is death," 1 Cor. xv. 26. Now,

What bulwarks does this king build against the little city? There are two great bulwarks it builds; the one before, and the other behind it. Before death, there stands the bulwark of terror and fear because of sin, which is the sting of death, and hence many within the little city are kept long in bondage through fear of death Heb. ii. 15. The terrors of death sometimes compass them about, and the fears of hell on the back of death. Again, behind death there is another bulwark, and that is seeming victory. When death gets soul and body separate, and the body made death's prisoner in the grave, where the worms destroy it, and rottenness seems to ride in triumph over it; and this is the reason why it is said to be the last enemy that shall be destroyed; because it has a seeming victory over the visible part of the believer, till the last trumpet sound, and the dead be raised incorruptible, immortal, &c.

III. The next thing was, To speak of the deliverance of the

city, and the raising of the siege. And here we are led by the text to consider, 1. How the Deliverer is described; 2. How the deliverance is effected.

1st, Consider how the Deliverer is described: "There was found in the city a poor wise man." And here he is set before us, so as we may consider him,

1. In his humanity, as a Man. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Saviour and Deliverer, he was a man; he was prophesied of before, that he should be the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham; and in the fulness of time he was made of a woman, born of a virgin: "The Word was made flesh;" and he became man, a true man; he went through all the stages of man, conception, childhood, youth, riper age: he was a distressed man, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was a mortal as we are, and actually died as we must; he died a painful, shameful, and ignominious death, which we were commemorating at this occasion.

2. We may consider the Deliverer in his Divinity, as a wise Man. Wisdom dwells not with fallen men; they had all their heads cracked by the fall of Adam, and were become fools, having folly bound up in their nature; therefore, the man who is the Deliverer must be a man that never fell in Adam, a wise man—that is, God as well as man; one that, with the nature of man, hath the wisdom of God; yea, and is "the Wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 24. It is he that says, "I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence," Prov. viii. 12. And it is of him the Father says, "My Servant shall deal prudently," Isa. lii. 13. And it is by his infinite wisdom that he delivered the city, of which more afterwards. He is essentially wise, being Wisdom itself; the God whose understanding is infinite. He is communicatively wise, having all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid in him, and the Spirit of Wisdom to give.

3. We may view the Deliverer in his humiliation; as a poor Man; poor in outward respects: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet, for our sakes, he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9. He had all the riches and all the fulness of the Godhead in him, yet he became poor. Many are poor against their will, but he became poor voluntarily; he became a poor servant: "Though he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he took upon him the

form of a servant ;" taking on our nature, not in its best condition, but the lowest state of our nature. He became poor in his birth, poor in his life, and poor in his death. He was born, not of a queen, but of a mean virgin ; born, not in a palace, but in a stable, laid in a manger : The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests ; but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head." He had nothing to pay tribute withal till he ordered a fish to bring it. He was ministered unto in his life and in his death, by reason of his real extreme poverty. He was poor as a man, and yet wise as God. The poverty of men and the wisdom of God met and centred in him.

4. We may consider the Deliverer in his destination to this work ; he was found in the city. He was found of God, who says, " I have found a Ransom ; I have found David my servant," Job xiii. 24 ; Psalm lxxxix. 20. He was found in the city, among men ; and was chosen out of the people, Psalm lxxxix. 19. He was found in fashion as a man, Phil. ii. 8. He was found willing and cheerfully ready to undertake this work of redemption and deliverance, Psalm xl. 6 ; Heb. x. 6, " Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will." He was found able and well qualified for the work, Psalm lxxxix. 19, " I have laid help upon one that is mighty." And, as he had a personal fitness, being God as well as man, and God-man in one person ; so he that found him did also fit him, by the supereminent unction of the Holy Ghost, Ps. lxxxix. 20, " I have found David my servant ; with my holy oil have I anointed him." Thus, " Him hath God the Father sealed," for this work, John vi. 27 And this is what Christ acknowledges of himself, Isa. lxi. 1, " The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God ;" to deliver the city.

2dly, How the deliverance is effected. Here two things are to be a little opened, 1. The matter of his work : " He delivered the city." 2. The manner of the deliverance : " By his wisdom."

(1.) In general, the matter of his redemption work : He delivered the little city, he raised the siege. Here we are to view how he manages the work, in opposition to the great kings, that built great bulwarks against the little city.

1. If we view the siege as formed by the Great King, that is, the Great God, when the great bulwarks built against the city are

the broken law of God, cursing the sinner; and the injured attributes of God, viz., justice, holiness, and truth, all standing in battle array against the sinner, behold the poor wise man, he comes and fulfils that law that we had broken, and bears the curse that we had incurred. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," Gal. iv. 4. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. And, in this way, he satisfies the justice of God, vindicates the holiness of God, and clears the truth of God; Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself a sacrifice for us, of a sweet-smelling savour to God, Eph. v. 2. He is become the Lord our righteousness, and the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes; and in him mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other, that God might save, and shew mercy on the little city, in a consistency with the honour of his injured attributes, which are now glorified more by his obedience and satisfaction than ever they were dishonoured by our sin and rebellion. Thus he brake down the great bulwarks that the great King of heaven and earth had built against the little city, and that by the King's order and allowance, and according to his command and will: "This commandment have I received of my Father."

2. If we view the siege as formed by the devil, the great king of hell, and prince of the power of darkness, that rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, we will find him raising this siege partly by the price of his blood, that he shed for us; and partly by the power of his Spirit, which is given to us.—By the price of his blood he delivers from the devil's kingdom; for "By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. xi. 14. And, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8. And he was thus manifested, according to the original promise, Gen. iii. 15, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." Christ took a wooden cross, as it were, a tree in his arms, and therewith beat down the great bulwarks that Satan built against the little city. As by means of a tree the devil built his battering engine; so, by means of a tree, Christ demolished his building. For, upon the cross, "Jesus Christ spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," Col. iv. 15. Again, by the power of his Spirit he

destroyed the devil's bulwarks, when he gives spiritual armour to the citizens, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, and the rest of that spiritual artillery, mentioned, Eph. vi. 11-17. Whereby they quench the fiery darts of the devil, demolish his bulwarks, resist the devil, and overcome by the power and strength of the Captain of their salvation. Though they constantly fight while here; yet they gradually defeat the devil and his instruments, that oppose themselves to Christ and his people, to his cause and interest. Truth prevails always at last; and the friends of truth overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, Rev. xii. 11.

3. If we view the siege as formed by the great king, Sin, which naturally reigns in our mortal bodies. How doth the poor wise man destroy the great bulwarks thereof? Why, this he doth, both meritoriously, giving himself a sacrifice for sin, John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Heb. ix. 26, "But now once in the end of the world, has he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." And then he doth it efficaciously, and that, partly by the actual imputation of his righteousness, for removing the guilt of sin in justification; and partly by the effectual operation of his Spirit, for removing the rule of sin in sanctification. In justification, he destroys the legal power of sin: for, "The strength of sin is the law;" but when the righteousness of God is imputed and received, and Christ is become the end of the law for righteousness, to the person, then the law, being satisfied, has no more power to keep the person under the curse, whereof the power of sin is the leading part. And, again, in sanctification, he destroys the actual reigning power of sin. Both these are imported, I think, in that word, Rom. viii. 2, "The law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death;" and both are particularly spoken of, in verses 3-4, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak, through the flesh, God [did] sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Here is the legal power of sin destroyed; and ver. 13, "If ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live;" there is the destroying of the actual reigning power of sin. Thus, by his pardoning and purifying grace, he demolishes the bulwarks of sin, and all by the means of the gospel, as it is the power of God to salvation;" The weapons of this warfare being not carnal,

but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought, to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4-5. Again,

4. If we view the siege as formed by the great king, Death, behold our King, Jesus, "the poor wise Man," delivers the city, by overturning the great bulwarks that death built; and this he doth by removing both the sting of death and the victory of the grave; The sting of death is sin, which he removes, as I have been just now saying, both meritoriously and efficaciously till it be perfectly removed in glory, where we shall be like him, by seeing him as he is. The victory of the grave, which is corruption; the corruption of the body he is to remove at the great day, "When this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality: and that saying shall be brought to pass, Death is swallowed up in victory." Hence in the faith of all this, the believer may sing that triumphant song, "O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, that has given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 54, 57. Thus you have a view of the deliverance in the matter of it. But then,

[2.] In particular, we are led here to consider the manner of it. It was in infinite wisdom; "He by his infinite wisdom delivered the city." As it is said of his works of creation, "In wisdom hath he made them all;" so of his work of redemption, "In wisdom hath he delivered the city. He made the earth by the word of his power, established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion," Jer. x. 12. And it is even he who, by his wisdom, delivered the city. Particularly,

1. By his wisdom he removed all the impediments that stood in the way of our salvation, while he gave himself a ransom for many, satisfied the law and justice of God, defeated the devil, destroyed sin, and conquered death. And thus, except one great King, whom he brings to peace and reconciliation with the city, he destroyed all the other great kings, and their great bulwarks, in so much that we may say, "He smote great kings, for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth for ever!" O the infinite wise Captain of salvation who could, by his wisdom, deliver a little city, so powerfully besieged.

2. By his wisdom he united the most distant and contrary ex-

tremes, while God and man are joined in one person: The infinite and eternal God, with a bit of clay; which is a mystery ten thousand times greater than if an angel had become a worm. He became a poor man, that he might deliver the poor city: "Great is the mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh."

3. By his wisdom he united the most contrary interests, God's interest and man's: the interest of his glory, and our salvation; they are quite different, after the fall. In some respects (when man came to have no other interest but that of the devil) God's interest and glory seemed to require man's destruction; and yet it was man's interest to be delivered: God's interest, in infinite wisdom, is made to agree with the interest of little city, while Christ is set forth to be a propitiation, that the glory of God's justice and righteousness might be reached, as much in saving the city as it can be by destroying them who are without the city, and more.

4. By his wisdom he united the most contrary affections, namely, God's hatred and love; his hatred of sin and his love to the sinner. Nothing more hateful to God than sin, and yet nothing more dear to God than the sinner that is in Christ, in whom God is well-pleased. Infinite wisdom contrived the reconciliation of the opposite-like affection in God that the city might be delivered by the wisdom of God in a mystery: the manifold wisdom of God.

5. By his wisdom he brings about the greatest things by the most unlikely means. In delivering the city, who would have thought that the seed of a poor woman that was deceived should bruise the head of the serpent, the deceiver; that a poor woman should bring forth a poor man-child; and poor man should conquer all the armed legions of hell; and that, by his stripes, we should be healed; and by his blood we should be washed; and this blood should sap the foundations of all the great bulwarks that were raised against the little city?

6. By his wisdom he brings the greatest good out of the greatest evil. Could there be anything worse than sin? Yet out of this, wisdom brings greater glory to God, and greater happiness to man. God had built the fabric of the old covenant with brick, as it were; the devil and our first parents pulled it down. But, says God, I will build with cedar, and all the devils in hell shall not bring it down: "Mercy shall be built up for ever,"

Psalm lxxxix. 2. O, here is wisdom ! And we may say, "To the King eternal, immortal, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen," 1.Tim. i. 17.

IV. The fourth general head proposed was, To speak of the ingratitude of the citizens, their proneness to forget their Deliverer ; "Yet no man remembered the same poor man." This is the sin that God has challenged in his church many times, Deut. xxxii. 18, "Of the rock that begat thee thou hast been unmindful, and hast forgotten God, that formed thee ;" Psalm cvi. 21, "They forgot God their Saviour, who had done great things in Egypt. They soon forgot his work."

I might here speak a little to these four things ; 1. Of the nature of their unmindfulness or forgetfulness. 2. The object thereof : they forgot the POOR "wise man," and his work. 3. The universality of this oblivion, NO "man remembered the same poor man." 4. The reason of this forgetfulness.

1. We are first to view the nature of this oblivion. For, understanding thereof, you would know that forgetfulness of Christ is either total or partial. A total forgetfulness takes place in the wicked, of whom it is said, "God is not in all their thoughts." A partial forgetfulness is coincident to believers themselves, who may, in a great measure, forget what God hath done to their souls. Actual forgetfulness is what the godly may be guilty of, as David, after his gross sin of adultery, when he was contriving the murder of Uriah. But there is an habitual forgetfulness peculiar to the wicked, who desire not the knowledge of God ; and never remember God till they be driven to it with a vengeance, as it is said of these, "When he slew them, then they sought him ; they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer." They never remember till God bring a mortal stroke. But, now, this forgetfulness imports the want of a spiritual view and discovery of God ; and the want of that lively impression of him which the right view of him doth require. We cannot rightly remember God if we see not his perfections shining in his work, as David did, when he says of God's works, "In wisdom hast thou made them all." When we see the wisdom, and power, and other attributes of God shining in his works, particularly in his delivering the little city the church, then, and not till then, do we rightly remember them ; and, when we see his great end in all is the glory of these perfections, and entertain due impressions hereof, so as to

remember not only in a speculative, but in a practical and appropriating manner; and when we remember his delivering us in particular from the power and policy of the great things that were against us, and render to him the praise due to his name.

2. The object of this forgetfulness: "No man remembered the same POOR WISE MAN." We are apt, and naturally prone to forget our Creator, to forget our Redeemer, and Saviour, and Protector, and Benefactor, our best Friend.—We forget the Deliverer himself, the poor wise man found in the city. We forget his humanity, that he is a man; his divinity, that he is the wisdom of God; his humiliation and poverty, that for our sakes he became poor; and his destination to this redemption-work;—all is forgotten. We forget all the deliverances he hath wrought, the redemption he hath accomplished.—We forget his works of creation, though yet the heavens declare his glory. We forget his works of providence, both prosperous and adverse; both ordinary and extraordinary, as Israel did, of whom it is said, "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; he forgot God that made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." They forget the plagues of Egypt: the drowning of the Egyptians: the solemn appearance of God on Sinai, when the hill trembled under the weight of God, and the flames ascended to the middle heaven.—We forget his work of redemption. He redeems from the fury of justice, the curse of the law, the bondage of sin, the slavery of Satan, the sting of death; from the wrath of God; that terrible wrath, that intolerable wrath, that interminable wrath, that powerful and eternal wrath, that ever-coming wrath; he delivers from the wrath to come: and yet we are apt to forget the Deliverer, and the deliverance. We forget this redemption, and the necessity of it; the sufficiency of it; the excellency of it; the efficacy of it; the fulness of it; the acceptableness of it;—all is forgotten.—We forget also his work of regeneration, the work of conviction, and humiliation; the work of conversion and sanctification. Though this work of grace effectuates a real change, a sensible change, an universal change; yet all may be forgotten, in so much, that we may pose the believer himself, have you a regeneration-frame, the same temper of spirit you had in the day of believing? "Where is the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals?" Yea, communications and manifestations, and communion experiences may all be fearfully forgotten.

3. The universality of this oblivion; NO MAN "remembered

the same poor man." That this unbelieving forgetfulness of Christ, the Redeemer, is universal, appears evident from two arguments.

(1.) From the instances of all ages of the world.—The first man that ever was, began his apostacy from God by his sin; he forgot the favour of God in giving him such an excellent being, and such excellent benefits; forgot the covenant that God entered into with him, forbidding him to eat of the tree that was in the midst of the garden upon peril of eternal ruin to himself and his posterity; yet the hissing of the serpent drove all out of his mind. How quickly did Noah forget the great deliverance from the deluge, when all the rest of the world was overwhelmed in the midst of the waters; he was no sooner saved from water, than he was drowned in wine. How quickly did Lot forget the deliverance from the flames of Sodom, and fell into the fire of lust. Solomon forgot the God that appeared to him thrice, and turned to idolatry. David quickly forgot the Lord's delivering him from Saul, and fell into the sin of adultery and murder. Israel forgot God and all his works of wonder. The ten lepers, all but one, forgot to return and give praise to God that healed them. The disciples of Christ, quickly forgot the miracles of the loaves; they got sweet communion with Christ, yet Judas and his party soon drove all out of their minds. "No man remembered the poor wise man."

(2.) It appears from the many remembrancers and memorials that the Lord Jesus has set up of himself, and his works, as preservatives against this forgetting him. God's works of creation are his remembrancers, while the heavens declare his glory.—God's works of providence are his remembrancers. "He hath not left himself without a witness," even among the heathen, giving them rain and fruitful seasons: every drop of rain is a memorial of God. God's ordinances are his remembrancers; why has he given us Sabbaths and sacraments, but to be memorials of the works of Christ, and the death of Christ? "Do this in remembrance of me." In a word, the Holy Ghost is given to be a remembrancer, John xiv. 26. "I will give the Comforter, and he shall bring all things to your remembrance." I have been long preaching among you, might Christ say, and given you many a sermon; but all is gone, you forgot all; therefore, I will send the Holy Ghost to be your remembrancer. These things evidence the universality of this sin: "No man remembered the poor wise man." Now, consider here

4. The reason of this forgetfulness. And there is these four following reasons we shall assign for it.

(1.) It flows from the universal depravation of our nature ; the memory, with all the rest of the faculties of the soul, got a dash by the fall of Adam ; our heads were dashed to pieces, when we fell from such a height of happiness to such a depth of misery.

(2.) It flows from the little esteem and value that people have for the poor wise man, and his great works of redeeming and delivering us. It is strange to think, how much the works of men will be admired, and the works of God slighted. If a physician shall perform a cure upon a man that is desperately diseased, and dangerously ill, the man will be more taken up with the physician's work than with God's work ; he will pay his physician, but never thank his God. Many will read the works of men with admiration, and read history with rapture ; but they will read the history of the life and death of Christ without ever being moved.

(3.) It flows from this that the memory is stuffed with other things, even with the trash of hell ; there is no room for Christ and his works of wonder. It was a base treatment of Christ when he was sent out to the stable, laid in a manger, no room for him in the inn. But it is a thousand times worse, when your heart is so full of the world, lusts, and idols, that there is no room for Christ.

(4.) It flows from the little impression that Christ and his redeeming work takes upon us. Naturalists give this as a reason of remembrance, when a thing makes a mighty impression on the brain. But, alas ! the works of God flee over our heads, like a shadow, and so are forgotten. The best thing for the memory is the Spirit of God coming with life and power to the soul : " I will never forget thy words," says David ; why ? " for by them thou hast quickened me." It left an impression, and therefore abode. When the word of God, the works of God, have no impression, no wonder they are soon forgotten ; there is a fowl of the air, the prince of the power of the air, the devil, he picks away every thing you hear, if your hearts be not closets for Christ. If he were your treasure, your hearts would be the cabinets : " Where the treasure is, there the heart is also."

V. The fifth and last thing proposed, was, The application of the subject. And this we shall essay in an use of information, lamentation, trial and exhortation.

We are, First, to deduce some inferences for information. Is it so, as has been said, hence see,

1. The despicable case of the church of God in this world ; it

is but like a little city, and a few men in it. It is a despised city. The world calls it an outcast, saying, "This is Zion whom no man seeks after," Jer. xxx. 17. As Christ was despised and rejected of men, so are his friends and followers; they are a little flock, and a despised flock. Whatever be the state of the church visible; sometimes when it appears fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners; and when her visible glory, the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government is not defaced; yet the church invisible, in this world, is, for ordinary, a poor, small, despised company; of whom it is said, Zeph. iii. 12, "I will leave, in the midst of thee, an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord."

2. Hence see the dangerous circumstance of the church of God in this world. It is a city besieged by a great king, building great bulwarks against it. The church is like a bush burning in the midst of the flames; it is in a dangerous militant state. The church of God is the man-child, which the red dragon stands ready to devour, as soon as it is born, Rev. xii. 4. What a helpless case is the church of God into, in outward appearance! A great city cannot stand out well against a great king, and great bulwarks: far less a little city, and few men within it.

3. Hence see the marvellous grace of God in finding out a Saviour, and a great one, to save the little city; and behold "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was great and rich, yet for our sakes he became poor;" and in the capacity of a poor man, though yet infinitely wise, being God as well as man, he delivered the city, and raised the siege. O see and admire his wisdom, by which he delivered the city!

4. Hence see the matchless ingratitude of the visible church, where such a great deliverance is wrought; that no man should remember the poor wise man; that they should be guilty of such universal oblivion. Unbelief discovers itself by unmindfulness; the life of faith is a life of spiritual remembrance, but unbelief appears by forgetfulness; by faith we remember Christ, but by unbelief we forget him and all his acts of kindness and love, though a standing ministry be appointed to help our memory! and O what a horrid ingratitude is it to forget him that minded us! Forgetfulness is the spring of that deluge of atheism and wickedness that over-runs the world and the present generation; people forget God and Christ. If men did but remember there is a God in heaven, that notices

what they do, they could not practise as they do ; men have their minds so sunk in a present world, that they mind no other world ; they forget him that came to redeem from this present evil world, and to provide a better ; while we mind only earthly things, we neglect the great salvation, and the great Saviour and Deliverer.

5. Hence see what is here inferred, verse 16, that wisdom is better than strength. Christ is frequently here and in the Proverbs represented under the name of Wisdom ; and surely the wisdom of Christ is better than the strength of men, better than the strength of carnal policy, better than the strength of human reason, better than the strength of armies ; yet the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard ; Christ is despised, and his gospel neglected and rejected.

Use 2. Let us then apply this doctrine for lamentation over the besieged city, particularly the Church of Scotland. Let us take a view of the church, and then of the professors therein.

First, Of the church of Scotland, more generally as a city besieged, and a city delivered ; and yet a city most ungrateful and unmindful of the Deliverer.

1st, As a city many times and many ways besieged, especially by the devil and his instruments, whom God in righteousness, suffered to vex and disturb the city, and build great bulwarks against it.

I might here begin with the first foundation-stone, laid in the church of Scotland, more than 1600 years ago, even a few years after Christ's ascension, when God, by means of persecution, sent Christians and gospel-professors first among us ; and we were, in a literal sense, a little city and few men in it. How many great bulwarks of pagan darkness, and heathen idolatries, were built in opposition to the little city, and the little flock that were the followers of Christ, when there was here a temple for Apollo, and there a temple for Diana ; one for Jupiter, and another for Juno ; one for Mercury, and another for Venus ; one for the Sun, and another for the Moon : one for this god and goddess, and another for that ; and also many temples for the devil, for offering so many bloody inhuman sacrifices upon ! We may think, how could the little city stand when surrounded with such great bulwarks against it.

I might go forward to the fifth century, when the little city was first formally besieged, and the great bulwark of popish dark-

ness and anti-christian superstition built against it. When Palladius was sent from the Pope of Rome to Scotland, the little city did hold out against Rome for a long time, but the siege continued against the city for no less than ten centuries ; for, from the time of Palladius to the Reformation, was about a thousand years ; for, till the fifteenth century, the little city was covered with that dark cloud, over-run, oppressed, and almost wholly destroyed ; only, amidst these dismal days, God had his witnesses, from time to time, that testified against Rome and hell, even when they were carrying all before them.

Again, I might descend to latter times, when the little city was again attacked, and had the great bulwark of prelatical tyranny and arbitrary power built against it ; when the inhabitants of the city were haunted, pursued, yea, persecute to death, imprisoned, fined, confined, banished, martyred and murdered, because of their adhering to the rights and royalties of the glorious Lord and King of the city. Once and again the city was thus molested before the late Revolution ; and many witnesses are yet living, that can attest the grievous trials of the late reigns.¹

Further, I might here observe how the city has been besieged and attacked several ways in our own time, and within our remembrance, as well as at this present time ; partly without doors, by late foreign invasions, and a late unnatural rebellion,² wherein a popish faction have attempted to ruin the city in all her most valuable and sacred concerns ; and those attempts favoured underhand, by parliamentary acts, tolerating errors, and restoring patronages ; and partly within doors, while unnatural citizens seek in a manner to sap the foundations thereof.

QUEST. Who are these within the little city that disturb the peace, and destroy the foundations of the city.

ANSW. Surely, if there be any party within the city, that are thieves and robbers, not coming in by the doors and gates of the city but climbing up some other way ; if there be who seek themselves, and not the welfare of the city ; or that lift up hammers and axes against the carved work, the doctrine, worship, discipline, and

(1) Alluding particularly to the twenty-eight years' persecution, under Charles II. and James VII. between 1650 and 1688

(2) Our Author here has his eye probably upon the intended invasion by France, in favour of the Pretender, Anno 1708, and upon the actual invasion and Rebellion in the year 1715.

government of the city ; if there be any that stand not to condemn gospel-truth, and tolerate damnable errors ; if there be any that stand not to offend the generation of the righteous, and to wound the citizens, and smite them, and take away the vail from them ; if there be any that violently thrust in pastors upon congregations, or officers upon the city over the belly of the citizens, and that discourage a holy and pious set of officers, and encourage a loose, legal, erroneous, and scandalous set ; these are surely the disturbers of the peace of the city ; these are building up great bulwarks against it.

2dly, Take a view of the church of Scotland not only as a city besieged, but as a city hitherto delivered by the wisdom of the poor wise man, the glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

By his wisdom he delivered the city, first from Paganism : not only did he make the gospel take footing in Scotland, in these early times of Christianity, so quickly after the resurrection of Christ, that some reckon he was not fifteen years in heaven till he sent the gospel to Scotland ; and about fifteen thereafter, sent another drove of Christians, flying before the second primitive persecution to our land, because they heard the gospel was received there : But also, in the two hundred and third year of Christ, set up a Christian king, Donald the First, who established Christianity by law ; and broke down the bulwarks of Paganism, that were supported by the Bards, and Druids, and Pagan priests. This deliverance he effected by little and little, till heathen idolatry was abolished.

Again, By his wisdom he remarkably delivered the city, at the glorious Reformation from Popery, and black antichristian superstition. He turned back our long thousand years captivity, as streams in the south, and made light to shine out of darkness, by raising up burning and shining lights, holy, wise, and zealous instruments, for beginning, carrying on, and advancing that glorious work, and that in a way of Solemn, National Covenanting, from time to time ; in which course, the Lord gave signal evidences of his gracious presence and countenance.

Again, By his wisdom he mercifully delivered the city at the late remarkable Revolution, wherein he gave us more than a little reviving in our bondage, that we were under unto Prelacy and tyranny ; and put an opportunity in our hands of advancing reformation-work, more than we had heart and courage to do at that period. But yet, though the glory of the second temple was not equal to the glory of the first ; I mean, the Revolution far inferior

to the Reformation ; yet it was such a glorious work of God, in delivering the city from these that sought the utter ruin thereof, that multitudes in this generation, have seen the glory of God in his sanctuary, and been brought to enjoy the privileges and immunities of the city of God ; in so much, that some have thought, that as many have shared of the blessed fruits of this happy Revolution within these forty years past, though in a more diffused way through the whole nation, as shared formerly of the blessed fruits of the former Reformation, in a more confined way at remarkable times and places, when the spirit was poured out upon great multitudes at once. Whatever be in this, yet we have reason to put a remark upon the wisdom, power, and grace of our glorious Deliverer.

Finally, By his wisdom he has from time to time, and even hitherto, delivered the city, not only from invasions and insurrections that threatened the ruin of the church and state, and reducing of us unto Popish bondage, and Antichristian darkness ; but so far has he delivered the city, also, even from disturbers and destroyers within the city, that gospel-light is yet shining among us, and we have yet access to pure gospel-ordinances : we are yet allowed, in peace to keep our solemn feasts ; we have Sabbath upon Sabbath, sermon upon sermon, “ precept upon precept, and line upon line ;” and whatever disorders have been, and do take place in the city, hitherto some testimony has been kept up ; and I hope he has reserved to himself a wrestling remnant in Scotland, both ministers and people, that have occasion to say, by reflection on all the deliverances he has hitherto granted, as it is, Psalm cxxiv. 1-4, “ Had not the Lord been on our side, when men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick ; the waters had overwhelmed us, and the proud waters had gone over our souls.” Thus we may view it as a delivered city.

3rdly, We may look upon this church as a city most ungrateful and unmindful of her Deliverer ; and this is the great cause of all the disorders, divisions, and confusions, all the troubles and distresses, that befall the city : “ No man remembered the same poor man.” We are universally unbelieving and unmindful ; forget to render the praises due to the Deliverer : we have no due consideration of what God has done for us ; no deep impression of his wonderful mercy ; no practical remembrance of his favour ; his goodness has not led us to repentance. No wonder that many desolations are to be seen in the city ; for many times Christ has said to us, as to

Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children under my wings, as a hen doth her chickens, and ye would not? therefore, behold, your house is left desolate." "No man remembered the poor wise man," who is the great Deliverer of the city.

Where is the man that remembers duly the great deliverance that God gave to Scotland at the first plantation of the gospel, when he paid such an early visit to us, when we were nothing but a pack of blind Pagans; when we were worshipping nothing but stocks, and stones, and devils? Where is the man that remembers the great deliverance he wrought for us at the glorious Reformation, when he threw down the bulwarks of popery, so many ages after he had demolished the bulwarks of paganism? Where is the man that remembers the merciful deliverance wrought for us at the Revolution, (for I confine myself to the most known and remarkable periods), the fruits of which deliverance we yet enjoy (under the influence of a peaceful prince, whose royal family's succession to the throne was interwoven with that remarkable period); which goodness and mercy of our great and glorious Deliverer, we ought to remember as long as we enjoy these gospel-ordinances in peace and freedom, and without fear of outward hostile disturbance, such as the followers of Christ met with in former reigns, before the said merciful Revolution? Again, where is the man that remembers the many, many other particular deliverances, former and later, that this land has been favoured with? And how many a time he has beat down the great bulwarks of hell against the little city?

O, ungrateful Scotland! How have we forgotten our solemn covenanted allegiance to our glorious Deliverer! We, again and again, swore with uplifted hands to be for him and his truth, and to defend the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of his house, according to the scripture pattern, in opposition to all errors and antichristian corruptions whatsoever. What evidences have we given of our ingratitude and forgetfulness, that, instead of remembering these national engagements we have, in many instances, contradicted our covenanted allegiance, and deserted our covenanted principles, broken, burnt, and buried our covenants! "Do we thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise?" What ingratitude appears towards our Deliverer in the encroachments made upon the rules of God's word, which we swore to walk by; and to the constitution of this church, which our reformers declared to be founded thereupon, in the robbing God's people of the right to choose their

own pastors; a right to which our church, by her books of discipline, assert to belong to them, by the warrant of God's word! But our defection and recession from the good old way in that matter has come to a height by several steps: to me this recession seems to have been commenced in the Assembly, 1649; confirmed and advanced in the Parliament, 1690; and now some way consummate and completed in the present year, 1732, so as it never was before, by any deed of the church.¹

(1) That the origin of Patronage flowed from the papal chair is granted by every one; that it hath been a heavy burden on the church, and productive of the most direful consequences, is abundantly notour; that it never did comport with Presbytery, but was always incompatible thereto, is evident from its being frequently abolished when Presbytery had the ascendant; that it hath always, since the Reformation, been looked upon as an intolerable yoke and grievance in the Church of Scotland, is manifest from the many appearances she hath made against it, and attempts used to get rid of it. This is not at all surprising, seeing it is contrary to the Sacred Volume, and inconsistent with our Standards. That Patronage is neither agreeable to the rule of God's word, nor to the Apostolic practice, is apparent from Acts i. 23, 26; vi. 3; viii. 14; xiii. 3; xiv. 23; xvi. 9; 1 John iv. 1; and 2 John 10. That it is inconsistent with our Standards is plain from the Second Book of Discipline, Chap. xii., Par. 10, 11. How criminally guilty, then, must both the Presenters and Accepters of presentations be! The Presenters of presentations must be highly culpable, since they are diametrically opposite to the sacred canon, contrary to reason itself, the practice of the primitive and purest ages of the church; a plain encroachment upon the natural rights of mankind, and the laws of free societies; a cruel oppression upon societies of men, who duly value their immortal souls; and opens a door for a corrupt and lax ministry to enter into the church. The Accepters cannot but be highly guilty, because, if the Patron is guilty of a sinful usurpation over the church of God, and spoiling and robbing her of her just rights and privileges to choose her own officers and overseers, then the Acceptor becomes partner with him, approving him in his sin, homologating his usurped power, encourages and hardens him in his guilt. Besides, the Acceptor acts contrary to the known principles of Presbyterians, and their own engagements; sadly prejudices the success of the gospel, and their own ministry; increases the prejudices of the people against themselves; and opens a door to many dismal evils, as Simonaical pactions, unchristian contentions in judicatories, oppressive concussions in parishes, vexatious persecutions, and scandalous intrusions; which is still the more unaccountable, in regard they have it in their power, by an act 1719, to render Patronage abortive, by rejecting the presentation. From the above hint, the conduct of the Assembly, 1732, in appending, by their act, such a sanction to Patronage, must appear vastly strange—a sanction unparalleled by any preceding Assembly. That those who should be the guardians of the church's rights and liberties, and who ought to contribute the utmost of their endeavours to maintain them, and embrace every opportunity to be quit of any encroachments made upon them, should themselves wreath a yoke about the necks of disciples which neither they nor their forefathers were able to bear, how amazing! how inconsistent! As the arbitrary proceedings of the Assembly in this matter was one of the principal grounds that gave rise to the Secession, it was judged proper to give this short hint, that that affair may appear in its proper light.

Again, what ingratitude do we manifest towards our Deliverer, in our forgetting and neglecting to appoint national thanksgiving-days for the many mercies and deliverances that God from time to time gave, and national fast-days and humiliation-days for our national guilt; particularly in this universal sin of not remembering our Deliverer and deliverance, but casting all his goodness behind our backs? What ingratitude are we chargeable with in not improving gospel-light yet continued with us?

How guilty are we in not remembering God, and the righteousness of God, amidst all the evils that befall the little city? For, "Is there evil in the city, and I have not done it, saith the Lord?" Though we cannot justify any treacherous Judas who betrays Christ and his truth; nay, nor vindicate any timorous Peters, who, under some temptation, may deny Christ and his cause at a time; nor ought to justify any wicked instruments of the dispeace, destruction, and disturbance of the city; yet we ought to justify God in all that does befall us, and acknowledge his righteousness; for, "Have we not procured these things unto ourselves, in that we have forsaken the Lord our God," the Deliverer of the city?—Jer. ii. 17, "Our own wickedness doth correct us, and our backslidings reprove us." We have not rightly improved the liberties and privileges of the city, that sometimes we have enjoyed; therefore, God justly suffers us to be a city robbed and spoiled, rent and disturbed. Let us not, therefore, rail upon ministers, assemblies, judicatories, or instruments. We ought not to bring a railing accusation against the devil himself, but rather say, "The Lord rebuke thee;" the Lord rebuke the devil and his instruments; the Lord rebuke an erroneous spirit; the Lord rebuke a backsliding spirit; the Lord rebuke the instruments of the church's calamity. "The Lord is righteous, for we have sinned." Say not, Such and such persons have brought ruin upon the church; for it is you and I, by our sins, that have provoked God to do it, and will provoke him to more terrible wrath, if we be not humbled for our sins; and, particularly, for our not remembering duly our Lord Jesus, the Deliverer of the city. But, now,

Secondly, To forbear any further about the public, and close with what more particularly concerns every one of us, how may we lament our forgetfulness of Christ? Though his name be as ointment poured forth, we do not remember his love, his precepts, his promise, providence, and ordinances. How is this evident? Alas!

when do we sit down and admire him, and his works of redeeming love? If you see a curious piece of art, how are you astonished? And yet how little filled with wonder at what God has done! We may pose the consciences of some, whether they ever sat down a quarter of an hour, all their life-time, full of wonder at the great deliverance Christ hath wrought for sinners?—Again, when do you trumpet forth the deliverance that Christ hath wrought, and declare to others what Christ hath wrought for you, or for his church? This is the exercise of the saints, with a charming accent, to cry out, “Thou art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, excellent in working, doing wonders.” Again, when do you meditate upon him, and upon what he has done for you, and the church, and the little city? This is the exercise of the saints that remember him; “My meditation of him shall be sweet.” Alas! we all want consideration; “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but my people doth not know, Israel doth not consider.” Consider how sinful and provoking this evil of forgetfulness is, and the hurtfulness of it; it is a manifest contempt not to remember or regard the operation of his hand. If a skilful artist should spend half his time in making a curious piece of work, and bring it to you, and you should undervalue it, how highly might the man be offended? How much more may God be offended, when you forget his works! God has spent six days in the work of creation, near six thousand years in the work of providence, and as much time—yea, an eternity itself—in the work of redemption, and shall we forget and undervalue all? What a manifest contempt is this of God and his Christ! It is also horrid unthankfulness, that he should work for us, and work in us, and we never think upon it. It is a defeating the design of his work. His design is that we may see his attributes shining in his works of grace and mercy, in which so many wonders shine; wonderful wisdom, wonderful power, wonderful holiness, wonderful justice, wonderful mercy, wonderful truth. His design is, that his doings may be incentives to duty in us, and that we may publish his doings to posterity; but, by forgetfulness, we endeavour to defeat all his designs. This forgetfulness is the mother of apostacy. If we forget our duty, we forsake our duty; if we forget God, we forsake God, and depart from him. This forgetfulness provokes God; when the city forgets what he hath done for it, this provokes God to do no more for the city. It provokes God, instead of works of deliverance and mercy, to work some work of judgment, and to perform a

strange work. If we forget God, we provoke him, by the law of retaliation, to forget us; yea, total forgetfulness of God brings on universal ruin; "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

Use 3. We might apply this doctrine for trial. Hence you may try your state. If you be in a safe state, then,

1. You will be like a little city; you will be very little in your own eyes; a poor helpless creature in your own esteem.

2. You have seen yourself besieged; you have seen yourself to be under the wrath of God, under the power of the devil, under the dominion of sin and death: you have seen great bulwarks built up against you, which it was impossible for you to bring down; and that you were undone for ever unless you met with a Deliverer.

3. If your state be safe, you have a view of Christ, the Deliverer and Saviour; you have got a view of him as a man, a God-man, a poor man, a poor but wise man, a man found out of God for this work. Have you seen him to be the wisdom of God, and the power of God? And have you seen the wisdom of God shining in his delivering the city, by satisfying the justice of God, destroying the works of the devil, giving himself a sacrifice for sin, and, by death, delivering from the sting of death, and so the wisdom of God in destroying the bulwarks that were built against you?

4. Have you been brought to the believing remembrance of him; to a daily remembrance of him; and are you afflicted that you remember him so little? But your errand to a communion-table was to remember him, and what he hath done for you; and is it your desire and endeavour to remember him still, and to remember his love more than wine: and to remember to live on him, and to live to him?

Use 4. I would now close with a word of exhortation.

1. That you would come to Christ the Deliverer of the city. O sinner! while you are without Christ you are in a dangerous case; you are like a little city, having great kings against you—erecting great bulwarks against you. God's bulwarks are set against you; his justice, his wrath, his curse, his vengeance, how can you escape? Are you able to fight against God?—The devil's bulwarks are against you, and you cannot stand against his temptations; he will tempt you to sin till he turn you to hell, if he get his will of you.—Sin's bulwarks are against you; the guilt of sin, the power of sin you lie under: sin will press you to hell if you be not delivered.

—Death's bulwarks are against you ; how soon you shall die is uncertain ; perhaps it may not be this night, or to-morrow, or the next day ; you know not precisely : but come death when it will, if it meet you out of Christ, it will have a terrible sting, a terrible train of woes and miseries to all eternity : the first death will be followed with the second death, which is the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, Rev. xxi. 8. And therefore, O sinner ! flee from the wrath to come : flee for refuge to Christ the Deliverer.

Will you come to the God-man for deliverance ? Will you inlist yourself with the poor wise man ? “ Will you go with this man ? ” You have no wisdom to deliver yourselves, no more than you have power ; but he, by his wisdom, delivers the city. Though you have been playing the fool all your days, and though you be never such a witless fool, this man minds you ; here is wisdom to deliver you : He is made of God to you wisdom. By his wisdom he satisfied God's justice ; by his wisdom he defeated the devil ; by his wisdom he destroyed sin ; by his wisdom he conquered death. O take on with the Deliverer, and you have the deliverance ; for, he that is the Saviour is the salvation of sinners. Though you can do nothing, it needs be no stop to you, for wisdom can do all for you. O be content that you be nothing, and that he by his wisdom be all to you, and do all for you. It is a leading part of faith to know that you cannot save or deliver yourselves, and to welcome the Saviour and salvation brought to your hand ; and believingly to remember what he has done for you, and what he is ready to do to you. Say not, there stands so many things in the way ; darkness, deadness, hardness, unbelief, enmity, and innumerable evils that you need to be delivered from ; for it is his office to deliver the city, to deliver the soul from all these bulwarks of hell ; since he by his infinite wisdom offers to deliver, put all the work in his wise and powerful hands.

2. I would exhort you to remember the Deliverer ; let it not be his complaint, “ No man remembered the poor wise man.” O remember him that remembered you in your low estate ; that remembered you from eternity ; that remembered you when he was upon the cross ; that remembers you now in heaven, when he intercedes for you at the Father's right hand ; for he ever lives to make intercession ; and is he ever remembering you, and will you never remember him ? Remember what he has done for you ; believe all that ever he did was for you ; his works of creation, provi-

dence, and redemption are on your account. You have an interest in all his works : therefore, do not forget his works. Consider, that he remembers you when you forget him. Yea, when you forget yourself ; “ Zion said, The Lord hath forgotten me : but the Lord said “ Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee.”

We shall now shut up the whole discourse by giving you two directions.

1. O seek the Holy Ghost to be your Remembrancer ; some on hearing the word have committed it to the Lord by fervent prayer, that he would keep it for them ; and that very same word has been brought home to their hearts, with unspeakable pleasure in the day of their darkness. The Spirit of God is the best Remembrancer ; seek he may teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance.

2. Seek for a new look of Christ : Christ looked upon Peter, and then Peter remembered Christ and his word. A look of Christ will make you remember your sin with grief and sorrow. O study a perpetual remembrance of him, so as never to forget him and his kindness ; and a practical remembrance of him, so as though you cannot remember him, so as to mind all that he says, yet you may remember to do what he says, and glorify your Deliverer with your hearts, lips, and lives. Remember what great things he has done for the little city, and what great things he has yet to do. Wait on him till he finish his work.

S E R M O N X X X I.

THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE.¹

REV. vii. 17.—“ For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them.”

WE are met this day to celebrate the memorials of the love of Christ, in his death and crucifixion, upon mount Calvary. And

(1) This Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, at Dunfermline, June 10th, 1733.

that our faith may look to him in the best light, and to the best advantage, we are to remember, not only where he once was, but where he now is; and we will find, we need not be ashamed of a crucified Christ that was once upon the cross, for now he is upon the throne. The Lamb that was slain, as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice for us, the once dying Lamb in the midst of the cross, is now the everliving Lamb in the midst of the throne. And from this throne of God, where he reigns, we expect our food and provision upon the feast-day; according to the words of the text, "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them."

From the 13th verse of this chapter we have a description of the honour and happiness of these that shall faithfully serve, and patiently suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ. Some interpreters think that the happiness of the saints militant, even in this world, is here described; some, that it is only the happiness of the saint triumphant in heaven; others make this place of scripture relate to both, and with these especially I join; because, whatever honour and happiness of suffering saints is here set forth, they enjoy the same partly in this life, and fully in the life to come, as may appear by the particulars here mentioned.

The happy persons are spoken of, ver. 14, "These are they that have come out of great tribulation." Whatever relation some think this may have to the church of Christ on earth, after they have escaped the antichristian bloody persecution; or as others, to the martyrs in heaven, that have suffered unto death for the Lord Jesus Christ; yet it may be said of all the militant saints, who, through much trouble, enter into the kingdom of heaven, and therein are conformed to their suffering Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and bear about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all." It may be said of all the saints, These are they that have come from trouble to rest, from bondage to liberty, from death to life, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The perfection of this purity they have in heaven; but even here on earth they are washed in the blood of Christ, and clothed with the white robe of his imputed and imparted righteousness.

Verse 15, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." This seems to be a further de-

scription of the happiness of the saints both militant and triumphant ; as they are happy.

1. In their state, being washed, justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of their God.

2. They are happy in their station, being always before the throne of God. The glorified saints in heaven are always in that presence where there is fulness of joy : and the sanctified ones upon earth have this blessing also bestowed upon them, they are said to sit with him in heavenly places ; and it is their daily work to come boldly to the throne of grace. Again,

3. They are happy in their service ; for, " They serve him day and night in his temple." Though these that are in heaven, serve him without weakness or weariness, which we cannot here do ; yet it is the property of all the true circumcision to worship God in the Spirit, and in truth, and to pray without ceasing ; meditating on his law day and night, and going to the altar of God ; to God in Christ, the true spiritual temple.

4. They are happy in their company ; for, " He that sits upon the throne shall dwell among them." This points out friendship, fellowship, and familiarity between God and the redeemed ; which also Christ allows to the militant saints in part, when, upon opening the door of their heart, he comes in and sups with them, and they with him, Rev. iii. 20. And they are in case to say, " Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3. Yea God says, " I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

5. They are happy in their freedom ; they shall be freed from all want and all uneasiness. From all want ; for, " They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more ;" for this freedom will be perfected in heaven, as it is commenced on earth ; as the prophet says, speaking of Christ's spiritual kingdom, Isaiah xlix. 10, " They shall not hunger nor thirst," &c. Hence says Christ, John vi. 35, " He that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst," pointing out the spiritual pleasure and satisfaction they shall have, and never be altogether deprived of. From all uneasiness also shall they be freed ; " Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat : " or as it is in the fore-cited Isaiah xlix. 10, " Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them." The redeemed above are perfectly freed from all uneasiness ; and even the redeemed on earth, according to the measure of faith, such

will be their measure of ease, even amidst all things that tend to make them uneasy. Christ says to them, "Fear not, only believe: Fear not, I am with you: Fear not him that can at most but kill the body; the very hairs of our head are all numbered; you may be perfectly easy. Nothing is more uneasy than the sun in the meridian regions; so are afflictions and persecutions to the saints, and the temptations they are attacked with from earth and hell. But "God is faithful," says the apostle, "who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 12.

6. They are happy in their provision, because "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them;" hence he is said to feed his flock like a shepherd. The feeding here spoken of imports also rule and government, such as a shepherd hath over his flock. It is in the believing view of the provident, loving Shepherd, the Psalmist says, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," Psalm xxiii. 1.

7. They are happy in their direction and conduct, in their director, guide, and conductor: "He shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." Now, of these living waters the Lord Jesus speaks, as they respect even his people in this world, John iv. 14, and vii. 38, "The water that I give shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life; and, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters." By these they have matter of comfort amidst all their crosses. Hence,

8. They are here said to be happy in their joys; for, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;" that is, all their griefs and sorrows shall be swallowed up in the fulness of joy and consolation that shall be abundantly allowed them. The commencement of this joy is even here, amidst all the troubles and trials of the militant saints: "For, behold, says God, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard," Isaiah lxxv. 18. And hence they are sometimes filled with joy and peace in believing: yea, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It is the first part of this last verse that I have especially my eye upon; particularly that description of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the commentators I have consulted pass over more slightly than I expected, namely, "The Lamb which is in the midst of the

throne." Where we have our Lord Jesus described, 1. From his meekness and humility : therefore he is called the Lamb. 2. From his majesty and authority ; he is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. What benefit accrues to his church from his meek and majestic government follows in the rest of the verse, which, if I have time, I may a little insist upon. But what I especially propose to speak to, as the Lord may assist, is from the sweet account given us here of our Lord Jesus. And this we shall essay in the following doctrinal proposition.

OBSERV. That our Lord Jesus Christ is the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

And, as the Psalmist says, Psalm cxxi. 1, " I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help ;" so let us lift up our eyes to the throne, from whence comes our food to-day ; and we may the more readily and joyfully do so, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, to be the feeder. That I may open and apply this doctrine for our benefit, I propose the following method.

I. Speak a little of the Lamb.

II. Of the throne.

† III. How the Lamb comes to be upon the throne.

† IV. What is imported in the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne.

V. Consider the benefit of feeding, that issues from the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne.

VI. Deduce some inferences for application.

I. We are to offer a word concerning the LAMB. This is a name frequently given to our Lord Jesus in scripture ; and he is so called, both because of his immaculate whiteness and innocency, and because of his incomparable meekness and patience : he is a Lamb without blemish, and without spot, 1 Pet. i. 19 ; and his meekness was matchless, of which more afterward ; he is the Lamb of God, the worthy Lamb, the Lamb that was slain.

I shall only here mention four periods wherein he is represented as a Lamb.

1. In his designation from the beginning, yea, from all eternity, to be a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice ; hence, Rev. xiii. 8,

he is called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; slain decreatively, in the purpose of God, before the foundation of the world, was laid; and slain typically, in all the sacrifices under the law.

2. In his manifestation, when he appeared in our nature, he is pointed out as the Lamb that was come to be a sacrifice for sin, John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world;" and again, verse 36, "Behold the Lamb of God." To this purpose says the same beloved disciple, 1 John iii. 5, "You know that he was manifested to take away our sins."

3. In his humiliation unto death, he is represented as the meek and patient Lamb, Acts viii. 32, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a Lamb before his shearer, so he opened not his mouth;" which are the words of the prophet, Isa. liii. 7. Thus saith the Lord, by the prophet, chap. l. 5, 6, "He was not rebellious, neither turned away back: I gave my back to the smiter, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

4. In his exaltation, or in his exalted state, he is in scripture represented as a Lamb; particularly Rev. v. 6, "And I beheld, and o, in the midst of the throne, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth unto all the earth." This is the scripture that our present text hath a reference unto; and, therefore, concerning it you may observe the description given of this Lamb.

(1.) As the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne; of which more afterwards. Only, you see, in his exalted state at his Father's right hand, he is still the Lamb; change of place hath not made him change his name or nature: he took our human nature along with him; and he is still the meek and lowly Lamb, though he be upon the throne.

(2.) He is described by being the Lamb slain; a Lamb as it had been slain. He appears with the marks of his sufferings upon him, to shew that he intercedes in heaven in the virtue of his satisfaction; because he entered the holy place by his own blood, Heb. ix. 12. And the virtue of the sacrifice he offered is always fresh, as if he were newly slain.

(3.) He is described as a Lamb having seven horns; pointing out the perfection of his power to execute all the will of God, and to conquer all his enemies. This Lamb is the power of God.

(4.) He is described as a Lamb having seven eyes; pointing out the perfection of his wisdom, to understand all the will of God, and to do it in the most effectual manner. As he is the power of God, so he is the wisdom of God; for he hath the Spirit of God above measure; therefore it is said, "The seven eyes are the seven spirits of God;" not seven in number or nature, but in respect of the diversity of the gifts and operations of that one and eternal Spirit of God. This Lamb of God, then, is he that hath the Spirit of the Lord God upon him, for he hath anointed him; and he is anointed, that he may anoint. And, O! may the Lamb with the seven eyes look upon this assembly, and give eyes to us to see his glory this day, that our hearts may join issue with the heavenly company, Rev. v. 12, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!"

II. The next thing we proposed was a word concerning the throne. Here we would consider what for a throne it is, and why called a throne.

1st, What kind of a throne is it which the Lamb is said to be in the midst of? We may answer, It is the throne of God, Rev. xxii. 1-3. There it is called the throne of God and the Lamb. The throne of God is the throne of the Lamb, and the throne of the Lamb is the throne of God. It is the throne of grace, the throne of glory, the throne of his holiness, and the throne of his justice.

1. It is called the throne of divine grace, Heb. iv. 16, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace." Why so? because we have a High Priest there; the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. And indeed the throne of grace is nothing else than a God in Christ, a God reconciled in Christ, a God upon a mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of Christ.

2. It is called the throne of divine glory, Jer. xiv. 21, "Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory; remember, break not thy covenant with us." The prophet there speaks of the temple, and the ark in it, the symbol of God's presence; which was typical of Christ, in whom the covenant of grace stands fast: and so it is called the throne of glory, because all the glory of God shines about that throne. As the grace of God is the glory of God, so all the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Therefore,

3. It is called a throne of divine holiness, Psalm. xlvii. 8, "God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness." Holiness becomes

his house, holiness becomes his throne, and holiness is his throne : there is nothing there, but the holy God, the holy Lamb, the holy throne ; and they that are about it, cry, " Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," Isa. vi. 3.

4. It is called the throne of his justice, Psalm lxxxi. 14, " Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne." And, Psalm xcvi. 2, " Clouds and darkness are round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." His glorious and holy throne of grace stands firm upon the base and foundation of justice satisfied for the sinner, and judgment execute against sin, in the blood of the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne. It is therefore no hindrance or impediment to our access to the throne of grace, that it is also a throne of justice ; but rather a furtherance and encouragement, because there grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 21. And, since grace reigns there through justice-satisfying righteousness, why then, God may with honour meet with sinners, and there sinners may with hope draw near to God. This is the throne of God and the Lamb.

2dly, Why is it called a throne ? The place, in the midst whereof the Lamb is, is called a throne, on these accounts.

1. A throne is a place of powerful and majestic glory, honour, and dignity. Jesus Christ, the lamb, is set in the midst of this place, crowned with glory and honour, Heb. ii. 9. His Father crowned him King there, saying, " Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," Psal. xlv. 6.

2. A throne is a place of power and authority.—Christ, the Lamb, is set in the midst of this throne ; for, " All power in heaven and earth is given to him," Mat. xxviii. 18. All judgment is committed to him ; and the government is upon his shoulders.

3. A throne is a place of height and eminency.—Christ, the Lamb, is in the midst of this place ; Isa. vi. 7, " I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." His Father hath set him on the highest throne : " He hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name," Phil. ii. 9.

4. A throne is a place of plenty ; thence the royal bounty is communicated. Christ, the Lamb, is in the midst of this place ; hence it is said, Col. i. 19, " It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell ;" and again, " In him are hid all the

treasures of wisdom and knowledge ;" all the treasures of grace ; and, " Out of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace," John i. 16.

5. A throne is a place of beauty, as well as bounty ; it is a beautiful and splendid place. And to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, is to see the King in his beauty, Isa xxxiii. 17, " Strength is within his holy place, and there doth beauty shine ;" there doth glory shine.

6. In a word, a throne is a place of pleasure, peace, joy, and triumph. The Lamb is in the midst of this place ; having ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, Psalm lxviii. 18. He sits triumphant upon the throne, making all his enemies his footstool. If he triumphed over them on the cross, as it is said, Col. ii. 15, how much more does he triumph over them on the throne, making all believers sharers of his joyful triumph !

III. The next thing I proposed was, To shew how the Lamb comes to be upon the throne. I shall tell you in a few words, that he bargained for the throne, he wrought for the throne, he fought for the throne, and died for the throne.

1. He bargained for the throne. In the counsel of peace, betwixt the Father and the Son, it was promised to Christ, that, upon his doing and suffering for his people, he should have a glorious throne, and a numerous retinue ; that he should see his seed, and see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, Isa. liii. 10, 11. The Lamb cries out, It is a bargain that I cheerfully go in to : " Lo, I come ; in the volume of thy book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God ; thy law is within my heart," Psalm xl. 7, 8. Hence says the Father, " I have made a covenant with my chosen," Psalm lxxxix. 3.

2. He wrought for the throne. According to the bargain and covenant between the Father and him, he brought in everlasting righteousness, Dan. ix. 24 ; he fulfilled all righteousness,, Mat. iii. 15. And hence he claims the crown and the throne : " I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do ; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was," John xvii. 4, 5. Thus he wrought for the throne.

3. He fought for the throne. You may see how he fought, Isa. lxiii. 1, 2, 3, " Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah ; this that is glorious in his appeal, travell-

ing in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save! Wherefore art thou red in thine appeal? and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." And on this account the Lamb sits upon a triumphant throne, having spoiled principalities and powers, bruised the head of the old serpent, destroyed the works of the devil, and came off the field like a glorious conqueror. Therefore, "the Lord said unto our Lord, Sit thou at my right hand," Psalm cx. 1. In which Psalm you read both of the bloody battle, and the glorious enthronement of the Lamb.

4. He died for the throne. Having drunk of the brook in the way, therefore did he lift up the head, Psalm cx. 7. And, because he became obedient unto the death, even the death of the cross; therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, Phil. ii. 8, 9. When he had the cross upon his back, he had the throne in his eye: "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God," Heb. xii. 2. And thus, for the suffering of death, he was crowned with glory and honour, chap. ii. 9. Our faith then may see and be satisfied how he came by the throne. But, for widening and increasing faith's view of this enthronement, I proceed,

IV. To the next thing proposed, namely, To shew what may be imported in the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne. And,

1. That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, speaks forth the dignity of his person, his supreme Deity, and equality with the Father. Though, in his infinite love, he thought it no disparagement, at his Father's call, to make himself of no reputation and take upon him the form of a servant; yet, being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, Phil. ii. 6. And his Father thinks it no disparagement to him to call even the suffering Lamb, the crucified Jesus, his fellow and equal; "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow," Zech. xiii. 9; yea, to crown him King upon his everlasting throne, saying to him, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," Heb. i. 8. O sirs, if the Christ-disparaging and soul-damning doctrine of Arians were true, the Lamb would not be worthy of such a throne, far less the midst of the throne.

2. That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, imports and speaks forth the high of his exaltation. Besides the natural right as God, that Christ hath to the throne, he hath a donative right as Mediator, and because, as Mediator, he hath brought in glory to God in the highest; therefore, he is exalted to the highest throne that his Father can give him: "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth," Psal. lxxxix. 27. And now, according to his promise, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus that was crucified, both Lord and Christ," Acts ii. 6. And being now possessed of the throne, "He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords;" and the rather that it is a scarlet robe, "a vesture dipt in blood," Rev. xix. 13, 14, to show, that it is the worthy Lamb that was slain in the midst of the throne.

3. That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, imports, I think, the perfection of his mediation, and exactness thereof. O but this part of the throne be fit for him, and he fit for it! It well becomes him to be there; he is the middle person between the Father and the Holy Ghost, and the middle person between God and man; and it well becomes him to have the middle part of the throne. The Mediator and midsmen having the midst of the throne, it says, he is a perfect Mediator, a merciful and faithful High-priest, Heb. ii. 17; faithful to God, and merciful to man; true to both parties, between whom he stands in the midst of the throne.

4. That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, imports the beautiful order and equity of his administration. As the government is upon his shoulders, so it will be a just, righteous, and equal government: "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness; even the man that shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest," Isa. xxxii. 1. "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins," Isa. xi. 4, 5. His administration shall be so righteous and equal, that none shall have occasion to complain that he hath gone too far, either to the right hand or to the left hand of the throne: no; he will ever keep the midst of the throne, and his government, like his covenant, will be well ordered in all things.

5. That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, imports the accessibleness of the throne of God on every hand. The Lamb is

upon the throne of God, and therefore there is access to the throne ; for, the Lamb being there, clothed with his vesture dipped in blood, we may come boldly to the throne of grace, and have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb. iv. 16; x. 19. If the Lamb were not there, such guilty sinners durst not be so bold as to look a just and holy God in the face, or approach to the throne : but, O, good news and blessed tidings ! the Lamb being our Forerunner, we may boldly run as far forward as the blood of the Lamb hath run in like a river before us ; and that is to the very heart and centre of the throne of God. Yea, not only is the Lamb upon the throne, which speaks access thither ; but he is in the midst of the throne, which speaks access on every hand, and on every side of the throne. If he were only placed at the one side of the throne, it might be thought there would be no access at the other side ; but being in the midst of the throne, he is ready to welcome all comers from all quarters, saying, " Whosoever will, let him come," from east, west, north, or south ; let him come on this side, or that side, or directly before the throne, yea, let any poor creature who blushes to be seen, come slipping secretly as it were, behind the throne, like the woman with the bloody issue, that came behind him, saying, " If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." O, to get in, if it were but behind the throne, this day, to get a touch of the royal robes of the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne ! Welcome, sinner, there is access on every hand of the throne, for the Lamb is in the midst of it. The Lamb of God, which lies in the midst of his Father's throne, to welcome and receive all comers, saying, " Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out."

6. That the Lamb is in the midst of the throne imports the Lamb is the centre of all the glory that surrounds and encompasses the throne of God, or the throne of grace. He is the centre of divine fulness, and of all the glorious perfections of God ; for, " in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9 ; every attribute of God shines gloriously in the face of Jesus Christ. He is the centre of all divine truths, and we cannot know any precious gospel truths or mysteries in a saving and satisfying manner unless we know the truth as it is in Jesus, Eph. iv. 21. He is the centre of all the divine promises, being the centre of the covenant of grace, in whom it stands fast, and " in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen to the glory of God," 2 Cor. i. 20. He is the centre of all the divine blessings ; for God blesses us with all spiritual

blessings in heavenly places only in Christ, Eph. i. 3. He is the centre of all divine grace ; for it is out of his fulness that we receive, and grace for grace, John i. 16. He is the centre of all divine comfort ; for he is the consolation of Israel, and he is anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above his fellows, Psalm xlv. 7, that he may anoint with the same oil, and bring his people to fellowship with him in the same spirit of joy and consolation, according to their measure. He is the centre of all saving offices ; being, as a Prophet, the Wisdom of God, for our illumination ; as a Priest, the Righteousness of God, for our justification ; and, as a King, the Power of God, for our sanctification. He is the centre of all sweet relations ; the Saviour, the Surety, the Head, the Husband, the All and in All of his people ; their Light, and Life, and Strength, and Righteousness, and Rock, and Refuge, and Portion. He is the central place, where God, and man may meet together ; for he dwells between the cherubims, on the mercy-seat, and over these ; "There will I meet with thee," Exod. xxv. 22 ; "There will I commune with thee." And no communion with God can we have but in him, who is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and middle-person between God and us. In a word, being in the centre of the throne, he is the centre of all things ; he is the centre of all the sins of the redeemed for their expiation ; for, "The Lord hath laid on him [or made to meet in him] the iniquity of us all," Isa. liii. 6. And the centre of all their service, for their acceptance ; for, "We are accepted in the Beloved," Eph. i. 6. And thus he is someway the centre of all things ; for, as all things are in his hands, so all things in heaven and earth are said to meet in him, Eph. i. 10 ; Col. i. 20. And therefore, the Lamb who is in the midst and centre of the throne ought to be the centre of our hearts and affections, the centre of our love and delight. Thus, among other things, he is the centre of all our provision. Which leads to,

V. The Fifth thing proposed, which was, To view the benefit of feeding that issues from the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne : "He shall feed them." Whatever other pastoral care, rule or government this word imports ; yet I shall, because this is a feast-day, consider that part of his pastoral care that is here expressed by the word feed : "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them." If I were to enlarge upon this subject, I might tell you how the Lamb feeds his church and people with the manifestations of his glory, with the intimations of his love, with

the communications of his grace, and with the consolations of his Spirit : but I confine myself to the doctrine of the Lamb being in the midst of the throne ; and therefore I shall speak to this feeding only as it relates to that doctrine. The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne is the food ; the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne is the feeder ; and the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne makes the feeding of those that are the followers of the Lamb to have the following qualities. All our sacramental food and provision this day must come from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Therefore,

1. It must be kindly food and provision that comes from the throne, since the Lamb is in the midst of it. The meek Lamb, the loving Lamb, that feeds his flock like a shepherd, gathers the lambs with his arms, carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young, Isa. xl. 11. He makes them to lie down in green pastures, Psalm xxiii. 2. He makes them to go out and in, and find pasture, John x. 9. It is sweet, and easy, and kindly feeding that issues from the Lamb in the midst of the throne. And yet,

2. It must be powerful feeding that comes from thence ; it is from the throne of power : and, indeed, you will not feed to advantage this day, unless power comes from the throne to make you take your food. It is the work of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, to feed by the efficacy of his grace : all the means and ministers in the world cannot make a soul open its mouth or heart for this food, till power come from the throne ; and yet when it cometh, it comes so sweetly and kindly, that there is nothing like force or violence. The man is made as frank and free, in going out after Christ, to be the food of his perishing soul, as if there were no power at all put forth in the case. Power makes him eat and feed heartily : "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," Psalm cx. 3.

3. It must be spiritual feeding that comes from the Lamb in the midst of the throne ; for his throne, his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, it is not of this world : "The flesh profits nothing ;" his words are spirit and life. Food for the soul must be spiritual food : "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17.

4. It must be plentiful provision and feeding that comes from the Lamb in the midst of the throne ; for it is a rich throne, and all

fulness is there. There is plenty of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; abundance of all sorts. Here is wisdom enough, for the most ignorant; righteousness enough, for the most guilty; sanctification enough, for the most filthy; redemption enough, for the most ruined; comfort enough, for the most sorrowful; strength enough, for the weakest: "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house," Psalm xxxvi. 8, O the plenty that is about the throne! Plenty of divine perfections to feed upon, when viewed in Christ. Indeed, the mildest attributes of God, out of Christ, will be a terrible sight; but the most terrible attributes of God, in Christ, are a pleasant feast; even justice, holiness, and truth. Here is plenty of promises to feed upon, while the performance is delayed. Every thing in Christ is a feast; his names, and natures, offices, life, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession; his merit, his Spirit, his word, his flesh, his blood, and victory.

5. It must be suitable food that comes from this quarter; for, the Lamb being in the midst of the throne, will distribute equally and suitably. He cannot possibly fail and miscarry, by giving too much, or too little; being in the middle of the throne, and the middle person between God and man, to communicate what is suitable for God to give, and suitable for man to have, no more and no less does he communicate, because he is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. And, indeed, as a key is suited to a lock, so is Christ's fulness to our wants. We are diseased, he is a Physician; we are lost, he is a Saviour; we are debtors, he is the Surety; we are dead, he is the Life; we are blind, he is Eye-salve; we are naked, he is Clothing; we are troubled, he is Rest: Are we bewildered? he is a Guide: Are we in danger? he is a Guard: Are we benighted? he is a Sun: Are we assaulted? he is a Shield. Who in heaven or earth can thus supply our wants, heal our wounds, bear our burdens, sweeten our afflictions, subdue our enemies, as Christ? O suitable feeding to the soul is here in all cases!

6. It must be joyful feeding and provision that comes from the Lamb in the midst of the throne; for, the throne is a place of joy and triumph. Here must be the choicest cheer, amidst the choicest company: God and Christ, and angels, and saints. There is as much sweetness in Christ, as there is fulness and suitableness: He is the fountain of sweetness; his mouth is most sweet, his presence is most sweet, his fruits are most sweet: "I sat down under his shadow

with great delight," says the church, "and his fruits were sweet to my taste," Song ii. 3. Here are the sweet rivers of living waters that drive away all death and sorrow, as it follows here in the text.

7. It must be free provision and feeding that comes from the Lamb in the midst of the throne. There is nothing to pay about a throne; this would be a disgrace and disparagement to the prince that possesses the throne: so here, all is to be had freely. The finest is always the freest, Isa. lv. 1. The legalists, that cannot feed upon Christ and his righteousness freely, but only on their own works and duties, they feed upon ashes; the legal preacher, that cannot offer Christ freely, is like the unnatural fathers, that when their children ask bread, give them a stone: when they ask a fish, give them a scorpion. What is our best performances but scorpions, serpents, stones, yea, poison to them that make them their soul-food? Nothing can feed the soul but Christ. Rabshakeh threatened to make all the people on the wall to eat their own dung, 2 Kings xviii. 26; the legal preacher accomplishes this threatening, in a spiritual sense; our best works are but dung: "I will spread the dung of your sacrifices on your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts." But, O sirs, here the finest and sweetest feast is the freest; from the throne of grace proceed all blessings freely.

8. It must be durable provision and feeding that comes from the Lamb in the midst of the throne; for he ever lives upon the throne, and his throne is for ever and ever; and therefore everlasting food comes from thence, and food that nourishes to everlasting life: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven," says Christ; "if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever," John vi. 15. Here is provision for eternity: "Labour not for the meat that perisheth," says Christ, "but for that meat that endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you," John vi. 27. What a fool was he that filled his barns, and then said, "Soul, take thy rest, thou hast much goods laid up for many years!" while God said to him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee!" But, O what wisdom were it to lay up for eternity this day, that death may not be able to robe you of your store, but that ye may have it all before your hand! The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, lives for ever there to feed: "He lives for ever to make intercession;" he lives for ever to make provision; they have everlasting food, who have the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne to feed them. Thus you see what sort of feeding is to be had

under the throne of the Lamb, and who it is that must cover our table this day, even the Lamb in the midst of the throne; he hath mounted the throne, to be a feeder, and to let down blessings to the footstool.

VI. The last thing proposed, was, the Application. Is it so, that our Lord Jesus is the Lamb in the midst of the throne? Hence we may infer these following particulars.

1. Surely we need not be ashamed of a crucified Christ, nor our Christian passover this day, the Lamb that was sacrificed for us. Since now the Lamb is upon the throne, and in the midst of the throne, the shame and reproach of the cross is wiped away, with the glory and splendour of the throne. We need not be ashamed of the cross of Christ, who is now in the midst of the throne. Let none despise those that espouse the cause and interest of the Lamb, whatever hardships they may be brought under before courts, councils, and judicatories on earth; they need not be ashamed to go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. The great Apostle Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." O believer, it is our greatest glory to be bearing his cross, who is now wearing the crown; to be followers of the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne.

2. Hence we may learn, that the church of God is safe, since the Lamb that is their Head is in the midst of the throne. Believers in Christ are happy and safe, their Head and Husband, their Lord and King is upon the throne: the militant church, the fighting remnant, are in no great danger while he hath the government. Perhaps there are some here, like Eli, whose hearts are trembling for the ark of God, and the work of God at this day, when so many axes and hammers are lifted up against the carved work of the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of God's house; but let this be matter of joy to their hearts, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne; and, therefore, as he rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth, and over-rules all damage done to his house, so he will make it appear in the issue, that according to his word, "Upon all the glory there shall be a defence," Isaiah iv. 5.

3. Hence we may learn, that the enemies of Christ may have a quaking heart, since the Lamb, whom they despise, is in the midst of the throne. His Father, that set him on the throne, hath said, Psalm lxxxix. 23.—"I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. The heathen rage, and the people

imagine a vain thing ; the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel against the Lord and his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands, and cast their cords from us. But he that sits in heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision : having set his King upon his holy hill of Zion, he will break them in pieces with a rod of iron, and shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, Psalm ii. 1-9. The Lord reigns, let the people tremble ; he dwells between the cherubims, let the earth be moved," Psalm xlix. 1. The Lamb being in the midst of the throne, is matter of terror to the enemies of his glory ; for he sits upon the throne of power, and the Lamb will be a Lion to tear them in pieces.

4. Hence we may learn, that there is a sure foundation laid for the faith and hope of life and justification by the blood of the Lamb. Since the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, the throne of grace is a door of hope ; and, that our hearts may be raised and lifted up to lively hope, the Lamb that was slain is raised and lifted up to the throne. Did he rise again for our justification ? and does his resurrection seal upon our consciences the sufficiency of his death, and the acceptableness of his righteousness unto God ? Much more may our faith and hope be confirmed herein, that he is exalted to the midst of the throne ; for his Father had never put so much honour upon him, had he not been infinitely well-pleased and satisfied with his obedience unto the death. We may now read the dream that Jacob had at Bethel, Gen. xxviii. 12. " Behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven ;" the ladder is the Lamb ; the foot of the ladder was fixed in the midst of the earth, when he was here in a humbled estate ; and now the top of the ladder is fixed in the midst of the throne ; all the rounds of it are completed, that we may ascend by this way from earth to heaven.

5. Hence we may learn, what good reason there is for having a high esteem of Christ, since God hath so highly exalted him, to the very midst of the throne. O believer, should not Christ be high in our valuation, when God hath set him so high ! No wonder then that it is said, " If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be ANATHEMA MARAN-ATHA ;" that is, " accursed until our Lord come," 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Wo will be to them that will not put honour upon him, whom God the Father put so much honour upon, and that as our Redeemer and kinsman !

6. Hence learn, the throne of God needs not be terrible unto

us, since the Lamb, the meek Lamb, is in the midst of the throne ; sinners need not fear to go to the throne of God, as long as the Lamb is there. If unbelief look toward the throne, it views it only as it is the throne of God, and so fills the soul with slavish fear, and frightful apprehensions : but true faith views it as the throne of God and of the Lamb ; and the views of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, raises some joy, hope, and pleasure in the midst of the heart. Why, there is meekness as well as majesty ; grace, as well as grandeur, about the throne, because the Lamb is there.

7. Hence we may learn what ground there is to expect the great God to be present in the midst of us this day, because the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. We would have no ground to expect that God would be with us on the footstool, if Christ were not with God upon the throne. Christ promised, upon his ascending to the throne, that he would be with his people, saying, " Lo, I am with you always," Mat. xxviii. 20. He promised, when he went up to the throne, he would send down his Spirit : " If I go away, I will send him," John xvi. 8. Therefore, if he be by his Spirit in the midst of us this day, it is because he is in the midst of the throne. It is easy for him to be both sitting gloriously in the midst of the throne, and at the same time walking graciously in the midst of the golden candlesticks, Rev. ii. 1. He is both the blest *Logos*, the Word of God ; and the blest Immanuel, God with us. The seven spirits are said to be before the throne. The Spirit of God is one, but his gifts, operations, and influences are various ; and the Lamb, that is in the midst of the throne, hath the Spirit to give ; and having said that he will send him, O let us look to the throne, and thence expect the Spirit according to his word.

8. Hence we may learn what is the mark of a worthy communicant, namely, if he be a true believer of this doctrine, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. " Let a man examine himself upon this, and so let him eat." I ask not if you say you believe ; or think you believe ; but I call and enjoin to try, if you truly believe that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. For helping you to this search, you may consider two things, namely, what view you have of this truth, and what virtue you find in it.

(1.) What view have you of this truth ? If you truly believe it, then you view it with approbation. Is your heart satisfied that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne ? Do you cordially approve of the Father's setting him so high ? Did it ever fill your heart

with joy and satisfaction, and with some secret pleasure and exultation, that God hath put such honour upon Jesus? And have you thus received this truth in the love of it, and in the sweetness of it? O did ever your heart leap, as it were, within you, to think that the throne of God is also the throne of the Lamb, and so a throne open to you to come boldly unto by the blood of the Lamb, that encircles the throne like a rainbow? How does your heart stand affected to this truth? "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," Rom. v. 10.

(2.) What virtue have you found in this truth for leading you to enthrone Christ, as the Father hath done? As the Father hath set the Lamb in the midst of the throne of glory; so, have you set him in the midst of the throne of your heart? Is he, that is in the midst of the throne of God, in the midst of the throne with you? Surely, "To them that believe he is precious" [or an honour], as the word may be read, 1 Peter ii. 7. And they put this honour upon him, even to set him in the midst of the throne. O my dear friends, let me tell you that by this you may try and examine yourself, and prove your own self, whether Christ be in you; if he be in you at all, he will be in the midst of the throne. You are not fit for a communion table, and at your peril be it if you go, and get some other thing than Christ hath the throne of your heart; if self be in the midst of the throne, if the world be in the midst of the throne, if your lusts be in the midst of the throne, Christ is not in you. It is true, the heart of the believer, while here, is not quite free of sin, and self, and the world; they may fight for the throne, and many times they may be seen to win the throne of their heart; but sure I am, they never got peaceable possession of the throne of their heart. The believer is free from peace with sin, though he is never free from war with sin in this world; his league with it is broken, he can never consent to its rule and government any more; and hence, whenever sin usurps the throne, like Adonijah, then the believer enters his protest against it before the King of kings, saying, "Lord, hast thou not said that Solomon shall reign?" Hast thou not promised, that grace shall reign, and that sin shall not have dominion? O down, down with this usurper; and let Christ have his own proper room and place, which is in the midst of the throne. Hath virtue come from the throne of the Lamb to enable you to enthrone Christ in the midst of your heart? Hath he the throne of your esteem, the throne of your delight, the throne of your affec-

tion? Felt you ever any virtue coming down from the throne of Christ, to dethrone sin, and to draw your heart up to the throne of God? Did you ever find so much grace descending from the throne, as to make your hearts ascend to the throne? And is it the view of the Lamb's being there, that fires your heart, and makes it flame upward to the very midst of the throne where he is? Again,

Lastly, Hence we may learn the duty of sinners that hear this doctrine of the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne. I think it is your duty, yea, sure I am it is your duty, to come and see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, to come and match with the Lamb, and then to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

(1.) It is your duty to come and see this great sight the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne. If the question be, Where is the Lamb? The answer is, In the midst of the throne. But if the question again be, Where is the throne, that we may see it, and the Lamb in the midst of it? We answer, God's throne of glory is properly in heaven; but his throne of grace is really on earth, as well as in heaven; it is erected in the church, and in this gospel dispensation, declaring that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. A God in Christ is a throne of grace everywhere, and a glorious throne everywhere is the place of our sanctuary, Jer. xvii. 12. Hence, when the Apostle says, "Let us come boldly to the throne," he does not mean locally climbing up to heaven, but believingly approaching to God in Christ, as held forth in the gospel of his grace. Why then, as Christ is in the midst of the throne, so the throne is in the midst of this house.

Quest. What will we see, if we come and see the Lamb in the midst of the throne?

Ansr. You will see that the throne of God is patent to sinners, because the Lamb is there; and that there is access with boldness from all quarters, at every side of the throne, because the Lamb is in the midst of it. The blood of the Lamb encircles the throne, and sprinkles the mercy-seat; and therefore guilty sinners may come, through this guilt-expiating blood. Here you will see the most dreadful attributes of God divested of all their dread and terror, and appearing amiable. Infinite holiness and infinite justice are awful attributes, and both are upon the throne of God, but the Lamb is in the midst of them; holiness is gratified, justice is satisfied, every attribute is glorified; "Mercy and truth meet together,

righteousness and peace kiss each other ;” and all harmoniously conspire, because the Lamb is in the midst of them. The mildest attributes would be dreadful to sinners, if the Lamb were not in the midst of them ; but the most terrible attributes are amiable and lovely, when you see the Lamb in the midst of them.

Here you will see the most terrible dispensations of God smiling in your face, when you see the Lamb in the midst of them ; for, though clouds and darkness are round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitations of his throne. He that rides in heaven by his name YAH, and makes the clouds his chariots, as he sits in the midst of his throne ; so he sits in the midst of the cloudy and dark dispensations of our day, to order and over-rule. Black clouds are over the church of Scotland, and the government, as it is in the hands of men, is all in disorder and confusion, and turned upside-down ;¹ but, if you see the Lamb in the midst of these dispensations, you will see that the government is upon his shoulders ; and that not only justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, but that justice and judgment sit with mercy and grace ; and God hath some glorious design on foot, however terrible to his enemies, yet merciful to all the followers of the Lamb.

In a word, here you will see all the glory of God, when you see the Lamb in the midst of the throne. O the throne of glory is a throne of grace, because the Lamb is there ; the throne of justice is a throne of mercy, because the Lamb is there ; the throne of infinite holiness is accessible by guilty sinners, because the Lamb is there. O come and see.

(2.) It is your duty to come and match with the Lamb. O sinner, who hath been married to the devil hitherto, married to your lusts, married to the world ; O man, woman, whether old or young, will you come and be the bride, the Lamb’s wife ? as the word is, Rev. xix. 7. Let none dare to go to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, to the communion-table, until once they have given their heart and hand to the Son of God, and joined in marriage with the Lamb ; and, O may this be a marriage day. It is a great part

(1) Matters in the church, at this time, had a very dismal aspect ; errors of the most pernicious consequence abounding ; impieties of the grossest nature prevailing ; incroachments upon the Lord’s heritage, of the most grievous kind, taking place ; and yet the sword of discipline drawn forth with more keenness against those who faithfully testified against these evils, than against the authors, perpetrators, and promoters of them.

of our work to court a bride for the Lamb, and then to lead her to the table ; and, O may drawing power come from the throne, to draw out many hearts after him ! O sinner, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, is come to court your heart, saying, " My son give me thy heart ;" and he is come to offer himself to thee, man ; to thee, woman, saying, " Behold me, behold me ; come to me, that you may have life." What for a match would you have ? Would you not be well married, and happy in such a Husband to all eternity ?

1. Are you for an honourable match, a royal match ? O here is the King of kings, the Lamb in the midst of the throne ; the Head of all principalities and powers.

2. Are you for a rich and opulent match ? Here is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, in whom are hid unsearchable riches, and all the fulness of the Godhead ; everlasting treasures of grace and glory.

3. Are you for a bountiful match ? O there is none like the Lamb in the midst of the throne for a generous spirit, willing and ready to lay out all his riches, that out of his fulness ye may receive, and grace for grace.

4. Are you for a beautiful match ? Behold the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the King in his beauty ; he is white and ruddy, and altogether lovely : no wonder, for he is the brightness of his Father's glory ; all the glory of God shines in his face. Some of God's glory shines in the works of creation, the sun, moon, and stars ; some of it in the works of providence : but all the glory of God is here. He is the temple of God, and there doth beauty shine, Psa. xevi. 6.

5. Are you for a loving, as well as a lovely match ? Behold the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne is a mirror of love, without all dimension : " O the height and depth, the length and breadth of his love !" He loved and prayed for his enemies that murdered him ; and how then must he love his friends that will match with him ? Again,

6. Are you for a beloved match, who is valued and esteemed of all whose love and esteem is worth the regarding ? O ! the Lamb in the midst of the throne is beloved of all the holy angels, they admire and adore him ; he is beloved of all the saints in heaven and earth ; they say, This is our Beloved ; he is beloved of God the Father, who says, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am

well-pleased ;" he is hated of none but the devil and his wicked crew.

7. In a word, are you for an immortal match ? Well, here is the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne ; he lives for ever and ever : " I am he that was dead, and am alive ; and, behold, I live for evermore." The best friends here in this world are mortal, and may leave you in a moment ; but the Lamb is the King eternal, immortal : he lives for ever, and he can make you live for ever and ever. O mortal worms, whose bodies will be laid in the dust in a few days or hours, and who have nothing but a thin wall of flesh between you and eternity ; are ye for a match that can abundantly jointure you for another world, and portion you for eternity ? Is this a despicable bargain ? Are your lusts and idols, and perishing vanities of a world, a better bargain ? Nay, you dare not say it for your life. This offer of Christ accept or reject it as you will, is worth ten thousand worlds.

8. Are you for a match that can pay all your debt to law and justice, that can supply all your wants, that can heal all your diseases, that can bear all your burdens, sanctify all your crosses, sweeten all your afflictions, subdue all your enemies, manage all your concerns, and make you happy for ever ? Then come and match with the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne : a greater offer cannot be made to you than this most glorious King, upon the most glorious throne. O great proposal ! Wonder men and angels, at this gospel offer ! Be astonished, O heavens and earth ! If such a matchless match be offered and rejected, all the angels and saints that are about his throne will cry, Shame upon you for ever, and reject and refuse such a bargain ; and we must say, Amen ; everlasting shame must be upon you. What was the Gadarenes' blasphemy, but their preferring their swine to the Lord Jesus Christ, when he was upon the earth, and not yet upon the throne ? But greater is your blasphemy, O sinner, if you prefer your swinish lusts to our glorious Lord, now exalted to the throne. What ! prefer the swine, that are in the midst of the dunghill, to the Lamb in the midst of the throne ! O base, brutish, mad, and devilish blasphemy.

I hope, by this time, there are none hearing me, but are so far self-convicted, that they see they must condemn themselves if they reject such an offer as is made to them ; and therefore, I take witness upon it, that when the Lamb, that is now in the midst of the

throne of grace, will be the Lamb in the midst of the throne of judgment at the last day, ye must own that the sentence of condemnation, that shall be then passed against you, will be just and righteous, if you stand to your refusal ; therefore, though this should be a rejected offer to-day, yet it shall redound to the honour of the Lamb at the great day, insomuch, that the condemnation of you will be the justification of him ; your own consciences witness that he will be just when he speaks, and clear when he judges, and adjudges you to hell and damnation, because of your neglecting the great salvation, and rejecting the offer of the great Saviour, the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne. By way of anticipation the tribunal is now erected before-hand in your bosom, where God's deputy, conscience, sits as the judge ; and there the Lamb is assoilized as free of your blood, and the sentence comes forth, that your blood is upon your own head. Well, I hope your judgment is persuaded of this, that such an offer is made to you as is worthy of all acceptation ; but, O sirs, since the judgment may be informed and gained, while yet the heart is not engaged ; therefore, though faith come by hearing what a worthy Lamb is offered to you, yet bare hearing will not do without the heart-drawing power of the Spirit which is before the throne ; and, therefore, this being the pure chrystal river, that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 32, that this river of drawing influences of the Spirit may run down among you, I will put the best rope in your hand that I know for bringing down this blessing ; it is even the Lamb's own sweet promise, John xii. 32. " And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men after me." Where observe, 1. The persons concerned. 2. The promise. And, 3. The condition of it.

(1.) The persons concerned, *all men*. There is an *All* among sinful men, that Christ the second Adam hath to draw to him ; these were given of the Father to him ; and they *shall come*, John vi. 37. Yea, these he *must bring* to him, John x. 16. He must draw them, and they shall hear his voice. But, lest any should hereupon say, Perhaps I am not among the number of the second Adam's *all*, that he is to draw ; perhaps I am excluded by the secret council, or hidden decree of God from all eternity. Therefore, I will tell you what may satisfy you fully upon this point, that the Lamb, that is now in the midst of his Father's throne, was in the midst of his Father's counsels from all eternity ; the Lamb was at

that council-table : therefore, let not the thoughts of the eternal decree be terrible and dreadful to you ; for the Lamb was upon the concert, and therefore nothing passed at that council to the prejudice of any poor sinner, that would venture his soul upon the blood of the Lamb. It was concerted there, that the ground and object of faith should be no hidden counsel, no past decree, but a present openly declared truth ; namely, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and that whosoever will might come to him, and him that comes he will in no wise cast out ; and, therefore, if you venture your life and salvation upon the Lamb that is at present upon the throne of grace, you have nothing either past or future to fear ; neither any past decree, or any future wrath ; and now, by this free offer of Christ to you all, God is accomplishing his glorious decree, that you may be for ever happy upon your acceptance, or for ever inexcusable upon your refusal.

(2.) The promise, which is, “ I will draw all men unto me.” In case any should say, There is indeed a free offer, and a good bargain ; but I have a reluctant as well as a deceitful heart ; I cannot embrace the offer, nor bring up my heart to close with Christ, and make up the match. Why, here is the encouraging promise, “ I will draw ;” that is, I will send the Spirit to draw out your heart, to make it rise and mount, like a flame, towards the throne, where the Lamb sits. But if I do not find this drawing power, what encouragement have I to look for it ? Why, observe,

(3.) The condition of this promise, “ If I be lifted up from the earth.” Not an uncertain condition, depending upon us ; but a sure condition, depending upon himself : “ If I be lifted up, or when I am lifted up.” Now, the condition is performed ; Christ was not only lifted up upon the cross, but now he is lifted up to the throne. Now, Christ said, John xvi. 8, “ If I go to the Father, I will send the Spirit ;” if I go to the throne, I will send down the Spirit in his drawing influences. And now, may you not plead, “ Lord the condition is performed, the time is come, thou art lift up, thou art upon the throne ; therefore, let the crystal river run down out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb ?” Is this the language of your heart and soul ? Lord, draw, draw ; thou that art the Lamb in the midst of the throne, draw my heart to thee, according to thy word. Is your heart burning or beating, saying, “ O I am the blackest, the vilest sinner that ever matched with such a glorious One ; but yet I find my heart beating and burning within me, saying, O to be

drawn ; O to have the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne to erect his throne in the midst of my heart, and to rule there in the midst of his enemies ; and to be all in all to me, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to me ;” Why, then, we may say, your heart is the throne, and the Lamb is in the midst of the throne. And, if the drawing power of the Spirit hath made up the match between him and you, we are warranted to lead you next to the marriage supper, where “ the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed you.”

A WORD AT THE CLOSE OF THE SOLEMNITY ON THE MONDAY.

BEFORE you go, I shall conclude this solemn work in two words, one directed to the enemies of the Lamb, and another to the lovers of the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

First, To you who are enemies to him. If the Lamb be in the midst of the throne, then let sinners stoop to him ; O sink down at his feet, and be content to be ruled by him ; if you be ruled by your own lusts, and by your sins, you put Christ out of his throne in effect, and put your lusts in his room. O sinner, consider how you cross and contradict the great God by this means ; he hath said of Christ, Psalm ii. 6, “ I have set my King upon mine holy hill ;” I have set him in the midst of the throne ; and are you saying to your lusts, Be ye king over me ? Man, will you live in sin, and sin against him that is in the midst of God’s throne ? If a thief cut a purse when the judge is upon the bench, and the sentence ready to pass against him, he is worthy to be hanged ; Christ is on the bench, in the act of judgment, O man, beware of sinning against him : be afraid, O ye that are enemies to the Lamb, “ Enemies in your minds by wicked works ; It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” Can you harden yourself against God and prosper ? Nay, you shall be so far from prospering in this way, that the Lamb in the midst of the throne, hath a rod of iron, to break and dash you to pieces. “ Consider this, ye that forget God.” The Lamb will, in a little, be a lion, to tear you to pieces, when there shall be none to deliver. The Lamb is yet upon the throne of grace, inviting you ; but it may be this is the last invitation you shall have, till you see him upon a judgment-seat : and what shall be the effect of

these gospel offers you have enjoyed? These solemn feasts will not always last; and perhaps death will dash you down to the dust before another occasion of this sort. Can ye find in your heart to let Christ go, and this occasion over, without getting any good of him? Are you content that salvation hath come so near you, and you lose it for ever? If not, O will ye take the first opportunity of retiring to some corner, and cry to the Lamb in the midst of the throne to come and draw you, and back these precious means with his powerful blessing! He that is in the midst of the throne hath been setting his throne in the midst of Dunfermline, and saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men!" O let him not lift his tent till you be taken in!

Again, O crown him King, whom the Father hath crowned! O might this be his coronation day! A day of espousals with the Lamb is his coronation day: "Go forth, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart," Song iii. 11. Happy day, if you could go away, saying, Such a day, at the communion of Dunfermline, Christ was crowned King; I beheld King Jesus with the crown wherewith his Father crowned him, and saw that the Father set him in the midst of the throne, and I helped to put the crown upon his head; for, through grace, I set him in the midst of the throne of my heart, and crowned him King there; I found in my heart to dethrone sin, and enthrone Christ. O is Christ crowned King here! Hath no virtue come from the throne to draw my heart, as the adamant draws the iron? The clucking of the hen makes the chickens to run; gospel preaching is the voice of the Lord Jesus, and much of this you have had these days bygone. O have you run under his wings? See what Christ says to Jerusalem, Mat. xxiii. 37, 38, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!" May we hope that God will not yet leave Scotland desolate, but that Christ will be crowned King in the church of Scotland? Though he be robbed of his royalties, and notwithstanding of all unwarrantable Acts that tend to the hurt of his government, he is in the midst of the throne.

2dly, To you that are the lovers of the Lamb, I offer first a word of comfort, and then a word of advice.

(1.) A word of comfort. Surely though the earth should be removed, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea; though external governments should be dissolved and overturned, yet while the Lamb is upon the throne all shall be ruled to advantage unto all the lovers of the Lamb. What, though ye should see the ministers of Christ suspended¹ or deposed, for adhering to the testimony of Christ, and endeavouring to keep a good conscience in an evil day? Though they should be reproached and persecuted,

(1) Alluding to the conduct of the Assembly and Commission, in the prosecution carrying on at this time against Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, and his adherents. As this affair is frequently hinted at, it may not be improper here briefly to lay the matter open.—The Church, at this time, was not only in eminent danger of being over-run with a pernicious scheme of Arian, Socinian, and Arminian doctrines, as formerly noticed, but likewise of being pested with a corrupt, erroneous, and time-serving ministry, for whom a wide door had been opened by several violent settlements on reclaiming congregations. The number of legal sermons, and dry moral harangues, too evidently evinced the truth of it; and the eager disposition, appearing in many to grasp at Presentations, and the Act of Assembly, 1732, in favour of them (observed above), put the fact beyond all dispute. This being the melancholy situation of matters at this time, Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, Minister at Stirling, thought it his duty, in a sermon, at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, at Perth, Oct. 10, 1732, to testify plainly against some of the prevailing evils of the times, particularly against the Act of Assembly, 1732, and of the proceedings of the Judicatories, in the settlement of ministers over reclaiming and dissenting congregations. This discourse so galled and tormented some of the ministers then present, that they pushed, and obtained of the Synod, an appointment of a Committee to consider the particulars in the sermon, said to give offence. The expressions were condescended on, and answers given to them by Mr. Erskine. The Synod, after spending three days on this affair, found Mr. Erskine censurable, and resolved to rebuke him; from which several ministers and elders dissented; and Mr. Erskine and Mr. Fisher protested, and appealed to the Assembly, 1733. The Assembly having considered the appeal, approved of the proceedings of the Synod, and appointed him to be rebuked and admonished by the Moderator; though neither Synod nor Assembly had shown his doctrine to be contrary to the word of God, and our Standards. Mr. Erskine protested against this deed; and his Protestation was adhered to by Messrs. Wilson, Moncrief, and Fisher. The Assembly ordered the foresaid ministers to appear before the Commission in August; and impowered the Commission to suspend them, if they did not withdraw their Protestation, and profess their sorrow. They appeared before the Commission in August, and were suspended by them. The Commission in November 16, loosed their relation to their respective charges, and declared them to be no longer Ministers of this Church. The Assembly, 1740, passed the sentence of Deposition against them, and others who adhered to them, and joined with them; and all this, without finding them either erroneous in doctrine or immoral in practice; but merely for their stedfast adherence to their principles, and ministerial fidelity in setting the trumpet to their mouth, and telling the house of Jacob their sins, and Israel their transgressions!—Those who incline to see more of this matter, may peruse Mr. Erskine's printed Sermon, which was the foundation of this process, together with the State of the Process, and other public papers emitted to the world.

yet still "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God:" and still there is this great ground of comfort, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and the crystal river proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb; and upon this throne the Lamb rules righteously and mercifully, though men rule never so unjustly and cruelly; and in a little time there will be an end of man's rule and government, but the Lamb's dominion is for ever and ever. God the Father hath proclaimed that he is the everlasting King, saying, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The followers of the Lamb have unspeakable ground of comfort in Christ, whatever trouble they have in the world; "In the world you shall have tribulation, but in me you shall have peace, be of good cheer; I have overcome the world;" and I am now upon the throne; and ye at last shall overcome, and sit down with me on my throne.

1. Here is comfort against desertion. Though the Lord may hide himself, and seem to be far away, yet still it is food to your faith, that the Lamb is in the midst of the throne; and, as he never deserts the throne, so he will never leave you nor forsake you; why? the promises are all Yea and Amen in him who is ever upon the throne, to make out his word.

2. Here is comfort against the cross. While you have the cross upon your back, you may keep the throne in your eye, and you may be sure of pity and favour thence, because the Lamb is there, who went from the cross to the throne.

3. Here is comfort against the power of sin, corruption, and spiritual enemies, be they never so powerful: for the Lamb is upon the throne of power, and all power in heaven and earth is given to him; and he is concerned in honour to destroy these enemies.

4. Here is comfort against want and weakness. Your strength lies in the Lamb, and your spiritual provision flows only from him.

5. Here is comfort against church-tyranny. Times have been, when there was tyranny in the state over the consciences of men; these were reckoned very evil days; but when there is tyranny in the church, over the consciences of men, it is in many respects worse; for church persecution is a kind of blasphemy, it is in the name of God to persecute the people of God. But yet here is comfort in this case, that church tyranny cannot keep the throne; "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" No, no. "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood," Psalm

xciv. 20, 21. The Lamb will keep the midst of the throne, and tread down his enemies in due time.

What would make a church-government glorious and eminent? When the Lamb is kept in the midst of the throne, and when his spiritual kingdom is kept distinct from the temporal kingdoms of this world. The government of the church is quite mismanaged when the Lamb is put out of the throne, and temporal heritages are made the foundation of spiritual privileges. As, for example, when in the choice of pastors to any congregation, which is a spiritual privilege, relating to immortal souls, the heirs of this earth, the heirs of a little yellow dust, have such a privilege and preference given them by virtue of their temporal inheritance, as if they were lords over the consciences of men, and lords over God's heritage. Surely their secular advantage in the world can entitle them to no spiritual privilege in the house of God, no more than an earthly inheritance can entitle them to heaven; but to give them a dominion over the souls of men in this matter, is a practical dethroning of the Lamb from the midst of the throne. Church-officers themselves are discharged to usurp such a dominion as to be lords over God's heritage; it is unlawful for them to obtrude pastors upon a Christian people without their consent; far less have they power to put such a dominion over men's conscience into the hands of earthly superiors. How can they give what they have not themselves?¹ In spiritual matters we are to own no man lord, but he that is Lord of lords, the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne." Church-government is quite overturned, when the throne of Christ's spiritual kingdom is possessed by any other in this world but only the Lamb.

6. Here is comfort against death. Death shall not reign because the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and liveth for ever and ever, and hath the keys of hell and of death; and therefore death shall be swallowed up in victory.

7. Here is comfort against the fear of judgment. That awful day needs be no terror to the lovers of the Lamb, because when the fiery tribunal will be erected, the Lamb will be in the midst of the throne; and the friends of the Lamb will be received into his bosom, while all his enemies will stand trembling before his throne.

(1) Patronage has always been a great grievance to the church, and was carried on at this time with a very high hand, though contrary to Scripture, Reason, our Standards, and Acts of the Church; particularly Act of Assembly at Glasgow, 1638.

8. Here is comfort in the view of a long eternity, that the Lamb, that is for ever in the midst of the throne, will for ever feed you, and lead you unto living fountains, and wipe away all tears from your eyes. Oh ! who can tell the happiness of the higher higher house, the glorious feeding and leading you shall have there, the everlasting and everliving fountain of divine consolation, wherewith ye shall for ever be refreshed ! The fountain is God, and his glorious attributes ; Christ, and his inexhaustible fulness ; the Spirit, and his everlasting consolation ; a glorious Trinity ; God, who is now a promising God, will then be a performing God. Who can tell the sweetness of that blessing, his wiping away all tears from your eyes ? He that hath a bottle for your tears now, hath a napkin to wipe them away then ; for, Ye shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Secondly, I offer a word of advice to you. O sirs, if the Lamb be in the midst of the throne,

1. Then be quiet amidst all the mall-administrations of men, amidst all the mismanagements of church men and church judicatories ; because though men cannot be justified in their church ruining projects, yet the Lamb being in the midst of the throne, hath a just, holy, and sovereign hand in ordering these evils, when he hath a controversy to plead with us. Let us see the hand of God in leaving men to themselves, to rob the church and people of God of their rights and Reformation privileges. What was the hand of Pilate against Christ, the cruellest act that ever was done. Why, it was the hand of God himself ; for it is said, when Pilate spake, saying, “ Dost thou not know that I have power to crucify thee or to set thee at liberty ? ” Christ answered, “ Thou couldst have no power, except it were given thee of my Father. ” Even so say I, church men or church judicatories, courts or assemblies, could have no power to break down any of the carved work of Reformation ; no power to harm the liberties of God’s people in choosing their pastors ; no power to obtrude ministers on Christian congregations, willing to choose faithful pastors ; no power to pass sentence against such as oppose that speat of defection, except it were given them of our Father : and therefore, let us be quiet and sober ; we have some other thing ado than to break out in a passionate resentment against poor mortal men ; the sinful instruments of the church’s confusion and disorder. When Shimei railed upon David, “ Let him alone, says David, may be the Lord hath bidden him. ” The

Lord, for our trial and chastisement, perhaps hath required some in our day, Go and tread upon the rights of these people ; go and reproach and persecute, suspend and depose these ministers, for keeping a good conscience in an evil time. I say, it may be the Lord hath bidden ; yea, " Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it ? " Is there evil in the church, and the Lord hath not done it ? No, no. Well, what of that ? This does not justify evil instruments, no, but it says, we are to be sober, and lay our hand upon our mouth, and bear the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him : We are to be dumb, and not to open our mouth because he does it. The Lamb in the midst of the throne hath the government upon his shoulders, and he is righteously ordering and over-ruling these matters for the profitable trial of his people, and the glorious praise of his name in the issue ; " The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of his wrath wilt thou restrain. " The Lord hath his own time and way of restraining his enemies, and his own time and way of reforming his church ; and when the Lord shall appear in his glory, he will build up Zion. Sometimes he sees fit to appear in his wrath, and then he lets out the wrath of man, the enmity of man, to the breaking down of Zion, and of his carved work ; but there is another time, when he sees fit to appear in his glory, and then to restrain the wrath of man, and reform his church. And since he is appearing in his wrath in our day, letting out the reins of man's wrath, to the ruining of Reformation work : O be sober and humble, and depend upon him as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, who hath the reins in his hand, to let them out, or take them in, as he pleases. Instruments are but his sword, his hand, by which he does as he pleases, Psalm xvii. 13, 14. " Deliver my soul from the wicked, from men which are thy hand, O Lord. " Think not, then, the government is out of Christ's hand, when men are doing many sad things, and giving many heavy blows to the work of God ; No, no ; men are but his hand, and it is the hand of God that justly and righteously is lying heavy upon his people. Look above men then ; you have not to do with them ; there is a turn of matters just as he is pleased to turn his hand ; the Lamb is in the midst of the throne, and in the midst of heavy clouds, hanging over Scotland ; therefore look to him, that he may turn away his wrath ; Psalm ii. 12, " Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little ; blessed are all they that put their trust in him. " Again,

2. It is only the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne. O then be tender of those that are followers of the Lamb, while they are yet upon the footstool, and not yet set down with Christ upon his throne. They are in danger in an evil day, wherein they are called to give testimony against the evils and corruptions of the day, to go aside to some extreme or other. There are many thoughts of heart, and many needless words among people at present about the manner of testifying. Some are accused as if they were too forward, others are accused as if they were too far behind, in their testimony. Well, not to meddle with mistakes people may be under, it may be both these are true; for who can say, I am clean, and do not err toward the right or left hand, when they would appear for Christ and his cause? But, O be tender of the militant followers of Christ. I hope you will remember, that it is only the Lamb that is able to keep the midst of the throne; and I hope we are all willing to subscribe to this, that this honour only belongs to him, that he was able to keep the midst of the way to the throne, without going to one side or other; none but himself was ever able to do so; let him alone have all the glory.

3. Let me say to you that have become the bride, the Lamb's wife, if the Lamb be in the midst of the throne, O then see that ye frequent the throne. What more inviting argument than this can there be, that the Lamb is in the midst of it? And the farther forward you approach, so much the better. Never rest till you be in the midst of the throne, where the Lamb is. You may have boldness so go as far as the Lamb goes; and you will find this the most pleasant exercise in the world and the most profitable also, for grace and mercy is about the throne of grace; it is a mercy seat, because the Lamb is there.

4. O believer, if the Lamb be in the midst of the throne, even the Lamb, your Head, your Husband, see that you live upon him by faith; let the Lamb be your feeder, and the Lamb your food every day; and beware you do not disgrace your honourable Husband. Are you married to the Lamb in the midst of the throne? We read that Bathsheba said to her son, Prov. xxxi. 4, "It is not for a king, O Lemuel, it is not for a king to drink wine, nor for princes to drink strong drink." So it is not for believers in Christ to drink and tipple, to swear and cheat; the graceless world do so. But, O believer, have you been at a communion table? Hath the Lord graced and honoured you with marriage to the Lamb in the

midst of the throne? Do not disgrace yourself; it is below your rank; see that you live as becomes these that are matched and married to the Prince of the kings of the earth.

I remember some years ago, after certain disputing in the Church about the doctrine of the gospel, we had a solemnity here, on which occasion I was led to speak of the substance of gospel doctrine, Christ given of God to be a covenant of the people;¹ and now I am obliged to remark, That after some contendings, or rather, in the midst of some contendings in the Church, about the government of his house, I have been led, without any design in me, but only as the text was pleasant to my own soul, to speak of the very sum and centre of ecclesiastical government, the Lamb in the midst of the throne. I remember, at that former occasion the Lord was present by his Spirit, and gave evidence thereof unto many; and now, I hope, at this occasion also, there shall be some blessings dropt down from the throne. And, O to be going away from this place, with this truth sealed upon our heart, concerning the Lamb's being in the midst of the throne. Come what will, there is no fear of the followers of the Lamb, and the sufferers for him, for, "The Lamb is in the midst of the throne."

S E R M O N X X X I I.

STABILITY IN THE FAITH, THE CHURCH'S STRENGTH.²

ISAIAH xxx. 7.—"Their strength is to sit still."

EVER since man departed from God, the only resting place, he has been, in vain, rambling among the creatures for safety and satisfaction; whereas, if we believe the word of God, we will see our only strength and safety is to return to God in Christ, as the centre of rest; and to sit still and rest upon him, and put confidence in him; as saith the prophet here, "Their strength is to sit still." These

¹ See this elaborate discourse in Vol. I.

² This sermon was preached in the year 1733, but at what place we are uncertain; however, from some passages in the discourse, it appears to have been delivered on the Monday after some sacramental solemnity.

who have been sitting down at a communion table, by professing to sit down under the shadow of the Almighty by faith, are to remember that it is their strength to sit still ; as they are well set, who can say with the church, " I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste ;" for, to sit down, is to believe ; so it is yet better, if, by unbelief, they do not rise again ; for, it is " their strength to sit still."

Jerusalem and Judah were here threatened with some approaching dangers and desolations, and it is thought to be by Sennacherib ; and this people's sin, for which they are here reprov'd, was their trusting to the Egyptians ; they were all in a hurry to bring help and succour from them, without seeking counsel of God, and resting upon him.

We may observe in the words, the four following things :—

1. The evil of this sin ; " The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose : " compare this with ver. 3, and hence observe, That though they that trust in the power, providence, and promise of God, shall never be ashamed of their hope, yet they that put confidence in any creature, will find it their reproach, shame, and confusion—they will hurt instead of helping. God is true, and may be trusted ; but every man is a liar, and may be suspected ; we cannot expect too little from man, and too much from God.

2. Notice the prophet's intermeddling in this concerning matter ; he publishes God's mind and commission. Observe, it is the duty of ministers to meddle sometimes in public matters, whether in church or state ; they are to show Jacob their sins, and Israel their transgressions ; and this is a part of ministers' work, to testify against sin in all. Christ was the light of the world ; they should be like their Master, testifying against all sin, and all works of darkness. However, this is one of the great quarrels that the world have against the servants and people of God, because they bear testimony against their sins. Many that have some light, yet they put their light in a prison, Rom. i. 18, " They hold the truth in unrighteousness ; " particularly, by not bearing witness against sin and defection in others, as well as in ourselves ; it was the graceless expression of a graceless Cain, " Am I my brother's keeper ? " What am I concerned with the souls of others, or the sins of others ? What am I concerned with the public evils of the day I live in ? Indeed right religion begins at home, but it does not end there ; it will come without doors with us.

3. The manner of the prophet's address to this people, "I cried concerning this;" *I cried*; hence observe, That it is the duty of ministers to be earnest and zealous in reproving sin and reclaiming sinners. Ministers are both seers and criers; and, when they see the danger, they should cry, that the people may hear, and flee out of harm's way. If one in the streets of a city were crying, Fire, fire! O what a running and motion is then! But when ministers cry, The fire of hell is ready to burn the wicked and ungodly, no person is moved; why? they are sensible of bodily danger, but no sense have they of soul danger, nor fear of the fire that burns both soul and body. Ministers need to cry about matters of eternity, that people may secure something that death may not be able to take from them; such as these, (1.) Saving knowledge; if you get this, it will lodge with you to eternity: "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (2.) Faith, saving faith, death will not be able to take it from you: "All these died in faith." Again, (3.) Evangelical love of God in Christ: "Love never fails." (4.) The favour of God, Rom. viii. 38, 39. "I am persuaded, that neither death nor life shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus." (5.) Pardon of sin, and washing in Christ's blood; "These are they that have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb." (6.) Faithful labours for the honour and glory of God; "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; they shall rest from their labours, and their works follow them." They enjoy the fruit of their labours; they will not lose one good thought, one prayer, one tear; he has a bottle for these. Some seek after worldly honour, but these will soon be at an end; their honour will be laid in the dust. Some spend their time and strength in pleasure; there these will soon be at an end, 1 John ii. 17, "The lusts of this world passeth away; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever."

4. The prophet's doctrine, or the sum of his preaching and advice, in these words, "Their strength is to sit still."

In which words you may notice, 1. The sedate life of faith, expressed by "sitting still." 2. The advantages of that life of faith to believers, it is "their strength."

(1.) By "sitting still," we are to understand a recumbency upon God, resting on him, and trusting in him, and stedfast waiting on him, and abiding in the way of duty. This duty puts a man to less trouble than his rambling abroad among the

creatures ; he has no more ado but sit still. Some are at more pains to bring misery upon themselves, than God's people are to get the blessing. Esau hunted up and down, and was at a great deal of pains ; yet Jacob sat at home, and got the blessing : " He that believeth shall not make haste."

(2.) The advantage of this duty, it is " their strength." They that sit still in a day of distress, " hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord," this will be their strength and safety : when we have tired ourselves by seeking help from creatures, we will find it the best way for recruiting ourselves, to repose and settle upon the Creator ; by trusting in him, waiting on him, and steadfastly adhering to him ; this will keep us from much needless labour and fatigue ; yea, it will secure to us the accomplishment of the promise, Luke i. 45, " Blessed is he that believeth, for there shall be a performance." Hab. ii. 3, " For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie ; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

This text then has two parts, that are like the two pillars of Solomon's temple, the one Jachin, and the other Boaz, stability and strength ; stability is one part of the text, and strength is the other : " Their strength is to sit still."

OBSERV. " That a church or people's strength and safety in perilous times, is their steadiness and stability in the faith."

The prophet here speaks forth the duty of Jerusalem in a perilous and dangerous time, and shows that that stability is their safety ; and that it is stability in the faith he here speaks of, you may see clear, from two other verses of this chapter ; verse 15, " In returning and rest, shall ye be saved ; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength. In returning to God, and reposing in him as your rest ; in quiet acquiescing in him, and confident dependence upon him. Verse 18, " The Lord is a God of judgment ; blessed are all they that wait for him ;" this also explains it of the stability of faith."

This doctrine might be confirmed by many other scriptures ; Heb. iii. 12, 14, " Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God ; for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfastly unto the end ;" importing, that our stability in the faith is our safety in evil times, and at all times ; Heb. x. 23,

25, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." In Col. ii. 19, there you read of a number that fell off in time of temptation, "not holding the head," not sitting still and abiding in Christ, Heb. xiii. 8, 9. But many other scriptures will offer in the sequel.

The method I propose for prosecuting this subject, through the divine favour, shall be the following.

- I. To show what are these times that may be called perilous times, wherein people are ready to show much instability and unsteadfastness in the faith.
- II. Open up the nature of this stedfastness and stability in the faith.
- III. Show that this stedfastness and stableness is people's strength and safety in perilous times.
- IV. Deduce some inferences for the application of the subject.

I. We are to show what are these times that may be called perilous times. You may see the apostle's description thereof; 2 Tim. iii. 1-8, "This know also, that perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of these that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away. Now, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." If the last times be the most perilous times, then we seem to be among the very last; we are called to redeem time, because the days are evil. There is a twofold evil, moral and penal; the moral evil of sin is the ground of all penal evil of punishment. Jerusalem here was not so much in danger from the Assyrians, whom God was sending upon them to punish them, as they were from their own sins, for which God stirred up the enemy to afflict them; or if when danger appeared, they had returned to the Lord, and rested on him; then in returning and resting they had been saved; but they departed from God, and then all went to wreck with them. Times of departing from God, the only resting place, are perilous times. More particularly,

1st, Times of rebellion against God are perilous times. Of this, Jerusalem is here reproved ; and for this a woe is denounced against her, "Woe to the rebellious children," ver. 1, of this chapter. When may a people be called rebellious? Even when sin, which is rebellion, is come to such a height, that the Lord is obliged in honour to plead a controversy with the sinning people ; as it is said, Hos. iv. 1, 2, 3, "The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore, shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish with the beast of the fields, and with the fowls of heaven, yea the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away." Now, he may be said to have a controversy with a land for their rebellions, in four cases.

1. When all manner of sin and acts of rebellion abound, such as are there mentioned, so as they are not only the sins of such and such a person, nor of such and such a congregation, but they are become national, and universal, and epidemical ; and I imagine this is but too just a description of our case.

2. When people's sins are committed against many checks of conscience, many beams of light, many means of grace, many calls of providence, many instances of mercy and divine goodness, how provoking is it, as you see, Romans ii. 2, 3. Thus highly aggravated against the patience and forbearance of God.

3. When the rebellion is so heightened that not only is the patience of God abused, but laughed at, and ridiculed, by a profane age, that begin to say, as 2 Pet. iii. 4, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Where is the threatening of his coming to judgment? Then it is a perilous time, because the Lord is angry, and will let men know that he is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness, though he be long-suffering to us-ward ; and that he is not slack concerning his threatening.

4. When there is nothing standing between the rebellious people and the stroke, "None to stand in the gap," and keep out the wrath that is coming in, Ezek, xxii. 30, 31. Or, when such as would stand in the gap, and plead with God, have no access to him this way ; and when God is saying, upon the matter, though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were pleading for such a people, it is in vain.

2dly, Times of carnal consultation, or of following carnal coun-

sel, are perilous times. This was the case of Jerusalem, "Woe to the rebellious children, that take counsel, but not of me!" (Where also we see, that this was a special branch of their rebellion, they are reckoned rebels against God that take counsel, but not of him; and so follow their own carnal counsel.) Men take counsel, but not of God, when they consult with flesh and blood, with carnal ease, carnal friends, carnal reason, and are swayed with carnal arguments; when they consult with numbers and multitudes, and follow the supernumery party, and so bind their faith to the belt of a majority, saying, Can such a great number be all wrong? and such a small number only right? Shall we be singular? Indeed, when vice becomes general, singularity is a virtue; when error in judgment, or practice, becomes universal, it is then a necessary duty to be singular. Whomsoever men take counsel with, if it be not with God, they rebel against him, and expose themselves to woe and misery. To take counsel even with learned and eminent men, even when they are on the right side of the question, and to believe so and so, because they believe it, is but a human faith, built upon a human testimony; and yet ordinarily the most learned Rabbies are the greatest enemies of Christ and his cause, John vii. 48, 49 "Have any of the rulers and Pharisees believed in him? But this people, that know not the law, are cursed." Why, says flesh and blood, they are but a pack of ignorant fools, who differ from such great and learned men. Well, but it may happen that even these may be blind, whom neither themselves nor others think to be so, as it was with the applauded Pharisees, who said, "Are we blind also?" Christ proves them to be so; and tells, that if the blind follow the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Thus also they take counsel, but not of God, that yield a blind obedience to the commandments of men, as Israel did to the statutes of Omri, Micah vi. 16, and Ephraim, that willingly walked after the commandment, Hos. v. 2. This is charged upon Israel, Isa. xxix. 13. "Their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men."

3dly, Times of carnal confidence and coverings, are perilous times, verse 1. "They cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit." The shadow of Egypt was their covering; they put their confidence therein; but it was a refuge of lies, a covering too narrow for hiding them, while they had no holy confidence in God, but a carnal confidence in men; they departed from God, partly through fear of men, namely the Assyrians, and partly by trusting in men, viz. the

Egyptians. "The fear of man bringeth a snare." And it is an awful word to that purpose, Isa. li. 12, 13. "Who art thou, that thou should be afraid of man, that shall die, and of the son of man, that shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord, thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?" Many are like the Jews, John xii. 42, that durst not profess Christ for fear of being lashed out of the synagogue: and thus even some of the godly dare not make a public appearance for the cause and truth of the Lord Jesus, for fear of being exposed to the censures of the church, and fury of the prevailing party; but what says the Lord in such a case to these that fear the reproaches, and revilings, and resentment of men, Isaiah li. 7, 8. It is but the grass of the field that opposeth you, "All flesh is grass," Isaiah xl. 6. Are you afraid of withering grass, and forget the everlasting and everliving God? They may be reckoned fools that expose themselves to the fury of a government, civil or ecclesiastic: why should they expose themselves to worldly losses and inconveniences? But, if the commands of men be not agreeable to the commands of God; if they be unlawful and unwarrantable, it is the best wisdom to sit still, and rest obedient to God, and disobedient to man; yea, this is their strength and safety; it is better to suffer than to sin; and we sin, if we but yield a doubtful obedience to man, doubting if it be right; for, "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." It is always safest to keep back from sin, and abide with Christ: all losses for his sake are to be repaired an hundred fold in this life; that is good recompence, and the stock still secure; "In the world to come, eternal life." However, this is one part of carnal confidence, the fear of man; for, whom we truly fear, for their frowns, them we are apt to trust, for their favours and friendship. And then trust in man, is another part of carnal confidence, which, when it prevails, shows it is a perilous time: this is cross to the commands of God also, Psal. cxlvi. 3. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom there is no help." This is dangerous work, and points out a dangerous time, when trusting in an arm of flesh is prevailing, Jer. xvii. 5. "Cursed is the man, that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm; whose heart departs from the Lord. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man." See Micah. vii. 5, Jer. ix. 4. If we depend upon

human power, for the preservation of our church, or depend upon human policy, for the reformation of religion, we will find ourselves sadly disappointed: "It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in flesh." If we depend upon human laws, even for the security of our fortunes; or upon our compliance with whatever human authority enjoins, for our freedom from outward trouble and trials; we but trust in man, and confer with flesh and blood: we trust in a broken reed that will pierce us.

4thly, Times of instability are dangerous and perilous times. This is supposed plainly to be the sin of Israel in the text, "Their strength is to sit still," to be stable and settled in the faith; but they were unstable, unstedfast, unsettled. Now, that times of instability are dangerous, may appear from these particulars.

1. Unstable times are times of error, and these are dangerous. This is plainly insinuate, Heb. xiii. 9. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." Unstable persons are carried about with every error. This is the dangerous circumstances of England and of Scotland in our day; what errors are spreading! Atheism is in a manner professed by a number that call themselves free-thinkers, who cannot think of a God, though it must be as certain that there is an eternal Being, as it is certain there is any being at all; for there could be no such effects, if there were not a supreme cause. Deism is openly professed by some, who deny all divine and supernatural revelation, and applaud the light of nature, though under a dismal eclipse. Arianism has taken root, a denying the true and proper divinity and supreme Deity of Christ. Legalism and Libertinism, which may be well joined together, because they that deny Christ to be the end of the law for righteousness, being not under grace, but under the law, sin must have dominion over them. Profaneness and immoralities, and all manner of errors and evils, take place in unstable times.

2. Unstable times are times of temptations from men and devils; and it is much to continue with Christ in such times: when men are tempted with the world, and tempted by the devil and his temptations, it is much to get that testimony, Luke xxii. 28. "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptation, and I appoint unto you a kingdom. A time of general temptation is a dark and dangerous hour, Rev. iii. 10. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will keep thee from the hour of temptation,

which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." When temptation is so universal, no wonder the most part are carried down with the stream.

3. Unstable times are backsliding times ; times of defection and apostacy, and these are perilous times ; for, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways ;" and, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Surely these are perilous times in Scotland, when they are such covenant-breaking times, wherein Reformation principles and purity are given up, wherein truth falleth, and he that departeth from evil, and adhereth to covenanted truth, maketh himself a prey, Isa. lix. 15.

4. Unstable times are times of division, and these are perilous times ; for, "A city, or house, divided against itself, cannot stand." Then is disolation near, when the anger of the Lord has divided a people ; divided their hearts, so as they hate one another : and divided their tongues, so as they reproach one another, and speak evil of one another ; then is the land's name justly turned to a *Babel*, Gen. xi. 9. "The name of it is called *Babel*, because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth, and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth." When people's hearts and tongues are divided and confounded, then they are in hazard of being scattered and destroyed.

5. Unstable times are times of the slighting of the gospel, the heavenly manna. When people cannot rest content with that provision which God makes for them in the gospel, how dangerous is this ! See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14, 15, 16. "They mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Jer. xxvi. 4, 5, 6. "Thus saith the Lord, If you will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them (but ye have not hearkened) ; then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth." Was ever a nation more guilty than ourselves ? Judge, then, if we live not in perilous times.

6. Unstable times are times of formality in religion ; men having a form of godliness, without the power ; yea, denying the power of it. When God has but the outside ; drawing near to him with the mouth, and honouring him with the lips : a formal carnal way

of worshipping God, instead of worshipping him in the Spirit. Unstable souls, that take up a profession of religion which degenerates into a formal outside hypocritical devotion, are in a very dangerous case, as appears from the many woes Christ denounced against the Pharisees and hypocrites.

7. Unstable times are times of security. Where there is no spiritual settlement there will be a carnal settlement, like Moab, that was at ease from his youth, and settled upon his lees and dregs, not being emptied from vessel to vessel, Jer. xlviii. 11. It is a dangerous time, when the wise and foolish virgins are sleeping and slumbering; when men cry, Peace, peace; and like the old world, put the evil day far off from them, sudden destruction may be at the door.

8. Unstable times are times of careless indifferency about the matters of God, and lukewarmness. When people are unstable in the truth, they can never be zealous for it: the dangerousness of this disease you read of, Rev. iii. 16. "Because thou art lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth," that is, reject thee with abhorrence. This, among others, is the sin of our day, and shows we are living in perilous times. There are two things very sad in Scotland.

(1.) Our light has worn out our zeal. It is seldom heard tell of, that light should be an enemy to zeal and practice, till now it seems to be our misery, that our light, knowledge, wisdom, and politeness, has blunted our zeal for God and for Reformation principles and practice.

(2.) Our hazards have drowned our zeal; our apprehended hazards and difficulties have quenched the fire of zeal in many. The days have been in Scotland, when our difficulties and crosses, hazards and dangers, have been as a burning coal to quicken our zeal for God, and make it the more fervent; but now, our difficulties and dangers are like so much wet timber laid upon the top of our zeal, like to drown it all out; and yet, where is the danger of standing up for God and his cause? "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" Is it our strength and safety to run away from God and duty? No, by no means; rather, is it not our strength to sit still?

II. We now proceed to the second thing proposed, which was, To open up the nature of this stability in the faith, or steadiness and establishment therein. I would here, 1. Offer a scripture or two, for showing how this duty is commanded and commended. 2. What

it supposes. 3. What it includes. 4. What it excludes. 5. What it infers.

1st, I would show that it is both commanded and commended. I might cite many scriptures for this end ; but I shall only quote one scripture, where it is commanded, and another where it is commended.

1. This stability in the Faith is commanded, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." "Stand fast in the faith:" this is that duty which the apostle calls a continuing in the faith, grounded and settled, and not being moved away from the hope of the gospel, Col. i. 23. This is that which he calls a being stedfast and immoveable, yea, always abounding in the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58. This is that which is called an earnest contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, Jude 3. And again, it is called a standing fast in one mind and spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel, in nothing terrified by your adversaries, &c. Phil. i. 27. In a word, it is called a being faithful to the death: "Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10. In all which scriptures this duty of stability is commanded ; and it is called a standing fast in the faith, to show the influence that faith has upon perseverance ; for, "By faith we stand," by faith we walk, by faith we live, by faith we fight, by faith we overcome ; and all this, because by faith we stand still, and rest upon a God in Christ, established in the faith.—Thus it is commanded. Again,

2. This stability in the faith is commended, Rev. ii. 13 ; there the church of Pergamus is commended in these words, "Thou holdest fast my name, and has not denied my faith," &c. Where the thing they are commended for being stable in, is Christ's name, and his faith ; that is, his gospel, and the doctrine thereof. Paul is called a chosen vessel to bear his name among the Gentiles ; that is, his gospel, and it may well be so called, because by the gospel he makes his name known ; and it is called the faith, because it is the object of faith, the thing to be believed ; and it is called his faith, because he is the author of it, the sum and substance of it. The giver of this gospel doctrine substitutes himself in Adam's room, and fulfils the law, which to him was a covenant of works ; and hence it is, that out of his obeying the law, the sweet doctrine of the gospel flows unto us : "He is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Now, this is what the church of Pergamus held,

and would not deny, but gave their testimony to it against all the enemies that opposed it; no wonder, for it is the words of eternal life. We are not to think the worse of any truth, that it is opposed and controverted, and requires fast holding, and violent holding: "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Nay, the more a truth is controverted, the more commendable is a steady adherence to it. While we are in this militant state, we cannot hold the truth without fighting; it is said of the builders of the walls of Jerusalem, Neh. iv. 18. "That every builder had his sword girded by his side, and so builded;" so, in adhering to the truth of the gospel, we are not to think strange to hear of a banner in the banquetting-house of the gospel: "He brought me to the banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love." Why a banner in a banquetting-house? Because we cannot keep the feast without opposition either from without or within. Many, when they see their believing promised to be joined with a combat, they are discouraged; but spiritual builders must be spiritual soldiers, holding the promise in one hand, and the weapon in the other; the word in one hand and the sword in the other; the truth in one hand, and the armour of proof in the other. Faith, without trouble or fighting, is a suspicious faith; for true faith is a fighting, wrestling faith; and this is the faith that is here commended, as it is also, Rev. iii. 10. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee in the hour of temptation. Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith," Rev. ii. 13.

As to the denying of faith, there are four degrees of it. (1.) When men are silent through fear, unable to say, with Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." (2.) When men dissemble as Peter, "I know not what thou sayest." (3.) When they halt between two opinions, like these in the days of Ahab, that halted between God and Baal. (4.) When they expressly deny the faith, as Peter denied Christ, "I know not the man;" and am not upon that side of the house, nor of that party. Thus Christ is many times wounded in the house of his friends; sometimes by a traiterous Judas, sometimes by a timorous Peter. However, the denial of the faith goes on by such degrees as these; every one of them draws on another; silence, through fear, draws on dissimulation; dissimulation draws on a halting between two, as it were, in a demurring what to do; and this halting draws on denying of the faith expressly; for, apostacy is a slippery precipice; therefore men

should beware of the least beginning, and of the least shifting of the profession of the faith, when called thereunto.

2dly, What this stability in the faith supposes? Surely it supposes people's being once in the faith ; as Paul designs Timothy, his son in the faith, 1 Tim. i. 2 ; for, till once people be in the faith, they can never be established in the faith, as the word is, Col. ii. 7. No more than a tree can be firmly rooted in the earth, that was never truly planted into it. Stability in the faith then, supposes a being in the faith ; and that as it respects either the word of faith, the grace of faith, the obedience of faith, or the profession of faith.

True stability in the faith supposes, 1. That we know the word of faith. 2. That we have the grace of faith. 3. That we make a profession of faith. 4. That we yield the obedience of faith.

1. That we know the word of faith, or the doctrine of faith, or truth ; for a man can never be stable in the faith which he is ignorant of. If ever we will be established in scriptural principles, we must be acquainted with the scriptures, the word of God, and know the truth as it is in Jesus ; and that not only a head-knowledge, but a heart-knowledge, that it may be a heart-establishment in the faith ; this is called a receiving the faith in love, or a receiving the love of the truth, 2 Thes. ii. 19. Knowledge and affection should grow together ; for these people are most prone to error, who gain knowledge of truth, without affection to it ; " Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. For this cause God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie ; that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

2. It supposes that we have the grace of faith ; for, stability in the faith, being an establishment in the grace of faith, as well as in the word or doctrine of faith, it must presuppose, that a man has the grace of faith, otherwise he cannot sit still, or be stable in it ; no more than one can be said to sit still who has never sat down ; true stability then supposes, that a man hath once been made to sit down and rest upon Christ as his righteousness and strength. We are called, 1 Peter v. 9, to resist the devil, stedfast in the faith ; and that not only by a stedfast adherence to that word of faith, which was the weapon Christ made use of against the devil, when he quoted scripture to him, he refuted him by scripture ; and this sword of the

Spirit, which is the word of God, is the weapon by which we are to resist every temptation to sin ; but also, by a stedfast acting and exercising of the grace of faith, I mean, true justifying faith ; because this weapon of the word of faith cannot be used but by the grace of faith ; for, to make use of the word of faith, without the grace of faith, is to do no more than the devil and his instruments can do, who will quote scripture as well as we ; but to wield that weapon with the arm of faith, is what none but true believers, through grace, can do.

3. It supposes that we make profession of the faith ; why so ? Because stability in the faith, is a holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering, Heb. x. 23. They cannot be said to hold fast the profession thereof, who never had a profession, and never made a profession. Men may be professors, indeed, that are not true believers ; but all true believers must be professors, and ought to be professors, and hold fast their profession, in the worst times, without being ashamed of Christ, or his cause ; as Paul, who was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, though opposed by the great, and wise, and learned of his day. Again,

4. It supposes that we yield the obedience of faith ; of which we read, Rom. xvi. 26. This is a practical profession, or confession of Christ. There may be a verbal profession with the mouth, without a practical profession with the life ; both should go together ; we ought to confess Christ with the mouth, Rom. x. 10, without being ashamed to acknowledge our Master ; and we ought to discover the sincerity of our profession by the whole tract of our conversation. This obedience of faith or practical profession, is either active or passive ; active profession is when our lives and manners do speak and confess Christ, and evidence that we are not of these that profess to know him, but in works deny him.—A passive profession is when we are ready to seal with our sufferings and blood, what we profess with our mouths and actions ; this is the profession of martyrs, “ To whom it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,” Phil. i. 29. And here you see what is the obedience of faith, both active and passive. Now, true stability herein, supposes a man's entering upon this obedience ; for, how shall he be stable in it, who never began to yield it ? Stability in the faith then being a stability in the doctrine of faith, in the grace of faith, in the profession of faith, and in the obedience of faith ; it supposes a man's knowing and understanding

the faith, which we ought to be established in ; believing what he understands ; professing what he believes ; and practising what he professes ; and, indeed, faith not held in practice, will soon be denied in profession, when the trial comes.

3dly, The next particular proposed here was, What this stability in the faith includes. It includes two things, 1. An adherence to the faith. 2. A perseverance in it.

1. A stedfast adherence to the faith, to the word of faith, the grace of faith, the profession of faith, and the obedience of faith ; this adherence to, or sitting still upon the sure foundation, is called a being rooted and built up in Christ, Col. ii. 6, 7. It is not enough that we receive Christ Jesus the Lord, but we must walk in him, and be rooted and built up in him, by a daily improving of him. It is a fixed adherence to him notwithstanding all fears, Psalm cxii. 7, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings ; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord ; his heart is established, he shall not be afraid, &c." Notwithstanding all attacks of the enemy, and defeats by them. Though a believer be beat down, yet by faith he rises, and keeps his ground ; "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy ; for, though I fall, I shall rise," Micah vii. 8. He that kills his enemy at the first blow, shows himself valiant ; but so does he also show a great deal of valour, who being often knocked down and wounded, yet rises again and stands to it. Though the field be many times doubtful between faith and fear, between faith and doubting, yet faith overcomes by adhering to Christ, notwithstanding difficulties in the way ; thus Abraham staggered not, but was fixed in his persuasion of the promise, being nothing moved by contrary appearances, but against hope believed in hope ; overlooking both the deadness of his own body, and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

2. It includes constant perseverance in the faith ; for, "He that endures to the end shall be saved." They that cast away their confidence entirely, were never built upon Christ ; and that say, "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer ?" This is not to sit still, but to weary and withdraw from Christ. A true believer may be weary of his sins, and weary of his life, but he will never be weary of his faith ; he takes up Job's resolution, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." He buys the truth, and will never sell it ; he buys it at any rate, and will sell it at no rate ; but they that buy truth at an easy rate, no wonder that they sell it at an easy rate ; he

that buys it for the sake of the world, will sell it for the sake of the world ; he that buys it for a lust, will sell it for a lust.

There are two things we are to adhere to, and persevere in, which yet the most part of people think needless ; and these are, 1. The present truth ; and, 2. The least truth.

(1.) The present truth is what we are always to adhere to, and persevere in, 2 Pet. i. 12. There the apostle speaks of being established in the present truth. If a man do not adhere to the truth, that is at present in controversy in his day, he will adhere to no truth at all. The best evidence of integrity is freedom from the present corruptions of the times and place we live in ; and adherence to the present opposed truth, so as to swim against the stream when it is strong. Some think, what need we trouble our heads with a truth that is controverted among great and learned men? Really, sirs, there is hardly one fundamental truth in religion, but what has been controverted by the devil and his instruments ; and if we will not cleave to opposed and controverted truth, we must renounce the truth altogether. Nay, the more Christ and his truths are opposed, the more should we stand firm for him and it.

(2.) The least truth is what we are to adhere to, and persevere in, if we would be stable in the faith ; he that is content to part with a hoove, is content to part with the whole of religion ; as the true obeyer has a respect to all God's commandments, so the true believer has a respect to all his truths. The least truth of God is a beam from the infinite Truth ; and the man that will not adhere to the least truth of Christ, will adhere to no truth in the day of trial for the truth.

4thly, The fourth thing here proposed was, What this stability in the faith excludes? To this we reply, That, among other things, it excludes these eight particulars following.

1. It excludes a fainting at the sight of the cross, Prov. ii. 10. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." Sometimes the distant view of the cross is more terrible than when it is at hand ; and some have fainted at the distant view of it, that have rejoiced at the presence of it. Peter was not so near the cross, when only his Master was tried before the council, but he had a distant prospect of it, and he fainted and fell by a silly maid challenging him ; but when he came to be before the council himself, instead of fainting, you see what boldness he had, Acts v. 29, how he and the rest of the apostles departed from the council, rejoicing that they

were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. The nearer the cross of Christ is viewed, the sweeter it is ; and the nearer we come to it, the lighter. However, this fainting at the sight of the cross, is excluded by this stability : the more stable, the less fainting.

2. This stability in the faith excludes a doubtfulness and hesitation about the truth, that we stand up for, and adhere to, in a time of trial, Rom. xv. 5. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." A man will never firmly adhere to, or suffer for that, which he is not fully persuaded is a truth. I defy you to be a cleanly sufferer for the cause of Christ, in a day of Scotland's defection, unless you can say, that you are really persuaded, that the covenanted Reformation, doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland, is the work of God, and founded on the word of God, and you have no doubt in your heart to the contrary.

3. This stability in the faith excludes a presumptuous persuasion. We read of some presumptuous believers, John ii. 23, to whom Christ would not commit himself, because he knew them to be but rotten at the heart. Many have a faith that has neither God for its Father, nor the scriptures for its mother ; it is a bastard that has neither true father nor mother. Christ will not commit himself to such believers ; they persuade themselves that they trust in Christ, but he knows them, that they cannot be trusted, and that they will not be trusty to him, or his cause.

4. This stability in the faith excludes wavering, and being tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, Eph. iv. 14. Some will have one religion this year, and another the next ; one religion with this company, and another with that company. It is true, the faith of believers may be shaken by temptations from the devil and his instruments, but yet it is not broken nor banished ; he maintains a high veneration for the truth which he hears brangled, opposed, and borne down, and yet cannot sufficiently defend, like the woman that said, "Though I cannot dispute for Christ, yet I can burn for him." But if your religion changes with the wind of temptation, or turns with the tide of the times, it is not worth a farthing.

5. This stability in the faith excludes doubleness of mind and tongue, James i. 8. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Many have a double mind, a double face, a double tongue ;

and when this doubleness gets in among God's people, it mars this stability. Peter learned a little of this doubleness and dissimulation, for which Paul took him to task, Gal. ii. 13. Some are expert in this trade of dissembling, that they may please every party; but their prudence will be their plague, who are not straight and upright for God, to the utmost of their power and knowledge; their policy will never be a cloak for their perjury, who upon prudential considerations, desert the cause of Christ.

6. This stability in the faith excludes all sinful compliances with the courses of the times. To go further than conscience will allow, is to make shipwreck of faith, and a good conscience, 1 Tim. i. 19. Carnal reason says, Hold with the times, comply with the measures of the majority, be what it will; it is dangerous to do otherwise: but God says, Hold faith and a good conscience, and then you are safe; "He that walks uprightly, walks safely."

7. This stability in the faith excludes sinful silence, when the cause and interest of Christ requires our testimony; "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace," says the prophet, Isa. lxxvii. 1. The watchmen upon her walls are ordered not to hold their peace, but to cry aloud and not spare. There are some scriptures that many are like to break their necks upon in our days, and that is one among the rest, Amos v. 13. "The prudent shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time." Why then, say some, in their practice, we should not speak a word for truth, let truth be never so much opposed; nor speak a word against any acts of Assembly, let them be never so contrary to scripture and covenants both. But God never warranted any, according to their call, capacity, and station, so to keep silence as not to speak against the evils and errors of the times: this were inconsistent to his solemn orders to his watchmen, to give faithful warning to people, as they would not be guilty of their blood. And if God has said, he will send a sword to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, I think, we particularly, who preach the gospel unto you, would not be faithful if we did not warn you that Scotland is in danger of God's wrath, as long as there is any standing acts of the national church, contradictory to, and inconsistent with the National Covenant; nor will ever any wrested scripture be a sufficient cloak to cover us from the guilt of sinful silence.

8. This stability in the faith excludes all sinful debates and disputings about known truths. We read, 1 Tim. iii. 5, of perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth: men that

will bring known truths to be matter of debate, will never be stable ; if the truth come not to be a matter beyond debate, and beyond dispute with them. Alas ! all the precious truths of God, even some that were never debated in our land, are, now-a-days, become debatable points. It was never a point of debate, or debated in our reforming times, that ministers were to be settled by the call and consent of the people, but now it is turned to a debatable point, though we have the strongest arguments in scripture for it. In Acts i. 23, we have an argument for it drawn from the greater to the less, in the whole church, or people's being called to choose the apostle, as far as was consistent with his being immediately chosen of God, as the office required ; for, the people were to choose the two, out of which God was to choose one : and if they had such an hand in the choice of the extraordinary officer, much more ought they to have in the ordinary. In Acts vi. 3, we have an argument from the less to the greater, in the choosing of deacons ; as the highest officers, the apostles were not chosen of God, without the people, in the former example ; so here the lowest officer could not be chosen by the apostles themselves, but by the people ; though one might think the apostles were as good judges : and if the people must choose these that take care of their alms or charity, much more concern have they in choosing such as take care of their souls.—In Acts xiv. 23, we have a plain argument from the example, the apostles ordained “ presbyters by the suffrage of the people, as it is well known the word *CHEIROTONESANTES*, signifies¹.—And James ii. from the beginning, we have these arguments confirmed by the apostle, discharging all respect, in spiritual matters, to the rich man with the gold ring and the gay clothing ; intimating, that no temporal wealth or heritage can entitle them to any spiritual privilege, no more than an earthly estate can entitle a man to heaven ; and consequently, no

(1) The word *Cheirotonesantes* in our version, is but half translated ; and made to run thus ; “ And when they had ORDAINED them elders in every church.” But according to Erasmus, who renders it *CUM SUFFRAGIIS CREASSENT*, and Beza, Pasor, &c. who have it, *PER SUFFRAGIA CREASSENT*, it should run thus, “ When they had, by *SUFFRAGES*, appointed to them elders in every church.” All the old English Translations have it so ; and it was retained by our last translators, until the version was committed by K. James to some of the English bishops to be revised, who vitiate this, as well as thirteen other passages of the New Testament, to make them favour the Church of England ! The word here is not *Cheirothesia* which signifies the action of ministers in ordaining ; but it is *Cheirotonia* which is expressive of the people's act in electing pastors by elevation or lifting up the hand, as was the custom at that time. In this sense the apostle uses it, 2 Cor. viii. 19

heritor of this earth, as such, has any right above others to choose pastors to any congregation, which is a spiritual privilege relating to immortal souls; ministers themselves have no title to be lords over the consciences of men, far less have they power, by any act whatsoever, to make temporal heritors, or earthly superiors, lords over God's heritage. But for as clear as this is in scripture, and though it be one of the covenanted principles, yet it is turned now to a debatable point.¹

Again, it is now turned a debatable question, whether Christ be the supreme God, the most high God, though yet in scripture all the great names of God, all the glorious attributes of God, all the wonderful works of God, and all the worship due only to God be ascribed to him.² It is now a debatable point, whether there be any necessity for divine supernatural revelation; whether the light of nature be not sufficient, without the scripture, to salvation.³ In a word, the greatest points in religion are turned debatable points, and among the rest, whether our national covenants be binding upon us.⁴

Well, I say, stability in the faith excludes all sinful debating about known truths: and when matters of faith are turned to debatable questions, it is a clear demonstration of the instability of the times. If we would sit still, and be stable Christians, we are to lay up known truths in our bosom, as matters beyond debate; the de-

(1) This reasoning has a peculiar respect to the Act of Parliament, 1710, restoring Patronage, and the Act of Assembly, 1732, in vesting heritors and elders with the power of election of ministers.

(2) Alluding to the Process concerning Professor Simpson, briefly laid open, vol. ii. and vol. iv.

(3) About this time the principles of infidelity were greatly upon the increase; and several of the younger clergy but too justly suspected as favourers of Deistical tenets. Mr. Campbell, professor of ecclesiastical history in St. Andrews, openly published to the world a system of very pernicious principles; and amongst others, "That the laws of nature are, in themselves, a certain and sufficient rule to direct rational minds to happiness; and that the observing "these laws is the great mean and instrument of our real and lasting felicity." And the author of "The Assembly's Catechism Revised, &c.," saps all the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and strikes at the whole scheme of divine revelation, contained in the said Catechism. And so insolent were some upon this point, that a little after this, one Mr. Nimmo, student in divinity, in a public discourse in the divinity-hall of Edinburgh, made a blasphemous attack upon the whole of divine revelation.

(4) The perpetual binding obligation of these covenants have been asserted by many writers; particularly by Mr. Shields, in his *Hind let Loose*, p. 514, 520, and Mr. Brown in his *Apologetical Relation*, p. 327, 414.

bating of known truths is a sin as pernicious as committing of known sins, and omitting of known duty, or neglecting of known commands. Thus we see what this stability in the faith includes. The mentioning of these things plainly show, that it is our strength to sit still, and to be stable and fixed in the faith; there is little safety where there is little stability.

5thly, The next thing proposed upon this head was, What this stability in the faith infers. And I shall consider this question, 1. With respect to the object. 2. With reference to the exercise of this stability in the faith. The first question will relate to what we are to be stable in, when stable in the faith? And the second to this, How we should be established?

[1.] What this stability infers, with reference to the object? And here we shall enumerate the following ten particulars on this point.

1. Stability in the faith infers, with reference to the object, wherein we are to be stable, and stability in respect of our principles: and hence we are called to hold faith and a good conscience, 1 Tim. i. 19, these two make up a right principle, namely, faith and a good conscience. The object of a right principle is the truth, which is the object of faith. The subject of a right principle is conscience, and that a good conscience, a sanctified conscience; these two must be joined together, "Hold faith and a good conscience." Error is seldom accompanied with holiness; faith and conscience go well together; many join them very profanely, by swearing by them; few join them religiously, and hold them fast together. The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, 1 Tim. iv. 1. We do not know what is coming upon us; but it may be that these truths we now allow, and approve of, we may come to be ashamed of, as some are at this day of our ancient covenanted principles.

2. Stability in the faith infers, stability in respect of the promises. We see David taking hold of the promise, Psal. lx. 6. "God has spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice:" he sees the mercy, truth, and holiness of God are pledged for making out the promise. Now, we ought to be stable in the faith thereof; many times we take the promise, and upon the first temptation we cast it away; but we are to hold the promise as we would do our life, saying, "Lord, I hope in thy word; Lord, remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope." We are to expect good upon the head of the promise.

3. Stability in the faith infers, stability in respect of the relations wherein we stand to God, and he to us ; the church maintains the faith of this, Song ii. 6, " My Beloved is mine, and I am his." And again, Song vii. 10, " I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." She says it backward and forward ; He is mine, and I am his ; and again, I am his, and he is mine ; and, indeed, stability in the faith of this, is requisite when enemies say, " Where is thy God ?" And what claim have you to him more than others ?

4. Stability in the faith infers, stability in duty, and particularly in the duty of the times, and in present duty, that God calls to in his present dispensations ; as it is said of the children of Issachar, that they had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do, 1 Chron. xii. 32. It may be said of many of us, what Christ said of the Pharisees, Mat. xvi. 3, that they could discern the face of the sky, but could not discern the signs of the times. We have skill of many things, but no skill of present duty ; but he that is established in the knowledge of present duty, though there should be never so many dangers and hazards in the way, he will venture upon duty, and tread upon the neck of hazard. See John xi. 7, 8, " Jesus said unto the disciples, Let us go into Judea." Again, " His disciples answered, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again ? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day, and while a man walks in the day he stumbles not, because he seeth the light." " I have," might he say, " twelve hours to walk in, and they are not yet ended ; there is no fear of hazard till my day be done ;" let not present duty be neglected, from the prospect of hazard. Danger hath many times more bulk in our eye than duty ; but, if we follow Christ, duty will be more bulky in our eye than danger.

5. Stability in the faith infers, stability in our resolution to follow duty. Thus Joshua, chap. xxiv. 14, 15, when he is dealing with Israel, to whom he had been a leader, and endeavouring to confirm them in their resolution to serve the Lord : " Choose ye," says he, " whether you will serve the gods on this side of the flood, or the gods on the other side of the flood ; but as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." " Lay your hand to your heart," might he say, " and choose you whom you will serve ; but I am resolute, I will serve the Lord." Such a stability David professes : " I have sworn, and I will perform, that I will keep thy righteous judgments."

6. Stability in the faith infers, stability in our courage, and boldness to confess Christ before the world, when others deny him; it is an awful word, Mat. x. 32, 33, "whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him also will I deny before my Father who is in heaven." It is recorded to the praise of Daniel, that when he was forbidden to pray to God, he is not daunted, but will openly worship him with his windows open toward Jerusalem, when a royal statute and decree was emitted, that whosoever should ask a petition of any god or man, for thirty days, save of king Darius, he should be cast into the lions' den; Daniel worshipped God in all the solemn circumstances he had formerly done. Some might have thought he might have worshipped and kept his window close, without exposing himself by such a circumstance; but when even the circumstances of a testimony and confession tends to glorify God, and the failing even in circumstances would tend to dishonour God, and gratify the enemy, they must be adhered unto. Hence say some, "He that cannot be a circumstantial confessor, will never be a martyr."

7. Stability in the faith infers, stability in our war against sin, and in our old and new victories we have obtained over our idols and lusts, that we lose not that which we have wrought, 2 John 8, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not that which we have gained," as the word is in the margin. May we not say many times, What we gained in the forenoon, we lose in the afternoon; what victory over sin we have gained in the evening, we have lost in the morning; or, what we have gained in the morning, we lose in the evening. Perhaps you have got some ground upon your worldly-mindedness, some time ago; some ground upon your passion, some ground upon your lusts; but, alas! now all is gone. What need have we to look to ourselves, that we be stable in our war against corruption, stedfast in maintaining what victories we have got over our lusts.

8. Stability in the faith infers, stability in our spiritual frame, as far as possible. It is true, this is the most changeable thing in the world; who can speak of a communion frame continuing eight days? yea, or eight hours? It is a very rare thing; yet this ought to be studied, and means of maintaining a spiritual frame followed, particularly in the intervals of duty, not only by spiritual conversation, but also spiritual ejaculations towards heaven: "Pray

without ceasing," says the apostle; that is, according to some, endeavour still to maintain a praying frame.

9. Stability in the faith infers, stability in spiritual experience and experimental knowledge. This helps to courage, in unstable and dangerous times. Paul, speaking of his sufferings, says, "Nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know in whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him," 2 Tim. i. 12. "I know what dealings I have had with him, and what affairs I have committed to his trust; I know what meetings I have had with him, may a believer say, what Bethel visits I have had from him, and what Peniel views I have had of him." Trying times may shake your experiences, and death will try them, and perhaps bring down twenty of them to one or two; we need to be stable and well established therein.

10. Stability in the faith infers, stability in all the other graces of the Spirit. It infers stability in our love and affection to Christ and his truth. The church of Ephesus is reproved because she fell from her first love, Rev. ii. 4. O where is that love that once you had to Christ and his way? But were we stedfast in the faith, we would be stedfast in our affections to Christ and his cause. It infers stability in our joy, so as to rejoice in Christ Jesus: "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will be glad in the God of my salvation." It infers stability in our hope: "Continuing in the faith, grounded and settled, so as not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel," Col. i. 23. What the anchor is to the ship, that is hope to the soul: "Entering within the vail, and having respect to the recompence of reward," with Moses; living in expectation of the heavenly Canaan; and in this view preferring a share with the suffering Israelites before all the riches of Egypt. It infers stability in our zeal; many are like Gallio, who care for none of these things, whether God or Baal prevail, whether Dagon or the ark be set up; whatever religion is in vogue they set up for, being, like Reuben, "unstable as water, and cannot excel;" but stability in our zeal for God, and his interest, is duty at all times, especially in times of greatest hazard; though it should cost us the loss of our lives as well as our livelihood, it will be gain at last. Thus much of the object of our stability, or what we are to be established in.

(2.) What this stability infers, with reference to the exercise of this stability, or the duty of stedfastness.

1. This duty of stability infers and carries along with it grace in the heart, as the predominant settler and establisher of the soul, Heb. xiii. 9, "It is a good thing to have the heart established with grace." Grace must be predominant in that exercise, in settling the heart in the day of trouble and temptation. Where there is little grace, there is much ebbing and flowing in religion.

2. This duty of stability infers an immoveable motion, a constant moving, yet always immoveable, 1 Cor. xv. 58, "Be stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;" the work signifies ever moving, and yet never moving; that is, ever moving within the circle of duty that God has cast for him, but never moving over God's bounds.

3. This duty of stability infers, a continual watchfulness: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith. Let him that thinks he standeth, take heed lest he fall." We ought to watch unto prayer, and watch unto the practice of known truth; every fresh discovery of truth quickening to the fresh practice of it; we ought to watch against sin, and particularly against the sin of a backsliding time, wherein perjury is varnished over with the name of prudence. See Isaiah li. 20, 21.

4. This duty of stability infers and carries with it, daily renewed actings of faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ; 1 Peter ii. 4, "To whom coming, as to a living stone; ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." It is a new coming to Christ that is there spoken of, the stable Christian every day fastens new grips, and takes faster hold of Christ, lest the former grip and former hold should slip.

5. This stability infers, a daily sucking in the sap of the scriptures, in order to spiritual growth and spiritual strength; 1 Peter ii. 3, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The steady Christian will be daily gathering a stock of scriptures and a treasure of truths into his bosom, that when the devil sets his cannon of temptation against him, he may be ready to bring out a cannon of scripture quotations out of his bosom, as Christ himself did, Matth. iv. 3, 11, and thereby defeat the devil, and discomfit the strong man.

6. This duty of stability infers, a patient waiting for the appointed time of the promise being accomplished; Hab. ii. 3, "The vision is for an appointed time; but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come."

The Lord many times reserves some precious word of promise to be made out to his friends, when they come to some sad hour of trial and temptation : " Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will keep thee from the hour of temptation," Rev. iii. 10. Until the dark hour come, perhaps he will not show himself. God promises to deliver Israel out of Egypt, Exodus iii. 8 ; but, behold the Lord keeps the out-making of the promise to a Red Sea, and there he lets it drop into their cup : " The Egyptians whom you have seen to day, you shall see them again no more for ever," Exodus xiv. 13. Think not strange, if some sweet promise be reserved to a Red Sea that is before you : Israel had never known the sweetness of the promise, if a Red Sea had not made it out. God has wonderful ways of making out his word through fire and water.

7. This duty of stability infers, a continual warfare, and fighting the good fight of faith, putting on, and keeping on, the spiritual armour ; Eph. vi. 11, 12, " And above all, taking the shield of faith, whereby we quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." When the devil is like to set all the house in a flame with his fiery darts, we are as fast to bring water from the word of God, and throw it upon the fire to quench it. Yea, not only has faith the waters of the sanctuary to cast upon the flames, but also the blood of the covenant, the blood of Christ, to extinguish the fire : " We overcome by the blood of the Lamb." Why, the believer can go where the tempter cannot approach, and that is to the holiest by the blood of Jesus ; or to God, through Jesus Christ, to bring strength from on high.

8. This duty of stability in the faith infers, a living upon the things unseen, till we get the things that do appear ; " We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen ; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 18. How did Moses bear up, when he choose affliction with the people of God ? Why, he endured as seeing him who is invisible, Heb. xi. 27. Visible things bulk most with us but they are the most changeable things ; therefore, they are best off in trying times, amidst all outward changes, who look most at the things that are not seen, and which are eternal and unchangeable.

7. This duty of stability infers, especially in perilous times, a taking up the cross, and yet leaving the weight of it upon Christ.

The cross of Christ is like the yoke of Christ, of which he says, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light," Mat. xi. 30. We are not to take it up, in order to bear the weight and burden of it, but only to take it up, and lay the weight of it upon Christ himself, who so orders us, saying, "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee," Psalm lv. 22. Our Lord never requires us to lift a burden, but with a design we should lay it upon his own shoulders, who is the chief burden-bearer. When he calls us to a warfare, it is upon his own charges ; therefore, if we have any faith, we need not be afraid of the cross of Christ ; it is rather matter of joy ; "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations," James i. 2. It is matter of gloriation ; "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," Gal. vi. 14. "We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope," Rom. v. 3.

10. This duty of stability in the faith, in perilous times, infers a continuance in the faith in times of trouble ; "If ye continue in my word," says Christ, "then are ye my disciples indeed ; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John viii. 31, 32. Who will be the freest men in trying times ? Even the strictest man, who continues most firmly in the faith. There is a fourfold work of faith in this continuing exercise of it in a day of trouble.

(1.) It is the work of established faith to take a new feast upon an old experience. The man comes sometimes to a wilderness where there is nothing to be gotten but hunger and want, and then sits down and searches around to find something to support him, and presently recollects what he has formerly enjoyed, and so falls upon a five or six-year-old experience, a twenty or thirty-year-old experience, and takes a feast upon it, saying, "For all that is come and gone, 'I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High : I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and from the hill Mizar. I will remember the works of the Lord ; surely I will remember thy wonders of old,' " Psalm xlii. 6, lxxvii. 11. It is the work of faith, in the day of trouble, to take a new meal upon an old promise, as Jacob did ; Gen. xxxii. 12, "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good ;" and now, "Remember the word on which thou causedst me to hope."

(2.) It is the work of established faith, in times of trouble, to sit down upon the hill of difficulties and straits, and sing that plea-

sant song, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit be found in the vine, &c. ; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of my salvation. Though my house be not so with God ;" though my heart be not so with God as I could wish, "yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure ; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire."

(3.) It is the work of established faith, in a day of trouble and hiding, sometimes to make use of some common relations to God as an argument for faith, till it get a more special relation to feed upon. Psalm cxix. 73—"Thy hands have made and fashioned me ; Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments. Thy hands have made and fashioned me." Well, may not any reprobate wretch in the world say the same thing? True ; but they cannot make such an argument of it, "Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments." Psalm xxii. 9, 10—"Thou art he that took me out of the womb." Well, what of that? It follows in the next verse, "Thou art my God from my mother's belly." Faith can take an argument from a general relation, till it get a more special relation to plead upon.

(4.) It is the work of faith to draw encouragements from discouragements : What more discouraging than to be called a dog? Matth. xv. 27, yet the poor woman draws encouragements out of it : "Truth, Lord ; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Hezekiah draws encouragement even from oppression ; Isa. xxxviii. 14. "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." David draws encouragement from the greatest of his sins, Psalm xxv. 2. "For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." He draws an argument from his weakness, Psalm vi. 2. "Have mercy upon me, for I am weak." And sometimes from his poverty and necessity, Psalm xl. 17. "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me." Established faith will, from guilt, draw an argument for pardon ; from pollution, an argument for purification ; from sickness, an argument for healing, &c.

(5.) It is the work of established faith to dispute and deny the conclusions of unbelief, Psalm lxxxvii. 7, 8, 9. The conclusions of unbelief are, "The Lord will cast off ; the Lord will be favourable no more ; his mercy is clean gone ; his promise fails ; he has forgotten to be gracious ; he has in anger shut up his tender mercy : " but faith first disputes these conclusions, saying, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? will he be favourable no more? is his mercy clean

gone? doth his promise fail for evermore? has he forgotten to be gracious? has he in anger shut up his tender mercy?" It calls these conclusions into debate, disputing and questioning them, and then denies them in the following verse: "I said, this is my infirmity; I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High; I will remember the works of the Lord, and his wonders of old." And when ever faith comes to deny the conclusion of unbelief, then it is at the head of the mount, as it were, at the top of the hill and a song of triumph in its mouth; "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High, and his works and wonders of old."

(6.) It is the work of established faith, in a day of the trial of faith, to recover and restore the soul, when temptation has thrown it down into the mire. David fell before the temptation that was drawn from the prosperity of the wicked, and adversity of the godly, Psalm lxx. and says, verse 13. "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency; for I am plagued all day long." Well, but whenever he went to the sanctuary of God by faith, then he recovers himself and says, "So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee: nevertheless, I am continually with thee: thou holdest me by my right hand; thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me into thy glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in the earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Thus we see what this stability in the faith infers and carries along with it. I now proceed to the next general head.

III. To show that this stability and establishment in the faith, is people's strength and safety in perilous times. For opening this head, I shall consider, 1. The evil and disadvantage of Instability. 2. The good and advantage of Stability in the faith.

1st, The evil and disadvantage of Instability and unstedfastness appears in these particulars.

1. Instability in the faith is hateful to God, who says, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38. It provokes God to reject people, and to spew them out of his mouth. And why so? Because,

2. Instability in the faith is a greatly aggravated sin; it is a sin against knowledge; and the servant who knows his master's will, and does it not is to be beaten with double stripes. It is a sin

against profession and engagements, whither national or personal, in baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is a sin against great love and mercy.

3. Instability in the faith has fearful idolatry wrapt up in it. When, by unbelief, we depart from the fountain of living waters, we turn to earthen cisterns, which can hold no water.

4. Instability in the faith is the greatest reproach ; it is a leaving of God, even after experience : few have a profession of faith, but have tasted something of the sweetness of God's ways ; and now, to prefer sin and lusts, what a reproach is cast upon God.

5. Instability in the faith is worse than profaneness, 2 Peter ii. 21, 22, " 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." Instability being the porch of apostacy, where this is total, it is worse than profanity ; for it is a greater sin to renounce Christ, than to refuse him.

6. Instability provokes God to write a bill of divorce against a people ; it is a sin that separates between God and them : it is just with God to cast them off, when they cast him off. And, woe to a people when God departs from them.

2dly, The next thing was to speak of the good and advantage of stability and establishment in the faith ; and therein it will appear, that it is a church or people's strength to sit still, and abide in the faith. The advantage of stability in the faith may appear in the following particulars :—

1. Establishment in the faith puts a man in capacity to act for God ; Isa. xi. 31, " They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength." And again, " They that know their God, shall be strong and do exploits," Dan. xi. 32. They have strength to do for Christ : if we abide in Christ, by faith, then we bring forth fruit to the praise of God.

2. Stability in the faith puts a man in case to suffer for Christ, and to continue with him in his temptation ; and thereby the Christian is made sure of Christ's legacy ; " Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom." This legacy is secured by the death of the Testator, Luke xxii. 28. The men of the world think they have a poor bargain, who venture all for Christ ; but let me see where there is such a noble bargain, and so up-making for time and eternity.

3. Stability in the faith puts a man in case to die for Christ, if

he be called to it; Acts xxii. 13, "What mean ye to weep, and break mine heart? I am content not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of Jesus." His friends were weeping because he was going up to Jerusalem, where bonds and imprisonments were abiding him; but says he, "I am content not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." I value my life as well as you do; but when my life, and the Lord of life comes in competition, my life shall go, though I had a thousand lives.

4. Stability in the faith puts a man in case to defeat the devil; for, by faith, we quench his fiery darts, and resist him stedfastly in the faith. Satan sought to winnow Peter, but Christ prayed for him, and that his faith might not fail. This says, the devil has a sieve wherein he sifts and winnows, and winnows both ministers and people; and we may well affirm, that Satan has the ministers and Christians of Scotland now in a sieve, and he is sifting and riddling them; and it is like, more chaff than good corn will be found among us; but as for these that are stable in the faith, Satan loses his pains and his profit with them; for they will be able to overcome, by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony.

5. Stability in the faith makes a man reach the design both of the word and rod: it is the end of both to establish us in the faith; wherefore comes the word to us, but that we may believe and be strong in the faith? Wherefore comes the rod, but that by the trial of faith it may be strengthened and confirmed? So that upon a man that is established in the faith, both word and rod have got their errand; none of them are in vain.

6. Stability in the faith is an honourable duty and exercise; for, faith is the crown, and steadfastness therein is a keeping of the crown. Rev. iii. 11—"Behold, I come quickly; hold fast what thou hast, that no man take thy crown;" and he lays no other burden upon us but this, "Hold fast till I come"—Rev. ii. 24, 25.

7. Stability in the faith proves a man to be a true disciple, John viii. 31, 32. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Men may reckon themselves free by human laws and acts, though yet they abide not in the truth; but they that know the truth, and abide in it, are free by an act of the court of heaven.

8. Stability in the faith influences our growth in every grace; we will never add grace to grace, experience to experience, and faith

to faith, unless we be stable in the faith: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." When we are steadfast and immoveable, then we are always abounding in the work of the Lord. Except we ply the oars close, we will go down the stream.

9. Stability in the faith evidences sincerity and uprightness of heart, even as instability evidences hypocrisy, Psalm xxvii. 37. "Their heart was not right with God, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Their unstedfastness discovered that their heart was not right with God. Now, if you be steady and stable in the faith, it will discover that your heart was right with God, and that is the great matter.

10. Stability in the faith makes a man useful in his generation; though he were alone, yet he is useful, as Noah, of whom God says, Gen. vii. 1. "Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark, for thee only have I found righteous before me in this generation." How useful was he to the preservation of a remnant! Elijah was alone as a prophet; and how useful was he in his day! He is called the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And though a man that is stable in the faith were of no other use, but to give his testimony for God, exonerate himself in his day, it is a matter of consequence to the generation, both past, present, and to come.

We need, sirs, at this day, to exonerate ourselves at the hands of our forefathers, who are gone; at the hands of our children, who are living; and at the hands of our posterity that are to come. O sirs, it is a question we should pose ourselves with, Are we faithful to our fathers that went before us? Are we faithful to these that are cotemporary with us? and, Are we faithful to these that are following after us, when we ourselves are rotten in the dust? What are we doing, to exonerate ourselves at the hand of our forefathers, who travailed night and day to get a covenanted work of Reformation brought to the pattern of God's word, and committed it to us, having left it whole and sound at our doors? Alas! how is this work marred and defaced among our hands! How has the generation betrayed the trust our fathers committed to us? What are we doing to exonerate ourselves at the hand of the present generation? Are we contending for the faith, and for the cause of Christ, against those that are betraying it? and, What are we doing to exonerate ourselves at the hands of our posterity? Are we transmitting Reformation-work whole and sound to them? or, rather, Are

we not transmitting to them poison, instead of wholesome food ; trash, instead of truth ; lumber and dross, instead of silver and gold ; and counterfeit, instead of good coin ?

In a word, stability in the faith is our strength and safety, because it is God himself, Christ himself, that is our strength and safety ; he is the strength of Israel, and therefore our strength lies in sitting still, and sitting near to him ; our strength lies not in the act of faith, otherwise it were enough to have once sat down upon this foundation ; but it lies in the object and ground of faith, our Lord Jesus Christ ; the Lord our righteousness and strength, on which alone true faith doth rest and sit still : when we stay, by faith in the midst of our strong tower, we are safe, because the strong tower is our safety : the strength of faith is God himself in Christ : therefore, to abide in him, to sit still and rest on him alone, is our strength. When a man runs to, and rests upon an impregnable rock, where he is safe from the enemy, we do not mean that it is his act of resting there that secures him, but the rock on which he rests ; yet we say, it is his strength to sit still upon the rock, because the rock is his strength ; so it is our strength to sit still on the Rock of ages, because Christ, the Rock of ages, is our strength ; and when by unbelief, we depart from him, then we desert our strength.

IV. The next thing was the application. All the application I offer at the time is in a few Inferences.

1. If it be so, as has been said, hence see, what to think of these who are so far from being stedfast in the faith, that they are stedfast in a course of sin ; instead of sitting still upon the Rock of ages, they are sitting still upon sandy foundations that will sink with them ; they sit still in their sins, and sit still in their errors, and sit still in their sloth and security. O how dreadful and terrible is their case ! For God is saying to such ; Rev. xxii. 11, " He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still ;" he that is erroneous, let him be erroneous still ; he who is wicked and ungodly, let him be so still ; he who is joined to his idols, let him alone. God is saying, Ministers, let him alone ; ordinances, let him alone ; providences, let him alone ; my Spirit, let him alone : " My Spirit shall not always strive with men upon earth."

2. Hence we may see what to think of the Church of Scotland at this day ; how dangerous her circumstances are, when instead of sitting still, and remaining stedfast in the faith, she is receding and running away from her ancient Reformation-principles and purity.

How unstable, like water, is the generation! How great is the apostacy and defection of the day! And here we may see, if there shall be any schism, or separation in the Church of Scotland very soon upon the present emergency,¹ that you all know of, who will be the schismatics and separatists? Surely not these who sit still and remain stedfast in the faith, and upon the old foundation, but these who go off from our Reformation-principles: these that sit still, are the strength and safety of a Church, they that rise and turn away, the ruin thereof.

3. Hence see matter whereby every one may try their state and their strength, by trying what stability they have in the faith. Have you a stable and strong faith? (1.) Strong faith is a fighting faith; It fights against all discouragements, and overcomes the greatest difficulties and trials, 1 Sam. xxx. 6; Hab. iii. 17, 18; Heb. xi. 33, 34; against the greatest temptations to sin, Heb. xi. 24, 25. (2.) It is a resolute and wilful faith; "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It stands not at providences seemingly contradicting the promises, Rom. iv. 19, 20; against all discouragements; Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" (3.) It is a wrestling faith; "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." (4.) It is a violent faith; "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." (5.) It is a disputing faith, it disputes every inch; Truth, Lord, I am a dog; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table," Mat. xv. 22. (6.) It is an urging and arguing faith; it presses God with arguments taken from his own name, his own Son, his own promise, and his own perfections; mercy, faithfulness, truth, &c. (7.) It is a touching faith; *Turba premit, fides tangit*, Luke viii. 33-48. (8.) It is an humbling faith, bringing in the deepest humility: the more confirmed and established a person is, the more humble. Thus Abraham; "Who am I, that have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes?" Job, when established; "Now, I abhor myself." Isaiah, when he got a confirming manifestation says, "I am unclean." Paul also, a confirmed Christian, "I am less than the least of all saints." (9.) It is a faith that removes all legal fears, terrors, and torments, and yet increases godly sorrow and gospel repentance. It lives on Christ, and not on frames and

(1.) Our Author here, without doubt, alludes to the conduct of the Church judicatories, in their prosecution at this time carrying on against the four Brethren, formerly briefly narrated.

enlargements; the doubting Christian is up and down with his frames, if that be gone, he thinks all is lost; but the established believer is secured in Christ, and his everlasting righteousness; even when the mutable frame is gone, it is not discouraged.

4. Hence see the duty both of sinners and saints, or believers.

[1.] Of sinners, to sit down; we cannot exhort you to sit still, till once you sit down, and take rest in Christ. And therefore, O sinner, sit down and rest upon a God in Christ as your rock and resting-place. Let me advise you, take a seat for your souls to sit upon. Some of you know what an uneasy thing it is to want a seat for your body, when you are weary walking or weary standing; well, much more uneasy will it be if you want a seat of rest for your souls. Would you have your souls rightly seated and rightly settled? Will you tell me, can you find such a right seat in all the world, as a God in Christ? Is there any seat or centre so proper for the soul? Is not God the seat and centre of the intellectual world; the centre of spirits, in whom they can find rest? Is the world a proper seat for your souls to sit down upon? Though you had your barns full, and were saying, "Soul, take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up for many years;" how soon can God say, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee!" Is your own righteousness a proper seat for your soul to sit down and rest upon, when your righteousness is but filthy rags, and when there is as much sin in your best duties as would damn you? Is it possible you can think, when death and judgment is before you, that you sit safely enough there? or, do you think that the devil, the world, or the flesh, can give you rest and satisfaction, though you had all the advantages they can offer you? O sinner, are you seeking to settle on this side Jordan? Though you should sit easy till the day of death, what will become of you upon the day of judgment? But would you have a seat on which you may find everlasting rest in death, judgment, and through eternity? Then, O Come to Christ for rest, and sit down upon the Rock of ages. Here is a high and honourable seat; whenever you come to God, you dwell on high, you sit with Christ in heavenly places. Here is a soft and easy seat; "He will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on him, because he trusteth in him." Here you may get rest to your understandings in Christ, as a Prophet; rest to your consciences in him, as a Priest; rest to your hearts in him, as a King. Here is a safe seat; when you rest upon Christ for salvation, you cannot but

be safe : " He that believes shall be saved." Your desires will sit safely upon him, who is " the Desire of all nations;" your hope will sit safely on him, who is " the Hope of Israel;" your delight will sit safely on him, who is the Darling of heaven. Here is a sure seat, " the sure mercies of David;" a firm seat, that cannot fail you in the day of need, and in the time of extremity. The covenant of works was not a firm and sure seat; and to sit down either directly or indirectly, upon the works of the law, is a sandy foundation. Here is a ready seat, and just at hand; you need not say, We cannot ascend to heaven, to sit down upon this seat; it is near at hand, " I bring near my righteousness;" and this righteousness is the seat you are to sit down upon. And it is an everlasting seat, an everlasting righteousness, where you may sit safe and easy for ever. O seek not rest anywhere else; sit down under the shadow of the Almighty. But you may ask, How shall I sit down? Why be convinced of the sinfulness of your rambling among the creatures for help, relief, and rest; and that " in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, or from the multitude of mountains." Though you were to sit down upon mountains of prey, mountains of gold or silver, this would not give rest or relief to your souls: " Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Mountains of creature-aids and outward means will not do; therefore, cry to God, that he may set your feet upon a rock; upon himself, the Rock of ages; and cause you to sit down under his shadow. The almighty power must make you willing and able: O cry then for a day of power.

[2.] The duty of saints, is to sit still and abide in Christ by faith, and to sit still in respect of stability in the faith. And that I may the more distinctly direct you to this, I would have you consider this stability,

(1.) As a privilege secured to you; this should excite you to it; for, as in working out salvation work, we could have no encouragement, if God had not promised to work in us, both to will and to do; so, in stability in the faith, we could have no encouragement, if this stability was not secured.

(2.) Consider it is a duty; and I would direct you to it in the following particulars.

1. O believer, labour after growth in grace, and particularly after establishing grace. There are these establishing graces: Knowledge, Isa. xxxiii. 6, " Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of the times. The people that know their God shall be

strong, and do exploits," Dan. ix. 32. Faith, Isa. vii. 9, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." See 2 Chron. xx. 20. Patience, James v. 8, "Be patient, and stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" Love, Song viii. 6, 7, "Love is strong as death, &c. Many waters cannot quench love," &c. Joy, Neh. viii. 12, "The joy of the Lord is their strength." Humility, James iv. 6, Self-confidence is the greatest weakness; Peter was weak when proud; humility is a man's going out of himself, and laying all his weight upon the Lord, who looks to the humble, hears the desires of the humble, and gives grace to the humble. Fear, Psalm cxii. 1, 8, "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; he shall not be afraid of evil-tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord; his heart is established," &c. Hope, Psalm xl. 1, 2; Rom. viii. 24; 1 John iii. 3. Again, as you would endeavour, through grace, to grow in established graces; so,

2. To improve establishing means. Prayer is an establishing mean; Psalm cxxxviii. 3, "I cried to the Lord, and he answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul." Praise, Psal. xliii. 4, 5, "Upon the harp will I praise thee;" then it follows, "Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? still hope in God, for I shall yet praise him." Communicating, while he is known in the breaking of bread, the bread of life is strengthening. Fellowship with the saints, confirming one another; Heb. x. 23, 24, 25, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend. Diligent attendance on ordinances; the voice of Christ is quickening and strengthening; "Faith comes by hearing;" and establishment in faith comes the same way. Meditation, and spiritual conversation, and communication, are strengthening.

3. Seek after established manifestations; John ii. 11, "He manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him;" that is, their faith was established and confirmed. Manifestations have a convincing light and overpowering evidence, making clouds flee away, and dashing the bottom out of all their doubts; thus Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." Manifestations have an instructive light; from darkness, wavering proceeds; and what we know darkly we easily suspect; but see Psalm xx. 6, "Now, I know that the Lord saves his anointed:" that is, now I understand it more distinctly. In manifestations there are tastes of his goodness and

sweetness, and this is a spring of stability; dry notions will never make a man stable; while the truth is not received in love, they will soon quit it for delusion; but when they have a sense of it, then their sense will plead better than learning and rhetoric; like a philosopher telling a man the sun is not shining, the grass is not green. Manifestations carry power in them; there is a heart burning power; this power will embolden the believer to avouch and plead for the truth, whosoever be against it, and whatever it costs, when they find the good effects of it in their own souls. Manifestations carry still a suitableness to the case, trial, and necessity of the person to whom he manifests himself; when Abraham is to leave his father's house, and to go, not knowing whether; to leave friends, means, relations; the Lord manifests himself to him as God Almighty, God All-sufficient. These manifestations exactly meet with their necessities, and this makes them abide by him. Manifestations always humble; and humility is the strength of all other graces; "What is the first grace? humility, said one of the fathers: What is the next? humility: What is the third? humility;" and so on, intimating, that this is a bulwark to every other grace. Hence,

4. Take heed of these things that hinder stability: as pride; "Pride goes before a fall. God resists the proud;" remember Peter. Worldliness, 2 Tim. iv. 10. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world," 2 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Idleness, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich;" but idleness makes him poor in grace, poor in purse. Needless fellowship with wicked company: "He that walks with the wise shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. A man shall not be established by wickedness," Prov. xii. 3; but the heart is established by grace.

5. Seek much after establishing breathings of the Holy Ghost. The disciples were letting their grips go, and Christ breathed on them, and says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Much of the Spirit will bring about much reformation in the matters of God. Be content of the Spirit's comforting and supporting influences under trials, without seeking any visible signs for your confirmation. The Jews seek a sign from Christ, but, says he, "No sign shall be given you, but that of the prophet Jonas; as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Here is the sign, ye shall get many a cross, and I will strengthen you to bear

them ; and if you be not satisfied with these signs, ye will but tempt him. All the breathings of the Spirit are of an establishing nature ; his quickening, sanctifying, and comforting influences. Wait the time of the Spirit's breathing, and of this wind of heaven blowing. Wait at the shore, though you cannot command the wind to blow ; and be easy, though he reserves the sweetest confirmation to the saddest times. Christ cures the blind man, John ix. ; the Pharisees drag him out from court to court, till at last they cast him out and excommunicate him ; but then Christ took him in, and manifested himself : " Dost thou now believe ? Who is he that I should believe ? " says the man ; Christ shows himself to him, and then he believed and worshipped. Well, perhaps a time of sweet consolation and confirmation is reserved till ye be cast out by a corrupt kirk and clergy, or to a more troublesome time, when you are at the extremity. He will season all with a new manifestation, a new communication.

6. Be cautious, and jealous of yourselves, and watchful : " Let him who thinks he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Perhaps, you have laid up some truths in your bosom beyond all debate, but in the hour of trial you may be in hazard to quit them : who would have thought that the disciples would debate whether Christ was the Saviour of the world, the Saviour of Israel, after the many confirmations he gave of this ? Yet, they not only debate it, but are in hazard to quit it, Luke xxiv. 22. Oh ! it would make a heart break to hear such language ; " We thought he was the Saviour of Israel, he that should have redeemed Israel : " there it was all quit to a thought. O then, sirs, beware of witchcraft ; " O foolish Galatians, who had bewitched you ? " &c., Gal. iii. 1. The devil and his instruments sometimes cast a kind of fascination over our eyes, to hide the beautiful face of truth, to make it look ill favoured ; beware of the devil's deception, he can make perjury look like prudence ; and honesty, like rebellion against judicatories, &c. You may be confirmed in the faith, and yet make such a sudden change, as to cause all honest ministers and Christians wonder at you, as Paul says, Gal. i. 6, " I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him who hath called you to another gospel." Beware of letting the fear of losses and crosses frighten you ; you may make fair offers of following Christ, and yet forsake him in the view of the cross. There came a man to Christ, Matth. viii. 19, saying, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest ;" Christ will

hardly get a fairer offer from any here ; but what says Christ to him ? “ The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” What hinders the performance of this fair offer ? Why, you must make yourself ready for losses and crosses, and follow Christ naked. Many men and women come the length of the cross, and there they bury all their resolutions. The cross has been the burial place of many vows and promises ; therefore, see that you be not scared and terrified with the fear of losses and crosses ; know that what you lose for Christ will be the surest gain.

I might here add some encouragements to engage you to this duty.

(1.) If stability in the faith is the strength and security of the church, in the most perilous times, then let us sit still and be stable, because the most perilous time is the very season wherein God has, in all generations, made the most signal appearances for his church, in so much, that we have no more ado, in effect, when perilous times come, but to stand still ; or, which is the same thing, to sit still, and see the salvation of God. Here I would offer eight instances of signal appearances in most perilous times : particularly in the first defection by sin ; when our first parents fell ; there God appeared in the first promise, wherein the devil was sentenced.—Israel's oppression in Egypt ; then is Moses born ; then the Lord appeared gloriously.—The Assyrians rage, under Sennacherib, against Jerusalem ; then the Lord sent his angel.—Haman threatened the destruction of the Jews ; then the Lord appeared, and brought about their deliverance.—Christ the Head laid in the grave, then the Lord appeared making that dark hour the porch of light and life.—The Jewish and Pagan persecutions against the first Christians, the Lord made these the mean of propagating the gospel, and the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church. The anti-christian tyranny, wherein the whore was drunk with so much blood, issued in the glorious Reformation ; the Lord appearing in his glory, building up Zion.—The bloody reigns in Britain, particularly in Scotland ; the martyrdom in the late times, issued in the Lord's appearing by the merciful Revolution.—And now, when troubles and trials take place, our God is not dead : “ He will arise and have mercy upon Zion. The Lord sits upon the floods : the Lord sits King for ever.” Hence,

(2.) To sit still in perilous times, is to sit where God sits ; he

sits upon the floods, and they sit with Christ upon his throne, not only when they come to heaven, but by faith upon earth; they sit and reign with Christ; as they shall judge the world at the last day, so they rule and judge even in this life, Psalm ii. 9, compared with Rev. ii. 26, 27, and with Psalm cxlix. 6, 7, 8, 9. This is the honour of all the saints; and hence the saints who are faithful to God in their day, not only judge and condemn the world, by their practice and their testimony, but in some respects execute the sentence against them, so as to torment them, Rev. xi. 10. "The two witnesses tormented them who dwelt upon the earth."

(3.) To sit still is to sit easy amidst all the overflowing floods, because we sit still and rest upon him who sits upon the floods; this may give ease amidst whatever floods you are surrounded with. Is it a flood of tribulation, temptation, reproach, &c. "The Lord sits upon the floods," and makes the floods his footstool, his throne. He treads upon the floods, and reigns amidst the floods, and makes the floods his chariot, wherein he rides, and his bench, whereon he judges righteously.

(4.) When we sit still by faith, we glorify God, and edify men; we honour God, and exonerate ourselves at the hands of men, both in the former, present, and following generations, as I said before.

S E R M O N X X X I I I.

FAITH'S PLEA UPON GOD'S COVENANT.¹

PSALM lxxix. 20.—"Have respect unto the Covenant."

THE psalmist, in pleading for the church and people of God, and that he would appear for them against their enemies, uses several arguments; particularly, in the close of the preceding verse, there is something he pleads God may not forget, "Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever:" and the rather he uses this argument,

(1) This was an evening-exercise on a preparation-day, before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Kinglassie. The exact time cannot be precisely ascertained; but it is supposed to have been in the year 1733.

because he had said, Psalm ix. 18. "The needy shall not be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." There is, in this verse, something he pleads, that God may remember and have regard unto, "Have respect unto the Covenant." Thou hast brought us into covenant with thee, might he say, and though we are unworthy to be respected, yet, "Have respect unto the Covenant of promise." When God delivers his people, it is in remembrance of his covenant, Lev. xxvi. 42. "Then will I remember my covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will remember the land." We cannot expect he will remember us, till he remember his covenant: hence, therefore, we propose to illustrate the following truth.

DOCT. That one of faith's strong pleas with God is, that he would have respect to the covenant.

If we would deal with God for mercy, or plead with him for favour, or look to him for any good at this occasion, let us expect it only upon this ground, the respect he hath to the covenant, and plead upon this argument.

The method we would observe, as the Lord shall assist, for briefly handling this subject, shall be the following:—

- I. Show what covenant it is he will have a respect to.
- II. What it is for God to have a respect to the covenant.
- III. What it is in the covenant he hath a respect to.
- IV. What kind of a respect he hath to it.
- V. Why he hath respect to it, and so why it is a suitable plea and argument in suing for mercy.
- VI. Make some application of the whole.

I. We are then first to show what covenant it is he will have a respect to. The covenant here spoken of is the covenant of grace and promise, made in Christ Jesus before the world began, and published in the gospel to sinners. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. "And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 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 an heart of flesh, &c. Jer. xxxi. 45. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people." See also Psal. lxxxix. throughout. It is called a covenant of grace; because grace is the beginning and the end, the foundation and topstone of it: even grace reigning through righteousness. It is called a covenant of mercy; because therein mercy to the miserable is proclaimed through justice satisfying blood; for there mercy and truth meet together; and all the sure mercies of David are conveyed thereby. It is called a covenant of peace and reconciliation; because it both treats of peace with God, and makes it good.—It is called a covenant of promise; because it lies in promises with reference to us; and these to be accomplished upon the condition already fulfilled in Christ's obedience and satisfaction; and because therein the faithfulness of God is pledged, for making out all the promises to believers, the children of promise.—It is called a covenant of salt; because it is an incorruptible word, "An everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure."—In a word, it is a covenant of help to poor helpless sinners, saying, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help."—It is a covenant of pardon to the guilty, saying, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and I will not remember thy sins."—It is a covenant of supply to the needy, saying, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them, I, the God of Israel will not forsake them."—It is a covenant of gifts, wherein grace and glory are freely given; and, in the dispensation thereof, God says, Come, and take all freely; Himself, his Christ, his Spirit, and all, Rev. xxii. 17, Isa. lv. 1.

II. We are to show what it is for God to have respect to the covenant.

1. God hath respect to the covenant when he remembers it, and so remembers us, as in that forecited, Lev. xxvi. 24. "I will remember my covenant, and then will I remember the land." Thus Psal. cxi. 5. "He hath given meat to them that fear him." Why, he will ever be mindful of his covenant. If he come to give us

meat to feed our souls at this occasion, the ground will be, he will be mindful of his covenant, mindful of his promise.

2. God may be said to have respect to his covenant, when he regards it. He hath no reason to have respect or regard to us, but he sees reason to have regard to his covenant; he puts honour upon it, for reasons that I shall afterwards show, only I will say here, his honour is engaged therein, therefore he says, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips," Psal. lxxxix. 34. He hath more regard to it than he hath to heaven and earth; for he says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." He hath such a regard to it, that he will never break it, but ever keep it.

3. He hath respect to his covenant, when he establishes it. And when we pray, that he would have respect to the covenant, we not only pray he would remember the covenant, and regard the covenant, but establish the covenant betwixt him and us, as he said to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7. "I will establish it between me and thee, and thy seed after thee." He shows respect to the covenant, when he makes the covenant take hold of us, and makes us take hold of the covenant; for then he makes us put respect upon him and upon his covenant.

4. He hath respect to the covenant, when he performs the covenant-promises, according to Micah vii. 20, "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old;" and he does this, when he acts according to the covenant, or according to the mercy that made the promise, and the truth that is engaged to make out the promise.

In short, the sum of this prayer, as it concerns the import of the word *respect*, "Have respect to the covenant," is, "Lord, remember the covenant, and so remember me; Lord, have regard to the covenant, and let me be remembered on this ground, when there is no other reason why I should be regarded; Lord, establish thy covenant with me, and so put honour upon thy name manifested in that covenant, and do to me according to the promise of the covenant. Cause me to hope in thy word, and then remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope; and deal with me, not according to my sin and desert, but according to thy covenant and mercy in Christ Jesus."

III. We are next to shew what it is in the covenant he hath a respect to, or that we should plead upon.

1. Have respect to the covenant ; that is, to the Mediator of the covenant. Though thou owest no respect to me, yet dost thou not owe respect, and hast thou not a great respect to the Mediator of the covenant, to Christ, whom thou hast given to be a covenant of the people ? For his sake let me be pitied ; have respect to the relation he bears to the covenant, even to him who is the Mediator, Testator, Witness, Messenger, Surety, and All of the covenant. Have respect to his offices, and let him get the glory of his saving offices. It is a strong plea to plead with God upon the respect he bears to Christ ; God cannot win over such a plea as that. He must own his regard and respect to Christ, who paid such respect to him, and finished the work he gave him to do.

2. Have respect to the covenant, by having respect to the blood of the covenant. The blood of Christ, that is represented in the sacrament of the supper, it is the blood of the covenant, called the new testament in his blood ; because all the promises are sealed therewith, and so Yea and Amen in Christ : this is the condition of the new covenant. The covenant of works had only the active obedience of the first Adam for its condition ; but the condition of the covenant of grace properly, is both the active and passive obedience of the second Adam, his doing and dying. Now, Lord, have respect to that blood that sealed the covenant ; since the condition is fulfilled to thy infinite satisfaction, let the promised good be conferred upon me.

3. Have respect to the covenant, by having respect to the oath of the covenant, Heb. vi. 17. The promise is confirmed with the oath of God ; "That by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation," &c. Now, Lord, wilt thou not have respect to thine own oath ? Hast thou not sworn by thy holiness, thou wilt not lie unto David ?

4. Have respect to the covenant, by having a respect to the properties of the covenant. This would be a large field ; I sum it up in a few words. Have respect to the covenant ; that is, Lord, have respect to the fulness of the covenant, and let me be supplied, for there is enough there ; it contains all my salvation, and all my desire. Have respect to the freedom of the covenant, and let me, however unworthy, share of the grace that runs freely thence. Have respect to the stability of the covenant, and let me be pitied, though unstable as water, and infirm, yet the covenant stands fast ; remember thy word that endures for ever. Have respect to the

order of the covenant, that is well ordered in all things, as well as sure. "Though my house be not so with God, says David, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure." Though my house be out of order, and heart out of order, and my frame out of order, and all be in confusion with me, yet see, according to thy covenant, to order all well.

IV. We proceed to shew what kind of a respect he hath to the covenant, that we may be the more engaged to plead upon it.

1. He hath a great and high respect to the covenant. It is the covenant of the great God, with his great and eternal Son, for the honour and glory of his great name; and therefore he cannot but have a great and high respect unto it. His great name is manifested in it; and therefore, when we plead his respect to the covenant, we plead, in effect, saying, "What will thou do for thy great name?"

2. He that hath a dear and lovely respect to the covenant; for it is the covenant of his grace and love, wherein he shows his infinite love to Christ, and through him to a company of wretched sinners. It is a covenant of kindness; Isa. liv. 10, "My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee;" intimating, his covenant of peace is a covenant of kindness, wherein he manifests his dearest love; therefore, he hath a dear respect to it.

3. He hath a full respect to the covenant, a respect to every promise of it: "They are all Yea and Amen, to the glory of God," 2 Cor. i. 20. He hath a respect to all of them, because they are all Yea and Amen, and because they are all ratified in Christ, to the glory of God. He that hath a respect to every article of the covenant, "Not a jot shall fall to the ground."

4. He hath an everlasting respect to the covenant; therefore it is called an everlasting covenant; it is secured by an everlasting righteousness; it is made between everlasting parties; it is replenished with everlasting blessings; it is rooted in his everlasting love: therefore he is ever mindful of his covenant, and will never cease to have a respect to it.

Well then, say you, what need we pray and plead, that he would have respect to his covenant? Why, if it be sure that he hath, and will for ever have, a respect to the covenant, then we may pray with more assurance and confidence; so that there is here strong footing for our prayer; but besides, when we pray, and say,

"Have respect unto the covenant," we seek, that he would shew the respect that he hath unto it, that he would shew and make it manifest unto us, that we may have the faith of it, and enjoy the fruits of it, and the blessed effects of that respect to it, in our participations of the blessings thereof.

V. The next thing was, To show why he will have respect to his covenant; and consequently, whence it is such a suitable plea and argument for us. Why,

1. When he hath a respect to the covenant, he hath respect to himself; the framer of it he owns himself to be; Psalm lxxxix. 3, "I have made a covenant with my chosen." Why then, the strength of the plea is, "Have respect to the covenant," and so have respect to thyself, and thy own glorious name and attributes, and let them be glorified, in showing regard to the covenant. Have respect to thy wisdom, that shines in the contrivance of the covenant, "The manifold wisdom of God, yea, the wisdom of God in a mystery," that here appears. Have respect to thy power, that shines in the efficacy of the covenant, not only for overpowering principalities and powers, but overcoming thyself, and the power of thine own wrath, by the power of thy love. Have respect to thy holiness, that shines in the holy oath of JEHOVAH, by which it is confirmed, and the holy obedience of Jesus, by which it is fulfilled; so that, as by the *sinful* disobedience of one, many were made sinners, by the *holy* obedience of another *Glorious One*, many are made righteous. Have respect to thy justice, that shines in the blood of the covenant, the sacrifice by which justice hath got condign and infinite satisfaction. Have respect to thy mercy and grace, that reigns through this righteousness to eternal life. Have respect to thy truth and faithfulness, that shines in accomplishing all the promises of the covenant, upon the ground of Christ's having fulfilled the condition. Have respect unto thy eternity and immutability, in the unchangeableness of the covenant; shew that thou art God, and changest not. Thus have respect to thyself.

2. When he hath respect to the covenant, he hath respect to his Son CHRIST, the centre of it, and in whom it stands fast, as he owns; Psalm lxxxix. 28, "My covenant shall stand fast with him." Why, then, the strength of the plea is, "Have respect to the covenant," and so show respect to thy Son: have respect to him in his person, as he is thy Son and our Saviour; IMMANUEL, God-man: in his divinity, wherein he is equal with God; in his humanity,

wherein he is the master-piece of God's work. Have respect to him in his purchase, which is the substance of the covenant bought with his blood. Have respect to his death and resurrection; for thou lovest him on this account; John x. 17, "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again;" where we see that Christ, as dying and rising in the room of his people, is the object of the Father's love, delight, and esteem. Have respect unto his intercession, wherein he prays for all the blessings of the covenant that he hath purchased: doth not the Father hear him always? Have respect to his commission, which is sealed by thee; for "Him hath God the Father sealed," anointed, and authorised unto all saving offices, relations, and appearances; let him get the glory of all these. O strong plea!

3. When he hath respect to the covenant, he hath respect to his Spirit, the great applier of the covenant-blessings, and executor of the testament, sealed with the blood of Christ, and by whom covenant-love is shed abroad upon the heart, Rom. v. 5. Why then, the strength of the plea, "Have respect to the covenant;" that is, have respect to thy own Spirit, that he may get the glory of applying, by his power, what Christ hath purchased by his blood. Have respect to the promise of the Spirit that thou hast made, that when he is come, he shall convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and testify of Christ, and glorify Christ, by shewing the things of Christ. Have respect to the offices of the Spirit, as he is a Convincer, Sanctifier, and Comforter, according to the order and method of the covenant. Have respect to the honour of the Spirit, who is the all in all of the covenant, in point of power, and powerful manifestation, communication, and operation. Have respect unto the relations of the Spirit, as he is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Spirit of the covenant, and of all the covenanted seed. Hence,

4. When he hath respect to the covenant, he hath respect to his people, on the account of the covenant of promise; for, "They, as Isaac was, are the children of promise," Gal. iv. 28. Why then, the strength of the plea and argument here is, Lord, "have respect to the covenant," and so show regard and respect to us. We have no confidence to claim any respect at thy hand, but merely upon the account of the respect thou hast to thy covenant. Have respect to our persons on this ground, since the covenant provides acceptance in the Beloved, Eph. i. 6. Look upon us in the face of thine

Anointed, and in the glass of the new covenant. Have respect to our prayers and performances on this ground, since the covenant hath provided much incense, to perfume the prayers and offerings of all saints, upon the golden altar that is before the throne, Rev. viii. 3. Have respect to our tears, when we sigh and groan, and mourn and weep before thee, since the covenant provides a bottle for our tears; Psalm lvi. 8, "Put thou my tears in thy bottle." Have respect to our needs on this ground, when we are hardened, that we can neither pray nor weep, nor shed a tear, since the covenant provides supply to the poor and needy; Phil. iv. 19, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches, in glory, by Christ Jesus."

VI. I would now proceed to make some Application of the subject in these four Inferences.

1. Hence see a mark and character of true believers that are fit for a communion-table, they are of God's mind; he hath a respect to the covenant, and they have a respect unto the covenant; and hence they know what it is to plead with God upon the respect that he hath to the covenant: they could not do so, if they had not a high respect to it themselves; they have such a respect to the covenant in kind as God hath.—They have a great respect to it, so as they esteem it more than all things in the world; they would not give one promise of it, on which they have been caused to hope, for all the gold of Ophir. They have a dear and kindly respect to it, as all their salvation and all their desire; yea, and all their delight also. The word of grace is sweeter to them than the honey and the honey-comb. They have a full and universal respect unto it, and to all the promises of it; they respect the promise of purity, as well as the promise of pardon; the promise of salvation from sin, as well, and as much as the promise of salvation from hell; the promise of holiness as well as of happiness. As they have a respect to all God's commandments; so they have a respect to all God's promises; and particularly as David had his golden psalms, so they had their golden promises that they are made to hing upon. Yea, they have an everlasting respect to the covenant, and to the promises thereof, even when their frame fails them; when their sweet enjoyments fail them, yet their respect to the covenant remains, and their respect to the Maker of the covenant, to the Mediator of the covenant, to the blood and oath of the covenant, to the Spirit of the covenant, and to the blessings and benefits of it. They have an everlasting respect

to the grace of the covenant of grace ; they are adorers and admirers of free grace. They have an everlasting respect to, and remembrance of the words of the covenant, particularly these words that have been let in with any life and power upon their soul, or that they have been caused to hope upon ; whatever they forget, they can never forget, such a word, that brought life to their souls : " I will never forget thy words," says David ; " for by them thou hast quickened me." They have such an everlasting respect to the covenant, that, when they have nothing in the world to trust to, they will rely on the covenant, and confide in such a promise, and plead upon it, saying, Lord, " Have respect to the covenant."

2. Hence we may see the misery of these that are unbelievers, and remain strangers to the covenant of promise, and have no respect to the covenant. It is misery enough, that God hath no respect to you ; no respect to your person or prayers, as it is said, " To Cain and his offerings God had no respect," Gen. iv. 5. So God hath no respect either to your persons or performances ; they are an abomination to him. Your prayers to him are but like the howling of a dog, if you have never taken hold of his covenant, nor seen the respect that God hath to the covenant. You have no respect to God, while you have no respect to that which he respects so highly. And as he hath no respect to your persons or performances, so he hath no respect to your tears ; they never flowed from faith's views of a pierced Christ. He hath no respect to your souls, the redemption thereof ceaseth for ever, because you have no due respect to the Redeemer's blood and righteousness. He hath no respect to your communicating ; nay, he disapproves of it, and discharges you to sit down at his table, on peril of eating and drinking your own damnation. God hath no regard nor respect to your salvation, because you have no regard nor respect to the Saviour he hath provided and offered. God thinks as little to damn you, as you think little to dishonour him. God thinks as little of you, as you think little of sin ; and he hath as little respect to you, as you have little respect to Christ and to the covenant. Woe to you, if you remain in this case ; for the day is coming, wherein God will, before all the world, show no more respect to you, than to say to you, " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But,

3. Hence we may see the happiness of believers, that have such a respect to the covenant, as I was speaking of, a great, dear,

full, and perpetual respect to it, and to the Mediator of it, who have taken hold of the covenant through grace, and who knows what it is to take hold of God in the covenant, to take hold of God in a promise, and to hold him by his word, and rely upon him in it saying, "Lord, have respect to the covenant;" here is your great happiness, God hath a respect to you: What respect? Even to your persons and offerings, as it is said of Abel; Gen. iv. 4, God hath a respect to him and to his offering. Though you be saying in your heart, Oh! how can he have a respect to me, black and vile, and guilty me? Why? not for your sake indeed, be it known unto you, but for his covenant's sake, and his name's sake. He hath a respect to your praying and praising, and communicating; because he hath a respect to the covenant. He hath a respect to your name; though the name of the wicked shall rot, your name shall be in everlasting remembrance; for God hath put his name in you; something of Christ in you, something of the covenant in you. Some observe, when Abram's name was turned to Abraham, that there was some of the letters of the name JEHOVAH put in Abraham's name. Indeed, God gives the believer a new name, that he hath a respect unto. He hath a respect to your suits and supplications; "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself. O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs; let me hear thy voice, let me see thy countenance; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. He hath a respect to his beloved doves, when pouring out their hearts before him; that voice that the world laughs at, God hath a respect to it. He hath a respect to your blood; "Precious in his sight is the blood of his saints." He hath a respect to your souls; and hence he gave his blood to be a ransom for them; and when your souls languish, he sends his Spirit to restore them; and when you die, he will send his angels to bring them to heaven. He hath a respect to your bodies: you ought, being bought with a price, to glorify him in your souls and bodies, which are his. When your body goes to the dust, he will take care of that dust, and lose nothing of you but raise you up at the last day, and make your vile bodies like unto his glorious body; and so shall ye be ever with the Lord. He hath a respect to you, such a respect, that he puts honour upon you; "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable." He hath made you kings and priests to your God. Jacob was crowned a prince on the field of battle, the field of prayer, when he wrestled with the

Angel and prevailed as a prince. The poor wrestling man is a prince, and the poor wrestling woman a princess, in God's sight; "This is the honour of all the saints." They have power with God, therefore no wonder that they have power over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron: they judge and torment them that dwell on the earth, even here: And know you not, that hereafter the saints shall judge the world? God hath a respect to you, and he will show it in due time, because he hath a respect to the covenant, and filled your heart with a respect to it also.

4. Hence see the duty incumbent upon us in pleading with God for his favour, presence, and blessing; let us go to him both in secret prayer, and in solemn approaches to his table, crying, Lord, "Have respect to the Covenant." I know not a case you can be in but the covenant exhibits a cure, and you are allowed to plead it, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. After many new-covenant promises, it is said, "For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them:" and how are we to enquire, but by pleading the respect he hath to the covenant.—Have you a polluted heart with the filth of sin, a polluted conscience with the guilt of sin? Why, here is an article of the covenant; "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you," ver. 25. O then, go to God for cleansing, and plead, saying, O Lord, "Have respect to the Covenant."—Have you the old hard stony heart still within you, and would you have it renewed and softened? Here is an article of the covenant, "A new heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." O then, go to God, and plead it, saying, "Have respect to the Covenant."—Are you destitute of the Spirit, sensual, not having the Spirit? Do you find such a want of the Spirit, that you cannot walk in God's way? Well there is an article of the covenant here, ver. 27. "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." O plead for this great blessing, and say, Lord, "Have respect to the Covenant."

In a word, when you consider what kind of a sinner you are, consider also what kind of a covenant this is; it is enough to say, that it is a covenant of grace, of all sorts of grace, for all sorts of sinners that are out of hell. Are you under dreadful guilt? Here is a covenant of pardoning grace, saying, "I will blot out thy sin as a cloud, and thy transgression as a thick cloud: return to me, for I

have redeemed thee," Isa. xlv. 22. O then plead he may have respect to the covenant.—Are you under fearful pollutions? O here is a covenant of purifying grace, saying, "There is a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." O then, plead he may have respect to the covenant. Are you in darkness and ignorance, having no knowledge of God? O here is a covenant of enlightening grace, saying, "They shall be all taught of God." O then plead it, saying, Lord, "Have respect to the covenant." Are you under deadness, and like dead and dry bones? O here is a covenant of quickening grace, saying, "I am come to give life, and to give it more abundantly. The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." O then plead that he may have respect to the covenant. Are you in confusion, and know not what way to take? O here is a covenant of directing grace, saying, "I will bring the blind by a way they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Are you under sad plagues and soul-diseases, over-run with sores from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot? O here is a covenant of healing grace, saying, "The Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings.—I am the Lord that healeth thee. I will heal your backslidings." O then plead, saying, Lord, "Have respect to the covenant."—Are you in extreme danger of hell and damnation, because of your sin and guilt? O here is a covenant of delivering grace, saying, "Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." O then plead it, and say Lord, "Have respect to the Covenant.—Are you in bondage unto sin, Satan, and the world, a captive unto lusts, and shut up in unbelief as in a prison? O here is a covenant of liberating grace! Proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Are you a stupid soul, that cannot move toward God, nor stir heavenward, by reason of a backward will, like a brazen gate, that resists all the force of moving means? Well, but, O! here is a covenant of drawing grace, saying, "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." As the power and virtue of the loadstone draws the iron, so the virtue of an exalted Christ draws the iron bar of the will; "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." O then, plead it, saying, Lord, "Have respect to the Covenant."

What other concerns have you?—Are you concerned for your

children, that they may be partakers of covenant-blessings, and saved of the Lord? O here is a covenant of extensive grace, intailing blessing on us and our offspring, saying, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed." O then, look to God in behalf of your children, saying, Lord, "Have respect to the Covenant."—Are you concerned for the church, and the dangerous circumstances she is into by reason of cruel enemies? This seems to be the great concern of the psalmist here as appears from the body of the psalm, and the words following the text: "For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." These that live in the darkness of ignorance and error, and in the works of darkness, are full of cruelty against the church and people of God, and they are surrounded with them, in so much that the church is like a lily among thorns, or a sheep among wolves; what shall become of it? Why, here is a covenant of defence, and of defending and protecting grace, saying, "Upon all the glory there shall be a defence;" therefore, even when enemies break down the carved work with axes and hammers, ver. 6; when they are casting fire into the sanctuary, ver. 7; when they are saying, "Let us destroy them together," ver. 8; Yea, when it shall come to this, that a bloody sword that is raging abroad, shall come over to us,¹ and that foreign or domestic enemies, or both, shall devour and destroy, and, perhaps, burn up all the synagogues of God in the land, as it is, ver. 8; and when we shall not see our signs, and there is no more any prophet, nor any among us that know the time how long, ver. 9. In all such cases, what course shall we take, but that of the psalmist here? Lord, "Have respect unto the Covenant."

Are you concerned about inward enemies, spiritual enemies, and molested with the powers of darkness? Is your heart full of the habitations of cruelty, and fearfully inhabited with cruel devils, cruel lusts, cruel corruptions, that master and conquer, and prevail against you, so as you lie many a time wounded and dead at the enemy's feet? O here is a covenant of sin-conquering grace, not

(2) Several foreign Powers, at this time, were at open war with one another, and, as formerly observed, our own nation was alarmed with an open rupture with the court of Spain; who, as was then confidently affirmed, had entered into a formidable alliance with different Powers, in order to recover Gibraltar and Port-mahon; and to favour their designs the better, gave out that their intention was to invade Britain, and place the Pretender on the throne. However, this rupture did not actually take place, till the year 1739; or the attempt to enthrone the Pretender, till the year 1745.

only a covenant of mercy to your soul, but of vengeance to your lusts, saying, "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, the year of my redeemed is come," Isa. lxiii. 4. O then, implore the promised vengeance on all your cruel soul-enemies, saying, Lord, "Have respect to the covenant."

Are you concerned about your soul-poverty and indigency, not only as oppressed with enemies without and within, but oppressed with wants and necessities, being absolutely poor and needy, and destitute of all good? O here is a covenant of soul-supplying grace, and of all needful provision, saying, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them; I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." O then, plead the covenant, as the Psalmist here in the following verse, "O let not the oppressed return ashamed; let the poor and needy praise thy name." "Have respect unto the Covenant."

In a word, let your case be the worst case out of hell, this covenant contains all salvation, as a covenant of grace; of all grace, of all sorts of grace for all sorts of sinners, and of all sorts of cures for all sorts of cases; and if you can get yourself wrapt within the bond of this covenant, by believing and pleading it, then you draw God upon your interest, so that your concern is his concern, your interest is his interest, your cause is his cause, as the Psalmist shows here, verse 22. "Arise, O God, plead thine own cause." It stands upon his honour, and he will do his own work in his own time. If ever you got grace to draw a bill upon God, as covenant-promising God in Christ, and have any bills lying tabled before the throne, and are sometimes unable to plead and pursue the bill, with a Lord, "Have respect unto the Covenant;" you have the strongest encouragement to wait on him, and expect his answering the bill in due time; for he will rather work marvellously, and create new worlds, rather turn all things to nothing, than quit his concern in, or give up with his respect unto the covenant.

Are you concerned for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the earth as you ought to be? Here is a covenant of grace to the Jews, and grace to the Gentiles; grace to the heathen nations, saying, "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Are you concerned about generations to come, about the rising generation, when there

is little hope of the present? O here is a covenant of grace to succeeding generations till the end of the world, saying, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore the people shall praise thee for ever and ever."

Are you concerned about your latter end, and how it shall fare with you when in the swellings of Jordan, how you will fight the last battle? O here is a covenant of death-conquering grace, saying, "Death shall be swallowed up in victory: O death, I will be thy plague! O grave, I will be thy destruction!" Are you concerned about a gospel ministry, and thoughtful whether it shall be continued? There is many a word in this covenant about it; but especially that, Christ is exalted to maintain and support a gospel-dispensation to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20. Whatever spot of the earth he chooses or refuses, he having ascended on high, hath received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them, Psal. lxxiii. 18.

S E R M O N X X X I V.

FAITH'S PLEA UPON GOD'S WORD.¹

2 SAM. vii. 25.—"Do as thou hast said."

DAVID was a strong believer; and it were our great advantage to follow him in his faith: and in this word that I fix upon to speak to, there are two ways wherein his faith works, 1. By believing the divine word, Thou hast said so and so. 2. By pleading the accomplishment thereof, "Do as thou hast said."

1. Faith works by believing his word, "Thou hast said." The object and ground of faith is the divine saying; and faith rests upon a Thus saith the Lord; it is not upon a Thus saith a man, or Thus saith a minister; nay, nor Thus saith an angel. Divine faith can stand only upon a divine testimony: "Thus saith the Lord, thou hast said." If you have faith then, you have received the word, not as the word of man, but, as it is indeed, the word of God, which effectually works in you that believe. Faith acts by taking God's

(1) This was an evening-exercise on a preparation-day, before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Burntisland, in the year 1733.

word, "Thou hast said, thou hast promised, thou hast spoken in thy holiness."

2. Faith acts by pleading the accomplishment of the promise, "Do as thou hast said." God is not a speaker only, but a doer; he is not a promiser only, but a performer; and faith looks to a promising God, that he may be a performing God; and so puts him to his word.

OBSERV. That it is the business of true faith, to take God's word, and to put him to it.

In the illustration of this doctrinal proposition, we would incline, through divine aid, to essay briefly the following things:—

- I. To show, that it is the business of faith to take God's word.
- II. That it is the business of faith to put him to his word.
- III. How faith takes God's word.
- IV. How it pleads the accomplishment of the promise.
- V. Whence is this the business of faith to take God at his word, and to put him to his word.
- VI. Make application of the whole.

I. We are first to show, That it is the business of faith to take God's word, or to take him at his word: this is plain, because the word is the immediate object of faith. We have no other glass wherein to see God savingly, but his word, particularly his word of grace and promise; Rom. x. 8, "Say not, Who shall ascend to heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; so then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith is a relative word, it relates to the faithfulness of the speaker; believing relates to a word to be believed. That it is the business of faith to trust in the word of God, is evident from the whole scripture. How many times, Psal. cxix., doth the Psalmist speak of trusting in his word, and hoping in his word, and rejoicing in his word, and so taking him at his word.

II. We come, in the next place, to show, That it is the business of faith to put him to his word, or to plead the accomplishment

of his word, that he would do as he had said ; this is evident from Psalm cxix. 49, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." And how many times doth he plead with God, to do to him according to his word ? "Quicken me according to thy word," ver. 25. Again and again we have this repeated, as ver. 107, 154. "Strengthen me, according to thy word, ver. 28. Save me, according to thy word, ver. 41. Be merciful to me, according to thy word, ver. 58. Deal well with thy servant, according to thy word, ver. 56. Let thy merciful kindness be my comfort, according to thy word, ver 76. Uphold me, according to thy word, ver. 116. Give me understanding, according to thy word, ver. 169. Deliver me, according to thy word," ver. 170.—All comes to this, "Do as thou hast said."

III. We proceed now to show, How, or in what manner, faith takes the word of God.

1. It takes it by an intelligent apprehension of it in the understanding. The man is taught of God, and gets his eyes opened, to see the faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance ; he sees it to be the word of God, and a word spoken in season to his weary soul. They will never take the word by faith that do not understand it ; Philip said to the Eunuch, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" So we may say, Understandest thou what thou hearest ? Are your eyes opened to see the wonders of his law or doctrine ; to see the glory of Christ held out to you in the word ?

2. Faith takes the word of God by a particular application of it with the heart ; insomuch that it is a cordial apprehension, a cordial assent that is given to the word : "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Saving light goes to the heart. Many have only their heads enlightened, their judgments informed, but not their hearts engaged, nor their affections captivated. Faith is a cordial applying the word, and that particularly to the man's own benefit ; whether we call it assurance or not, it comes to the same thing : as when in conviction the threatening is applied, the man trembles under the fear of hell and wrath, because he applies the law-threatening to himself, saying, I am the man to whom this threatening is spoken ; so, in the day of conversion, or believing, the promise is applied, the man is relieved with the view of the grace and mercy of God in Christ, because he applies the gospel promise to himself, saying, "I am the man to whom this promise is spoken, and I receive and rest upon Christ for salvation, as he is

promised or offered to me in the gospel : ' To me is this word of salvation.' And if the man did not take it to himself, there would be no end of believing at all. But then,

IV. The fourth thing proposed, was, To show how faith pleads the accomplishment of the promise.

1. It pleads upon the mercy that made the promise, that it is everlasting mercy, unchangeable mercy : " The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious."

2. It pleads upon the truth that is to make out the promise ; it is called, " The truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham," Mic. vii. 20 ; that his name is faithful and true.

3. It pleads upon the power of the promiser, " Being fully persuaded, that he that hath promised is able to perform ;" that he hath not out-promised his own promise, or said what he cannot do.

4. It pleads upon the blood of the covenant, that seals all the promises thereof ; hence they are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus.

5. It pleads upon the love of God to Christ ; this is to pray in his name, that God, for the love he bears to Christ, would do as he hath said.

6. It pleads upon the unchangeableness of God and of his word ; that his word endures for ever, and that he is God, and changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed.

7. In a word, it pleads upon his oath, Heb. vi. 10, " God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, hath confirmed it by an oath ; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

8. And lastly, it pleads upon his name : " What wilt thou not do for thy great name ?"

V. The fifth thing proposed was, To show whence is this the business of faith to take God at his word, and to put him to his word. Why, because,

1. It is the end and design of God, in giving his word : " These things are written (and spoken,) that we may believe in the Son of God, and that believing, we might have life in his name," John xx. 31. The gospel is preached in vain, if men do not take God at his word, and then hang upon it.

2. Because thus we glorify God; and the more we rest upon the divine word, the more we glorify him: "Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God." We give him the honour of his truth, and other perfections this way.

3. Because thus we engage the honour of God upon our side, when we put him to his word; his honour is engaged, "He cannot deny himself."

4. Because faith hath no other way of living, but upon the word of God: "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it. This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me."

VI. The last thing proposed was the application of the subject which, indeed, was the principal thing intended. Here is a fit exercise before the solemn communion work, to go to God and say, O "do as thou hast said." Consider what he hath said, and take him at his word, and put him to it, that he would do to you accordingly. Whatever your case be, surely there is some word relative to it.

Some may be thinking, alas! God hath said nothing to me, that I may put him to his word. Why, man, if the gospel, that is in this Bible, be preached to you, and if there be any word of grace therein suitable to your case, then put not away the word from you, but take it, and plead upon it, that God would do as he hath said. If you can see any word of promise suited to your case and to your need, then put to your hand by faith, and lay hold upon his word.

O, say you, is there any word from God about my case, who am a poor needy creature, like to starve for want of a spiritual meal and a hearty draught of the living waters that go out from Jerusalem? What hath God said, or hath he said anything concerning me? Yea, he hath said, Isa. xli. 17, 18, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in dry places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water." Hath he said so? Then take him at his word, and put him to it, saying, Lord, "do as thou hast said."

O, but is there any word from God for me, who have been long

waiting about ordinances, and never yet seen his glory, as I would desire to see it? What hath he said concerning me? Why, he hath said, that he waits that he may be gracious; that he is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him, Isaiah xxx. 18. He hath said, "The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it will speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, and not tarry," Hab. ii. 3. Hath he said so? Then take him at his word, and put him to it, saying, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word from God, concerning my case, that find my conscience challenging me for prodigious guilt; there was never such a guilty person on the face of the earth? Are you groaning under guilt? Hear what he says, Heb. viii. 12, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Isa. xliii. 25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." O then, take hold of his word, wherein he proclaims indemnity, and put him to it, saying, Lord, "do as thou has said."

But, says another, is there any word from God concerning me, that am compassed about with such strong corruptions and conquering lusts, that sin gets the mastery of me? Would you be delivered? Hear what he says; Mic. vii. 19, "He will subdue our iniquities, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Rom. vi. 14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Isa. lxiii. 4, "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my Redeemed is come." Hath he promised to take vengeance on your lusts? Then take him at his word, saying, O "do as thou hast said."

But is there any word to me, that am such a filthy monster, such a polluted creature in heart and way, that am stinking, as it were, in the grave of sin? He hath said, Exek. xxxvi. 26, "From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Zech. xiii. 1, "There is a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." Is there a promise of cleansing? Then take him at his word, and cry, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word to me a backslider, a grievous revolter, that many times after vows have made inquiry? my promises and resolutions have been but paper walls before the fire of temptation? Are you afflicted with this and would have relief? "Behold," he

says, Jer. iii. 22, "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Hos. xiv. 4, "I will heal your backslidings and love you freely. I will be as the dew to Israel." Hath he said so? Then let your heart say, Lord, "Do as thou hast said?"

But what doth God say to me, that have no strength for any duty or difficulty, that am weak like water? Would you have relief in this case? God says, 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness." Isa. xl. 26. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." Doth he say so? Then put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word concerning me, that am brought to a great difficulty, and know not what to do, or what hand to turn me to: I am straitened what course to take? doth God say anything to me? Yea, he doth; Isa. xlii. 19, "I will bring the blind by a way they know not; I will lead them in a path that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Isa. xxx. 22, "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it. I will guide thee by my counsel." Doth he say so? Then put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But what says God to a poor soul that is harassed with the temptations of the devil, and ready to be destroyed with the fiery darts of the wicked one? God says, "I will bruise the head of the serpent"—Rom. xvi. 20. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. "For this cause was the Son of God manifested, to destroy the works of the devil." Hath he begun to destroy him, and hath he said, Thou shalt bruise him under thy feet? Then put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

Alas! but what says God to a poor destitute creature, and hath nothing, no good, no grace, no light, no life, no strength? He says, Phil. iv. 19, "My God shall supply all your wants, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Psalm ix. 18, "The needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. There is bread enough, and to spare, in your Father's house." Hath he said so? O then! put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But what says God to me, that am longing, earnestly longing for some taste of his goodness, some communion and fellowship with

him? Why, God says to you, that he will satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry with good things. Mat. v. 6, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Hath he said so? Then let your heart say, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

Oh! but is there any word for one that hath a quite other case to tell you of, that hath no longing desire, no hunger, no thirst, that hath as much need as any longing soul here? but I have no spiritual longing, not so much as a desire, but, like the parching earth, the dry ground, that can have no active thirst, but hath many a wide cleft. God says, Isa. xlv. 3, 4, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; even my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. They shall grow up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses." Have you no other thirst but like that of the dry ground, and hath he promised a flood? Then, O put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

O! but is there any word for me, that am like the barren ground and unfruitful, that bears nothing but briars and thorns, and I find this ground is rejected, as nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned? Is this your fear and concern? Hear that word, Isa. lv. 13, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the briar, the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Hos. xiv. 8, "I am like a green fir-tree, from me is thy fruit found." Hath he said so? Then put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

Alas! but is there any word for me, that have been a fool, a mocker, a scorner, that have laughed at all religion and godliness; is there any merciful word that I may take hold of? Yea, God says, Prov. i. 22, "Ye scorers, that delight in scorning, and fools, that hate knowledge, turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my word unto you." Doth he say so? Then put him to his word, saying, O "Do as thou hast said."

But what says God to one that hath a plagued heart, a hard heart, a base heart, full of all manner of evils, and all the plagues of hell? Why, God says, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." And whatever be the plague, he hath said, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Hath he said so? Then, O put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

Ah! but doth God say any thing to a stupid wretch that not only hears you, but is no more affected than the stones of the wall, and that is quite dead, and can no more stir than a rock, and hath no more life than a dead corpse? God says, and, O that he would say it with power, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." Ezek. xxxvii. 12, "I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live." Hath he said so? Then, O put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But oh! is there any word that God says concerning me, that hath forfeited God's favour, by heaping up great and insuperable mountains betwixt him and me, that I fear he will never come over? Why, he says, Zech. iv. 7, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. He shall bring forth the head-stone with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it." "He can make the mountains skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs." Hath he said so? Then, O put him to his word, and say, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word for one that is filled with fear of heavy judgments coming upon the land, and upon an apostate church? Yes, he says, Isa. xxxii. 2, "A man shall be a hiding place from the storm, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." When you see matters running into confusion, church-members betraying the privileges of the Church, and the Church of Scotland destroying herself with her own hand, not only boars out of the forest wasting her, and wild beasts of the field devouring her, but enemies in the bosom of the Church making themselves famous, for lifting up axes and hammers, to break down the carved work of her doctrine, discipline, and government, remember the Lord hath said, that, "When he builds up Zion, he will appear in his glory;" and that, "Upon all the glory there shall be a defence;" that, "At evening-time it shall be light;" that the darkest part of the night, may usher in the morning-star of a Reformation in spite of hell: for I

would incline gladly to hope God will not leave Scotland, though we have left him. He took infestment by Solemn National Covenant six times;¹ and he hath had martyrs for his kingly office, that have asserted his royal prerogatives at the expense of their blood: therefore, let us apply that word, "He will arise and have mercy on Zion." Hath he said so? Then, O take him at his word, saying Lord, *Do as thou hast said.*

But is there any word for a poor creature that is in bondage through fear of death? "If I have run with the footmen, and they have wearied me, then how can I contend with horses? And if, in the land of peace, wherein I trusted, they wearied me, then what will I do in the swelling of Jordan?" I tremble to meet with the king of terrors. Why, he hath said, Hos. xiii. 14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death. O death! I will be thy plagues: O grave! I will be thy destruction. Death shall be swallowed up in victory." Plead then, that he would do as he hath said.

But I want assurance of all these things, may one say. Well, what mean you by that, man, woman, that you want assurance? I suppose many do not understand themselves, when they say they want assurance; for what better assurance would you have than the word of God? If you have his word, and take his word, you need no better assurance. If a man of credit, whom you can depend upon, give you his word for such a thing, then you depend upon it, and say you are assured of it; for you have his word. There is an assurance of sense, that is, the assurance of the work, when you have got the thing that is promised; this is not properly assurance, it is enjoyment; but the assurance of faith is the assurance of a word. And though the assurance of sense be sweetest, yet the assurance of faith is the surest assurance; for what you get in hand from God you may soon lose the benefit and comfort of it; but what you have upon bond in the promise, is still secure. If you take God's promise, you have the best assurance in the world; but if you say you want faith, you cannot take his word, or trust his word, then this is plain dealing; I fear this indeed be the case of the most; then you want assurance indeed, because you want faith, and cannot take his word, nor give him so much credit. But if any be saying, that is indeed my case, I cannot believe his word; doth God say nothing to me? Is there any word suited to my case? Yes,

(1) This was done at different periods betwixt the year 1589 and 1650.

there are promises of faith as well as to it. Zeph. iii. 12, "I will leave in the midst of them a poor and afflicted people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. In him shall the Gentiles trust." Hath the Author of faith so promised? Then, O take him at his word; cry for faith, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But may one say, I would desire not only to have the word, but the accomplishment of the word; I would not only have the promise, but the performance; and there are some promises I have been looking to, some ten or twenty years old promises, that I think I got the faith of; but, alas! the accomplishment is not yet come; there are some prayers and petitions I have had long tabled upon the ground of the promise: What doth God say to one that hath never got these promises accomplished, nor these prayers answered? Why, man, be thankful, if you have got grace to believe the promise; for so much faith as you have to take God's word, so much assurance you have that the word will be made out. If you be waiting upon a promising God, give him his time, and behold the womb of the promise will shortly open and bring forth; for it will not travail beyond its time; "Blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things that were told her from the Lord," Luke i. 45. And your fits and starts of unbelief, O believer, shall not hinder the performance of the promise you have once believed savingly; "If we believe not, he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself," 2 Tim. ii. 13. Will he deny his word, will he deny his oath? No, no; he will have respect to his covenant; because he hath respect to himself.

But what says God of one that is afflicted, and mourning for the desolations of Zion, and particularly for the sins and defections of the day we live in? I will tell you what he says, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy;" and though you have your mourning time for Zion, you shall also have your rejoicing times: "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her," Isa. lxvi. 10. He says, that he will set a mark upon the foreheads of them that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof, Ezek. ix. 4. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," Mat. v. 4. Why, then, look to him to do as he hath said.

But, says another, I am one that has a family, and children that the Lord hath given me, and it is my concern, not only that I

may be blessed myself, but that my seed and offspring may be blessed ; is there any word for me in this case ? Yea, what think you of that word ? Isa. xlv. 3, " I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." What think ye of that covenant made with Abraham, which you are called to lay hold upon by following his faith ? Gen. xvii. 7, " I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed." You have not only the covenant of Abraham to look to, but the entail of the covenant to your posterity to look to. Isa. lix. 21, " This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds' seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." He hath said that children are his heritage, Psalm cxxvii. 3 ; and that his righteousness is unto childrens' children, Psalm ciii. 17. " The promise is unto you and to your children," Acts ii. 39. O take him at his word, and cry, Lord, " Do as thou hast said."

But what do you say to one that finds himself deserted of God, and that God answers neither by URIM nor THUMMIM. " I go forward, but he is not there ; backward, but I cannot perceive him ; 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," Job xxiii. 8, 9. " The Comforter that should relieve my soul, is far removed," Lam. i. 16. God says, Isa. liv. 7, 8, 10, " For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee : In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I draw thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." Hath he said so ? Then, O take him at his word, saying, Lord, " Do as thou hast said."

But what doth God say to one that is tossed with one wave of affliction upon the back of another ? " Deep calling unto deep, at the noise of God's waterspouts ; all his waves and billows are gone over me," Psalm xlii. 7. Why, God says, Isa. liv. 11, 12, 13, 14, " O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires : And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones : And all thy

children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children: In righteousness shalt thou be established." Yea he says, Psalm xci. 15, "Yea he says, Psalm xci. 15, "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him." Many such sweet words of grace he speaks. O then, take his word, and plead, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word to one that is lost in the wilderness, and knows not where he is, so as to think it impossible that ministers can find him out: I think I am lost in a thicket, and it is impossible to find out my case in your preaching, it is a matchless case, a nameless case. Why, may be that word concerns you; Isa. lxii. 11, "Behold thy salvation cometh; and thou shalt be called, Sought out, not forsaken? And Hos. ii. 14, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to her;" or, as the word is in the margin, "speak to her heart." O comfortable, when God speaks not only to the ear, but to the heart! Well, hath he said it? O then, take his word and plead, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word to one that hath been incorrigible under directing providences, and hath his corruptions irritate by the cross, and rebellion rather increased by rods, instead of being reclaimed by word and rod? Is there any case like mine, or is there any word for me to lay hold upon? Yes; what think you of that word; Isa. lvii. 17, 18, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hide me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart?" Well, what follows? "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners." O astonishing wonder of free grace! that it was not said, "I have seen his ways and will damn him;" but, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I have seen his ways, and will save him. Hath he said so? Then put in your petition, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word to such as are under the power of unbelief and impenitence? The gospel is preached to believers and penitents: O God forbid but it was not preached to sinners, that are both unbelieving and impenitent, in order to bring them to faith and repentance: what says God to such? He says, what they ought to lay hold and plead upon; Psalm cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Acts v. 31, "Christ is exalted at

the right hand of God, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sin." Plead then he may do as he has said.

But is it possible that God is speaking to any that hath been a notorious sinner? Perhaps, all the country knows that I have been a scandalous debauchee, a lewd and wicked sinner, a profane, graceless wretch. O! if any were charmed with the joyful sound of gospel-grace to-day, he says Isa. i. 1, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Though you have sinned to the uttermost, I am able to save to the uttermost; is your name wonderful, as a sinner? Behold his name is Wonderful, as a Saviour. O hath he said so? Well, go and plead his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But besides my wickedness, I am grossly ignorant; doth God say anything to a poor brutish, ignorant creature, like me? Would you be taught? There is a word you may take hold of; John vi. 45, "It is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God." And, "Who teaches like him?" Hath he said so? Then take him at his word, saying, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word from God for one that hath crucified so many convictions as I have done; yea, and virtually crucified the Son of God afresh, by rejecting his calls, grieving his Spirit? Yea, we are called to preach the gospel to every creature, and even to the crucifiers of Christ: Repentance and remission of sin must be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. Why beginning at Jerusalem, among the crucifiers of Christ? Because they have most need of his blood to wash them; Christ came to save sinners, the chief of sinners. Hath he said so? Then put in your bill, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But will you tell me, is there any word for one that cannot think that it is as you are saying, that there is any merciful word in God's mouth, or any merciful thought in God's heart towards me; it cannot enter into my thought; I cannot let it light in my mind or heart? Why, God says, Isa. lv. 8, 9 "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." You are not to measure his thoughts by yours, no more than you can measure these wide heavens with your arms: but God knows his own thoughts,

and what says he of them? Jer. xxix. 11, 12, 13, "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. And ye shall seek me and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart." Hath he said so? Then go and plead his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

In a word, Do you want his presence? He hath said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Are you afraid of hell and damnation? He hath said, "Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, I have found out a ransom." O what encouragement is here to go and pray and plead, saying, Lord, "do as thou hast said."

O sirs, search the Scriptures, and study the word of God; consult and consider what he hath said; let there be no mouldy Bibles among you; let not the dust of your Bibles witness against you, for your eternal salvation depends upon your believing what he hath said, therefore study the faith of what he hath said. The Spirit is promised, and the scriptures are written to work this faith; Christ is exalted, and the throne of grace is erected to give this faith; and this faith comes by hearing what he hath said: by hearing not what Plato hath said, or Seneca hath said; what this or that man hath said, but what God hath said in his word, in this Bible, which is a book so prefaced, and so attested, as never any other book was; the Old Testament is prefaced by all the miracles wrought by Moses; the New Testament was prefaced by all the miracles wrought by Christ. And as Moses' Miracles were wrought before the Old Testament was written, so Christ's miracles were wrought before the New Testament was written: never a book was so attested as this even by a cloud of witnesses, a cloud of miracles, a cloud of martyrs, who sealed with their blood the truth contained in it. God, in the New Testament, exactly fulfils what he hath said in the Old; yea, the present state of all the world is a visible performing of scripture prophecies. Are not the Jews at this day a scattered and despised people, as the scriptures said they should be? Hath not God done as he hath said? Is not Antichrist, the long-lived man of sin and the cruel man of blood, as the scripture told he should be? Thus it is done as he hath said. Are not the Pagan parts of the earth the dark places and habitations of cruelty, as the scripture says they should be? Thus it is as he hath said. Do not the seven churches

of Asia lie desolate, as they were threatened, unless they repented? Thus it is as he hath said. Is not Mahomet, the false prophet, and his followers, like the waters of the great river Euphrates, to which they are compared in scripture? And thus is as he hath said. Does not the whole world lie in wickedness, as the word of God shows? And so it is as he hath said. Is not every saint as a brand plucked out of the burning, as the scripture speaks? And so it is as he hath said. Are not Deists and scoffers walking after their own lusts, and ridiculing the promise of Christ's coming, as the scripture speaks? And so it is as he hath said. Are not the black marks of perilous times in the last days upon us, as the scripture speaks? And so it is as he hath said. Are not the foolish virgins as many, yea, and more than the wise, and all slumbering and sleeping, and all according as he hath said? Doth not the Spirit speak expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, and accordingly it is as he hath said? Is not the gospel a savour of life to some, and a savour of death to others? Is not Christ precious to some, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to others, as the scripture speaks? And so it is as he hath said. Look about you, and see if anything that falls out be not an accomplishment of the word; and O how should you value this word! not a jot or tittle of it shall fall to the ground.

Walk in this garden of the scripture, and pluck up the flowers of gospel promises, and put them in your bosom; live by faith upon the promise, and be persuaded, whatever stands in the way, that he will do as he hath said. He will do so, for what he hath said he hath written, what he hath said he hath sealed, what he hath said he hath sworn, what he hath said he will never unsay; therefore, take hold of his word of grace, and hold him at his word in life and death, saying, "Do as thou hast said."

S E R M O N X X X V.

THE SAINT'S DUTY IN EVIL TIMES.¹

ISAIAH xxvi. 8.—“Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee.”

GOD hath promised his people a door of hope, in the valley of Achor, that they may sing there. These words are part of a song, composed a little before the captivity, by way of anticipation, showing what comfort may be found in the midst of all afflictions. The first part of the song is of a high strain, full of comfort; but, omitting the coherence, in this text you may notice, 1. The circumstances the Lord's people were in, they were under judgments. By *judgments* sometimes in scripture is understood the law and commandment; but here it is *affliction* as in the following verse. 2. Whence their affliction proceeded, from God; *thy* judgments. 3. The variety thereof, they are judgments, (in the plural number); and the *way* of his judgments. 4. The persons who were trysted with them, even the people of God, that are here representing their case, *we*. 5. To whom they relate their circumstances, to God himself; “In the way of thy judgments, *O Lord*.” 6. Their exercise; we have *waited* for thee.

From which I observe so many doctrines, for ground of meditation.

1. From the afflictions they were under, being called judgments. Observe, “That on whomsoever God inflicts any punishments, they are always just; for they are judgments, parts of his righteous administrations, as the righteous Judge of all the earth.” Hence learn,

1. To justify God, whatever be the affliction you are trysted with; and to ascribe righteousness and holiness to him: thus did David, when God had forsaken him and refused him an audience; Psal. xxii. 1, 2, 3, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my

(1) Where, or on what occasion, this sermon was preached, is uncertain; but by the place it has in the Author's notes, it is probable it was some time in the year 1733.

roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." So should we say, "I am so and so afflicted; but thou art holy, but thou art righteous, but thou art just."

2. To condemn ourselves when God so righteously judgeth us. We ought not to charge God foolishly; but to take with the charge of sin, and to bear the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him.

3. To see sin to be an iniquity and an unjust thing, because his afflicting for sin is just: "Thou art just when thou smitest, and clear when thou judgest."

4. To receive affliction dutifully and humbly; because we receive good things out of the hand of God, and should bless him because he is merciful; therefore, we should receive evil things out of his hand also, and adore him because he is just. He may afflict in sovereignty; but if he marks iniquity, we need quarrel no punishment he inflicts.

II. OBSERV. "That judgments upon a people do not come by chance, but have their original commission from God, therefore they are called *his* judgments, *thy* judgments."

The evil of sin is ours, but the evil of affliction the Lord challenges as his: "Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" It is God that chastiseth. Who brought such a man to a sick-bed, and who inflicted such and such a trouble? Who made that man a widower, and his children motherless; and such a woman a widow, and her children fatherless? Why, saith God, Am not I the Author of it? It is I that removes comforts; I that inflicts crosses. The cruellest act that ever was done in the world, so far as concerned the afflictive part of it, is what God challenges as his own deed, viz. the delivering of Christ to be crucified. It was not the hand of Pilate, but the hand of God himself; so it is said when Pilate spoke to Christ, saying, "Knowest thou not, that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin, John xix. 10, 11. Ye men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Him, being delivered by the

determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 22, 23. Whatever be the second cause, God is the first mover and the spring. Hence learn,

1. To take off your eyes and passions from instruments of trouble, and from the stone that is thrown, and look to the hand that throws it. See God in every affliction; it is his judgment, whether fatherly or wrathful.

2. Learn to exercise submission, patience and toleration. If it were only the hand of man, and the mere influence of some temporary cause, then perhaps there might be some liberty taken; but it is God: therefore let this stop our mouth for ever; "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it," Psalm xxxix. 9.

3. This should influence not only to toleration, but to supplication to God: "Is any afflicted? let him pray;" pray for grace to bear what he lays on your back; pray not only for patience, but for perseverance, since it is hard to hold out under affliction; pray for dependence upon himself: afflictions are the banishers of men from creature-comforts, and from resting on them; therefore we need to pray for a believing and close adherence to the Lord himself; and pray for deliverance; yet with submission to his will.

4. Learn to acknowledge his wise providence, that by judgment can bring about mercy; since they are his judgments, we may expect his mercifully accompanying them for good, and making them to work for good, to loose the heart from the creature. "He doth not afflict willingly," but he mercifully ordereth the affliction.

5 Learn to reap advantage by judgment, and to turn to him that smiteth, and to hear the rod, for it cometh with a lesson: *Schola crucis, schola lucis.*

III. OBSERV. "That God's judgments are various; from above, from beneath, from without, from within, from this hand and that hand: hence we read here of the way of his judgments." There are diversity of afflictions in the hand of God; some he exerciseth with affliction one way, and some another; some various ways, and with various afflictions, and multitudes of them: David knew this; "Deep calleth unto deep." Temptations, desertions, and many other ways: Paul was in perils diverse ways. Hence learn,

1. Men should beware of multiplying sin, lest God multiply judgments; for he hath many arrows in his quiver; an impenitent

sinner can never out-sin God's wrath ; his arrows of vengeance can never be spent.

2. Men little need to be secure when one judgment is over, as if the bitterness of death were past : God often brings a cloud after rain. When you have escaped one affliction, God can soon meet you with another ; he can soon make a son rise up against a father, as Absalom against David. You may escape the famine, and may fall by the sword ; you may escape one trial, and yet a greater may be behind. Be not secure.

3. If God hath so many and various afflictions wherewith to afflict you, leave it to the wisdom of God, in what kind and after what manner he will chastise you. Beware of afflictions of your own procuring : cut not out your own troubles ; let God cut and carve for you.

4. Learn hence, to stoop at the first blow, and not to put God at the charge of many arrows ; he will overcome when he judgeth, as he did with Pharaoh, that haughty monarch ; he had better dismissed Israel at first.

IV. OBSERV. "That the sins of God's own people may provoke him to send judgments on them, and on the place they live in." They may sin, as here, and bring judgments upon themselves and others : God may be provoked for the iniquity of sons and daughters. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Hence learn,

1. Let not God's own children forget their obnoxiousness to the discipline of his house ; "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments :—Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." Psalm lxxxix. 30. 32.

2. Let every one examine their own heart, and see what hand they have in bringing such a judgment, and such a judgment, whether spiritual or temporal.

3. It should teach us to stand in the gap when others make it wider, even the people of God themselves : how few then are there to stand and to fill it up, or stop it, in this day of degeneracy and backsliding ?

4 It should teach us to bewail the sins even of God's own people, their carnality, levity, wantonness, &c., and to live a life of continual dependence upon the Lord Jesus that we be not given up to the sway of our lusts ; and to humble ourselves. 2 Chron. vii. 4.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land.” Where we may remark, that as humiliation, supplication, and reformation are necessary, in order to have a land healed, if it is hurt even by the sins of God’s people ; so it is not our duties, or performance thereof, but God’s propriety in us, and covenant with us, that causeth him to show mercy to us. Which also teacheth us, how to wrestle with God in prayer ; the argument must be drawn from his free grace. And how to do duty acceptably ; it is by faith in Christ ; as our persons, so our services are accepted only in him : and his interest in his people is unchangeable.

V. OBSERV. “That we cannot go to a better hand to represent our afflicted circumstances, than the hand that smites us : In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, saith the people here, we come to pour out our complaints.” Hence,

1. Here is the mystery of faith ! It brings a man to that very God that was offended ; to him that judgeth righteously, that he may judge also mercifully.

2. God’s people, in their greatest trials, will never want a refuge : when they are under judgments, they make their Judge their refuge.

3. How condemnation-worthy are they that go to other physicians of no value, neglecting God himself, though it is the end of his chastisements to drive them to himself ?

4. Afflictions that come from God, with a blessing, leadeth to God by prayer ; and when we truly see them to be from him, as his judgments, they will lead us to him, to breathe out our souls to him, as the Deliverer.

VI. OBSERV. “That it is the duty of the afflicted to “wait for God.” It is the property of God’s people to wait patiently the time of God’s mercy in a way of hope, Lam. iii. 25, 26. “The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” It is not enough to wait on God, in the way of his mercies ; but we must wait on him in the way of his judgments also. Here I would, 1. Propose some questions, for explaining and clearing the doctrine. 2. Resolve some objections that may be made, against this duty of waiting upon God in the way of his judgments.

1st, The first thing was, to propose some questions for clearing the duty of waiting on the Lord.

QUEST. 1. What are we to wait upon God for?

ANSW. For all promised blessing of the new covenant; we ought to lay hold on his covenant, and then to wait for all the promised good thereof. As,

1. For God himself, his being our God, and acting the part of a God to us; since the great promise of the covenant is, "I will be thy God, and ye shall be my people."

2. For the new heart and spirit, according to the promise, "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 give you an heart of flesh." For promised pardon; "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." For promised healing, according to the promise, "I will heal your backslidings; I will love you freely." For the promised Spirit; "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." For promised presence; I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." For promised direction; "I will lead the blind in a way they know not." For promised salvation, grace and glory, and every good thing promised in the covenant; for what he hath promised to his children, to the church, to the nation. His promise is the rule for regulating our expectations, in waiting for God. We need to know what we are waiting for.

QUEST. 2. How, and in what manner are we to wait for him?

ANSW. 1. We are to wait believingly; believing and waiting are joined together, Psalm xxvii. 13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of God in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart." What is this waiting but continued believing, a living by faith.

2. We are to wait on the Lord industriously, obediently, and diligently; true faith is acting and working; we are to wait in the course of duty and diligence; so Elijah, when he prayed for rain, and sent his servant to see if there was any appearance thereof; he prayed again, and sent again, seven times.

3. We are to wait humbly: waiting is drawn from the service of an inferior to a superior, that waits upon him reverently and respectfully. O the infinite distance between God and us! How

humbly and reverently should we wait upon him, as our great Lord and Master? Psalm cxxiii. 1, 2.

4. We are to wait hopefully; Lam. iii. 26, "It is good for a man both to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of God." If his mercy be free, who would not wait and hope in his mercy, however unworthy?

5. We should wait upon the Lord cheerfully and affectionately; "For he meeteth him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness. Why art thou discouraged, O my soul; hope thou in God," Psalm xlii. 5; xliii. 5. Give not way to discouragement and despondency, for thus we dishonour God, and discredit his way. He loveth a cheerful giver, a cheerful seeker, a cheerful waiter.

6. Wait on the Lord constantly and perseveringly; Amos xii. 6, "Wait on thy God continually." Wait at the pool till the angel trouble the water; wait on him all the days of your appointed time, till your change come. There is no period here but death.

QUEST. 3. When are we to wait, at what time?

ANSW. At all times, as I was saying just now; and particularly in the way of his judgments. As,

1. A time of trouble and affliction.—Affliction from God is the furnace wherein God tries his metal, tries their faith, hope, and patience; therein we are to wait for him.—Afflictions from men; say not in your haste, You will repay mischief to them that hurts you; I will have a-mends of such a man. "Christ, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not."—Afflictions from friends, from enemies, and devils; Job met with all these, and waited on God in them.

2. A time of want; outward want, is a time for waiting; therefore we are called to be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, make our requests known. Hath he provided a Christ for your souls, and will he not provide a crumb for your bodies? Inward want; "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallies: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water," Isa. xli. 17, 18.

3. A time of temptation, is a fit time for waiting on the Lord, so Paul, when tempted, he besought the Lord thrice.

4. A time of desertion; Isa. viii. 17, "And I will wait upon

the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob ; and I will look for him."

5. A time of fear ; Psalm lvi. 3, " What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."

6. A time of weakness ; though called to duty or warfare, wait on him for strength ; " They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," Isa. xl. 31.

7. In a word, we are to wait on him in secret, in private, in public, in good and bad company, in all that we go about, or are called to be employed in.

QUEST. 4. Why are we to wait for him ?

ANS. 1. We are to wait on him, because he hath commanded us ; Psalm xxvii. 14, " Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart ; wait, I say, on the Lord." Whatever he commands is surely our duty ; and there is no greater reason, for any duty, than his sovereign will.

2. Because of his relation to us as our God, Maker, and Master ; Psal. cxxiii. 2, " Behold as the eyes of servants look into the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress ; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us."

3. Because all things wait on him ; Psalm cxlv. 15, " The eyes of all things wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season." All the inanimate creatures do so passively ; we ought to so actively.

4. Because it is our interest ; Isa. xxx. 18, " Blessed are they that wait for him." Isa. xl. 31, " They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

2dly, We propose to resolve some objections, that may be made against this duty of waiting on God in the way of his judgments.

[1.] Some plead against this duty, because of their darkness and unclearness about their saving interest in the God they are called to wait upon ; if I knew he was my God, I might have encouragement to wait on him ; but I am in the dark about my interest in him, and why should I wait for him ?

ANSW. 1. Let it be one of your reasons for waiting upon God, to deal with him for making your right to the covenant sure ; Pray him to send forth his light and truth to be a guide to you.

2. Thy want of clearness, in this matter, doth not make void his call and command to thee, to wait on him. This is indeed necessary for the doing it more comfortably and successfully.

3. When you cannot wait on him, as one you know to be yours, by special right ; you are to wait on him as one that offers himself to you, and to be yours through Christ.

4. Let not your darkness be a lazy, idle darkness ; but be stirred up to diligence by duty and means ; and if thou art as diligent, tender, humble, and holy under thy darkness, as others under their light and assurance, it is well ; and will have an agreeable issue.

[2.] Some plead, how can I wait on him, in the way of his judgments, when I have procured these judgments by my sins ? If my sufferings were cleanly, then I could wait for God, under them ; but my manifold transgressions have justly provoked him to send these judgments on me.

ANSW. 1. Your sin bringing on judgments, doth not loose your obligation to the duty of waiting upon God under them, though it may make the performance more difficult. In Psalm cxxx. 1, there the Psalmist is in the deeps, yet he cries to God ; though sin was at the door, therefore, he cries also for forgiveness, ver. 3 ; intimating, that sin had brought him into the deeps.

2. Thou art the more obliged to wait upon God under his judgments, that sin hath procured them ; and that whatever way you look on this duty of waiting. (1.) If you understand it for submission to God under sad providences, and patient abiding God's time and leisure for relief, then your sin is a strong motive to this waiting. What better reason for holy submission to his judgments, than that we have brought them on ourselves ? And what better reason to wait his time, than that we, by our sin, deserve eternal misery ? See Micah vii. 7. " I will look unto the Lord ; I will wait for the God of my salvation ; my God will hear me," Lam. iii. 30. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ? (2.) If you understand waiting for a hopeful expectation of good from God, and of promised covenant mercy, then the consideration of thy sins ought not to hinder thy waiting for this in the way of his judgments, though thou hast provoked him thereunto ; because the ground of your hope of the fulfilling of covenant promises, is the free grace of God in Christ, who hath performed the condition of the covenant ; and sovereign grace can neither be

furthered by thy good, nor hindered by thy ill ; though yet still good things promised in the covenant, are to be expected in the way of duty, not in the way of going on in sin ; therefore, set about the exercise of repentance, judging thyself as Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, 20 ; and by faith apply to the fountain of the blood of Christ, 1 John i. 9.

3. It hath been the practice of God's children to wait upon him under judgments, even though they were conscious of sin bringing them on, Psal. xlix. 5, " Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about ? " Again saith the church, " Though our iniquities testify against us, yet do thou for thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Have we not the more reason to wait on him for pardoning and purifying grace, that our sin hath brought sad things upon us ?

4. Christ sympathizes with you, even in these afflictions, which you bring upon yourselves by your sin. As a King, he corrects you for your sins ; and yet as an Husband and Head, sympathizes with you, and grieves for the misery that, by your sin and folly, you bring upon yourselves ; Isa. lxiii. 9, " In all their afflictions he is afflicted ; " even in these they sinfully procured. See Judges x. 15, 16. Israel had by their idolatry provoked God to give them up to a cruel enemy, yet it is said, " His soul was grieved for the affliction of Israel." How should this encourage us to wait on him, and expect his mercy !

[3.] Some plead against this duty in their heart, from the fearfulness of the providence that befalls them, the irrecoverableness of their losses, and the singularity of their cases : " Is there any sorrow like my sorrow ? "

ANSW. 1. No trouble, be it ever so great, hath befallen you, but what others of God's children have either met with the same, or with the equivalent ; therefore, say not your case is singular, 1 Peter iv. 12.

2. However singular thy affliction be, yet still thou art the more obliged to this duty, as a duty shaped out for a sad condition. I know no wrathful dispensation a child of God can fall under, that doth not consist with thoughts of peace towards them, to give them an expected end ; and where it is not good for him both to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God, Lam. iii. 26.

3. In waiting for God, we are to wait for what he hath promised, and as he hath promised it. Your temporal losses, be it of

a friend, an husband, wife, father, mother, children, &c., may indeed be irrecoverable ; in many cases you are not to expect a restoration of the particular thing, by the loss whereof God corrects you : but it is sufficient, if he gives you as good ; if he gives you in gold what you have lost in silver. He can make up your losses another way, by giving thee as good ; yea, and making thee find more comfort, sweetness, and satisfaction in himself, than ever thou hast found in these enjoyments. Some losses cannot be repaired without a miracle, in the particular itself ; and for this thou hast no promise ; but thou art to wait on him for the sanctification of thy loss, and for a sweet up-making of it.

4. Sense and reason, which go upon visible appearances, are not the grounds of faith, nor of waiting upon God ; but the covenant and promise is the ground thereof. Therefore, having God's word to build upon, on him you are to wait ; though there be nothing appearing to sense and reason that promises relief : but let faith look to what God hath spoken in his holiness ; and then there is ground to rejoice and to hope. Faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, will see salvation coming, when sense cannot perceive it, but seems to see the quite contrary ; therefore, learn to walk by faith, and not by sight, 2 Cor. v. 7.

[4.] Some plead, they have waited long, and are not the better, but rather trysted with greater trouble ; and therefore are ready to say, " Why should I wait on the Lord any longer ? " The longer I wait, the greater my trouble grows.

ANSW. 1. It is not strange though the Lord should make his people wait long ; yea, wait for good and behold evil, and make greater trouble shoulder out the lesser, Jer. viii. 15, " We looked for peace, but no good came ; and for a time of health, and behold trouble." Micah i. 12, " For the inhabitants of Maroth waited carefully for good ; but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem." When the end for which affliction came is not reached, yet still it is our duty to continue waiting, while he continues afflicting ; Hos. xii. 6, " Wait on thy God continually." We are to wait on him, till the day of calamity be over-past ; Psalm lvii. 1, " Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee ; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be over-past."

2. Whatever be the changes of divine providence, his love is unchangeable. He may multiply new troubles, instead of delivering

from old ones ; yet all this cannot separate from his love, Romans viii. 35, 38.

3. Let times of trouble be never so great or long, yet they are not comparable either to the eternal torments of the damned, or the eternal joys of the redeemed ; the former thou hast deserved, the latter thou art entitled to. Why then fret, and not wait patiently on God, under thy troubles ? They are nothing to the eternal misery of the damned, from which thou art delivered ; nothing to the eternal happiness of the redeemed, to which thou hast a right ; and that will soon swallow up all sorrow.

4. Let them be never so great, or of long continuance, they will have an end ; "The expectation of the needy shall not perish for ever," Psalm ix. 18. See Psalm xxxvii. 37. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous ; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all," Psalm xxxiv. 19. "The vision is for an appointed time," Hab. ii. 3. "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry," Psal. xl. 1. The Lord's time of giving out covenant-mercies, is the due time, the only time, the best time, the fittest time. Through hastiness of spirit you may think it is more than time, that the promised outget, or promised mercy were given ; but thou art not a competent judge, in this case. If we get our mercies or outget in our time, God would lose the glory, and we would lose the advantage he designs thereby ; he hath made everything beautiful in his time, not in ours. Let nothing therefore hinder your waiting on him, in the way of his judgments. "He is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him." Isa. xxx. 18.

We now proceed to offer some directions, for the right management of this duty of waiting on the Lord in the way of his judgments.

Say you, I cannot wait for God, being of an unbelieving fretful spirit. What help would you offer ?

ANSW. In general, without a change of nature, by regenerating grace ; and without strength, by the assisting grace of the Spirit, it is impossible this duty can be performed. Be sensible of this. And more particularly,

1. Labour to see the insufficiency and vanity of all things beside God ; and to have a right uptaking of his sufficiency, and graciousness through Christ, to be forthcoming for thee in thy worst condition ; without this, a soul will never wait for God. While people expect relief from the creature ; and from this and the other

mean; and see not the insufficiency of all things beside God, and how unprofitable and unsuccessful every course will prove, without him, they will never look to God and wait for him. And while people have no spiritual uptaking of the sufficiency of God, for their upmaking in every condition, and of his graciousness to make that sufficiency forthcoming through Christ, but entertain jealous thoughts of God, they will not wait upon him; but if men had once a view of creature-insufficiency, and of God's all-sufficiency, and of his graciousness to make it forthcoming, this would marvellously help to wait for him, and cry, "Ashur shall not save us, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods," Hos. xiv. 3.

2. Frequently call up your souls to this duty, resolutely essaying it, over the belly of all obstructions and difficulties: as in Isa. viii. 17; Micah vii. 7; Psal. iii. 5. Such resolutions would put the soul in a waiting and watching posture.

3. By faith bring strength from Christ, who can easily empower you, Phil. iv. 13; for, "Without him we can do nothing;" and bring all encouragement from the covenant, where there are promises made *of* waiting, and *to* waiting. Psal. xxvii. 14, "Wait on the Lord and be of good courage;" Object. But I cannot: why then it is added, "He will strengthen thine heart." There are also sweet promises *to* waiting; Isa. xl. 31; xxx. 18; lxiv. 4, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.—And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Lam. iii. 25, The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."

3. Be much in prayer for a waiting frame, and against the distempers of the spirit that hinders it. Go and tell God of your wants, and of your ills; and pray him to give that patience, faith, hope, and holy submission, and a waiting spirit; "Their hearts shall live that seek God."

5. Let it be a deed of the soul; "My soul doth wait," saith the Psalmist. (1.) Let it be a knowing distinct deed of the soul;

"Truly our soul waiteth for him," Psal. lxii. 1. (2.) A voluntary deed of the soul; not of necessity, but of choice, and with delight, Mic. vii. 7, "I will wait for the God of my salvation." (3.) An earnest deed of the soul; Rom. viii. 19, "The earnest expectation of the creature, waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God;" as the weary watch waits and longs for the morning, Psal. cxxx. 6. (4.) An humble deed of the soul. Waiting properly takes in the distance that is between an inferior and superior, the person waited on, and the person waiting; "As the eyes of the servants look to the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us," Psalm cxxiii. 2. Consider the great distance between God, your heavenly Master, and you. (5.) Let it be a resolute deed like that, "I have sworn, and I will perform." Psalm 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 all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple." (7.) Let it be a fixed and constant deed of the soul, notwithstanding of one disappointment on the back of another, during the whole way of his judgments, "Wait on thy God continually, Hos. xii. 6, I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried; mine eyes fail, while I wait upon thee," Psalm lxix. 3. Wait on God in the way following the text; "The desire of our soul is to thy name."

We now offer some Motives to enforce a compliance with the duty. 1. Consider that God, and the good things you need, in your sad condition, are worth the waiting for, were it never so long, Psalm lxxv. 5, 6, 7, "My soul wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God." Shall a husbandman have patience for the fruit of the earth, and wait for the former and the latter rain; and the soldier wait for victory; the merchant for gain, and the watch for the morning; and yet shall not souls in trouble wait for God, their Rock, their Salvation, their Refuge, &c.? 2. The time of God's delaying promised mercies and relief, is God's waiting time, as well as ours; Isa. xxx. 18, "He waiteth that he may be gracious." He expects a suitable time to show mercy. Thou thinkest thou waitest long for God; but truly he waits as long for thee, and for a fit sea-

son to show mercy on the soul that waits for him. 3. Waiting for God in trouble, keeps from being taken away with the temptation that attends the trouble. Satan takes the time of trouble to winnow poor souls with his temptations, and to drive them away from God to some monstrous course or other, for relief: but when the soul is once got to a waiting posture, they are much secured against these temptations. "I trusted in him, and am helped. Wait on the Lord, and he will strengthen thine heart." 4. God doth all things well, and maketh all things work together for good to them that love, and wait for him, Rom. viii. 28. They shall all be brought to say, that he hath dealt well with them, according to his word. Therefore, in the way of his judgments, let us wait on him. 5. Consider how complete he is: "Christ is all and in all." Consider how desirable he is: "He is altogether lovely." Therefore wait on him even in the way of his judgments.

We have reason to expect, that before good days come, there shall terrible days come. Why God hath given such a commission as Isaiah got, chap. vi. 10. "Go make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and convert, and be healed." We cannot limit the Lord, nor speak of his time: but surely the sins of our day are greater than the sins of those in Isaiah's time; for we have sinned against greater light, clearer gospel-light, than ever they had. And the greater our privileges are, the greater our guilt in neglecting them: the greater our guilt, the more awful will our judgments be. Perhaps he is to shake the nations before the Desire of all nations shall come. Believe, watch, and pray, for your enemies, are living and lively: corruption is not destroyed. Watch, and make not your watching a burden: but take up with it in a gospel-way, which is the easy way, and the pleasant way. How? You know it is not the business of the watch to fight the enemies; but whenever the enemy appears, to go and tell the captain-general: so your business in watching is not to go forth against the enemy; but whenever you see him appearing, whenever Satan attacks, by any temptation, and upon the very first motion of the enemy, go and tell the Captain of salvation, saying, "Lord, here is the enemy; Lord help me:" See that you mistake not Christ, when you cry to him, and he seemeth not to hear and answer. Mistake him not; the woman of Canaan knew the mind of Christ better; notwithstanding all the repulses she met with, she

looked through them all to his kind heart. Remember what David did, Psal. lxxxv. 8. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak : " I will hear him. Satan, sin, and the world put in their word ; but they have never a good word to say of Christ : therefore, I will not hear what they say, nor what unbelief saith, nor whatever the enemy saith ; but " I will hear what God the Lord will say ; he will speak peace," as a God in Christ reconciling the word to himself: he speaks peace in the covenant of grace. He speaks peace in his word ; I will hear him, and listen to his word. Come to Jesus saying, " Lord help me." However great the congregation is, yet there is room in Christ for you all : therefore, I beg you will all come to him, and wait on him ; and come you must to him, or perish. Let the echo of your soul then be, We have come unto thee, O Lord ; " Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee."

S E R M O N X X X V I.

THE PROMISING GOD, A PERFORMING GOD.¹

GEN. xxviii. 15.—"For I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

AT the last sacramental solemnity of this sort, I spoke a little upon the great plea and prayer of faith upon the divine promise, in the words of David, 2 Sam. vii. 25. "Lord, do as thou has said." We may now look upon this text that I have read, as the gracious answer of God to that prayer of faith in the words of the great God himself to Jacob. "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of ;" or, "till I have done as I have said."

What God said once to Joshua, chap. i. 5. "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Even so, what God said to Jacob here, doth equally belong to all believers in Christ: "I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to the of." Hath

(1) This sermon was preached on a thansgiving-day, immediately after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Abbot's-hall, October 22, 1733.

God condescended to speak to you, and caused you to hope in his word of grace or promise, at this or any former occasion? Here is good news to take away with you, that the promising God will in due time be a performing God, and that you may not think long, and weary or faint in your mind, apprehending what a weary time it may be between the promise and the performance. Here is supporting encouragement in the meantime, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." What I have said I will do, and will not leave thee till I have done it.

In the preceding part of this chapter, you find Jacob was forced to flee from his father's house, upon the account of the wrath of his brother Esau: he is hastened away to Padanaram, and on his way he comes to Luz, which afterwards, on the account of a notable emergent, was called *Bethel*, where God signally appeared and discovered himself to him in great glory, suitably to his strait. Here he was benighted, verse 11, and was obliged to lie in the open field. Some of the saints and servants of God have been put to great hardships, through the violence and rage of their persecuting brethren. But though Jacob's bed was hard, yet his rest was sweet; while he had a hard pillow of stone under his head, the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and spake comfortably to him. God's time of speaking comfort to his people, is readily when they are most destitute of other comforts; then he is most kind, when brethren come to be most unkind.

You may observe two things; first, what God showed to Jacob; and then what he said to him.

1. What he showed to him: he manifested to him his glory, as the God of providence, and the God of grace in Christ, who is here represented to him by the ladder reaching from heaven to earth, verse 12; and all the intercourse between heaven and earth is by this ladder.

2. What he spake to him: verse 13. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." As the vision was suitable to his present case, letting him understand that he had a good guide and a good guard, not only the angels of God, but the Lord of angels; so the words that God spake to him were suitable to his present need. The Lord spake from the top of the ladder; for all the glad tidings we receive from heaven come through Jesus Christ. Here are former promises made to

Abraham and Isaac, his father and grandfather, repeated and ratified to Jacob; whereby God intimated, that he would be the same to him that he had been to them. Here are fresh promises made to him suited to his present condition. He was to leave his kindred, and to want their presence; God promised to be present with him: "I am with thee." He was in the fear of Esau; God promised, saying, "I will keep thee." He was journeying to an unknown place; God promised to keep him in all places whithersoever he went. He was apprehensive he would never see his own country again; God promised he would bring him again to that land. He seemed to be left of all his friends and relations; God promised, saying, "I will not leave thee." Providence seemed to cross the promise, while he is thus going as an exile to a place far distant; God assures him of the performance of all he had said, in due season: "I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." When God speaks to his people, he speaks to the point; he speaks to the case: his words are suited to their present exigencies; and not only so, but to their future straits also. Jacob knew not, but God knew and foresaw what hardships he would meet with in his uncle Laban's service; and in a suitableness to the event that was to take place, he assures him, saying, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." This was such a gracious manifestation, and such a wonderful intercourse that God had with Jacob, as obliged Jacob to put a mark upon the place, and call it *Bethel*, the house of God, the gate of heaven.

The text is not so much a new promise, as a repeated confirmation of what he had before promised, for establishing and fortifying of Jacob's faith; for, says God, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Where we may observe two things.

1. A confirming word concerning the issue; or what he would bring out of these promises, that they shall not be mere sayings, but doings: "I will do what I have spoken to thee of." Have I said it, and will I not do it? "In the end the vision shall speak."

2. A supporting word in the interim, that faith may not faint in the meantime before the accomplishment come, "I will not leave thee, until I have done it." Jacob might think, Alas! it may be a long time between the promise now made, and the accomplishment of it. What will become of me in the meantime? And, indeed, he

had dark days and hard service before his hand ; and there was long twenty years between Bethel-visit here, where he met with God, and God spake to him in this manner, and Peniel-visit, when he wrestled with God and prevailed, and when God came to do for him some of the great things he had here spoken to him of. And in that interval of twenty years, between Bethel and Peniel, many vicissitudes and changes, trials and difficulties, occurred in Jacob's lot ; but, for his support in the meantime, God assures him that he would never leave him, until he had done that which he had spoken to him of. Hence the doctrine I would speak a little unto, is,

OBSERV. That whatever dark and dismal days may befall the children of God, upon the back of sweet Bethel-visits, that he allows to them, yet he will not leave them, till he hath accomplished all the Bethel-promises that he made to them.

He will never leave them, till he do what he hath spoken to them of. He will go on, till he hath done as he hath said. We may say of our Lord Jesus, when once he hath spoken to a soul, and begun to do graciously, as Naomi said to Ruth concerning Boaz, Ruth iii. 18, " Sit still, my daughter, till thou knowest how the matter will fall ; for the man will not rest till he hath finished the thing this day." Even so, when Christ hath begun to speak kindly, the poor believer may sit still and wait patiently, till the appointed time of accomplishing his word ; for, the God-man will not rest until he hath finished the thing. We may be confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun the good work in us, and said the good word to us, will perform it, and finish it ; Phil. i. 6, " I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

We find how this doctrine was verified, both in Jacob and his seed.

1. In Jacob's own person. After this discovery of God that he enjoyed at Bethel, many dark days and much hard service he endured, yet God did not leave him. When Laban cast down his countenance on him, he said, putting him in mind of his Bethel visit he made to him, and the Bethel vow he caused him to make ; Gen. xxxi. 13, " I am the God of Bethel." Yea, God never left him, till he did what he spoke to him, both in prospering him in the place where he was a stranger so long, and in bringing him back to

his own land though he was in great danger ; when Laban was pursuing him behind, and his brother Esau meeting him in the face, yet God preserved him according to his word, and brings him back to the land he promised to bring him to, and then sends him to visit Bethel, Gen. xxxv. 7, where he built an altar, and called it EL BETHEL, that is, the *God of Bethel* ; and so remarked the goodness of God to him, in not leaving him till he had done all that he spoke to him of.

2. In Jacob's seed this doctrine was verified, particularly with reference to the promise made to them, concerning their inheriting the land of Canaan, and expelling the Canaanites to make room for them. See and compare Josh. xxi. 43-55, with Josh. xxiii. 14, 15, and 1 Kings viii. 56. God will take his own time of doing what he hath spoken ; but he will be sure to do it, whatever difficulties intervene between the promise and performance.

In handling of this subject, I would incline to observe the following method, through divine assistance :—

- I. What we are to understand by the Bethel-visits, that God may allow his people.
- II. Consider some of the dark days that may follow upon these Bethel interviews.
- III. Consider and explain the promise here made, that he will not leave them, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of, notwithstanding of the dark days that may intervene between the promise and the accomplishment.
- IV. Offer some grounds upon which the believer may be assured, that God will not leave him, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to him of.
- V. Deduce some inferences for the application.

I. The first thing proposed was, to show what we are to understand by the Bethel-visits God may allow his people. In order to this, I premise, it is sure none are acquaint with what we call a Bethel-visit, except these that are in a peculiar manner blessed of the Lord, as Jacob was, of whom his father Isaac said, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed," Gen. xxvii. 33. They are the blessed objects of God's love, and the blessed heirs of the promises ; brought into covenant with God, and joined to the Lord by converting grace and saving faith. And as none are acquainted

with Bethel-visits but these that are thus blessed, so it is with great variety that the Lord's people do enjoy such appearances of God. Though they have not all experience of Bethel interviews with God, of the same measure and degree with that of Jacob ; yet they have such experience of meeting with God as are substantially the same. Whatever difference there may be in circumstances, yet they are such as they may call the place Bethel, the house of God, the gate of heaven.

In the illustration of this point, I shall here observe, 1. The substance ; 2. The ordinary circumstances of such interviews with God as may be called Bethel-visits.

1st, The substance, or substantial part thereof, is God's gracious meeting with them, so as they may have it to say, "The Lord God of the Hebrews met with us," *Exod. iii. 18.* And that either in public ordinances, or in secret duties, by night or by day, in the city or in the field ; and this meeting hath these two things especially in it, which we find was in Jacob's meeting with God here in Bethel, the one is the manifestation of his glory, and the other is the communication of his mind.

1. This Bethel-visit includes a manifestation of his glory. Jacob here sees the glory of God in Christ represented as the ladder reaching between heaven and earth. Why then you may call that a Bethel wherever it hath pleased God to reveal Christ in you, and to open your eyes to see his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, as the way to the Father, and as the ladder by which you may ascend up to heaven. Have you seen at this, or any former occasion, Christ to be, as it were, the ladder set upon the earth, in his humiliation, and reaching unto heaven, and so that all the rounds and steps of the ladder are completed in his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right hand ; "By him do we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, that our faith and hope might be in God?" *1 Pet. i. 21.* And have we thus, by faith, stept up the ladder, the only way? Hath thus the God that commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined into our hearts, not our heads only, but our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, so as our hearts have gone out after a revealed Christ? Well, this is one substantial part of a Bethel-visit, the manifestation of his glory.

2. This Bethel-visit includes a communication of his mind. Jacob here not only hath God manifesting his glory to him, but also

communicating his mind as a promising God, saying, I am your father's God, "The God of Abraham and Isaac:" and in testimony that I will be your God also, I will do so and so to you: and thus he communicates his mind to him by promise of grace. Why then, you may call that a Bethel-visit when God comes and intimates his love, or communicates his mind, and speaks into your heart by some word of grace and promise, opening up some secret truth of the gospel to you, and opening your understanding to apprehend, and your heart to apply it, and causing you to hope in his word, as Yea and Amen in Christ. If God hath spoken a word to your heart, and made you take him at his word, so as you can look to him, and say, "Remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope," wherever it was, you may say the name of the place was BETHEL, and that you found him in Bethel, and there he spake to you, Hos. xii. 4. Now, concerning these visits, we may remark four things.

(1.) That the Lord may allow a Bethel-manifestation and communication to his people, and yet they may not know that God is present with them, in such a manner as he is, till an after-reflection thereupon. Hence said Jacob here, ver. 16, when he awaked out of his sleep, "Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not." God's people may be surprised with his visits, that though they cannot but be conscious of his coming when he approaches to them, yet they may not be sure about the qualities of that visit, whether it was a saving divine manifestation, till they come to examine and reflect upon it, and find that it was none other but the powerful presence of God: for, they carry their own evidence along with them; Surely he was here.

(2.) Bethel-visits fill the soul with a holy awe of God, ver. 17, "How dreadful is this place?" They that see God will see cause of holy trembling and blushing before him, and the sight will humble and fill them with holy awe and reverence. Saving discoveries do not elevate and puff up with pride, but impress the soul with holy dread. The sweet pleasure and joy that attend the discovery is tempered with holy fear and awe, in so much, that they fear the Lord and his goodness, and rejoice with trembling. The place where God manifests himself is both a joyful and a dreadful place. Praise is the most joyful and heartsome exercise; yet God is said to be fearful in praises, because of the dread and awe of God that is on the heart of these that praise him; for Great is the glory of the Lord which they see who sing in the ways of the Lord.

(3.) Divine visits are not excluded from any place ; even here, where Jacob little thought of meeting with God, here he meets with him, he finds him in Bethel, and says, "This is the house of God, and the gate of heaven." Wherever we are, in the house or field, if we meet with God there, we may call it the house of God, and the gate of heaven : for, heaven is in his gracious presence.

(4.) Divine visits are quickening, ver. 18. He rises early in the morning, and sets about solemn worship of the God that appeared to him. He sets up the stone for a pillar, and annoints it as a memorial of what passed and gave the place a new name. A sweet communion we have with God ought to be remembered ; so his grant of mercy calls for our return of duty, Jacob is here also quickened to vow himself away to the Lord, and promises to serve him ; and, indeed, our vows and promises are then regular and evangelical when they are the fruit of God's manifesting himself in the covenant of promise to us, and to Jacob here ; for whatever we promise, we can perform nothing but in virtue of his promise to us.

2dly, As to the ordinary circumstances of such Bethel-interviews with God. Several of these may be gathered from the history of Jacob, and will be found to correspond with the believer's experience, as in these following particulars.

1. That in the Lord's ordinary way of dealing, when he deals effectually with poor souls, and when he hath a mind to bring them to a Bethel, he readily brings them to a wilderness, and there deals powerfully with them, and speaks kindly to them ; or to their heart. Thus here Jacob is in the wilderness, being banished from his father's house. Though he was a son of the promise, yet he was forced to run to a strange country. God allures his people, and brings them to a wilderness, and then speaks comfortably ; gives them the valley of Achor for a door of hope. Some here readily have come to this communion, or the like, and have found themselves in a wilderness of confusion, darkness, and dispondency, and yet had, ere all was done, ground to call the place **BETHEL**, by reason of his meeting with them, and speaking kindly to them.

2. The sweetest discoveries of God are readily ushered in with darkest nights. God's visit is ordinarily like the break of the day upon the back of a dark night. And, indeed, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Psalm xxx. 5. As it was literally in the dark night that God visited Jacob here ; so you will see what a dark night of trouble, distress, and perplexity,

Jacob was in when he met with God at Peniel, and wrestled with the angel and prevailed ; " Jacob was left alone ; and there wrestled a man with him till the break of day," Genesis xxxii. 24. He had been before this compassed with clouds of fear on the account of Esau, who was meeting him with four hundred men. You that are in a dark night of fear and distress may be encouraged to wait on, for readily the Lord ushers in manifestations of himself with the darkest nights.

3. As the Lord is pleased to usher in sweet manifestations of himself with a dark night ; so readily a dark night follows upon their sweet manifestations. And many times they are as a blink before a storm ; and the people of God often find this to their sad experience, making them see ground to be sober after their sweet experiences. Jacob had a good night in Bethel ; but new straits followed upon it, particularly in the hard service and harsh treatment he met with from Laban. Here is a visit ; and presently follows a night of trouble again. We mention this, not for your discouragement, but that you may not be surprised ; for, there may be a sudden turn in your spiritual affairs : " I said, my mountain stands strong ; but thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."

4. Sometimes the night that follows upon the Lord's manifesting himself may be darker, and the darkness of it greater than the night they had before their Bethel manifestation. Jacob was in a strait, before the Bethel-visit, through the fear of Esau ; but after that kindly visit, the strait was greater, and the night darker, while he had not only the fear, but the feeling of Laban's displeasure ; perhaps you had a dark night before the Lord paid you a visit ; but what if a darker night shall follow upon that visit, even some grievous temptation to raze all again. The church was brought to the banquetting-house, and his banner over her was love ; yet afterwards to the dark shadow, where she cries, " I sought him, but I found him not." What a sweet communion had the disciples with Christ at the last supper ! yet followed with the darkest night of temptation, trouble, and scattering : the shepherd of Israel himself being smitten, the sheep were scattered. When the Lord allows you sweet Bethel-interviews and blessings, you may mistake them, and think they presage nothing but a life of joy and comfort henceforth, and that former trials are at an end ; and yet they may be only preparations for approaching trials, and encouragements to faith and hope under future troubles. This leads me,

II. To the second thing proposed, which was to show, what dark and dismal days may follow upon these Bethel-discoveries. There are these following dark days, or rather dark nights, that may follow upon Bethel-visits.

1. A dark night of long absence, a night of weary desertion may follow. Jacob had not, for twenty years, such a night as he had at Bethel; there may be long twenty years' travel between Bethel and Peniel. Perhaps you had much heavenly warmth by a live coal from the altar, which God manifested himself, and you got a heart to close with Christ. The place was like a heaven upon earth to you; but, perhaps, many a weary day you have had since that time. May be you have never had such a gale since that time. Or, if this communion had been a Bethel to you, think it not strange, though a night of absence and hiding may follow, and though the night be long.

2. A dark night of forgetfulness may follow upon the Bethel-visit, so as it is hard to know how secure people may grow; and they may lose the sweet impression of the visit, and have little or no kindly remembrance of the sweet days they had at Bethel. This dark night followed upon Jacob's meeting with God here; it seems he had much forgotten it, till God puts him in mind of it, saying, Gen. xxxi. 13, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow." Jacob, might he say, do you not mind the time? do you not mind the place? do you not mind the two pillars? do you not mind the promise? do you not mind the Bethel, where I showed my covenant to thee, and accepted thy vows unto me? Be not discouraged with the fear of Laban behind pursuing you, and Esau before meeting you; it is enough to drive all fears and discouragements away, that "I am the God of Bethel;" I am the same God now, that I was at that day to you: however, Jacob had lost the sweet impression, and lost the kind remembrance of Bethel, till God himself was the remembrancer. In the dark night of oblivion, all may go out of sight, and out of mind.

3. A dark night of temptations, fears, and discouragements may follow upon a sweet Bethel visit. The gracious encouragement that God gave to Jacob afterwards, shows, what fears and discouragements he was under, and under which he was ready to sink, if God had not supported and comforted him from time to time. Well, even after a Bethel-visit you may be grievously tempted, to call all that you met with but a delusion: yea, to think it was Satan

that was working with you, and not the living God, and to think that your coming to a communion-table was but a taking a seal of your own condemnation. Some may be tempted to fear that God hath a controversy with them, and does not observe their affliction. It seems this was a part of the dark night that came upon Jacob; and therefore God shows him that it was an ungrounded jealousy: "For, says he, I have seen all that Laban hath done to thee," Gen. xxxi. 12. Though thou wast not sensible of my care, yet I have all this time had a special care about thee, and increased thy stock, notwithstanding of what Laban did. It is hard to believe the divine care in a dark day, wherein we apprehend his displeasure; and yet when he returns, he can make us see he had a special care of us, when we knew not of it; and that he hath been doing all things well, even when we were fearing all these things were against us.

4. A dark night of wants and straits may follow upon Bethel-visits; both outward and inward wants: temporal wants, such as Jacob mentioned, when he complained that Laban had changed his wages ten times, Gen. xxxi. 41. Spiritual wants, and want of comfort, such as Jacob was under, when in his strait he could draw no comfort, even from an old Bethel, till God gave him a new visit, by telling him, that he was the God of Bethel. Think not strange, though, upon the back of Bethel-visits, you be trysted with great straits, outward and inward, and perhaps can draw no comfort from a back-look upon Bethel; for, whenever you can draw comfort and encouragement from it, you may reckon it a new visit; when, in a dark day, you can remember him from the land of Jordan, and remember what God did to you at such a time.

5. A dark night of persecution, even by friends and brethren, may follow upon Bethel-visits, as Jacob found after this visit, when persecuted by Laban, his father-in-law, and Esau his brother, that was conceived in the same womb with him, though God mercifully restrained their anger and fury, that they got not their will of Jacob: "For the wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder thereof he will restrain." Think not strange, then, even from Bethel-meetings with God, though you should be tried with a dark night of persecution, even from envious friends and false brethren. The church and spouse of Christ speaks of a Bethel; Song i. 4, "The king hath brought me into his chambers, we will be glad and rejoice in thee;" and yet a hot and scorching persecution followed; verse 6, "The sun hath looked upon me." Why? "My mother's

children were angry with me." There is hardly any persecution more grievous and violent than that of angry brethren; but they are under a restraint, they can go no further than God permits; only we need not think strange to see church-persecutions, even after Bethel-visits.

A dark night of backsliding and relapse into former unwatchfulness, security, and sloth, may follow upon the Bethel-visit, though it was solemnly renounced at Bethel. Jacob seems to have been under a lamentable decay, as to the exercise of faith that once he had at Bethel, till once God returned and quickened him again. Christ said to his disciples after the communion, "Ye shall all be offended, because of me this night;" you shall all turn your backs upon me; you may lamentably relapse to these sins that were renounced. I know not your particular case; but whatever it is, it hath been the sad experience of God's remnant. You may relapse to the omission of known duty; yea, to the embracement of known idols, the very thing that parted between God and you. This is a sad and sorrowful night, that you need to take care you bring not upon yourselves through unwatchfulness, in so provoking the Lord to anger with you, as he was with Solomon, 1 Kings xi. 9. It is said the Lord was angry with him, because his heart turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice. What a sad matter is it, if, after a Bethel-interview with God, you turn your back upon the God of Bethel! "Will you also go away?"

7. A dark night of strange dispensations may follow upon Bethel-interviews. Various trials, vicissitudes, and changes, such as was in Jacob's lot, between the time of Bethel-promises and Peniel-performances thereof; Jacob did not want chastisements: "If his children break my law, I will visit their transgressions with rods, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail," Psalm lxxxix. 30-33. God may cover your table at Bethel, but behold afterwards the ordinary means of relief may fail you, as it was with Jacob in Laban's family: even so, the means of spiritual relief may fail you. You may go to preachings, and return as dark as before. You may go to your closet, and that mean may fail you. You may go to public ordinances and sacraments, and these means may fail you. Though at Bethel, you perhaps thought, O I will never be what I have been; I will never do as I have done; I will never doubt nor fear any more: yet all of this may be

out of sight, and the Comforter that should relieve your soul, may be far from you, Lam. i. 19. Strange dispensations may befall you; all God's waves and billows may pass over you, and deeps call unto deeps, Psalm xlii. 7.

8. A dark night of perplexities amidst these strange dispensations may follow upon Bethel-interviews. Thus it was with Jacob, before he came off from Laban's house: he knew not what to do, till the Lord directed him to arise and return to the land of his kindred, Gen. xxxi. 13. You may come to such a night of perplexities, that you know not what to do, or what hand to turn you to. You may come to look upon yourself as in a perishing condition, and to say your strength and hope is perished from the Lord: "Remembering your affliction and misery, the wormwood and the gall," Lam. iii. 18, 19. What shall I say? May we not observe, with fear and trembling, that some who have met with God have afterwards come under dreadful and dark clouds, both in point of sin and misery! Some have been so far left to sin after manifestations, as deservedly to be called devils: Peter got such a discovery of God in Christ, that the Lord says to him, "Blessed are thou, Simon Bar-Jona; flesh and blood hath not revealed these things to thee, but my Father that is in heaven." Yet instantly Peter is left so far to sin, that Christ says to him, "Get thee behind me Satan; thou savourest not the things that be of God," Mat. xvi. 17, 23. And what think you of his denying his Master with curses? Let us not imagine they are all strangers to Bethel-interviews with God, that deny, or do not zealously own, the cause and interest of Christ this day. But let us fear and tremble, to consider how far the children of God may be left to depart from him and his way, in a dark time, and in a day of temptation. It is possible that good men may be left to sin, and to justify their sin. I will be loth to say, that they are all wicked that justify their sinful proceedings in public matters at this day, and that justify their persecuting rage and anger at their brethren, when I consider how Jonah justified his anger against God, saying, "I do well to be angry." So it is possible that even some that have met with God, may justify their anger at their brethren, saying, "We do well to be angry even unto death," and angry even to suspension, deposition, excommunication.¹ I hope none need be offended, if I have charity for some

¹ Our author is here alluding to the conduct of the church-judicatories, in the prosecution at this time carrying on against the Rev. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine and his brethren.

that are of that opinion, through their ignorant zeal, while carried away like Barnabas, with the dissimulations of the day, and whose eyes God will open in due time, to see that their anger was as ill founded as that of Jonah's. For, if ever God met with them at Bethel, when he is pleased to return, their eyes will readily be opened, and they will see they did ill to be angry with their brethren that were contending for the rights of their mother's house; yea, another merciful turn upon their hearts will make them say, as Jacob's sons once did of Joseph, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." So we hope of some, if ever they have met with God at Bethel, surely upon the Lord's return they will regret their miscarriage, and say, "We have verily been guilty concerning our brother." However, as some that have met with God may come under dreadful clouds of sin (for we are not to unsaint them all, and every one that are carried down the stream of defection, though we are to have no charity for their ways, yet let us not meddle with their state, till we see if God shall reclaim them), so, in point of misery, some that have met with God may be put to say, O he breaks me with breach upon breach, and runs upon me like a giant; yea, while suffering his terrors, they have in a manner been distracted, and sometimes cursed the day wherein they were born. Thus you may see what dark days may follow upon Bethel-interviews with God; and yet, after all, the promise stands good to all the seed of Jacob that have met with God at Bethel. He will not leave them, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of.

III. The third general head proposed was, To consider and explain this promise, "I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." For explaining hereof there are these following questions that we would propound and answer:—
1. How God speaks to his people? 2. How he doth or accomplisheth that which he hath spoken to them of? 3. When is it that he will do that which he hath promised? 4. What is the import of this privilege, that he will not leave them? 5. In what sense, it is said, he will not leave them, till he hath done that what he hath promised?

1st, How God speaks to his people, when they have a Bethel-visit of him? I answer, in a few words,

1. He speaks divinely, he speaks like himself, letting them know that it is he that speaks: as he said to the woman of Samaria; John iv. 26, "I that speak to thee am he;" so says he here to

Jacob, "It is I that speak to thee: I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken." Never man spake like this man; man's speaking only reaches the ear, but God's speaking reaches and touches the heart. Hence,

2. He speaks powerfully, as it is said of Christ, "He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes:" so, when the Lord speaks, there is power and authority accompanying the word, either in its first coming, or in its after-working upon the heart. "Ye received the word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually in you that believe," 1 Thess. ii. 13.

3. He speaks particularly, as here to Jacob, "I will not leave *thee*, till I have done that which I have spoken to *thee* of." People may hear the word delivered in general to all the congregation; but it doth them no good, till they hear it in particular spoken to them. Then God calls the person by name, and says, To *thee* I speak: and the heart says, It is to *me* that God is speaking. O! hath God spoken to thee, man, to thee, woman?

4. He speaks kindly and comfortably: Hos. ii. 14, "I will allure her, and bring her to the wilderness; and speak comfortably to her." His kindness in speaking appears most evidently when it is in a wilderness case he communicates himself; every word he speaks to Jacob here is a word of kindness. O the light, life, strength and comfort, that the word brings when God speaks it! He hath a view both to their present comfort and their future support, when he speaks with them in Bethel.

5. He speaks plainly, and not in parables; for he opens their understandings to apprehend, and their hearts to apply: "For to them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; to others it is not given," Mat. xiii. 11. The word of grace is a sealed book, till the Lion of the tribe of Judah open the seal.

6. He speaks suitably to their case; for, he hath the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary, Isa. l. 4. He adapts his words here to Jacob's weary case, as I showed in the explication. He gives them a word that suits their difficulties. Sometimes they have difficulty about this, and sometimes about that and the other affair, and they come with their burdens before the Lord, and he presents a word relative to them. Sometimes they are burdened about their provision, and he gives a word for that: "Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." They

are burdened with fears of danger ; and they get a word for that : " Fear not, for I am with thee ; the eternal God is thy refuge." Sometimes they want direction ; and they get a word for that : " I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not ; I will lead them in paths that they have not known ; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." They want the Spirit ; and they get a word for that : " I will put my Spirit within you ; and the water that I give shall be in you a well of water springing up to everlasting life." They want strength for duty or trial ; and they get a word for that : " My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfect in thy weakness." They want pardon ; and they get a word for that : " I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." They want to have sin subdued and mortified ; and they get a word for that : " Sin shall not have dominion over you." They want something for the church ; and they get a word for that : " That the wall shall be built in perilous times ; that at evening time it shall be light ; and upon all the glory there shall be a defence." They want a blessing for their children ; and they get a word for that : " I will be thy God and the God of thy seed."¹

2dly, The next question here was, How he doth what he hath spoken to them ? " I will do what I have spoken of to thee." Why,

1. He will do it faithfully : " Not a word shall fail of what he hath spoken," Josh. xxi. 45. The history of Jacob shows how faithfully God accomplished his promise, and all that he spoke to him ; and he hath faithfulness for the girdle of his loins. " God is not man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." He will do what he hath spoken surely and certainly : " The vision shall speak, it shall surely come."

2. As he will do certainly what he hath spoken, so he will do it wonderfully, and he will work wonders before he do it not : " Heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot of his word fall to the ground." And it is in a very marvellous and mysterious way, that God doth accomplish his word through a world of dark dispensations ; " Through fire and water he brings them to a wealthy land." Though impassable mountains be in the way, yet he will come and do what he hath said, and give his people occasion to say when he

(1) See a vast many more of the cases of the saints stated and solved in Sermon XXXV.

comes, "It is the voice of my Beloved ; behold he cometh skipping upon the mountains, leaping upon the hills."

3. He will do what he hath spoken, and do it remarkably. Thus he did what he said to Jacob ; and if the believer may put a remark upon the Bethel-visit, when he comes to promise ; much more upon the Peniel-visit, when he comes to perform what he hath promised. In the Bethel-visit, we see him by faith in his word ; but in the Peniel-visit, we see him by sense in his work ; for then he not only says, but does what he hath said, and shows himself face to face.

4. When he doth what he hath spoken, he doth it surprisingly. Jacob was not expecting such a way of God's accomplishing his word. Psalm cxxvi. 1, "When the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." He sweetly surprises when he comes to do what he hath spoken : "Then was our mouths filled with laughter, and our tongues with songs ; the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." Again,

5. When he doth what he hath spoken, he doth it gloriously. His glory shines in all his works, and especially in accomplishing his promises, that are Yea and Amen in Christ. He makes the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, the glory of his mercy, truth, and faithfulness, to shine in the accomplishment ; he doth more than he hath spoken, and is better than his word, Exodus xv. 1. When God had accomplished his promise of delivering Israel out of Egypt, and out of the hand of Pharaoh and his host, then their voice was lifted up, saying, "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously."

6. When he doth what he hath spoken, he doth it seasonably : "The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie ; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry," Hab. ii. 3. It will not tarry beyond the appointed time, nor beyond the proper time ; and therefore, let faith wait upon a faithful God, who will do as he hath said. This leads,

3dly, To the third question, When is it that he will do what he hath spoken to them of ? You may take the answer of this in the following particulars.

1. Some things he hath spoken, relative to a day of trouble ; and when that day comes, he will do what he hath spoken to them of : "I will be with him in trouble ; I will deliver him, and honour him," Psal. xci. 15. Hence his people never enjoy more of his

presence and pity, than in days of tribulation and affliction. And sometimes he lets the trouble come to an extremity, before he sensibly accomplish his promise of help, "I was brought low, and he helped me," Psal. cxvi. 6.

2. Some things that he hath spoken to them of, relate to a day of temptation ; and when that comes, then he will do what he hath spoken. He hath spoken, Rom, xvi. 29. "The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly." He hath said, 1. Cor. x. 13. "That he is faithful, and will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear ; but with the temptation will make a way to escape." And hence it is for ordinary, in a time of great and grievous temptation, he opens some door by which they escape from time to time, while they wait upon him.

3. Some things that he hath spoken relate to a day of work, of great work that he puts into their hand ; and when that day comes, he doth that which he hath spoken. He hath said, "That he works in us both to will and do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13. He hath said, that he will strengthen, he will uphold with the right-hand of his righteousness, Isa. xli. 10.—And hence it is, that his people can sometimes say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. Though we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves, yet our sufficiency is of God." And hence, the church ; Isa. xxvi. 12, "Thou hast wrought all our works in us." And David ; Psal. lvii. 2, "I will cry unto God most High, unto God that performeth all things for me."

4. Some things that he hath spoken of, relate to a day of warfare ; and when that day of bloody battle comes, he doth that which he hath spoken. He hath said concerning this, even he who is the Captain of salvation ; the Lord mighty in battle hath said, for the encouragement of his soldiers, "Who go a warfare upon their own charges ? 1 Cor. ix. 7. He is the strength of their salvation, that covers their head in the day of battle," Psal. cxl. 7. And hence it is, that according to his word, his people are said always to triumph in Christ Jesus, and to be more than conquerors. See Psal. xviii. 30, 32, 14, "The word of the Lord is tried : He is a buckler to all those that trust in him. It is God that girdeth me with strength : He teaches my hand to war, and bows of steel are broken by mine arms."—All their ability to stand in a day of trial and danger flows from this.

5. Some things he hath spoken of relate to the day of death :

and when that comes, he will do what he hath spoken to them, He hath said, "Death shall be swallowed up in victory," 1 Cor. xv. 54. He hath said; Hosea xiii. 14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death? I will be thy plagues: O grave! I will be thy destruction."—And hence it is, that as all believers in Christ are blessed in death, for, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, and that sleep in Jesus;" so some believers have got the sensible and comfortable view of this, even when passing through that valley between time and eternity, and have fallen a singing in the midst of the valley, and saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." With the staff of the promise in their hand, they walk through Jordan dry shod. And when the soul is separated from the body, then it enters into the rest that remains for the people of God, according to that which he hath spoken.

6. Some things that he hath spoken relate to a day of judgment; and when that day comes, then he will do what he hath spoken to them of. He hath said four times in one chapter, namely; John vi., "That he will raise them up at the last day;" and 1 Thess. iv. 12, "That if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so, (upon the same ground, and with the same certainty,) them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him; and that the dead in Christ shall rise first, and meet the Lord in the air; and so shall they ever be with the Lord." He hath said; 1 Cor. xv. 52, "That in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trump, the dead shall be raised incorruptible; that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality." He hath said; Col. iii. 4, "When he who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory." He hath said; Phil. iii. 21, "That he will change our vile bodies, and make them like his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." He hath said, "That the saints shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and shall judge the world."

What I have said may give some light to the question, When will he do what he hath spoken to his people? He will do all that he hath spoken, partly here, and perfectly hereafter. He hath promised eternal life to the believer; "He that believeth on the Son hath

everlasting life." This he doth in part here, and to perfection hereafter ; and we may appeal to every believer of any standing, if the promise of heaven and glory be not, even in part, allowed him here by a personal possession. He is possessed of heaven, not only,

(1.) By union to Christ, so as his Head is in heaven, Christ the Forerunner having taken possession, and gone to prepare the place for him ; so that he sits with him in heavenly places ; but also,

(2.) By communion he hath some personal possession, if you consider what heaven is. Is heaven a state of light, perfect light ? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as he hath the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. Is heaven a state of liberty, perfect liberty ? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as at any time his bonds are loosed, and the Spirit of God is poured out upon him ; where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Is heaven a state of love, perfect love ? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as the love of God is shed abroad upon his heart, by the Holy Ghost ; and the love of Christ constraineth him to duty and service. Is heaven a state of perfect holiness ? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as he is sanctified in Christ Jesus, and going on to perfection : yea, is already perfectly holy in desire. Is heaven a state of perfect joy ? The believer hath this also in begun possession, when he is filled with joy and peace in believing ; yea, sometimes with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Is heaven a state of triumph and victory ? The believer hath the begun possession of this, when he boasts in the Lord, and says, " Thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ."—Is heaven a place of praise and wonder at the grace of God, and the glorious perfections of God ? The believer hath the begun possession of this also, when sometimes his heart is filled with the high praise of God, filled with wonder at his matchless love and distinguishing grace. He would invite all the world to wonder and praise. Yet, O what a small portion of heaven hath he here, in comparison of what he shall have ? " He shall drink of the river of pleasure for ever." Yet that part he enjoys here, is the earnest of the full possession, and the evidence that he will do all that he hath spoken to them of, concerning grace and glory, and every good thing.

4thly, The next question was, What is the import of this privilege, " I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of ? " Why, how can it be said he will not leave

them ; when yet, after Bethel-visits and Bethel-promises given them, they may be trysted with such dark nights as I have been speaking of? For clearing this subject, there are these two remarks I would offer.

1. The first remark is, "That there are some respects wherein God may be said to leave people ;" as,

(1.) When he takes away his word, his candlestick, his ordinances, and brings a famine, not of bread and water, but of the word of the Lord ; Amos viii. 11, 12. This is the worst famine in the world.

(2.) When he takes away his Spirit, and commands the clouds to rain no rain, Isaiah v. 6. This is a fearful leaving ; for, though the word and ordinances remain, yet, if the Spirit be away, then the word can do no good, it hath no power to convince or convert, to confirm or comfort.

(3.) When he takes away his ear, and doth not regard their prayers ; when he doth not suffer them to pray, nor answer their prayer, but shuts them out, Lam. iii. 8.

(4.) When he takes away his hand, his help and assistance, and leaves persons to themselves, to their own lusts and counsels ; "My people would not hearken, Israel would have none of me ; therefore I gave them up to their own heart lusts ; and they walked after their own counsels," Psalm lxxxi. 11. Alas ! a sad leaving ! But then,

2. The second remark I offer is, "That there are some respects wherein God will not leave his people." Either,

(1.) He will never leave them really, but in appearance. And hence they many times think, and fear he is away, when he is really present ; "Verily God was in this place, and I knew it not," says Jacob. Or,

(2.) He never leaves them absolutely but in some respect : he may leave them in respect of the influence of grace, though he doth not leave them as to the presence of grace. He may leave them in respect of comfort ; though he may allow the influence of grace, yet he may deny the comfort of grace. He may leave them in respect of assistance, though he may allow them the comfort of grace, yet he may deny them that assistance and strength they want, and also the sensible answer of their prayers. Or,

(3.) He never leaves them totally, but in some degree. He may leave them to be buffeted by Satan ; but will not leave them to

be overcome by Satan. And he may leave them to be harassed and captivated by strong corruptions ; though he doth not leave them to be conquered thereby. Or,

(4.) He never leaves them finally, but for some time, he may hide his face for a little moment, but with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them, Isa. liv. 7, 8. He will never leave them, so as to forget to do what he hath spoken to them of.

This promise then, "I will never leave thee," it says, that something of God is ever with them, and in them. They have in them a well of water, springing up to everlasting life, John iv. 14. God loves to stay where once he comes, "I will not leave thee."—It says also, that he will not stay away : though he hides himself out of sight, he will not be long away.—It says, that in whatever respect he may be said to leave them for a while, yet he will return to their joy ; "Now you have sorrow ; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." John xvi. 22.—It says, there are some things God will never deprive them of, never take away from them. He will never take away his love and favour ; for he hath loved them with an everlasting love. He will never take away his covenant of peace and of promise from them ; "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, Isa. liv. 10. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5.

5thly, The next question is, In what sense it is said of Jacob, and of all the spiritual seed of Jacob, that God will not leave them, until he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of? To explain this a little further, I shall show, 1. In what sense we are to understand this interim-promise, "I will not leave thee." 2. In what sense we are to understand this particle, until, which seems to point at a period of this promise.

[1.] In what sense are we to understand this interim promise, "I will not leave thee?" Why, whatever way he may be said to leave his people, yet,

(1.) He will not leave them Godless, but will still be their God : for, his covenant with them is, "I will be their God :—" they can never be so far left, but that God is still their God, and they may still go to him as their God.

2. He will never leave them Christless : he hath given Christ, the unspeakable gift of God, to them ; and he will never recal

that gift; "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance:" they shall still have Christ in them the hope of glory. Hence,

3. He will never leave them Spiritless; he hath given his Spirit to you who are believers; and this anointing which you have received of him, abides in you; "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever," John xiv. 16. The Spirit may be hid in the believer, but never absent.

4. Hence he will never leave them comfortless; John xiv. 18, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." However the streams of their comforts may be abated, yet the spring of comfort still remains; and hence the well of consolation now and then springs up.

5. He will never leave them helpless, but still be to them a present help in time of trouble; even when they have destroyed themselves, yet in him is their help. He helps their infirmities when they cannot pray. He helps them up when they are down. He helps them forward when behind.

6. He will not leave them hopeless, even when they are saying, "My hope is perished from the Lord;" yet he opens to them a door of hope in the valley of Achor. They are never again without God, and without hope in the world. Their hope lives. Yea,

7. He will not leave them faithless; For he hath prayed for them, that their faith fail not. Their faith may indeed languish, and be like to give up the ghost, as that of the disciples, when they said, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel;" but now we doubt of this fundamental article of our creed. But when their faith was just at the failing the Lord Jesus restored and revived it.

8. He will not leave them friendless and fatherless; he is a friend that sticks closer than a brother; and as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them: as a father chastises his children so the Lord chastiseth them; as a father provideth for his children, so the Lord provideth for them, that they may not be in total want, between the promise and the time of the performance.—Thus he will not leave them, until he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of. He will not leave dealing with them; he will not leave blessing of them; he will not leave guiding of them and guarding of them; he will not leave making all things work together

for good to them, and work for the accomplishment of his promise.

[2.] In what sense are we to understand this particle, until, which seems to point at a period of this interim promise. Surely the meaning is not, that when he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of, then he will leave them; but rather that then they will no more need such an encouraging word as this, "I will never leave thee;" for then they will be free of all fear of his leaving them. But the word imports,

1. That there may be a considerable time between the promise and the accomplishment; between the time of God's speaking to them, and the time of his doing what he hath spoken. There was twenty years distance between these two in Jacob's case.

2. It imports, that in this interval God is carrying on his work: "I will not leave thee, until I have done it." Saying and doing is all one to God, he speaks the word, and it is done; and when he hath spoken the word, it is always a-doing, till he hath done it completely.

3. It imports, that though he be still carrying on his work, yet it may be hid from our eyes, what way he is doing it; and though we may suspect, on this account, that God hath left us, and left his work, when we do not see him with us, nor see what he is doing: yet he is not away, when he is delaying the accomplishing of his word, to our sense and feeling, but only taking his own time and his own way, whose ways are infinitely higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.

4. It imports, that this interval of time, wherein God is carrying on his work, though in a way hid from our eyes, is the time of faith, wherein we are called to wait upon a promising God, believing that not only he will be a performing God in due time, to our sensible feeling and experience; but that he is a performing God at present, making all intervening providences so many steps towards the accomplishment of his word, though to carnal sense and reason, they may seem to be so many letts and impediments to hinder the accomplishment thereof. Joseph had it revealed to him once and again, that he would be lord over his brethren, and that all the family should yield obedience to him. How was this accomplished? Why, he is thrown into a pit; he is sold into Egypt for a slave; and afterwards he is cast into prison; these seemed all so many letts and obstructions, in the way of such advancement.--How could faith

keep its ground here? unless it should shut its eye upon providences, and open its eye upon promises, and upon a promising God, and then it would see all these seeming letts to be so many steps towards the accomplishment of the promise, "I will not leave thee, till I have done what I have spoken." Therefore, let faith see and believe, that I am still carrying on my work, and doing what I promised, whatever secret hidden ways I take to bring about my counsel; I am still doing, and will not leave thee, till I have done what I have spoken to thee of.

IV. The Fourth General Head proposed, was, To offer some grounds of the doctrine, upon which the believer may be assured, that God will not leave him, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to him of, and that he will be all that he hath promised to him at Bethel.

1. Believers may be assured of it, upon the ground of the unchangeableness of God. There may be many vicissitudes and changes in thy case: it is only the communion-day above that shall have no more night. Thou wilt certainly change, and change ere it be long: but darest thou say, God will change as oft as thou dost? Thinkest thou that he will change in his love, when thou changest in thy frame? No; he will rest in his love; whom he loves, he loves to the end.—Thy security stands upon God's immutability: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed," Mal. iii. 6.

2. Believers may be assured, that God will not leave them, till he hath done what he hath spoken; and assured upon the ground of God's foreknowledge. What makes men many times alter their sentiments, is, because there are many things fall out contrary to what they projected; but God foresaw what would be; he foresaw that even after a Bethel heart-burning interview with God, thou wouldst grow lukewarm and indifferent; yet, notwithstanding of this, he met with you in Bethel, and spake with you there; and therefore he will do what he hath spoken to thee. He foresaw what a prodigal, what a backslider you would be, yet he gave his word to you; and therefore he will not go back.

3. You may be assured he will not leave you believer, till he hath done what he hath spoken; because he is faithful; Heb. x. 23, 1 Thess. v. 23, "Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it." Though, when his children break his law, and keep not his commandments, then will he visit their transgressions with the rod,

and their iniquities with stripes ; nevertheless his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from him, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. Once hath he sworn by his holiness, that he will not lie unto David, Psalm lxxxix. 30,-35, " God is faithful, who hath called you to the fellowship of his Son."

4. Believers may be assured of this upon the ground of the divine power ; or, because God is almighty, and able to do what he hath spoken. The apostle says, Rom. xi. 23, " The Jews shall be grafted in : " Why ? " For God is able to graft them in again ; " having once promised it, and said that he will do it. It is enough to support our faith, that he is able to do what he hath said. Abraham's faith leaned upon the power of God ; Rom. iv. 21, " He was fully persuaded, that he that had promised was able to perform." You may then be assured, believer, that he will never leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken ; unless you can suppose, that he hath out promised his own power, and said more than he is able to do.

5. It is evident he will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken, if you consider the experience of his people, and your own experience. The experience of God's people, from the beginning of the world, who have always found God to be as good as his word, and the same God, that he manifested himself to be at their Bethel-meeting with him. They have still found him to be the God of Bethel, whatever jealousies they entertained of his love ; yet, upon their return, after their dark days was over, they found that his word endureth for ever, and that he never came short of his promise ; but notwithstanding all their temptations, they were continually with him, holding them by his right hand, Psalm lxxiii. 23. They still found him welcoming the returning prodigal, saying, " This my son was dead, and is alive ; was lost, and is found." Now, is it consistent with their experience ? And will he take a singular way with you ? Yea, thou dardest not deny, believer, but thou hast found God to be still the God of Bethel, even though many times you were fearing that God would never smile upon you again ; yet, upon your looking back to his holy temple, you have been made to say, O he is the same, and his love is not altered nor changed ; and that he hath not forgotten his promise. Hence, how many times have believers reason to set to their seal too David's exercise and experience, Psalm xxx. 9, 10, 11, when he is crying, " What profit is there in my blood, if I shall go down to the pit." They fell a praying, " Hear, Lord, and have mercy upon me : Lord

be thou my helper ;” and then have been made to say, “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing : thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.” May not then experience assure you, that he will not leave you, till he hath done that which he hath spoken.

6. The everlasting nature of the covenant of promise may assure you of this ; “Though my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure,” 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. The bargain was not left to your making a covenant with him, but God himself made it with you ; and therefore you shall be kept by his power, through faith to salvation. Though thou shouldest change a hundred times, God will not change one word of the sweet bargain he made with you ; because,

7. It is his bargain made with Christ ; “I have made a covenant with my chosen ; and my covenant shall stand fast with him,” Psalm lxxxiv. 3. And hence, “If his children break my law, I will visit their iniquity with rods ; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not take from him,” ver. 30, 33. And because I will not take it from him, I will not take it from them. Your assurance then of his not leaving you, till he hath done what he hath spoken, may stand upon the everlasting love that he hath to Christ, and the standing bargain between Christ and him. He cannot fail you, because he cannot fail his Son Christ, who hath sealed the covenant with his blood, and in whom, therefore, “All the promises are Yea and Amen, to the glory of God ;” and so the glory of God in Christ, the glory of his mercy and truth in Christ, obliges him to do as he hath spoken.

8. There is one ground of assurance more that I offer, as it lies in the bosom of the text, namely, the divine will and pleasure ; “I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken.” I will not ; it is my will and pleasure not to leave you till all be done. You have a word, 2 Sam. xii. 22, “The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name’s sake :” Why ? “Because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.” Thus it is said, Deut. vii. 7, 8, “The Lord set his love upon Israel :” Why ? “Because he loved them ;” he will, because he will. “And who hath resisted his will ?” His will is uncontrollable ; and hath he manifested his will in this, that he will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath said ? Then you may be assured of it, for he will do all his pleasure ; and well may you say, “Thy will be done.” The cove-

nant of grace is made up of *I wills*, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, and downwards : “ *I will* give thee a new heart, a new spirit *will* I put within you ; *I will* take away the heart of stone, *I will* give you a heart of flesh ; *I will* put my Spirit within you,” &c., ten or twelve *I wills*. And this part of the covenant, delivered by Jacob in the text, is like a crowning promise put upon the head of all : “ *I will* not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” And what better assurance would you have than this, that God says, “ *I will* ?” What he will do, must be.

V. The fifth general head proposed, was, To make application of the whole in some inferences. If it be so as I have been saying, hence see,

1. Whence it is that some may seem to be, of all men, the most miserable, who are yet of all men the most happy ; I mean believers in Christ, that are acquainted with Bethel-meetings with God, and to whom God hath spoken favourably and graciously. They may seem to be most miserable, in respect of the dark and dismal nights that may follow upon their sweet intercourse with God ; and yet are the most happy persons in the world, in respect of their having God, binding and obliging himself never to leave them, till he hath performed all the gracious promises of the covenant to them : “ ‘ This is the honour of all the saints ;’ ” God will not leave them, though they seem to be left by all the world. And God will do what he hath spoken to them of, though clouds and darkness, and mountains of difficulty, stand in the way.

2. See whence it is that some may seem to be the most happy persons in the world, who are yet the most miserable ; I mean, unbelievers, whether they be profane or professors, that have no acquaintance with God in Christ. They may seem to be most happy people for a while, in respect they know not what it is to have a dark day, a day of trouble and adversity ; they have peace and prosperity in the world : “ ‘ They are not troubled as other men, neither are they plagued like other men,’ ” Psalm lxxiii. 5. They have no fear either from church or state. They have easy consciences that can comply with everything, right or wrong, that is imposed upon them, whether by civil or ecclesiastical authority. They can sell truth, to buy peace, and so they live at ease ; and yet they are the most miserable, because they are left and forsaken of God, and are not the children of the promise, to whom God hath spoken peace ; but the heirs of the threatening, against whom God

hath denounced judgment, to whom he hath spoken wrath ; yea, and sworn in wrath, that they shall not enter into his rest ; for, " There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." And whatever temptations the people of God may be under to fret or grieve at their prosperity ; yet, whenever the believer goes to the sanctuary, he will see their end, and how they are set but in slippery places, and suddenly cast down into destruction.

3. Hence see, that the ground of faith stands immutable amidst all changes. The most dark and dismal days cannot hinder the accomplishment of the divine promise ; neither need any dark providence, or heavy dispensation, hinder the exercise of faith, and the life of faith in the divine promise. Nay, these cross providences may rather further the life of faith, than hinder it ; for faith is never properly exercised, but upon the supposition of dark providences, crossing and seeming to oppose the accomplishment of the promise : because, in such a case, the soul hath nothing to do but to believe ; nothing to look to but the promise ; nothing to confide in but a promising God, and this is downright and honest believing ; like that which our Lord Jesus called the ruler of the synagogue unto, when news came that his child was dead, " Fear not, only believe," Mark v. 36 ; for then it is time for God to shew himself. Faith hath a but that can stand out against all the arrows of cross-providence that are shot against it : " Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction ; bloody and deceitful men shall not live half their days ; but I will trust in thee," Psalm lv. 23. He had been speaking of many hard things in the way, such as his being pained, because of the voice of the enemy, and the oppression of the wicked ; ver. 3, " How they cast iniquity upon him, and in wrath hated him ; yea, but I will trust in thee." As God will accomplish his promise, notwithstanding all the buts that are in the way ; so there is ground for faith to trust confidently, because God hath spoken ; therefore no matter, though men and devils really, and dark promises seemingly, speak to the contrary.

4. Hence see who are the greatest blessings to a church or nation. Surely these to whom God hath said, that he will not leave them. God hath not altogether left the church or the land where any such are in it : but if they were gone, then God is gone also ; and " Woe to them when I depart from them, saith the Lord." Some are fond to have God's people persecuted, and his saints banished out of their coast : they cannot bear their faithfulness and

honesty, they are a torment to them ; but yet what should become of a church or land if God's faithful remnant were gone : his presence would go with them, and none would remain behind to whom God hath said, "I will not leave them." Then would that church be left of God, and woe would be to them. May we not say with the prophet ; Isaiah 1, 9, "Except the Lord had left us a very small remnant, we had been as Sodom, we had been like unto Gomorrah ?" Surely when a church begins to cast out the faithful from among them, then they begin to destroy themselves, and to bring down woe upon their own heads.

5. Hence see, where lies the safety of God's children, when they are cast out by their friends and brethren, as Jacob, was in a manner cast out at all hands ; he was the object of his friend Laban's envy, and his brother Esau's spite and rage, which occasioned his being cast out of his father's family, and the country of his kindred for twenty years. Well, but where was his safety ? Why, when all other comforts left him, God said, "I will not leave thee till I have done what I have promised." God's promise was his inheritance, and God's presence was his guard, amidst all frowning providences : and so it is, and will be, with all the true spiritual seed of Jacob. Whoever leaves them, God will not leave them ; whatever men speak reproachfully against them, yet God speaks comfortably to them ; yea, and whatever men do against them, God will do for them, and do all that he hath spoken to them of.

6. Hence see the different state of the church visible from the church invisible upon earth ; or the difference between the true and faithful children of God, and any particular visible church. Why, all true believers have this promise secured in their persons, that God will never leave them till he hath accomplished all his promises of grace and mercy to them. He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee : " but it cannot be said of any particular visible church, that God will never leave them. God hath left many particular churches, and called them, LO-AMMI, saying, "Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God," Hosea i. 9. And how far he may leave the church of Scotland who can tell ? The glory sometimes departs from the threshold to the mountains ; and God seems to be making fearful removes from the present generation. I would not love to give any just offence, nay, nor to grate the ears of any hearers with reflections upon any that are but poor, mortal, sinful men, like ourselves, subject to the like

passions, and clothed with the like infirmities ; but I would desire to keep mine eyes on a higher hand than any sinful instruments of the church's misery and confusion. They could do nothing if God were not provoked by our sins to leave them to themselves, and to their violent measures. "Who gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned?" May we not say of the Church of Scotland, "Her rowers have brought her into great waters?" Ezek. xxvii. 26. But it is our sins that have provoked God to leave the rowers and managers, who could do nothing either against the sacred office of ministers, or the Christian rights of the people, except it were given from heaven, as Christ said to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given." As I love not to offend or grate any, as I said, so I would not be chargeable with sinful silence in such a time, when God seems to be saying, "Cry aloud, and spare not; tell the house of Israel their sins." Woe would be to us, if we should be afraid of man, that shall die; or the son of man, that shall be as grass, Isa. li. 12. May we not consider, as a matter of lamentation, how far God seems to have left the Church of Scotland and her judicatories? I shall not assert, at this time, what I shall speak by way of supposition, and leave it to every one to judge whether it be matter of lamentation before God in case the supposition should be found a truth. And I shall speak in the first person of the plural number, that I may take in myself as having a hand, as well as others, in provoking the Lord to leave us.

If God hath left us and our judicatories to make unscriptural and unwarrantable acts, denuding the Lord's people of their just rights, and Christian privileges; would it not be lamentable?—If he hath left us so far as to make these acts terms of communion, so as none shall have communion with us that dare oppose these unwarranted proceedings. Again, if he hath left us so far as to indulge Arians and Blasphemers, and deal gently with these that are guilty of fundamental errors, and yet to proceed violently and furiously against some of the friends of truth, and to show hardly so much regard for the supreme authority and dignity of the Son of God, as we show for the supreme authority and dignity of our erring assemblies; if this were so, would it not be lamentable?—If God hath left us so far as to destroy ourselves, by sacrificing a covenanted reformation and covenanted principles, together with the sacrificed office of ministers, and the spiritual rights of people, that would

adhere thereto, and fall into what we call church authority and good order, which yet is but another name for church-tyranny, and dreadful confusion; would not this be very lamentable?—If God hath left us to cast out of our bosom some that are, perhaps, the friends and favourites of heaven, and that, because of their faithful testimony against the evils and defections of the day; would not this be lamentable, and evidence that God hath very far left us?—These and many other things I might suppose.

What is the world saying, but that our rowers have brought us into great waters? Ezek. xxvii. 27. What is this they are saying of the judicatories of the church of Scotland in our days? Are people saying, that God hath left us and our judicatories, so far as to make unscriptural and unwarrantable acts, and impose sinful terms of communion? &c. Are they saying, that Bethel is turned to Bethaven? That Philadelphia is turned to Laodicea? It would be good news if there were no truth in what the world are now saying of us. But if there be any truth in it, then surely God hath left us very far; and who knows how far he may yet remove? Better sword, famine, and pestilence among us, than that God should utterly leave us. But how far soever he may leave a visible church, yet he will never leave his invisible remnant: for to them he hath said, “I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”

7. Hence see the reason to try what side you are upon, whether you be a Jacob or an Esau. They were born of the same mother, and lay in the same womb, but the one was blessed and the other cursed. You may be of the same mother-church, yet born after the flesh, and not after the Spirit. If you be the true seed of Jacob, then you will know something of a Bethel-interview with God. Hath God ever brought you to a wilderness, and there met with you, and spoke comfortably to you? Have you ever seen the glory of God in Christ as a ladder to heaven, “the way, the truth, and the life,” so as you were made to close with him, and ascend up to God by this ladder? “For, by him we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.” Have you heard God speaking to you, and communicating his mind, or discovering himself as a promising God in words of grace to your humiliation, sanctification, and consolation? O man, woman, if all places be alike to you, so as you never met with God in a place that might be called Bethel; and if all words of scripture be

alike to you, so as you know no word on which he hath caused you to hope, you are yet a stranger in Israel ; but if you can point at the place where the Lord God of the Hebrews met with you once a-day, so as you can sometimes look back upon it with pleasure, saying, O I thought it was a Bethel, a house of God ; and if you point at the word with which God opened your heart, as he did the heart of Lydia, and made it the porch both of holiness and comfort, it is good. Did he make the word to you, as it was to Job, better and more precious than your necessary food ; and as it was to Jeremiah, the joy and rejoicing of your heart ; and as it was to David, sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb, and the very ground on which he hath caused you to hope ? and are you from that time to this still hoping in his word, when the Lord restores your soul out of its sleepy fit ? Why, then, it seems you are a child of promise, to whom God hath said, " I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

8. Hence see the duty of all who hear me, both unbelievers and believers.

[1.] Ye that are unbelievers, and know not the God of Bethel, but are strangers to the covenant of promise, living without God and without hope in the world ; living in the lusts of the flesh ; poor, wretched, worldly creature, drunkard, whoremonger, Sabbath-breaker, or hypocrite that may-be comes to communions, but never had communion with God there, and never came out of Sodom to this day, that was never brought to a wilderness of fear and despair, and then to a Bethel of hope and comfort in God, as a promising God in Christ ; I would tell you your duty in two words.

(1.) It is your duty to consider the dangerous state you are into. And I must tell you a terrible word for awakening your seared conscience, if God would bless it for that end. As you have been hearing that God is bound, by his own promise, never to leave his children till he doth that which he hath spoken to them of in the gospel ; so, on the other hand, that same God is bound and obliged, by his threatening, if you remain in that state, never to leave contending with you, until he hath done that which he hath spoken of in the law ; that is, you are under the curse of the law, and God is obliged to curse you. He that is faithful to his promise, and will accomplish it to all that flee in to Christ, is as faithful to his threatening, and will accomplish it to all that remain out of Christ. What a trembling heart would you have, man, woman, if

you were but in Paul's case, when more than forty men bound themselves with an oath, that they would not eat or drink till they had killed him? If so many men were bound under oath to kill and destroy you, I suppose it would take sleep from your eyes, and make you restless how to escape their fury; and yet their oath could relate but to a temporal life. But tremble and fear to think, that the great God is bound, by solemn oath, to damn and destroy you to all eternity, if you remain in that Christless state: "He hath sworn in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest," Heb. iii. 11.

(2.) It is your duty to flee from this wrath to come, by fleeing to Bethel, to the God of Bethel, to a promising God in Christ. You will never get to heaven, if you go not to Bethel by the way; I mean, if you remain strangers to Christ. Think not these are words of course that we are speaking to you; for, as knowing the terrors of God, we persuade you to flee out of Sodom, and away from the divine wrath; so, I hope, knowing the comforts of God as the God of Bethel, we would persuade you to come and see what is to be seen at Bethel, and to come and hear the voice of a promising God that is to be heard there. What we have heard and seen, may we not declare unto you, that there is such a thing as Bethel-interviews with God? And woe to us who are ministers, if we be preaching to you an absolutely unknown God, an unknown Bethel, an unknown Jesus! If we know neither the terrors nor comforts of God at any time, I think we would have no commission to speak any of them to you, my dear friends, whom I never expect to see all again in our present circumstances, till we see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven. In the fear of God, and in the faith of our meeting together before his tribunal, I would tell you, that the great day's meeting we shall have will be terrible to you, if, before you leave this world, you know nothing of a Bethel-meeting with God, as a promising God in Christ.

Therefore, let me exhort you, in the last of the feast, and in the prospect of the great day, to come to Christ, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen, to the glory of God. Come to him, by owning that you cannot come of yourself. Come to him, by believing that you are cursed, wretched, and undone without him, and that you shall be blessed and happy in him. Come to him, by believing that you have no righteousness but guilt, no strength but weakness; and that in the Lord only you have righteousness and

strength. Come to him, by believing that you have nothing, and that he hath all; and that you can do nothing, and he can do all for you. Come to him, by imploring him to be your Prophet, Priest, and King; your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Come to him, not upon such and such terms and conditions, that you are ready to dream you must come up to; but come to him, by coming down to his terms, that is to be willing to be saved by free grace. "Come down, Zaccheus, for this day salvation is come to thy house:" so, say I, come down, sinner, from the tree of legal qualifications and legal hopes, built upon your own naughty duties. Come down for you cannot save yourself by all your climbing, nor bring salvation to yourself; but this day salvation is come to your house: salvation is come to you, because you cannot come to it; salvation is come to your hand, salvation is come to your heart. The Saviour is knocking at the door of your heart, and calling you to come down, and take the free salvation that is come to you, because you cannot come to it; salvation is come to your hand, salvation is come to your heart. The Saviour is knocking at the door of your heart, and calling you to come down, and take the free salvation that is come to you: "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." It may be this shall be the last communion you shall see in time, and the last communion-offer that ever you shall hear; or, if you be spared in time, it may be the last communion you shall have with peace in the Church of Scotland; it may be so, and it may be otherwise; only we have had long forty years peace, and it is possible the present emergencies in this Church may be the beginning of sorrows; but whatever be a-coming, as death and judgment is certainly coming upon you speedily, it is safest for you to come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; let not the last offer be slighted; O let us not part with one another, till there be good ground to hope we shall not part with Christ. Alas! I fear, before this day eight days, yea, perhaps, before the cock crow twice, this offer of Christ will be forgotten and out of your head. Some pitiful trifle in a world will take it all out of your heart; but I here take your conscience to witness, forget as you will, that this offer shall not be altogether in vain, though it should be slighted; for, when the book of conscience shall be opened at the great day, this shall be called to remembrance, that such a day at Abbot's-hall after a communion there, Christ, and salvation from sin and wrath, came to you to be freely received, and

yet you rejected it ; and this will contribute to glorify the justice of God in condemning you, and make it evident to all the world, " that he is clear when he judges."

Woe is me, if there be not so much as a desire kindled in your heart after our glorious Lord ! If you think eternal salvation worth your while, O sinner, and this offer of it no contemptible thing, then I may advise you to set some little time apart, after this occasion is over, and betake yourself to some place, whether in the house or the field, where you may have a little retirement from the world, and there cry to God, that he may follow this offer and this occasion, with power upon your heart for drawing you to the Lord and his way ; while you are thus employed, who knows, but before you come from your knees, the place may become a Bethel, a house of God, where you will see and know him as a promising God in Christ Jesus ; for, in this way some have had a meeting with him that they will never forget. O be restless in waiting on him in the use of all appointed means, till he manifest himself to you savingly ; for when once he doth so, you may be sure he will never leave you, till he hath perfected the good work according to his promise.

[2.] To you that are believers in Christ, and know what it is to have some Bethel-interviews with God, either at this occasion or formerly. Are you in this happy state, and have God for your close companion, who having begun to do good, will not leave you till he hath done all that he hath said to you ? Your duty is both to be joyful in your promising God, and fruitful in the work of faith.

(1.) In the faith of this promise, you ought to be joyful. Is it nothing to you, that God himself is your everlasting companion, saying, " I will not leave you ?" That he is a promising God to you, and hath condescended to speak to you ? That he is your agent, to do what he hath spoken ? And that he hath bound himself never to leave you, until he hath done what he hath spoken ? O ! whatever dark days may come, it is your duty to be joyful in him : " Though the earth should be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea ;" here is a river that makes glad the city of God, that makes glad the children of God : " God is in the midst of them ;" and hath said, " I will not leave you."

OBJECT. Alas ! but may a child of God say, How can I take in this comfort, when I find the Lord hath left me ? Though he said once, " I will never leave you," yet it may be a delusion ; for I feel the contrary in many sad effects of his absence.

O unbelieving believer, will you, with Thomas, never believe, till you feel? The ground of your faith is God's promise, and not your feeling. But, for satisfying the soul, that may be under a dark cloud of desertion, saying, "The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten;" sin prevails, and God is out of sight; I would have you to remark, That there are tokens of God's presence with you, believer, even when you do not observe them, by reason of the clouds that are upon you: For example, whence is it that you are not swallowed up like a ship in a whirlpool; and that there is some secret gain of hope in the heart, even when your unbelief is ready to say, My hope is perished? Why, the reason is, he hath not altogether left you. Whence is it that you are like the burning bush, all in a flame many times, and yet not consumed; burning, but not burnt; flaming, but not consumed? You do not observe this; yet it is observable, that you are preserved to this day, to this hour, amidst the flames of temptation and the floods of corruption; why? the matter is, he hath not yet left you. Whence is it that you can never give over duties altogether; and, however the tempter prevail to slacken your hand, yet you cannot for your heart give up with religious duties, wherein you think communion with God may be had? Why, the reason of this is, he hath not altogether left you. Whence is it that you do not break God's prison, through utter despondency, and go away, and take your pleasure with the rest of the wicked world? Even when you are in the prison of desertion and unbelief, you dare not think of bidding farewell to God, or departing wickedly from him, or of bidding the Almighty depart from you; nay, is there not something in your heart, even at your worst, that says, O if he would come! O when will he come? This says, he hath not altogether left you. Whence is it that you cannot agree with sin? The more it prevails upon you, the more you abhor it, and abhor yourself for it, and dare not give way to it. Doth not this evidence there is some secret power and presence of God with you, and that he hath not yet left you. Whence is it, that when you stray from your true resting-place, you cannot rest anywhere else, and can find no quiet in your mind, till you be back again? Possibly you fall a seeking rest and peace in the creature, in the world, in recreations and diversions, and perhaps in your duties, and yet there was something in your heart that said, O it is not here, it is not here; you find vanity written on all, till you return to your first Husband. Again, Whence is it, that at your worst the least

word of news from him concerning his return, makes your heart leap within you for joy, as the babe in Elizabeth's womb, at the salutation of Mary, while the news of his return, and the hope of his coming again, gives you a glad heart? Surely he is not far off; and even when you are most secure and stupid, most dead and dull, there is a secret wish at the bottom of your heart; O for such a day again, wherein the candle of the Lord shined on me! "O that it were with me as in months past!" Whence is it, that the outward shell of ordinances cannot content your heart, without the kernel of communion and fellowship with God? And that the dead letter of the word cannot please you, without the living Spirit accompanying it? Why he hath not left you to be content with any thing without himself. Whence is it, that the interest of Christ is your interest, and that you cannot join with the defections of the day, nor side with the errors of the times, but still desire to be on Christ's side? Why cannot you turn with the tide of the times? Even because the Lord hath not altogether left you. In a word, Whence is it, that the least discovery he makes of himself is joyfully welcome to you, when he, as it were, but softly knocks, silently tirls at the door of your heart: "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him?" Song v. 4. When he seems to be on his way to you, you are ready to say as Laban to Abraham's servant, Gen. xxiv. 31, "Come in thou blessed of the Lord." Well, whence are all these things, but from this, that he is still present, thou you see him not, and that he hath never altogether left you, but is still remembering his promise, "I will not leave thee?"

(2.) It is your duty to be fruitful in the work of faith. O believer! give glory to God, by believing that he will not leave you, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to you of. Dark and cloudy days, that may follow upon Bethel-interviews cannot hinder God's doing what he hath spoken; and therefore, let it not hinder your believing that he will do what he hath spoken to you of. Hath he spoken to you of pardoning your sins? And hath he spoken to you of subduing your corruptions? Hath he spoken of supplying all your wants? Hath he spoken to you of bearing your burdens? Hath he spoken to you of healing your diseases? Hath he spoken to you of your provision and through-bearing in the world? Hath he spoken to you of your protection in time of danger? Hath he spoken to you of satisfying your desire? Hath he

spoken to you of guiding you by his counsel, and bringing you to his glory? Hath he spoken to you of your trials, that he will support and uphold with the right hand of his righteousness? Hath he spoken to you of your seed, that he will be your God, and the God of your seed? Hath he spoken to you of your death, that death shall be swallowed up in victory? Hath he spoken to you of eternal life, that you shall be for ever with him? Hath he spoken to you of his love, that he hath loved you with an everlasting love? Hath he spoken to you of his Spirit, that his Spirit shall be in you as a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life? Hath he spoken to you of his blessing, that he hath blessed you, and ye shall be blessed, and that in blessing he will bless you? Hath he spoken to you of his presence, that he will never leave you nor forsake you; that he will be with you in trouble? Hath he spoken to you of his care about you, that he will make all things work together for your good? Hath he spoken to you of his absence, that he will return, that he will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice? Hath he spoken to you of his anger, that it endureth but a moment, and that with everlasting kindness he will have mercy on you. Whatever he hath spoken O give him the glory of his truth, by believing that whatever he seems to be doing by outward frowning providences, yet he will never leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken to you of. It is your duty to keep your eye shut upon dark providences, and to keep your eye open the clear promise.

Has he said, he will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath said? Then wait upon him in the due use and improvement of all means, till he do his work, and do not leave him. Return his promise by your practice, saying, Lord, hast thou said, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken?" Behold, through grace, I resolve I will not leave thee, until thou hast done what thou hast spoken: "He is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him." Hath he said, and promised to this effect? Then, O put a favourable construction upon all his frowning dispensations! According to your faith of his promise, and of his favour therein, such will be your faith of his favour amidst all afflicting providences. Whatever distress and difficulty you meet with; yet let faith still say, for all this, I hope he will do as he hath spoken; for all this I will not quit my hold of him, but hope in his word.

O believer ! remember that whatever God hath said to thee, he hath said it with a *surely*, as he said to Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 12, "I will SURELY do thee good." And when Jacob came to a strait, he put God in mind of it, "Thou didst say, I will SURELY do thee good;" and therefore let your faith be acted with a surely, grounded upon the truth and veracity of God, saying with David, Psalm xxiii. 6, "SURELY goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. We live by faith, and not by sight;" and therefore, though dark days should come, you ought to believe when you cannot see, "And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of these things which were told her from the Lord, Luke i. 45. The word of the Lord endureth for ever," Psalm xix. 9.

Let the faith of the promise appear in your sanctification, holiness of heart, speech, and behaviour. "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1. Let it be evident to all the world you converse with, that now you are clean, through the words that he hath spoken to you. He that hath his faith and hope, purifieth himself; for faith brings all its purity out of Christ; or, which is all one, out of the promise, which is Yea and Amen in Christ. The faith of God's love will work by love to a holy God, and his holy ways; therefore, O believer ! let your life be a life of faith; and resolve, through grace, to live and die in the faith of his love, which he himself expresseth in this promise, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

S E R M O N X X X V I I .

THE COMBINATION AND CONJUNCTION OF JOYS; OR, THE JOYFUL
APPROACH OF THE SAVIOUR, CHEERFULLY WELCOMED BY THE
CHURCH'S ECHO OF FAITH.¹

PSALM xl. 7.—“Lo, I come !” —SONG ii. 8.—“The voice of my Beloved ? behold
he cometh ?”

WE have a communion-solemnity in view : but if the question be proposed, How shall we have communion with God at this occasion ? Two things are necessary to it. 1. His coming to us graciously : there is no communion with him to be expected, unless he come : so he saith in the first text here *Lo, I come !* 2. Our apprehending his approach, and giving him welcome entertainment, upon his coming : then, and not till then, have we communion with God, when we hear his voice, and see him, as it were on the tops of the mountains, and say, *The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh.*

In the words complexly viewed, we have two things more generally. 1. Here is intimation given to the church, by the Lord Jesus ; *Lo, I come !* 2. Here is notice taken by the church ; *behold, he cometh !* Here is the joyful voice of the Son of God ; *Lo, I come !* And here is the joyful echo of the church ; *The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh !* Mark the frame HE is in when he speaks of his coming ; it is a joyful frame ; “Lo, I come ! I delight to do thy will, O my God.” And observe the frame SHE is in, upon the intimation of his coming ; it is a joyful frame ; *Behold, he cometh !* He speaks with a joyful *Lo ; Lo, I come !* and she speaks with a joyful *Behold ; Behold, he cometh.*

These two words being all the subject I proposed to speak of, at the time, I shall refer the further explication of them to the prosecution of this doctrinal observation.

DOCT. That Christ's coming to his people graciously, in their time of need, is a joyful and delectable coming, both to him and them.

(1.) This Sermon was preached on Saturday the 27th of April, 1734, being the preparation-day before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Abernethy, upon the 28th.

The time wherein CHRIST said here; *Lo, I come!* was a time of great need, even when sacrifice and offering would not; when there was no hope of salvation from any other quarter, unless he himself had undertaken it: then said he, *Lo, I come!*—The time wherein the CHURCH here said, *Behold he cometh!* was a time of great and felt need; for the Lord had withdrawn himself behind mountains of sin and guilt, till he paid a new visit, that made her cry out with joy, *Behold, he cometh!*

That Christ's gracious coming to his people, is joyful both to him and them, will appear in the sequel; only it is enough here to demonstrate it, that as HE is a joyful proclaimer of his own approach, saying, *Lo, I come!*—So SHE is the joyful beholder thereof, saying, *Behold, he cometh!*

The method I would here endeavour to observe, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, shall be the following—

- I. To observe what comings of Christ to his people are joyful to him and them.
- II. Show what makes his coming joyful to him.
- III. What makes his coming joyful to them.
- IV. What expressions of joy in him are imported in his, *Lo, I come!*
- V. What expressions of joy in them are imported in their *behold; BEHOLD, he cometh!*
- VI. Show whence is this combination and conjunction of joys; or, why it is that, like a resounding echo, his *Lo, I come!* is answered, with a *Behold he cometh!*
- VII. Deduce some inferences for the application of the whole.

I. The first thing proposed was, To observe what comings of Christ to his people, are joyful to him and them. Here I shall mention only four comings of the Lord Jesus, namely, his coming in the flesh; his coming in the clouds; his coming in the word; and his coming in the Spirit.

1. His coming in the flesh was a joyful coming both to him and his people. The first text he is particularly applied to his coming in the flesh; Heb. x. 5, 7, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, a body hast thou prepared me; then said I, *Lo, I come,* (in the volume of thy book it is written of me) to do thy will O God." Which shows also, that this was a joyful and delightful

coming, though it was upon that errand of being a sacrifice to divine justice for our sins, when no other sacrifice would do the business. And surely this coming of Christ is a joyful coming to his people, and brings ground of joy unto all people; "Behold," said the angels to the shepherds upon Christ's coming in the flesh, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people: for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," Luke ii. 10. And it is probable, as many divines show, that these words of the spouse here saying, *Behold he cometh!* hath a particular reference to Christ's coming in the flesh. The Old-testament saints saw his day afar off, and rejoiced in the view they had of it by faith. They saw him coming, skipping in the dark mountains of shadows, and ceremonies, and typical sacrifices, to be the substance of all the shadows. In a word, his coming in the flesh is the very root and foundation of the joys of all the redeemed: if he had not thus come, according to the promise, they would never had any ground of joy; but faith's view of this coming, or of God in our nature, God incarnate, "God made manifest in the flesh," is a fountain-head of joy; "God being in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" being bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh: and we having access to God through him, who became like unto us in all things, except sin. O sirs, do you believe that there is a man in heaven called IMMANUEL, God-man? We read of joy and peace in believing; surely you never believed there was such a man, God in our flesh, if it never afforded any joyful thought to you.

2. His coming in the clouds is a joyful coming, both to him and his people; this is what is called his second coming; Heb. ix. 28, "To them that look for him, he will appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." And, indeed, this will be a joyful coming to Christ, for it is a coming to salvation: when he comes to save, he comes always joyfully. When he came first to save, by the price of his blood, he came leaping and skipping joyfully; and much more when he will come to finish the work of salvation, and to perfect the salvation of all the redeemed. His coming to marry his people is joyful to him, much more when he comes to consummate the marriage. Christ had an eye to this in his coming to suffer: "He endured the cross, and despised the shame, for the joy that was set before him," Heb. xii. 2; even to the joy of an exalted state: and, you know, that the last step of his exaltation is his

coming to judge the world at the last day ; then he will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.—And as it is a joyful coming to him, so it is to his people. It is true, it will be terrible to his enemies that slighted his coming to save, and neglected the great salvation ; for, “ He will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel,” 2 Thess. i. 8.—His second coming will be dreadful to them that do not welcome his first coming : and, “ Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all nations shall wail because of him,” Rev. i. 7. But to his people, to his followers and servants, to all that welcome him now, his coming is joyful ; they will welcome him with joy, saying, “ Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” They long for his coming ; and they are called to lift up their heads with joy, because the day of their redemption draweth nigh. They cry to him to hasten his coming. “ Haste, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or young hart on the mountains of Bether.” No wonder, for then they enter into the joy of the Lord. Christ who here says, *Lo, I come !* will as certainly come the second time, as he came the first ; and as he came the first time, in order to his coming the second ; so he speaks of his second coming with a *behold ; Behold ! I come quickly*, Rev. xxii. 20. And the church’s joyful echo follows, “ Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

3. His coming in the word, to court a people for himself, is a joyful coming to him and to his people ; for then as it is ; Rev. xxii. 17. Both “ The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. The Spirit of Christ, and the bride of Christ, joyfully invite sinners to come to Christ : hence a gospel-day is called the day of the Son of man. And Christ, in the gospel-dispensation, says, *Lo, I come !* He comes riding in the gospel-chariot ; he comes with out stretched arms, saying, “ Behold me ! behold me ! ”—And his coming thus is joyful to all his people ; Romans x. 15. “ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace ; that bring glad tidings of good things ! ” His coming in the word is joyful to them, in so much, that nothing in the world is so precious to them as the word ; it is sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. “ Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it, and it was to me, the joy and rejoicing of my heart ; ” this is their food ; “ Man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” This is their comfort in their affliction.—His word

quickens them; they hear his voice therein, and say, "It is the voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh! leaping on the mountains, skipping on the hills." But his coming in the word is joyful and beneficial, as it is attended with what follows, namely, his coming in the Spirit; for,

4. His coming in the Spirit is a joyful coming: and this is that which makes all the former ways of his coming to be joyful. We have no joyful view of his coming in the flesh, nor joyful hope of his coming in the clouds, nor joyful apprehension of his coming in the word, unless we have some share of his coming in the Spirit, as a Spirit of faith and consolation; his coming in the Spirit not only to court, but to win the heart; not only to deal, but to prevail with sinners, by his convincing and converting power.—This coming is joyful to him; for, it is a day of the gladness of his heart; Song. iii. 11. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him, in the day of his espousals, in the day of the gladness of his heart;" for then he sees the travail of his soul and is satisfied, Isa. liii. 11. And, O this should encourage us to pray for the Spirit, the promised Comforter, since nothing gladdens the heart of Christ more than the giving of the spirit to convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and so to comfort his people.—And, on the other hand, this coming of Christ in the Spirit, cannot but be a joyful coming to his people; for then they are anointed with the oil of gladness, and get the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Then they get their bands loosed; their maladies healed; their doubts resolved; their fears dispelled, &c. When Christ says here, *Lo, I come!* let us view therein the promise of his coming in the Spirit: for, why did he come in the flesh, but that he might come in the Spirit? Having come in the flesh, and finished his work, according to his word; he promises the Spirit, and sends the Spirit; "He shall glorify me; John xvi. 14. When the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, he shall testify of me," John xv. 26. His coming in the flesh was the great Old-testament promise; and his coming in the Spirit the great New-testament promise; and as the Old-testament was but a porch to the New; so his coming in the flesh was to pave the way for his coming in the Spirit; therefore, when you hear him say, "*Lo, I come!*" take up the meaning of it not only to be, *Lo, I come in the flesh;* but also, *Lo, I come in the Spirit.* And, O

sirs, is this his voice? What say you to it? Is there any joyful echo in your heart welcoming him, saying, "The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh! Surely, if he comes in the Spirit to you at this occasion, it will be a joyful coming.—I might here speak of his coming in his providence; his coming at death; his coming first to begin, and his after-coming to advance his work; but his joyful comings are only so by his coming in the Spirit. I go on,

II. To the next thing proposed, which was to show, what makes his coming joyful to Him. And what makes him come with a joyful *Lo, I come!* Why,

1. He rejoiced from eternity in the thoughts of his coming; and therefore cannot but rejoice in the accomplishment of his word and design, Prov. viii. 23, 31, "Ere ever the earth was, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men." It was in the council of peace he said to his Father, "Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will;" and in the fulness of time he says in our hearing, *Lo, I come!* O to give a joyful welcome to that joyful *Lo!*

2. His coming is joyful to him; because he comes clothed with a commission from his Father, and he rejoices to run his errands. It is his Father's will that he executes when he comes; and therefore he says, "I delight to do thy will, O my God. This commandment have I received of my Father, to lay down my life for my sheep." And, therefore, with desire he desired this passover, even to be himself our passover sacrificed for us. He hath a commission to come; for he is the Sent and the Sealed of God: "God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. Him hath God the Father sealed." He comes in his Father's name, and his Father's seal appended to his commission.

3. His coming is joyful to him, because it is on a glorious design of glorifying the Father; and therefore, when he comes he says, "Now is my Father glorified; now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him," John xiii. 31. When he came, and was just ready to lay down his life, and having done his work he said, John xvii. 4, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." He brought in glory and honour to all the perfections of God, and full reparation to all his injured attributes.

4. His coming is joyful to him, because, as his coming was on

a glorious design, with reference to his Father, God being glorified by his coming, whether in the flesh, or by the Spirit; so it is on a loving design towards his people, to whom he comes. He comes to save them, and justify them, and sanctify them, and comfort them, and heal them, and help them; and all for love, because he has loved with an everlasting love, therefore he comes to draw with loving-kindness.—Love makes him come joyfully: it was love made him come joyfully in the flesh, and love makes him come joyfully in the Spirit; love made him come at first; and, notwithstanding many provocations, love makes him come again, according to his word, “I will see you again, John xvi. 22. Now you have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice. O the height and depth, and length and breadth of his love!” He comes joyfully because he lives cordially. But I go on,

III. To the next thing proposed, namely, What makes his coming joyful to his people; what makes them welcome him with a joyful *behold*: “Behold, he cometh!” Why,

1. Because his coming is their life. When he came in the flesh, “he came to give life, and to give it more abundantly,” John x. 10. And when he comes in the Spirit, he comes to give life, to give the well of water springing up to everlasting life, John iv. 14. Whenever he comes, life enters the dead and dry bones. We are like dead carcases, our spirits sinking within us; but whenever the Spirit of life comes in the word, then we get up, as it were, to our feet; then we have life: He that hath the Son, hath life; whenever he comes, and that we have him with us, then the life of faith, the life of repentance, the life of love, the life of joy, the life of humility, the life of holiness, and the life of comfort come: we live or die as he comes or goes. If life be sweet, then his coming must be sweet; and of all lives, the life of God, a spiritual life hid with Christ in God, is the most pleasant and glorious.

2. His coming must be joyful to them, because his absence is their death; yea, his absence is a hell to them that know what a heaven his presence makes: hence their many *O's* when he is away; “O when wilt thou come unto me? O that it were with me as in months past!” And hence their many *how longs* when he is away; “How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?” Psalm xiii. 1, 2. They cannot live without him; or, if his absence be to such a degree, as that they are careless, stupid, and unconcerned, yet they that know what

his joyful presence is, will grant, that their careless times are their sad and sighing times ; they are not their joyful times ; they are not their life, but their death ; and they never expect to have a joyful life till he come again.

When he is away from the church, then all goes to confusion : “ The servants of the house begin to smite their fellow servants,” Mat. xxiv. 46. Why, because the Lord delays his coming ; they begin to smite them with sentences of suspension or seclusion, as at this day, when he is away, then the shepherds begin to rule his people with force and violence, Ezek. xxxiv. 4. And what is the effect of that ? See ver. 6, “ My sheep wandered over all the mountains ; my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.” Why, might not this smite the hearts of rigid rulers, to see the flock scattered here and there, upon the violent obtrusions of hirelings upon them ? No ; none did search out, or seek after them. They even slight them as an ignorant mob, a rabble, that need not be regarded ; [and, indeed, if matters go on at this rate, if God do not stir up the ensuing Assembly (viz. 1734) to take course with these disorders, the ruin of the church of Scotland is but beginning.] But whence are all these confusions ? May we not say, as it is, Deut. xxxi. 17, “ Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us ?” When he is away from a church, nothing but confusion and disorders take place ; but when he comes back, then his work is revived, Zion is built up, reformation restored. When he goes away from a particular believer, O what a hell of confusion till he returns ! His presence gives rest, but his absence troubles : “ Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.”

3. His coming is joyful to them, because the errand on which he came is merciful. What does he bring when he comes ? Why, he even brings God with him, and all the fulness of God ; and so he brings the chief good with him. God is in Christ, and all the fulness of the Godhead in him ; and, therefore, when he comes, all good comes ; when he comes graciously, he comes in the capacity of a friend, to help ; a physician, to heal ; a shepherd, to feed : “ He feedeth among the lilies.” When he comes, his presence is a reviving and refreshing presence ; an enlightening, enlivening, and enlarging presence ; sometimes a confirming and comforting presence ; a humbling and a sweetly-debasing presence ; yea, it is an exalting and dignifying presence. The effects of his coming are most joyful ;

for, when he comes to his people, then their sins are pardoned, their wants supplied, their enemies conquered, their crosses sanctified, their kingdom secured ; and therefore his coming must be joyful to them.

4. His coming is joyful to them, because his coming is all their heaven upon earth ; yea, his presence is the heaven of heavens. What is heaven, but a being like him, by seeing him as he is. Now, this heaven is begun on earth when he comes ; for then they behold his glory, and are changed into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. How can they be but joyful at his coming, when they consider who he is ; he is enough to make a heaven, whatever way they look to him ; if they look to him absolutely, "He is altogether lovely, the brightness of his Father's glory." When they look to him comparatively, "He is fairer than the sons of men ; more glorious than all the mountains of prey." When they look to him relatively, he is their Head and Husband ; their God and guide ; their righteousness and strength ; their light, life, joy, and all. O, says the strong believer, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his ;" he is mine, and I will not part with him for the whole creation. O, says the weak believer, the doubting believer, O if he were mine, I would not part with him for a thousand worlds. In a word, he is such a heaven to them, that nothing can make up the loss of his presence ; ministers cannot do it ; ordinances cannot do it ; angels cannot do it. Ordinances are but the shell, without the kernel, when Christ is not in them ; all creature-comforts cannot supply his room. Naturalists say, the loadstone cannot draw in presence of the diamond ; surely, when Christ is present with a soul, all the pomp and pride, all the gallantry of the world, will have no influence on the soul. Offer the believer mountains of gold and silver instead of Christ, "Get thee behind me, Satan," will be his answer : "Thy money perish with thee," that lays it in balance with the Son of God. Offer me something better than Christ, then you will see what I will do. There are so many thousand excellencies in Christ, that might be so many thousand reasons why his coming is joyful, that they cannot but say upon the notice of it, "Behold, he cometh !"

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, What expressions of joy in the Lord Jesus is imported in this "Lo, I come !" What sort of joy does it express.

1. I think this "Lo, I come !" expresses present joy : "Lo,

I come!" It is something like that of John xiii. 32, "Now is the Son of man glorified;" there was a time when he said, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?"—John xii. 27. But when he comes graciously, he says upon the matter, Now is my soul satisfied, now is my heart glad; the *Lo* is in the present time, and *I come* is in the present tense: "Lo, I come!" And if Christ be presently saying, with reference to any company here, "Lo, I come to you!" O it is a present joy to him; he comes rejoicing; he comes leaping and skipping; his set time of coming is the time of the gladness of his heart.

2. It expresses active joy: "Lo, I come!" He rejoices to do good; it is his joy to do service to his Father and his friends. And if he rejoiced in his work when he came to save by the price of his blood, how must he rejoice when he comes to save by the power of his Spirit! The natural sun is said to rejoice as a strong man to run his race, Psalm xix. 5. It is a metaphorical speech, for the sun is not capable of joy; but, without metaphor, it is true of the Sun of righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ; he is a strong man, the man of God's right hand, whom he hath made strong for himself; and he rejoices to run his race; he rejoices to arise with healing under his wings: "Lo, I come!" It is an active joy.

3. It expresses certain joy. The *Lo* is a note of certainty; the thing is certain and true: "Lo, I come!" And his joy is certain; certain, true, solid joy. There is nothing more certain than that believers have sometimes joy unspeakable; but these are only streams that flow from the joy that is in Christ's heart. His joy is the fountain of their joy: "He is anointed with the oil of joy above his fellows;" and the fellowship they have with him is by some drops of that oil of joy. Can they be certain of the streams and the drops when these are allowed? How much more is it certain, that all true joy centers in him. Believers have sometimes a fulness of joy; but their fulness is the fulness of the streams, or of the vessel; but his fulness is the fulness of the ocean. If it be certain there is a stream of joy in the believer sometimes, much more that there is the spring of joy in Christ.

4. It expresses communicative joy; designing his people should share of his joy, "Lo, I come!" The joy that Christ has, as Mediator, is a fulness of joy, designed for his people's use, that out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace, and joy for joy; grace answering grace in Jesus, and joy answering joy in him.

Yea, Christ, as Mediator, is anointed with the oil of joy, the Spirit above measure, that he may communicate this joy, and give to them the oil of joy for mourning; Isa. lxi. 3, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; to comfort all that mourn; to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Christ has a commission from his Father to communicate his joy; and therefore it must be communicative.

5. It expresses triumphant joy, conquering joy: "Lo, I come!" And nothing shall hinder my coming, nor stop me in my course. Mountains nor hills cannot hinder the sun rising: this points out his coming as a conqueror, notwithstanding principalities and powers in his way, he can easily throw them down. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save," Isa. lxiii. 1. Behold, it is I; "Lo, I come!"

6. It expresses solemn joy. He comes with a solemnity, "Lo, I come!" according to the council of a glorious Trinity. Now, when the purpose of heaven is come to the birth, and the decree breaks forth, and the fulness of time is come, he takes heaven and earth witness, as it were, to his solemn march on the errand; he says it with a loud *Lo*, that all the world of men and angels may notice, "Lo, I come!" And, indeed, all the elect angels break forth into joyful songs of praise at this solemnity; when he came in the flesh, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men." And when he comes in the Spirit to convert a soul, there is joy in heaven over the soul that repents. It is solemn joy.

7. It expresses infinite joy. If we consider who the person is that speaks, namely, God, assuming our nature in the person of his eternal Son. The joy of an infinite God, must be infinite joy. Finite creatures cannot tell what infinite joy is; nay, the joy of saints is joy unspeakable and full of glory; what, then, must be the joy of the King of saints? It is infinitely above speech and expression, infinitely glorious. The joy of saints is unspeakably great; the joy of the man Christ, of the human nature, is unspeakably greater; but the joy of God, of God in our nature, is infinitely great above all finite apprehension. Finite thoughts are lost in this infinite depth.

8. It expresses everlasting joy, and eternal joy ; joy from everlasting, before time ; and to everlasting after time. It is true, the *Lo, I come !* as I said first, imports present joy, with respect to our view of it, but with respect to God, nothing being past or future, but all things eternally present to him, this *Lo* expresses the everlasting joy he had, and will have for ever in this work now transacted in time. It is said, Psalm civ. 31, "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever. The Lord shall rejoice in his work ; the Lord JEHOVAH shall rejoice in all his works together" (as we have it in the metre). Why ? his glory is everlasting glory, his joy everlasting joy in all his works ; especially in that work wherein all his glory shines most brightly, his saving work, of which he is here speaking, when he says, *Lo, I come !* Thus you see what sort of joy is expressed in this, *Lo, I come !*

V. The Fifth thing proposed, What expressions of joy is imported in the *echo* from the Church, *The voice of my Beloved ! behold he cometh !* What sort of joy does this express ?

1. It expresses joy with surprise. O but his coming fills the believer with a sweet surprise, like that, "Or ever I was aware," Song vi. 12. How abruptly does the Church here speak, like one suddenly ravished ! *The voice of my Beloved ! behold he cometh !*

2. It expresses joy with wonder and admiration : *Behold, he cometh !* Wonder, O heavens and earth, that he should come to the like of me ! And wonder that he should come back again, after I have heaped up mountains and hills of provocation in his way. "Is this the manner of man, O Lord ? And what can David say more ?" What can I say, but sit down and wonder !

3. It expresses joy with faith : *Behold, he cometh !* The eye of faith first sees him coming, and then the tongue of joy sings, *Behold, he cometh !* "Faith cometh by hearing." What ? even the voice of Christ, the joyful sound of the gospel. Christ rides in that chariot ; and the believer, by faith, hearing the noise of his chariot-wheels ; yea, the sweet voice of him that rides in the chariot, who has grace poured into his lips, then he cries out, "The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh !"

4. It expresses joy with love. And, indeed, as faith is the head, so love is the heart of the new creature : and the joy here is a loving joy ; for it is in the view of Christ as her Beloved, "The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh !" He is the Beloved of the Father, who says, "This is my beloved son ;" and the true be-

liever is of the Father's mind, saying, "This is my Beloved, this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." And what but joyful love, makes her here speak, with her heart at her mouth, "The voice of my Beloved!"

5. It expresses joy with praise and adoration (as well as wonder and admiration); "The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!" O blessed be the Comer, as it is, Psalm cxviii. 26, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." It is a *behold* of adoration, as well as admiration; and, indeed, they both go together, an admiring heart is an adoring heart: as the presence of Christ makes a heaven in the heart; so it stirs up the heart instantly to the work of heaven, which is to sing his praise, and to glorify his name, saying, O glory, glory, glory to him for coming to the like of me, that was afraid he would never give me a visit. O! let all the world praise him with me, "Behold he cometh!"

6. It expresses joy with humility; *Behold, he cometh!* and cometh even to me: "What am I, and what is my father's house?" Behold, he cometh to me! I had no power to come to him, no heart to come, and I would have remained for ever at a distance from him, if he had not graciously condescended to come unto me: I could do nothing but depart from him by an evil heart of unbelief: but he comes; "His own arm bringeth salvation:" and he comes with all the salvation I need. Self is sunk to nothing at the appearance of this glorious *he*; "Behold, *he* cometh!"

7. It expresses joy with contempt of the world: "Behold, he cometh!" and his appearing darkens all the glory of the world, and makes it disappear, as the stars at the rising of the sun. "I count all but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of him." O how little does the believer think of the world, when Christ comes! (PANTA ZEMIAN TANTA SKUBALA) all is dung and dog's meat, as the apostle phrases it, Phil. iii. 8; earthly crowns, kingdoms, thrones, and sceptres are but little despicable toys. Here, here, is an object worth the beholding; let mine eyes be for ever turned away from beholding vanities: "Behold, he cometh!"

8. It expresses joy with desire that others may see and behold him: "Behold, he cometh!" O that all the world would come and see what I see, come and enjoy what I enjoy! They that see the glory of Christ, though they slight a world of vanities, yet they pity a world of perishing sinners, and would gladly be instrumental in bringing others to Christ; "Come SEE a MAN, that told me all

things that ever I did ; Is not this the Christ ?" said the woman of Samaria. Thus David, " Restore to me the joy of thy salvation : then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

In a word, this " Behold, he cometh !" expresses joy with all the qualities of heavenly and spiritual joy. It expresses unspeakable joy, as appears by her broken speech, " The voice of my Beloved ! It expresses glorious joy ; for it flows, from a view of his glory, " Behold, he cometh !" It expresses holy joy ; for she rejoices to see him come skipping and leaping upon the mountains and hills of sin and guilt and levelling all the high towers of strong corruption in his way. O how glad to see him coming down, and making the mountains to melt before him ! So it is a holy joy : the very opposite of all carnal and sensual joys. It expresses a quickening and strengthening joy ; for now her heart is open, her lips are open, whatever indisposition for duty took place before ; now the joy of the Lord is her strength. Again, it expresses a solid and well-grounded joy ; it is no fancy, no delusion, nor enthusiasm ; no : the word and Spirit both concur to this joy. " The voice of my Beloved !" there is the word : " Behold, he cometh !" there is the Spirit. Words cannot give the believer joy without the Spirit ; and the Spirit will not without the word ; the joy of the Holy Ghost is still grounded upon, or agreeable to the word. Finally, it expresses a welcoming joy ; " Behold, he cometh ! Lo, I come !" says Christ ; " Behold, he cometh," says the church : " Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly : " come and welcome with a thousand good wills. O may he be a welcome guest here !

VI. The sixth thing proposed was, To show whence is this combination and conjunction of joys : Or, why is it, that like a resounding echo, his " Lo, I come !" is answered with a " Behold, he cometh !" Whence is this ? Why,

1. It proceeds from the mutual RELATION between him and his people, between him and his church : he is the Bridegroom, and she is the bride ; he is the Husband, and she is the spouse. He has commanded other husbands to leave father and mother, and to cleave to his wife ; and he has done something like that himself : he that said, " Thy Maker is thy Husband," left his Father's bosom for the sake of his bride, saying, " Lo, I come !" and the conjugal tie being mutual, the believer having the Spirit of his glorious Husband, whenever he hears the voice of an approaching Jesus, is obliged to say, " The voice of my beloved ! behold, he cometh !"

2. It proceeds from the mutual sympathy between him and them; hence, what affects him, does affect them; what touches them, touches him; "He that touches you, touches the apple of mine eye," says Christ: they stand kindly affected also to him. This mutual sympathy and love, flows from the union between Christ and them. He is the Head and they are the members of his body; and both Head and members being animated by one and the same Spirit, his joy must be their joy. When they come to have his glorious presence in heaven, they are said to enter into the joy of their Lord: and when they have his gracious presence on earth signified to them with a joyful *Lo, I come!* they have some begun entrance into his joy; that makes them say with joy, *Behold, he cometh!*

3. His gracious coming is joyful both to him and them, because of the mutual oneness of nature between him and them. As he is a partaker of their human nature; so they are partakers of his divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. Hence, as he knows their frame, and what sort of a voice is most suited to their capacity, and accordingly speaks to them by the whispering of his Spirit in the word; so they know his voice from the voice of a stranger, John x. 5. They know the sound of his feet upon the mountains.

4. His gracious coming is joyful both to him and them, because of the mutual agreement in design between him and them. His ultimate end and design is the glory of God in their salvation; their ultimate end is the same, even that God may be glorified in their salvation. Now, when he comes to pursue this design so joyfully, they cannot but welcome him joyfully: "Sing, O heavens; and shout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel," Isa. xlv. 25.

5. His gracious coming is joyful both to him and them, because of the mutual intercourse between him and them at meeting: he hath always some good news to bring them from the Father, which he is glad to tell them, and they are glad to hear; and they, on the other hand, have something to tell him which they cannot tell the world. And as they are glad of his coming to have an opportunity to tell him their mind; so he is glad to hear them; "O my dove, that art in the cliffs of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me hear thy voice, and thy countenance; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely," Song ii. 14. He has something to do

with them, and they have something ado with him; and therefore, when he joyfully draws near to them, they joyfully draw near to him; and visit each other with endearing embraces. Truly, indeed, his visits are always visits of kindness, and theirs are ordinarily of business; his business is to give, and their business is to get; but then the visits are most sweet, when they are visits of love on both sides.

6. His gracious coming is joyful both to him and them, because of the mutual interest and concern they have both in the covenant of promise, which is a fountain of joy, and belongs primarily to Christ, in whom the covenant stands fast, and in whom all the promises are, Yea and amen; and secondarily to believers in him, who are all the children of the promise. It is promised to Christ, that "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied," Isa. liii. 11. And it is promised to the believer, clothed with the character of a meek person, that, "He shall eat, and shall be satisfied," Psalm xxii. 26. Now, when Christ comes graciously to his people, both he and they must be satisfied; for he comes to accomplish the promise made to himself and to them. Hence mutual satisfaction cannot but take place.

In a word, his joy is the fountain of theirs; their joy arises from the powerful influence of his joyful approach, upon their joyful reception of him; his joyful "Lo, I come!" does instantly create their joyful, "Lo, he cometh!" he having put an echoing principle within them. The joyful sound of his, "Lo, I come!" cannot but meet with a joyful resounding and rebounding of their, "Lo, he cometh!"

VII. The seventh thing proposed, was, To make some application of the subject, by deducing some inferences.

1. Is it so as it has been said, That Christ's coming to his people graciously, in their time of need, is a joyful and delectable coming, both to him and them? Then we may see, what it is would make a sweet communion-day among us, amidst these sad and lowring days wherein we live. We live in sinful and sorrowful days; but Christ's joyful approach, with a "Lo, I come!" would make a joyful day among us at this occasion; and, O that he would speak powerfully, that many here may be made to say, "The voice of my Beloved! behold he cometh!" He can make the gospel trumpet to convey his voice. Indeed, if the devil, and his instruments, could get their will, you would not enjoy a gospel ministry; and if our

rowers, that have brought the Church of Scotland into deep waters, had got their will, this and some others would have been vacant congregations: there would have been no communion solemnities here: when men would have shut the gospel-door, O may God himself come and open the door, and open the mouths of ministers, and make his voice to be heard; his joyful, "Lo, I come!" I come to give you a little reviving in your bondage; when men are most unkind, I come to show my kindness; as it is said, Dan. ix. 25, "The wall shall be built in perilous times." The times we live in are perilous times, in respect of sin, error, apostasy, and defection from Reformation purity and principles: a time wherein the rights and principles of poor people are injured, the office of the ministry retrenched, faithful ministers ejected, and the power of Presbytery invaded; a time of confusion in church and state, at home and abroad;¹ a time wherein God's wrath is threatened to be poured out: these are indeed perilous times; but hath the Lord said, "The wall shall be built up in perilous times?" O may this perilous time be a building time; according to the word. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory." Let us seek a glorious appearance of the Lord at this occasion: and what do we know but he is saying, even with reference to this very time, "Lo, I come!" O may we hear his voice, and say with joy, "Behold he cometh!"

2. Hence see the sweetness of fellowship with God in Christ; why, it is a partaking of his joy and happiness, his glory and triumph: it is a meeting his joyful, "Lo, I come!" with our joyful, "Behold, he cometh!" Happy are the sheep of Christ, who know his voice! And, Oh! how miserable are you who hear, and yet do not know the joyful sound! What makes the word and ordinances sweet to the believer? Why, it is their hearing his voice therein; his joyful voice, that gives them a joyful heart. But, what makes these same ordinances such a burden and weariness to you, poor graceless man? Why, you have never heard the voice of Christ his loving voice, his majestic voice, his powerful voice, that goes out-through and in-through the heart, and penetrates and ransacks the secret recesses of the soul. What makes believers lament the absence of Christ? Why, then their joy is removed; they are al-

(1.) The justness of the charge here exhibited, and a short account of the facts here alluded to, may be attained, by consulting what has been formerly narrated in the notes referred to above.

ways either rejoicing in his presence, or lamenting his absence, except when they fall into a nap of security, till his joyful voice awake them again. But, alas! what makes you, poor Christless sinners, live an unconcerned life, though Christ should be never so long away? Why, you are not acquainted with his coming and going, nor with the sweetness of communion with him. But, O poor soul, may it not stir you up to seek after acquaintance with him; to hear that the believer's joyful communion, is no less than a partaking of the joy of his Lord. Christ's joy is their joy, though not of the same measure: for Christ is annointed with the oil of joy and gladness above his fellows; yet it is of the same quality; for they have fellowship with him in his joy, whenever he comes to them.

3. Hence see the difference between the Law and the Gospel; or between the voice of God in the law, and the voice of God in the gospel: his voice in the law is a terrible and dreadful voice; for therein he comes in wrath, with threatenings and curses in his mouth: but the voice of Christ in the gospel is a charming voice, a joyful sound of salvation to sinners, and a door of hope. Whatever word tends to work despair, and to leave a man hopeless, is the voice of the law; but the gospel shows the door of hope in the valley of Achor, and that with a pleasant sound of grace, mercy, pardon, and pity: "Lo, I come!" Hence, as the law is never preached to good purpose, except in a subserviency to the gospel; so gospel-believers are these who first have believed the law, or heard God's voice in the law, which hath made them despair of all help in themselves, and their own righteousness and duty: and next, they have believed the gospel, or heard Christ's voice therein, which has brought them to a lively hope, yea to joy and peace in believing.

4. Hence see both the nature of faith and of unbelief. On the one hand, we may, from this doctrine, see the nature of faith, in its correspondency with its objects; both its immediate object, the word; and its principal object, Christ, the speaker, whose voice sounds in our ears by this gospel. The word says, "Behold he cometh!" and faith says, "Behold, he cometh!" Christ says, "Behold! Lo, I come!" and faith says, "the voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!" The gospel is nothing else but a proclamation of Christ's coming; his coming to give life, his coming to save sinners by the price of his blood and the power of his Spirit; and faith is a setting the seal to a present *lo*, with a present *behold*. The first act of faith looks neither backward to what is anterior or

past, such as the decree of God, or the design of Christ, his intention in dying ; nor does it look forward to posterior things, as if it believed a state of salvation that is to come ; but it looks to a present truth, a present saying, as the gospel is called, a faithful saying, and so a present *lo* : “ Lo, I come !” and offer myself to you, man, to you, woman ; “ Lo, I come !” and bring salvation with me. Faith, under the influence of the Spirit, says, “ The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh !” I hear the voice of God speaking to me through such a minister, and inviting me, the chief of sinners. And I joyfully welcome a coming with salvation unto me : there is a persuasion and appropriation in it to the man’s self ; and according to the measure of this particular application to itself, such is the measure of joy. There would be no joy at all, if the soul should put away the message from himself ; but receiving it to himself, he rejoices in the voice of Christ as his Beloved. But next, it shows us also the nature of unbelief, on the other hand ; the evil heart of unbelief contradicts the word of Christ. Christ says, “ Lo, I come !” Unbelief says, O he will not come : no, no ; he will never come to the like of me. Indeed a believer may say, and hath good reason to say, I fear my sins provoke him to stay away, and it will be a wonder if he come to the like of me. But it is a gross unbelief to say, He will not come, I do not expect so much good at his hand : and hence unbelief is said to make God a liar : it contradicts and blasphemes. O to get faith this day, to welcome Jesus saying, *Lo, I come !* and to expect good at his hand.

I might next apply it for trial and examination. What know you of this joyful coming of the Son of God ? It is this coming of the Lord Jesus that only can make your coming to a communion table profitable and warrantable : if you know nothing of his joyful approach graciously to you, you cannot approach with his allowance to his table ; for, if he never came to you by his Spirit, you never came to him by faith : and so you are an unbeliever : and if you remain in this case, you never had a right to his table here, nor shall have a share of his table above.

QUEST. How shall I know, if ever he came thus to me ? For helping you in this important inquiry I would ask you these few things following.

1. Have you ever apprehended the distance between Christ and you ? Was you ever made sensible of the dreadful distance between him and you : a dismal distance ; a damnable distance ; an

invincible and insuperable distance? Have you seen an utter impossibility of saving yourself from it, unless the Lord had come to you? This is the Lord's ordinary way: when he brings to light, he makes sensible of darkness; when he brings to life, he makes sensible of deadness and lifelessness; when he brings to faith, he makes sensible of unbelief; when he brings to love, he makes sensible of enmity; when he brings to holiness, he makes sensible of wickedness; and when he brings to acquaintance, he makes sensible of estrangement; and before he comes near, he makes sensible of distance.

2. Have you heard his voice saying, "Lo, I come!" Have you heard, not the voice of ministers only, but the voice of the chief Shepherd; and know it to be his voice, by the majesty of it, by the power that attended it, by the sweetness that was in it? Has the gospel come to you not in word only, but in power? 1 Thess. i. 5. Was there such light, life, liberty, and joy accompanying the voice, as made you sure, at the time, that it was not the voice of man, but of God, who spake like himself?

3. Have you seen him coming, and apprehended him by the light of the Spirit, revealing the Son in you? Have you seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Have you seen his fulness, suitableness, and sweetness; his glory, worth, and excellency; by a light shining not into the head only, but the heart? It is a spiritual light; flesh and blood cannot reveal it; education, and external revelation, however subservient it may be, yet cannot contribute unto it, without supernatural revelation.

4. Have you joyfully welcomed a coming Jesus, saying, in effect "The voice of my Beloved! behold he cometh?" Have you apprehended the mountains that were in the way between him and you, particularly the mountains of sin and guilt? Has this accented your joy, that he came over all the mountains, and melted down the mountains, and made your heart to melt down before him also, because of your heaping up such mountains between him and you?

5. What intercourse have you had with him? what mutual embracement? Did you get him in your arms, and wrestle with him for the blessing? Did you get grace to call him your Beloved, and to lie in his bosom, and melt in tears of joy? I know there may be intercourse and fellowship with him, even where this is not the attainment; but something like this ordinarily takes place, when he and his people meet together, after some black intervening clouds

have kept them long asunder ; when his joyful *Lo* meets with that joyful salutation, " Behold, he cometh ! it is the voice of my Beloved ! "

6. What are the fruits and effects of his coming ? Beholding his glory, was you changed ? Surely, if there was never a change wrought upon you, but that you remain as vain, frothy, and carnal in your conversation and deportment as ever, he has not come to you. But has his coming embittered sin, and made you differ with yourself, and submit to his righteousness for your justification, and to his holiness for your sanctification ? His great errand is, like his name, JESUS, to save his people from their sins ; from the guilt of sin, by his merit and righteousness ; and from the power of sin, by his Spirit and grace. What joy has his coming raised in you ? Surely, the joy of his salvation ; as it is a sin-killing joy, so it is a soul-strengthening joy : " The joy of the Lord is their strength," Neh. viii. 10. Did this joy strengthen you to believe, and strengthen you to pray, and strengthen you to hope, and strengthen you to wait upon him, and strengthen you to serve him, and to run the way of his commandments with enlargement of heart ?

QUEST. Are there any signs of his coming ? What are the prognosticates of his coming ?

ANSW. (1.) It would be a token of his coming, if we were sensible of, and afflicted for his absence, saying, " O that I knew where I might find him ! " a longing desire after him, saying, " O when wilt thou come ? " He will satisfy the longing desire.

(2.) Another sign of his coming is, if we were seeking after him, and wrestling with him for the blessing ; he is near to them that call upon him, and those who seek him shall find him.

(3.) If we were waiting for him in his appointed way, for they who wait upon him shall have to say, " This is our God," Isa. xxv. 9.

(4.) If we were finding ourselves to have a name to which the promise opens a door of hope. Is there any hope of his coming for a poor insolvent bankrupt, who fears that the word of the Lord is against him ? Why, that man is in the promise : " To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit," Isa. lxvi. 2. Is there any hope of his coming to a poor, needy creature, who can find no relief to its soul ? Yes, that case is in the promise : " When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, I the Lord will hear, I the God of Jacob will regard."

We shall now shut up the whole discourse with a word by way

of exhortation. Is Christ saying, "Lo, I come?" O sirs, hear and believe, so as you may cry out joyfully, "The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!" For motives,

1. Consider who it is that speaketh: it is God in our nature, "Immanuel, God with us." The word of salvation is to you, sinners, as well as to you, saints; his voice is, "Lo, I come," to save sinners; "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" yea, "To you, O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men," Prov. viii. 4.

2. He says it with a *Lo!* that all the world may give attention to it: "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken ye people from afar," Isa. lxix. 1. He is speaking to the isles, particularly to the isle Britain, that has long refused to hear his voice. The gospel is to be preached to every creature.

3. The reason why he is saying to you in this gospel, "Lo, I come" to save sinners, is, that sinners may welcome him and say, "The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!" Even the first welcome of faith may be in these terms, and should be so; for his manifesting himself thus in the word is the ground of faith, though his manifesting himself by the Spirit is the cause of faith, absolutely necessary to create that faith. But as "faith comes by hearing;" so hear, O sinners, hear this word as the voice of the Spirit of Christ: "Hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Listen to the word, till you hear and understand that it is the Spirit of Christ; or, Christ, by his Spirit, speaking to you, and saying, "Lo, I come" to you.

OBJECT. "Christ speaks not here to me, but to his "Father, saying, 'Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God.'"

ANSW. It is the better for you and me, and the surer ground of faith and hope; for, it is a word to his Father concerning us, and about his coming to save us. It were sure enough, if it were spoken immediately to us; but it is still the surer, that it is said to the Father concerning us; and he will not retract what he hath said to his Father. Therefore,

4. Consider, that his coming in the Spirit, to accomplish salvation by power, is as surely to take place, as his coming in the flesh has already taken place; therefore, when he says, "Lo, I come" to save by the power of my Spirit, let faith say, "Behold he cometh" to save me.

OBJECT. "But has he purposed to save us all? If not, how can there be ground for us all to believe?"

ANSW. Whom he has purposed to save, is a secret; but whom he calls to believe, and look to him for salvation, is no secret: "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth," Isa. xlv. 22. And faith, as I said before, is not to look to any secret, either past or to come, but to the word of salvation, to a present *Lo*; "*Lo, I come!*" And if you venture on his word, without more questions, we can assure you, from his word, you are safe; take him at his word, when he says, "*Lo, I come!*"

5. Consider, that mountains are no hindrances; he comes skipping on the mountains, and leaping on the hills. There is a mountain of darkness in your mind; a mountain of obstinacy in your wills; a mountain of carnality and earthliness in your affections; mountains of guilt lying on your consciences; and mountains of objections, doubts, and fears, in your hearts; but all these are nothing to him. Therefore, O take his word for it, "*Lo, I come!*" and say, "Behold, he cometh; skipping on the mountains." He can come over them all with one leap, with one skip.

6. Consider, that it is his joyful voice, both in the Old and New Testament, "*Lo, I come!*" He was glad to come in the flesh of old, and he is as glad to come in the Spirit now, according to his promise; and, O sirs, will you not gladly welcome him? O! is he saying so gladly, "*Lo, I come?*" What are you saying, poor soul? If you cannot say, "The voice of my Beloved!" then, O will you say, It is the voice of the Father's Beloved, who has said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" And if you welcome him, as the Father's Beloved, you are quite safe. If you cannot say, "Behold, he cometh!" just now, yet will you say, "He that shall come will come;" and wait upon him in his own way? He waits to be gracious; and he is a God of judgment; "Blessed are all they that wait for him." Again, if you cannot say, "Behold, he cometh!" to my observation, yet will you say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly?" And thus pray for his coming graciously and mercifully; "Come, Lord Jesus:" come to merciful judgment against all my lusts, and prepare me for thy general judgment. Come in the spirit. Come in power and great glory at this occasion. O he comes skipping and leaping! Let your hearts leap within you at the thoughts of it.

OBJECT. "But I do not feel, I do not see his coming."

ANSW. "Blessed are they that believe, and have not seen." I

you do not see and feel, yet do you not hear him say, "Lo, I come?" Faith comes by hearing, and not by seeing; while you hear his word, you hear his feet upon the mountains; therefore, against hope believe in hope, saying, "Lord, I believe; help mine unbelief:" "It is the voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!"

Well, sirs, what think you, will he not come to the feast? Have we no reason to think that he will come? Yea, I think we have. Why, it is a time of need among his poor people; and his throne of grace is erected for a time of need: therefore we are called to come boldly to it, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. It is a time of trouble and distress, and he is a present help in time of trouble, and a refuge for the oppressed. It is a time wherein many of his people are in a wilderness of darkness and despondency, and he has said, "I will bring her to the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to her; or, "in to her heart." It is a time wherein many of his people, from all corners, and I hope, many praying people, are met about his hand; and he has said, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them." It is a time wherein some of his servants, and many of his people, are like outcasts in the church, despised and cast out by the judicatories; and he hath spoken in his word of gathering the outcasts of Israel, Zeph. iii. 18, Isa. lvi. 8, Psalm cxlvii. 2, "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." Why then, shall we not expect his coming, when, at the same time, he is saying, "Lo, I come?" May faith's joyful echo in our hearts say, "The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!"

S E R M O N X X X V I I I.

THE TIME OF NEED, A TIME OF LOVE.¹

EZEK. xvi. 8.—"Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was a time of love."

MY friends, if you have been believing communicants this day, your Lord has been giving you a love feast. But now, since the

¹ This subject was handled in five sermons. The first was preached on the Sabbath evening immediately after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Dunfermline, July 14, 1734. The other four were delivered after the solemnity.

table is drawn, and the feast seems to be over, lest you reckon his love withdrawn also, I am come upon the back of the feast, to give you a love-letter, written with his own hand, and directed to you, that you may lay it up in the cabinet of your hearts, and never either forget nor jealous his love at any time, which he hath shown to you at this, or some other time of your need. The words of the letter are, "Now, when I 'passed by thee, and looked upon thee; behold, thy time was a time of love."

The most remarkable event that befel the Jewish church of old, as to its outward condition, was the shadow of the spiritual mercies, designed for the true Zion of God; and therefore, I am to speak of the blessings whereof this is an emblem; it is a New Testament mercy in Old Testament dress. Under this shadow is hid the most substantial spiritual blessings.

In the words we may observe the four following particulars.

1. A miserable time ascribed to the sinner, called, *Thy time*.
2. A merciful time ascribed to the Saviour, called, *The time of love*.
3. The happy conjunction or meeting, between that miserable time, and this merciful time. "Thy time was a time of love," and wherein I showed my love.

The strangeness and wonderfulness of this conjunction, "Behold! thy time was a time of love." It is matter of astonishment, and worthy of a note of admiration.

I reserve the explication of these particulars to the prosecution of the following doctrine.

OBSERV. That it is matter of wonder and admiration, that God should show his love to sinners, at such a remarkable juncture, that their time of need and misery, appears to be his time of love and mercy. "Behold, thy time was a time of love."

The method I would incline to handle this subject in under the divine favour, shall be the following.

- I. We shall speak a little of the Sinner's time of need and misery, as it is described in the context.
- II. Of God's time of love, as it is here also represented and shadowed forth.

III. Make it evident, that he shows his love at such a remarkable juncture, as makes it appear, their time of need is his time of love.

IV. Show that this is matter of wonder and admiration.

V. Deduce some inferences for application of the whole.

I. We are to speak a little of the time of need and misery, as here pointed out in the context.

1. The time of need here pointed out is, when we are in a polluted state; represented by the infant cast out of the womb; "I saw thee polluted in thine own blood, neither washed with water, nor salted, nor swaddled, ver. 4. When grace and mercy take hold of a sinner, it is even when living in the puddle and filthy mire of original and actual pollution; the understanding polluted with darkness, the will with enmity, and the affections with carnality and sensuality.

2. The time of need is when we are in an helpless, naked, and destitute state, having no eye to pity, or have compassion upon us; "No eye pitied thee to do any of these things unto thee, to have compassion upon thee," ver. 5. Grace and mercy step in with help when we can contribute no help to ourselves: when all refuge fails, and all help is gone, surely it is a time of need.

3. The time of need here mentioned is, when we are in a loathsome state; in an unpleasant state, as new-born children wallowing in their blood: "Thou wast cast out to the loathing of thy person," ver. 5. Grace then beheld with an eye of love and pity, even when we are loathsome to beholders.

4. The time of need is when we are in extreme hazard, upon the very brink and precipice of utter ruin, just choaked with our own blood, ready to die and expire, being exposed and cast out to the open fields, ver. 5. And what was it but a field of blood, a field of death? And what is this time of need, but the time of death, wherein we are dead in sin, and dead in law; which is plainly supposed, ver. 6, "I said to thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live:" intimating, that the time of need was a time of spiritual death, and obnoxious to eternal death, upon the brink of hell and damnation.—This is the time of need here represented.

II. The next thing I would touch at also, is God's time of love, as here shadowed forth; that extremity is his opportunity; that time of need is the time of his showing his love. And what this

time of love is, may appear particularly from these four things in the context.

1. His time of love is a time of love-calls, wherein he calls to us, Live ; ver. 6, " I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live ; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live." These love-calls are doubled, that they may be effectual ; he says it, and repeats it again ; and we are never called effectually, till we hear him twice. In the time of love, therefore, he says unto us, Live : yea, he says to us, " In our blood Live : " he says it outwardly, in the word, and then he says it inwardly, by the Spirit ; he says it into the ear, and then says it again into the heart ; then the heart that was a dead grave opens, and takes in the living Jesus, the Spirit of life enters, and the dead soul begins to live and breathe spiritually. The quickening word creates in the soul a life of care and concern about salvation, " What shall I do to be saved ? " A life of desire, after Christ the Saviour : O says the poor soul, I would give a thousand worlds for him ? And afterwards, in various degrees, a life of faith, hope, and joy.

2. His time of love is a time of love-visits ; " When I passed by thee," says the words here ; it is an allusion to passengers, that on their way, meet with miserable objects in a deplorable condition and extend pity toward them : " I passed by thee." It is spoken after the manner of man, but done after the manner of God who is pleased to give gracious visits to the soul, whom he once quickens by his word of power. It is true, all his visits in this world are but like a passing by ; they are but passing visits, as it is said to Moses, *Exod. xxxii. 23*, " While my glory passes by, I will show thee my pack parts ; for my face shall not be seen." It is in heaven we see him face to face, without interruption ; but here we are to be content, if we get some view of his glory, as it passes by.

3. His time of love is a time of love-glances, or of loving looks ; " When I passed by thee, and *looked* upon thee." It is not a look of observation only, for he beholds all things, they are naked and open before him ; but a look of commiseration. It is a look wherein his heart follows his eye.—In the time of love, the Lord gives his people sometimes an appropriating look, an affectionate look ; " His countenance beholdeth the upright," *Psalm xi. 7*.—Sometimes a directing look, " I will guide thee with mine eye," *Psalm xxxiii. 8*. If he takes his directing eye off us, we never make a right step.—Sometimes a convincing look, a penetrating look, such as he gave

to Peter, that pierced, melted, and dissolved his heart; "Jesus looked on him, and he went out and wept bitterly."—Sometimes a comforting look, Isa. lxvi. 2. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. With a look he breaks the hard heart; and with a look he heals the broken heart.—These are his love-glances.

4. His time of love is a time of love tokens: and here are many tokens of conjugal love in the context; some antecedent, some concomitant, and some consequent to the marriage.

(1.) Some love-tokens antecedent to the marriage; betwixt Christ and them. Such as, besides what I have already named, these immediately following the text. "Thy time was a time of love, and I spread my skirt over them, and covered their nakedness:" there is the marriage robe wherewith he covers his naked bride, the garment of his righteousness. "Yea, I swear unto thee;" there is the marriage-oath by which his word is confirmed, "That by two immutable things, by which it is impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation," &c. And "I entered into a covenant with thee;" there is the marriage-bond; the covenant that standeth fast in Christ: here all is done to her hand, when she could do nothing. "I entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God." And "Thou becamest mine!" there is the marriage-relation constitute, and the union betwixt Christ and his bride made up. I became thine, and thou became mine: I became thy Head and Husband, and thou became my bride and spouse: I manifested my good will toward thee; and I made thee willing in the day of my power.

(2.) Some love-tokens concomitant are here mentioned, from ver. 9, 14. "Then washed I thee with water," ver. 9; yea, "I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee." This points out both pardoning grace, washing the conscience from the guilt of sin; and purifying grace, washing the heart from the filth of sin; Whom he loves, he washes; hence the song of the redeemed is, "To him that loved us, and washed us in his blood."—And he washed us from our blood; it is *bloods* in the original; and he washes us from blood-guiltiness; both from the guilt of our own blood, and the guilt of the blood of Christ; in his blood he washed us from our blood.—Again, "I anointed thee with oil," ver. 9. Here is another notable love-token concomitant with the marriage. His giving the Spirit, the oil of gladness, wherewith he anointed above

measure; this he doth according to his promise, "I will put my Spirit within you," and that not only to begin the good work, to quicken and renew, but to abide in us, and subdue sin more and more, to help our infirmities, to be a pledge and earnest of the glorious inheritance, to guide us to the land of uprightness, and to comfort us under all our troubles in the wilderness, till we come to enter into the joy of our Lord.—Again, clothing necessary for benefit and comfort, mentioned ver. 10, and an inventory of more that served for state and magnificence, mentioned ver. 11, 12, 13. Whatever literally these things import to the Jewish nation, yet spiritually they refer to the precious graces and blessings wherewith Christ adorns his bride.—Yea, here is not only raiment, but food, ver. 13. "Thou didst *eat* fine flour, honey, and oil;" pointing out the best cheer, "The feast of fat things, and wines on the lees;" heavenly manna: the flesh and blood of the Son of God. Whom he loves with a conjugal love, he gives them food and raiment, and all provisions necessary.—Yea, not only so, but beauty and renown, ver. 14. "Thy renown went forth among the heathen, for thy beauty; for it was perfect through my comeliness which I put upon thee." What comeliness, what glory does he put upon his bride? Even his own glory, according to that wonderful word, John xvii. 22. "The glory which thou gave me, I have given them." What glory the Father gives the Son, the Son gives the bride; and so they are beautiful through his beauty, and glorious within, through his glory; righteous through his righteousness. O what love-tokens are here!

(3.) Some love-tokens consequential are here also mentioned; not only consequential to the marriage, but consequential to our adulterous carriage after marriage; the love-tokens posterior to this is his marvellous recovering of his backsliding bride, after her whorish departure from him: see the sum of the charge, ver. 15. "But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and played the harlot because of thy renown, and pourest out thy fornication on every one that passed by." This charge of the bride's whoredom is enlarged to the 60th verse of the chapter in many particulars. And her departure from her Lord is ushered in with distrusting of him, and trusting in her own borrowed robes, and created graces; and indeed, an evil heart of unbelief is the spring of departure from the living God: all our whorish departures from our glorious Lord and Husband, arise from that source. But behold the love-tokens of restoring grace and

recovering mercy, ushered in with a *Nevertheless*, ver. 60, "NEVERTHELESS I will remember my covenant with thee, and will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant:" though thou hast broken covenant with me, I will remember my covenant with thee; thou hast been so provoking, and I have been so provoked by thee, that one would think there was no reconciliation to be expected, but that the bargain was wholly broke, yet he was ever mindful of his covenant, that stands fast in Christ; and his remembrance will create a remembrance in us; "Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed," ver. 61. O here is great love in putting us in remembrance, and putting us to shame! This is more fully expressed in the last verse: "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Behold; what rays of love shine out after that dark night of distance and sinful departure! God is in Jesus Christ pacified towards us for all that we have done amiss against him; and when God deals thus graciously, what effect doth it produce? Why, whenever the father of the prodigal ran to him and kissed and embraced him, then the prodigal son was ashamed and confounded, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." The more sense we have of pardoning mercy, and of God's being pacified, the more will grief and shame for sin have room in our hearts, that ever we should have offended such a gracious Lord. The soul is confounded with the sense of God's astonishing mercy, in returning to such a desperate backslider, that played the harlot with so many lovers; and confounded in the view of its own madness and ingratitude: insomuch, that these love-tokens of recovering and restoring mercy, consequential to the bride's whorish breaking of the marriage-bond; these love-tokens that are like new conversions, may be even more remarkable than the first conversion, or the first love-tokens ever were.

Now, here is God's time of love: it is his time of love-calls, love-visits, love-looks, and love-tokens; love-tokens antecedent, concomitant, and consequential to the marriage. The antecedent tokens point out divine commiseration, and his love of pity and compassion in our base and black estate. The concomitant tokens point out divine delectation, and his love of delight and complacency in our beautified state by his grace. The consequential tokens point out divine restoration, or his restoring and receiving love, after our

apostasy. This subject of divine love, and of his time of love, is of vast extent, therefore I have confined myself to a glance at it, from the context only.

III. The next thing proposed was, To make it evident, that he shows his love at such a remarkable juncture, as to make it appear our time of need in his time of love ; our time of misery in his time of mercy ; our worst time, is the time of manifesting most kindness. This is plain from what I have already said : yet it may be necessary further to evince it, both from the beginning of the good work, and from the progress thereof in the Lord's people, both when they are sinners, and when they are saints ; their worst time is still his time of love.

1st, When they are SINNERS, and when he begins the good work, it were enough to say that he comes to convince and convert them in mercy, when they are in a state of nature and alienation from God, and rebellion against him ; but I shall advance a few instances, to put the matter beyond question.

1. We find God has showed love and mercy to sinners when they have arrived at monstrous perfection of sinning against him ; as we see in Manasseh ; 2 Chron. xxxii. 10, 15, " And the Lord spoke to Manasseh, and to his people, but they would not hearken ; wherefore the Lord brought upon him the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And prayed unto him, and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God." God showed mercy to him when he was at his worst, using all magical arts, making the streets of Jerusalem run with blood ; then God said to him, when he was in his blood, *Live*. He cast the skirt of love over him, and his time was a time of love.

2. We find God had showed mercy and love to sinners when they have been embruving their hands in the blood of the saints, madly persecuting the church and people of God. Thus, you know, he showed mercy to Paul, as he himself declares, Acts xxiv. When he rode to Damascus, God snatched him as a brand out of the burning, and shot a beam of love into his heart, when he might have destroyed him with a thunderbolt of wrath.

3. We find God has showed mercy when sin has, to appearance, been beyond mercy, by sinners their embruing their hands in the blood of the son of God, the Saviour of the world; yet he said to them when they were in their blood, Live. For many of the Christ crucifying Jews are convinced and converted, Acts ii., and made so many trophies of the riches and freedom of his grace. Their time of sin and misery was his time of love and mercy.

1. We find he has showed mercy to sinners that have spent all their time in sinning against him; witness the thief on the cross, and these called at the eleventh and last hour: mercy has stepped in between them and the pit, when they were just ready to fall into hell. What astonishing mercy is this! that the Son of God should say to a man that had spent all his days in sin, to the very last day of his life, and then to tell him, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." But whether sooner or latter there is none to whom he effectually says, Live, but he says it when they are in their blood; their very worst time is his time of love. But I pass many other instances.

2dly, When they are SAINTS, or in the progress of his loving-kindness towards them, still their time of need is his time of love; their worst time his loving time. Hence,

1. These and the like declarations; Psalm iv. 1, "O God, thou hast enlarged me, when I was in distress; Psal. cxvi. 6, I was brought low, and he helped me; Psal. cxxxvi. 23. He remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever; Deut. xxxii. 36. The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and that there is none shut up or left." Nothing left but black clouds of despair, and black signs of wrath, and fears of ruin, then shine forth the fair beams of love.

2. For this cause is the throne of grace erected, that there we may find grace to help in time of our need, Heb. iv. 16. For this cause God takes names to himself, importing our time of need to be his time of love, Psal. ix. 9; his is called a refuge in time of trouble; Isa. xxv. 4, "A strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in their distress. A refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible one is as a storm against the wall," Isa. xxxii. 2. He is called a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water from a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He is our hope in an evil day.

3. Consider, for further clearing this, the harmony between our time of need and his time of love: hence ordinarily your time of darkness is his time of enlightening love, according to that word, "To the upright there ariseth light in darkness. Though I walk in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me."—Your time of deadness is his time of quickening love; hence that prayer, frequently in the Psalms, "Quicken me, according to thy word."—Your time of fear is his time of favour, according to that word, "Fear not, for I am with thee." Your time of difficulty is his time of direction, according to that word, "I will lead the blind in ways they know not; and in paths which they have not known."

4. His time of love to his people, or of manifesting his love, is ordinarily when their time of need is most notable. He does not always show his love at the time that we think the time of need, but that he knows to be the time of need, which is when the time of need is most extreme. Hence his time of love is sometimes in their extremity of guiltiness, when they have made him serve with their sins, and wearied him with their iniquities, then he hath said, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my name's sake," Isa. xliii. 25. Sometimes in their extremity of rebellion and incorrigibleness; when, though he hides himself and smites, yet they have gone on frowardly in the way of their hearts, even then he has said, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him," Isa. lvii. 18. Sometimes in their extremity of remissness, when they had neither heart nor hand for prayer and pleading with himself for his pity; "When he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his own arm brought salvation," Isa. lix. 16. Sometimes in the extremity of want and necessity; Isa. xli. 17, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear, I the God of Jacob will not forsake. Sometimes in the extremity of affliction, when deep calleth unto deep, and all his waves and billows pass over them, then he commands his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song is with them, Psalm xliii. 7, 8. Sometimes in their extremity of desertion, when they are saying, "The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten me;" then he appears saying, "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," Isa. xlix. 14, 15. Sometimes in the extremity of temptation, when burnt with fiery darts, and

buffeted by Satan, he readily relieves with loving words : " My grace shall be sufficient for thee, my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness," 2 Cor. xii. 9. Sometimes in the very last extremity, in the extremity of death, and the extremity of their extremity ; when, like Lazarus, they are stinking in their graves of sin and security, then he speaks the quickening word, and says to the dead and dry bones, " Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

QUEST. May not God leave his own in their most extreme need, and in their last battle ?

ANSW. We cannot tell what God may do when he goes out of his ordinary road ; judgment is his strange work, especially when it seems to be execute toward a saint ; but God may suffer strange and extraordinary things to fall out toward saints themselves, as presages of strange and extraordinary wrath and vengeance coming upon a secure generation ; but certainly it is God's ordinary way to help his people in their last extremities, and make their time of greatest need his time of love, wherein he steps in for their salvation. Nay, what am I saying, that it is his ordinary way ? Let me correct the word, in spite of the devil, and unbelief, and all dark and dismal-like providences ; I will take back the word, and say it is his constant way. Though a saint in the last battle should die distracted, and seem to be a sacrifice to the devil and his instruments ; yet that last extremity is the time of love, wherein he leads them through the darkest trance to the fairest field of everlasting joy and triumph. When we consider what power the devil got over the body of Christ, to carry it hither and thither, what do we know how far he may get power over the body of a member of Christ ? We find, upon Satan's application against Job, there was a twofold power given him ; the first was, " All that he hath is in thy power : " the second was, he himself ; that is, his body ; " Behold he is in thine hand, only spare his life." If God had but allowed a third application, and had let out another link of the enemy's chain, the utmost would have been, Even take his life, and I will take him home. But this, by way of digression, though yet, I hope, not far out of the way.

I have shown you that all our time of need, both from first to last, is his time of love ; " Thy time was a time of love."

If any further inquire, Why God chooses to make such a time of need and extremity to be his time of love ? I shall only answer in a word. God, in his sovereignty, having fixed a time for the de-

crees breaking forth, wherein these with whom he travailed so long in the womb of his electing and redeeming love should be brought forth, he keeps the time to the moment that he fixed on; and he waits to be gracious: that is, he waits the time of love, and he makes it jump with our time of need and extremity, for magnifying the riches and freedom of his grace, and for engaging the sinner more to himself, and to his service; and he makes his time of showing love at first, and always afterwards, to the end of the believer's life, to jump and agree with their extreme necessity, for accenting the song of the redeemed in heaven, "To him that loved them, and washed them in his blood," and pulled them out of the fire, and plucked them out of the devil's hands, and raised them from the bottom of hell, to the battlements of heaven; from the depths of misery, to the heights of glory; he makes the depths of his love to answer the depths of their extremity. As by this means he shows his glory, so he stains the pride of man, makes his visits more precious, kills our enmity with his kindness, quickens love to him, and learns us to trust in him even at the worst: and shows the height of his thoughts above our thoughts, as the heaven is higher than the earth, he having thoughts of peace towards us, when we reckoned he had thoughts of wrath, and designs to ruin us. Thus he shows his wonders.

IV. The next thing was, To show that this is matter of wonder and admiration, which is the fourth thing in the text, BEHOLD! "Behold, thy time was a time of love."

1. It is wonderful, if we consider the nature of God, the Lover. If we look to his spotless holiness, and that he is of purer eyes than he can behold iniquity, O how mysterious and wonderful is it! that he should show his love to any of Adam's black posterity, so spotted with iniquity! If we look to his infinite justice, that he can no more cease to punish sin, than he can cease to be God; justice being as essential to his name as mercy. How wonderful is his love! if he had not found a ransom, there would have been no vent for his love; but grace reigns through Christ's righteousness. Again, if we look to his infinite highness, it makes his love wonderful: his majesty is infinite; "He is the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity." Surely, may we cry, when he comes to show his love, Lord, I am not worthy that thou should come under my roof.

2. It is wonderful, if we consider the nature of man, the loved object, to whom he shows mercy. What are we by nature? ene-

mies to God, rebels to the crown of heaven, children of the devil ; who but a God could answer his own question ? “ How shall I put you among the children, and give thee the pleasant land ? ” How shall I give thee a title to heaven, that art so justly entitled to hell ? If we look upon our baseness, O the wonders of his kindness ! May we not say with wonder, “ Will God in very deed dwell with men on earth,” on the earth his footstool ! May we not sing, as Psalm cxiii. 6, “ Who is like unto the Lord our God, that dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold things that are in heaven ? ” And much more may we say, Who is like unto him, that humbleth himself to show his love to worms on the earth ? Whence is this, that the King of glory should look upon vile dust ? If we view the opposition we make to his love, the resistance he meets with from the devils of hell without us, and the devils of lusts, sin, and corruption within us, and how we fight against his love and kindness, is this the manner of man to show love in this case ? O wonderful ! O condescending Jesus ! O patient Christ ! whom we have kept so long at the back of the door, that yet he should both forgive and forget all the wrongs we have done him, saying, “ Thy sins and iniquities will I remember no more ! ” We commit the fault, and he makes satisfaction. And if we view not only the bad entertainment he gets from us, at the first discoveries of his love ; but the affronts he meets with afterwards, from time to time, the abuses of his goodness, turning his grace to wantonness, grieving his Spirit, and madly following other lovers, till he hedge up your way with thorns, that we may not overtake them : O wonderful ! that after this love should reclaim us, and make us say, “ We will go and return to our first Husband, for then it was better with us than now,” Hosea ii. 7.

3. It is wonderful, if we consider that a time of love is denied to millions of better creatures than us. It was never allowed to fallen angels ; there was never such a word as that, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with angels that fell : but, “ Behold the tabernacle of God is with men,” and among men. Has he not passed many nations, and come to us, proclaiming the joyful sound of everlasting love in Christ Jesus ? in so much, that nothing hinders our enjoyment of it, but unbelief, and hardness of heart ; and amongst us, are there not some more highly privileged than others ? O believer, wonder that he hath passed by a thousand, and showed his love to you, the worst of them all, and even when you was at

your worst. O wonderful distinguishing love ! that passes by twenty houses, and falls upon one ! that passes by twenty souls, and comes upon yours ! Many a heart here this day never yet was touched or fired with this love, and your heart may be set a burning within you.

4. It is wonderful, if we consider the long train of the time of love ; both the train of blessing it infers and the train of times it includes. What a train of blessings does the time of love infer ? or, what good is done to the soul ? It brings life, and light, and pardon, and peace ; justification, adoption, and sanctification ; grace, glory, and every good thing ; it brings God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and with them all things. The time of love is the time of gifts, when God gives Christ and all things with him. What a long train and tract of times it includes ! The time of love has a beginning only in our view, but to God it has neither a beginning nor an end ; the time of love began before time, in the heart of God from all eternity purposing, and in the heart of Christ from all eternity transacting with the Father in our room ; therefore, he has said, Jer. xxxi. 3, “ I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” The time of love to us is when he lets down the cords of his love, like a heart-string, to draw up our hearts to his heart ; and as the time of love runs through every period of the believer’s life, while he is here, in so many fruits and effects of divine love, let out from time to time ; so it is never at an end, so long as his love to Christ endures ; though he visit their transgressions with rods, yet his loving-kindness will he not take away from him, nor consequently from them ; for, “ His seed shall endure for ever,” Psalm lxxxix. 32, 33, 36. The love that he shows in the time of love, includes love before time from all eternity, and love after time, even to all eternity ; therefore it is justly wonderful, and expressed with a Behold ! “ Behold, thy time was a time of love !”

V. I come to the fifth thing, which was the application. Is it so, as has been said, That God shows his love to sinners at such a remarkable juncture, that their time of need and misery appears to be his time of love and mercy ; then,

I. Let us apply it for admiration. O let us admire and adore the wonders of redeeming love ! It deserves our highest admiration ; when we have spent our thoughts upon it, it is fit we should supply the defect of our thought with admiration. Let us admire the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of this love

of God in Christ ; that the guilt of criminals should be transferred upon the innocent, and he exposed to the stroke of justice ; that the immortal God should be clothed with mortality ; the wonder of angels exposed to the reproach of men ; that he who was in the form of God should appear in the form of a servant ; and the Lord of life become obnoxious to the pains of death, and all that the love of God might vent toward sinners, and that he should take occasion to show his love to sinners when they are at their worst. Herein let us see and admire the freedom of the grace and love of God ; that he should take hold of such profane persons, such polluted persons, such loathsome persons ! O that the time of loathing should be the time of love ! Herein see and admire the power of the grace of God, that can conquer sinners at the height of their rebellion, and overcome their enmity, and supply all their needs. See and admire the wisdom of the grace and love of God, that he should consult the concerns of his own glory and our good so wonderfully. He consults the glory of his justice while mercy vents through a ransom, and grace through righteousness, that magnifies the law, and satisfies the justice of God ; he consults our good wonderfully, by showing his love at a time wherein his love may do us most good ; see and wonder at the wonderfulness of his mercy, love, and grace.

2. Let us apply it for examination. Try what share you have had of this wonderful love of God in Christ ; and whether your time of need has been his time of love, either now, at this occasion, or formerly. For gaining time, I forbear offering marks and evidences of this, and only propose, that you reflect upon what has been said concerning the time of need, and the time of love.

(1.) What sense have you ever had of the time of need ? Have you ever seen yourself in your polluted state, lying in your blood ? Your helpless state, no eye to pity you ? Your loathsome state, cast out to the loathing of your persons ? Your dangerous state, in the open field, lying open to the wrath and vengeance of God ? Have you ever got a sense and conviction of your dead state, as being under the power of sin, and under the sentence of the law ? The time of love is usually ushered in with a sense of sin, and fear of wrath. Was you ever pricked in your hearts, and made to cry, "What shall I do to be saved ?" If you never felt a time of extreme need, it seems you never have known a time of love. But,

(2.) What experience have you of the time of love, upon the back of your extreme need? Got you ever a loving call with power? A quickening word, when you was in your blood? A word that put life into your dead soul? Got you ever a love-visit, and a view of the glory of the Lord Jesus, and of God in him? Though it was but a passing visit, yet has he passed by you, so as to give you a sight of his back-parts, by the bye; for, "Now we see through a glass darkly." Got you ever a love-look, that made you look again unto him? A look that pierced and pained your heart, and made you sick of love to him, and desire after him? Got you ever any love-tokens; whether got you these I mentioned, that may be called antecedent to the marriage? Did he ever cast his skirt over you, and make you flee under the covert of his blood and righteousness? Did he ever swear to you, and enter into covenant with you, by making you to take hold of his covenant, and word of grace and promise? What know you of the love-tokens concomitant to the marriage? Did he never wash your heart and conscience in his blood, by giving you joy and peace in believing? Did he never anoint you with the oil of his Spirit, so as the chariot-wheels of your souls have been made to run sweetly and swiftly, by reason of this anointing, in the duties of religion? Has he never satisfied your longing soul? Though you have not got what you would be at, yet by giving you so much as made all the world tasteless to you, and Christ above all things precious? (If he has not fed you with joy, has he fed you with godly sorrow and mourning for sin?) Has he never beautified your deformed soul, by letting you see your own vileness and deformity, and that all your beauty, strength, righteousness, and store, was only in himself; and made you to see that all your excellency lay only in him, in whom all the seed of Israel are justified, and shall glory? What know you of the love-tokens consequent to the marriage, and perhaps to your whorish departure from him? Did he ever shame you for your unkindness by his surprising returns, so as you was confounded and ashamed when he was pacified toward you? Did ever the renewed sense of his love and grace, manifested to a rebel and runaway like you, melt your heart, and lay you in the dust before him? Try what love-tokens he has given you in the time of your extreme need: "Behold, thy time was a time of love."

I shall now close with a short advice to you who never met with a time of love, in point of power, engaging your heart to the

love of Christ. Though you have enjoyed a time of love, in gospel offers and loving courtships, yet you have despised his loving offers to this day. O what art thou doing, sinner, while despising the riches of divine love, goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering? The scripture tells you what you are doing—Rom. vii. 5, “Thou art treasuring up wrath to thyself against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” O you that were never convinced of a time of need, nor affected with your dismal state, as lying in your blood, nor concerned about a time of love, or a day of power, remember, that there is a time of wrath, and a day of death, and judgment a-coming; and if you remain despisers of the grace and love of God, the wrath coming upon you is both the wrath of God and of the Lamb; not only the wrath of an angry God, which is terrible vengeance, but the wrath of the slighted Lamb of God, which is double vengeance: “How shall you escape, if ye neglect so great a salvation?” Terrible wrath is coming upon gospel-slighters in Scotland, upon gospel-despisers in Dunfermline: do you hear of this wonderful love, and yet slight it? Then, “Behold, ye despisers, wonder, and perish! He that believeth not, shall be damned; the wrath of God abideth upon him.” Gave you never any entertainment to the news of grace and love, but to abuse it to lasciviousness, and turn the grace of God into wantonness, and to encourage yourselves in sin and wickedness? As sure as you have now a day of grace, the day of wrath is a-coming; and perhaps this is the last hour of the day of grace, and of the time of love, and what will you do with it? Will you let it pass away, and be for ever lost? O sinner! since the time of wrath is not yet come, though it is at hand; since the time of love is yet lasting, will you take and accept of divine grace and love, when he comes to give you now, perhaps, the last offer? And he has spared you out of hell till you get it; that either upon refusal, you may be for ever inexcusable; or upon acceptance, you may be for ever happy.

Well then, you that have mispent all the time of life and the time of love till now; he that yet continues the time of love with you, the time of love-offers, is saying to you, “Behold me, behold me,” in order to marriage with me. Come and take me, for a match to your soul, to make it up for ever. O sirs, will you match with him that can pardon all your sins, and pay all your debt, supply all your wants, and heal all your wounds; can cover all your spots, and cleanse all your filthiness, and loose all your bands, these bands

of sin, hell and death, wherewith you have been bound all your days? Will you, that can do nothing, leave him that can do all things for you? Will you, to whom death and judgment seem to be terrible, in a little, will you have him, that can make death safe and judgment sweet, and all trials by the way easy to you, by giving either a merciful support under them, or merciful issue to them? O will you, that are liable to an eternity of torments, have him that can give you an eternity of joy and happiness, in the vision and fruition of himself? Will you have him to make you holy and happy? If you have no will to this bargain, then surely, though you perish eternally, God does you no wrong, while he gives you your will, and lets you alone, saying, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Nothing but his omnipotent power can make you willing; but since this gospel is the organ of his power, and that if his drawing power be let down effectually by any means in the world, it will be by these cords of love and grace that are hanging down among your hands; therefore, Come, sinners.

To let down the cords as far as I can, by his warrant, be what thou wilt, "To you is the word of this salvation sent;" the grace and mercy of God is laid in your lap; if you shake it not away from you, by unbelief and enmity, you shall have it, be what you will: why, what are you, or what have you been? Are you a drunkard, swearer, Sabbath-breaker, whoremonger, adulterer, a filthy Magdalen, or bloody Manasseh, that have hitherto contemned the grace of God, and the Son of God? Are you the worst that ever breathed on the face of the earth; no matter: while this time of love lasts, grace is content to take you at your worst, and to make the worst time that ever you had, to be the best time that ever you saw. What are you, sinner? Are you a monster of sin? Are you a devil of sin? Be it so, since you are not yet a devil in hell, but a devil on earth, and a devil in flesh, that is not such a wonder as a God in flesh; and behold here is an incarnate God come to save incarnate devils. To you that are yet out of hell, he is saying, "Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." To you that are in the flesh, and not yet damned spirits, the word of God says of this God in Christ, "O thou that hearest prayer, to thee shall all flesh come," Psal. lxxv. 2. All that are yet human flesh are welcome to come to him; whatever sort of flesh you be, be you never such filthy flesh, or devilish flesh. God has sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, that all sin-

ful flesh may come to him, that he may form them into the likeness of an holy God.

If any trembling heart here be thinking, O is it possible that this call is to me, that this offer is to me? Yes, to thee, man, woman; to thee, lass, lad; to you that are farthest off and nearest hand me; to every one of you within these walls, this offer of love and mercy comes in his name, that has said, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature," to every rational creature under heaven. What say you? I was never so unfit to come, or so unable; I am at the very worst in sin and misery, at the very height of wickedness and woe. What? is it the time of the greatest need of grace, power, and pity? Well, God, who waits to be gracious, perhaps has been waiting till this moment, and waiting for this moment, that your time of need may be his time of love, and your time of misery his time of mercy: are you content it should be so? Has this word taken hold of your heart, saying, O "what shall I do to be saved!" O, a thousand worlds for Christ! Indeed, an offer to him is worth a thousand worlds, much more himself: do you see it to be so? and are you made willing to have him, that he may save you from sin, as well as from hell? And to save you presently, that you may never be a slave to your sins any more, but a servant to Jesus? Then we may say, "Behold, his time is a time of love," not only in point of offer, but a time of love in point of power.

I intended to have addressed myself to you whose time, either now or formerly, has been a time of love; but time does not permit; and this will fall in as natively afterwards.

S E R M O N X X X I X.

EZEK. xvi. 8.—"Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee; behold, thy time was a time of love."

[The second Sermon on this Text.]

THE time of life is short and uncertain; and we cannot improve it aright, if we be not acquainted with a time of love. The time of trouble is what we may all lay our account with; for, "Man is born

to trouble ;” and we cannot have true peace or rest therein, if we know not a time of love. The time death is approaching ; and what have we to sweeten the thoughts of death, if we know nothing of a time of love ? It is, therefore, most necessary we know it.

Having formerly improved this subject in an use of admiration and examination, we shall now, at this time, improve it in an use of information, by deducing two inferences.

1st. Hence see, that God in sovereignty may disappoint his people, and make the time of seeming anger and of wrath-like dispensations to be a time of love. As his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways ; so, his time is not our time ; we may hope that he will manifest his love at such a time, and he may disappoint our hopes ; and we may fear he will display his anger at such a time, and he may disappoint our fears, by manifesting his love. He makes his time of seeming wrath toward his people to be his time of love.

As this inference is suitable to the text, context, and doctrine ; so, being suitable to the circumstances of many here, under visible evidences of God’s anger in their families,¹ I shall insist a little upon this, by answering these four questions. 1. What seeming anger may be showing toward his people, whose time is notwithstanding a time of love ? 2. What love-designs may be carrying on by these wrath-like dispensations ? 3. What love is there in these angry-like dispensations ? 4. What lessons may we learn from this inference ?

QUEST. 1. In what respect may he seem angry with these whose time, notwithstanding, is a time of love ?

ANSW. 1. It is most angry like when they fall into sin, when he suffers them to sin, and leaves them to themselves, as he did David, Peter, Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 31 ; and leave them to heart-hardness : “ Wherefore hast thou hardened our hearts from thy fear ? ” Isa. lxiii. 17.

2. When they are under many grievous temptations, and buffetings of Satan, as Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 7 ; and Job, as you read, chap. i.

3. When they are under sad desertion, saying, as Psal. xxii. 1,

¹ At the time when this sermon was preached, most of the children in Dunfermline were seized with the small-pox, and vast numbers of them dying.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? How long wilt thou hide thyself?" Psal. xiii. 1, 2.

4. When they are under great outward affliction on their persons, families, friends, names, estates, or otherwise, Psal. xxxiv. 19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all." 2Tim. iii. 12, "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he must suffer persecution."

You will perhaps, say, Is there no difference between the afflictions of the godly and of the wicked? To this we reply, No difference as to the matter of them, and in their own nature: but vastly different in their use; even as water in baptism taken out of a well, so much of the water of that well may be taken for washing the hands, so much for baptizing; it is the same water, but the latter is made use of as a seal of God's covenant. Thus, when a fever comes, the godly man's person, or child, may be as sorely handled as the wicked; but the one is blessed, and not the other; the use of affliction to the one, and to the other, is vastly different, Jer. xiv. The prophet here sees a vision of two sorts of figs, the one was good figs, and the other bad and naughty. And what are these but two sorts of people, that were carried captive to Babylon? Some of them as good figs, whom God took a care of when carried away, to whom he says, that he will have his eyes upon them for good and not for evil; and that he will bring them again; but as for the other, he says, that his eyes were upon them for evil and not for good; and that he would pull them down. Thus, all the people go to captivity together; but yet never think he had no more respect to his own among them, than to others. Afflictions come upon the wicked, seeking satisfaction; but upon the godly, for correction; God out of love chastises them for their faults. There is a great difference when God, with a rod, strikes his enemies out of anger; and when, with that same rod, he strikes his children in love. Therefore when judgments come upon a land, or a place, let not the godly themselves think they shall be free; but as when a besom comes to sweep a house, if there be dross and dirt in it, and also diamonds and some gold among it, both of them may be swept to the door together; but this is the difference, the dirt rots away, but the diamonds or gold remains of as great worth as it was at first, till it be sought and got again.

The godly may lay their account with such troubles and afflictions, as the wicked meet with. Why?

(1.) These who are partakers in sin, must be partakers in punishment ; for though the godly were guiltless in men's eyes, yet before God, and in their own eyes, they are guilty, and sinful as others are ; for, it is hard to live with the wicked, and not be infected with their plagues, and so they must have part of their judgments.

(2.) There is no promise made to any of that sort, as to exempt them from the cross. Hence the true Israelites and Canaanites cannot be discerned by these outward things ; yet say not there is no difference between the afflictions of the one, and the other as I have shown above.

QUEST. 2. What love designs may be carrying on by those wrath-like dispensations ?

ANSW. 1. The first love designs thereby is to make sin bitter, and bring off their hearts from it, and make them leave it : " Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child," even of God's children, " but the rod of correction drives it off." Prov. xxii. 15. See Jer. ii. 19. " Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee : Know then and see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts. By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged," Isa. xxvii. 9.

2. The next love design is, to heal their hearts : to humble the lofty heart, and soften the hard heart : therefore he puts them in the fire to melt them ; they are naturally hard, stout, light, and proud. God melts them with this fire : " Thou has tried us with fire, as silver is tried." See Job xiii. 16 ; " For God maketh my heart soft."

3. The third-love design is, to make them weary of this world, by finding they meet with such bad entertainment in it ; " Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest, for it is polluted, it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction ;" Mic. ii. 10. Hence John xvi. 33, " In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace ; be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

4. Another love-design is, to awaken them : but he gives them something ado, and keeps them busy and fighting ; " These are the nations God left to prove Israel by them ; slay them not, lest my people forget," Judges iii. 1. ; Jer. xlvii. 11. They would stink and corrupt if they were not carried into captivity, and emptied from vessel to vessel.

5. The next love-design is, to exercise faith and patience; Rom. v. 3, "We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope, James i. 2, 3. Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience; but let patience have her perfect work."

6. Another love-design is, to bring them to themselves, by prayer, and other duties, otherwise they would mistake themselves, Hos. v. 15, and vi. 1, "In their afflictions they shall seek me early, saying, Come let us return to the Lord, for he hath broken, and will heal." True, indeed, hypocrites may cry, when they are afflicted: "When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and enquired early after God;—Yet they flattered him with their mouths," Psalm lxxviii. 35, 36. But even the children of grace need to be spurred up by the rod; and then they cry to their Father in another manner than hypocrites, in a kindly and cordial manner, Isa. xxvi. 19. There it is said of his people, "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening hand was upon them:" then they visited thee; they were growing strangers to God before the trouble came; they made him few visits, and were like to grow out of acquaintance with him; but now they begin to renew their acquaintance with him; they poured out a prayer; formerly, before trouble came, they prayed, but their prayers were but drops; they came but slowly forth, drop by drop, like water out of a still; but now their prayers are poured out like water out of a fountain: they pour out their prayers, and pour out their hearts in prayer before the Lord, when his chastening is upon them; "They poured out prayer;" in the margin it is a SECRET SPEECH: they may meet with God in public duties and ordinances, but especially their main intercourse with him is in secret; there they speak with God, and commune with him; and thus by afflictions and chastisements their communion with God is advanced.—In a word, such are his love-designs, by trials and wrath-like dispensations, that thereby he makes his mercy the sweeter to them when it comes: and their love to God the greater, because of his power and pity manifested to them in their afflictions.

QUES. 3. What LOVE is there in these afflictions, in punishments and chastisements? What love appears in them?

ANSW. Besides what I have said, 1. There is love in the measure of the affliction; while it is not in fury, but in measure, and in pity; "Fury is not in me.—In measure when it shooteth forth,

thou wilt debate with it : He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind, Isa. xxvii. 4, 8. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him," Psal. ciii. 13.

2. There is love in bringing them under one evil, to save them from a greater ; 1 Cor. xi. 32. They are chastised of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. See Heb. xii. 6, 7, 8.

3. There is love in making them thus sharers of the mercies of the covenant ; for, afflictions are a covenant-promise ; See 2 Sam. vii. 15, and Psal. lxxxxix, 31, 32. For which the saints have prayed ; as Jer. x. 24, " Correct me, Lord, but in judgment ; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing ; " Thus Psalm vi. 1, and xxxviii. 1.

4. There is love in that thus he favours and honours them to take them under his correction, and care ; See Job. vii. 17, " What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him ? and that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him ? Why ? how doth he magnify and honour him ? It follows, ver. 18, " And that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment."

5. There is love in his giving sweet cordials between-hands to bear up their spirits ; particularly, some cordials of the new covenant ; some words on which he causes them to hope : Psalm cxix. 49, " Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." Hence it follows, ver. 50, " This is my comfort in mine affliction ; for thy word hath quickened me." He quickens and refreshes with his words of grace.

6. There is love in the constant presence of grace that he allows them under their trouble, according to his promise ; Heb. xiii. 5, " I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Psalm xci. 15, I will be with him in trouble ; I will deliver him, and honour him." When the goldsmith has cast the gold into the fire, he leaves it not there ; nay, then he waits best upon it, that he may suffer it to get no more of the fire than he sees meet.

In a word, such love there is in their afflictions, that he is therein carrying on all the love-designs that I was mentioning on the former head, and thus preparing them for the heavenly kingdom ; " Our light affliction, that is but for a moment, worketh a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17. They would die and rot in their sins, if they were not poured out from vessel to vessel.

QUEST. 4. What lessons may we learn from this inference ?

ANSW. 1. That we ought not to seek so much to be rid of troubles ; we ought to submit and comply with the troubles that are upon us, seeing they are such excellent things, so profitable and medicinal ; we ought neither to lothe at, nor fret under God's physic.

1. We ought to accept of the punishment of sin, saying, " I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned." We should turn up our cheek to him that smiteth, and not weary of the Lord's chastisements, seeing it is for sin ; " Why should a living man complain ? a man for the punishment of his iniquities ? Therefore,

3. We ought to quit sin, saying, " What have I any more to do with idols ? " God designs, by trouble, to destroy some idol : join with him in seeking the destruction thereof : " I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face," Hos. v. 15.

4. Give way to the Lord Jesus Christ, and make open doors for him ; for this is the great design of all afflicting dispensations : for they are so many knocks at the doors of our hearts. Give way to him in a fourfold capacity.

(1.) As a reprover ; Rev. iii. 15, 16, 17, Take with the charge of lukewarmness, in being neither cold nor hot.

(2.) As a Counsellor ; Rev. iii. 18, Hearken to his counsel, as a Prophet, and buy his eye salve ; his counsel, as a Priest, and buy his white raiment, his counsel, as a King, and buy his tried gold.

(3.) Give way to him as a Corrector, a loving corrector ; Rev. iii. 9, " As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : " he corrects us for our faults, and for our amendment. Be patient, which is a continued submission ; and if sense fail, hold by the word.

4. Give way to him as an importunate Suitor ; Rev. iii. 20, " Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." He knocks by his word, and by his Spirit, and by his rod ; invite him to come in, saying as Laban in another case to Abraham's servant ; Gen. xxiv. 31, " Come in, thou blessed of the Lord : wherefore standest thou without ? " O come in and do not stand knocking, but make king's keys, and exert thy power and come in with salvation. So much may suffice for the first inference. Hence,

2dly, I infer, that neither the sinning nor the suffering circum-

stances of the people of God, in this world, is inconsistent with his special love to them: "Thy time" (though in the context both a sinful and afflicted time,) "was a time of love." By the love of God here, I do not understand, either benevolence or good-will, for this is common; "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He has sworn that he has no pleasure in the death of sinners. God may take pleasure in the execution of his justice, but doth not in the punishment of the creature; "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of sinners." Nor do I here understand his love of beneficence; for, he does good to all; "He makes his sun to shine upon the good and evil; and sendeth his rain upon the just and unjust." Nor his love of destination towards the elect unconverted; because, whatever be his thoughts of peace, and designs of manifesting love to them, yet he can take no pleasure in them, as they are in themselves, while out of Christ. But I understand his love of complacency and delight. Now, I say, his people's sinning and suffering circumstances here, are not inconsistent with his complacential love to them.

For the further clearing of this inference, I would, I. Show that the sinning circumstances of his people here, are not inconsistent with his love. 2. Give a discovery of these persons whose sinning circumstances are indeed inconsistent with his love. 3. Show that the suffering and afflicted circumstances of God's people are not inconsistent with his love to them. 4. Give a discovery of these whose carriage in their afflicted circumstances is indeed inconsistent with his complacential love of God.

[1.] We are to show that the sinning circumstances of God's people here, are not inconsistent with his love. This may be cleared in the four following remarks.

Remark 1. "That none of God's children, in this world, are free of sin:" they have a body of death in them; the company of two armies; two nations struggling. See Rom. vii. 15—25.

Remark 2. "That they not only have sin, but it may be powerful and prevalent;" Powerful, so as to carry them captive; "I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity unto the law of sin, which is in my members," Rom. vii. 23. Prevalent, as David says, "Iniquities prevail against me."

Remark 3. "That God observes and regards the truth of

grace in his people, though the measure may be small ; and he loves all his children, though some of them are babes, 1 John ii. 12, 13, 14." Hence they are ready sometimes to speak thus, " I pray indeed ; but, alas ! I do not wrestle, like Jacob ; nor water my couch, like David : I believe ; but I have not joy and peace in believing : I fear ; but I am not in the fear of God all the day long : I love Christ ; but, O my loves goes out after other things." Thus it is the weakness, not the want of grace, that troubles and perplexes them : yet God loves his children though weak.

Remark 4. " That the life of the believer is hid with Christ in God." It is not so much in himself as it is in Christ ; and hence they are ready to conclude their sinful circumstances such, as are not consistent with divine love ; but their life is most in their Head. Four things the saints complain of, and they get ease only in Christ. Alas ! I am guilty ! well, where get you ease but in Christ, as made of God your righteousness ? Oh ! I have much pollution ; well, where is your relief but in Christ, as made of God to you, sanctification, the fountain of holiness ! Alas ! there is much folly about me ! where is your relief but in Christ, as made of God unto you wisdom ? Oh ! I have no strength for duty or difficulties ; well, where lies your strength but in Christ ? " In the Lord have I righteousness and strength ! " He is the glory of their strength. Hence the greatest part of the believer's inherent righteousness, in this world, lies in his faith, faith going out of himself to Christ for all. This shows, that however sinful his circumstances are, yet he is a favourite of heaven.

[2.] We are next to give a discovery of these persons whose sinning circumstances are indeed inconsistent with his love. There are six sorts of sinners, whose sinful case is indeed inconsistent with God's complacential love.

1. These whose religion lies all in externals ; and whose hearts were never exercised before God about sin and wrath : " This people draw nigh unto me with their mouths, and honour me with their lips ; but their hearts are far removed from me," Matth. xv. 18. Their hearts were never engaged to approach to God.

2. These who never knew the power of the gospel, but are only taken up with the outward pomp of it ; pompous words, the excellency of speech, the flourishes of eloquence, that tickle their fancies : they never got good of the word who never had better to say than this, O ! there was a neat sermon ; it was gilded with all the flowers

of rhetoric, and embellished and set off with all the graces of oratory ; a handsome and eloquent discourse ; but never could say of any sermon, " Did not our hearts burn within us ? " We were touched and conquered thereby. They know nothing that know not the power of the word : " The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power : " See 2 Thess. i. 4. " The gospel came not in word, but in power."

3. These who persecute the people of God, and have no favour for them, no complacency in them ; though they can be civil to them as to others, yet they are far from preferring them to others, in esteeming them, or delighting in them. This is the brand of a natural man, for it is otherwise with God's children ; " To the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight," Psalm xvi. 3.

4. These that can live peaceably in any one sin, without remorse, without repentance, or reluctance ; or by bribing their judgment to defend it, or offering to God a satisfaction, like the whore in the seventh chapter of the Proverbs, " I have a peace-offering, this day have I performed my vows : come, let us take our fill of love," ver. 14, 18. God's children may have sin prevailing, but never have it peaceably reigning in them.

5. These that were never brought off from the pollutions of the world, such as drunkenness, whoredom, swearing, lying, cheating, stealing, Sabbath-breaking, &c. Some may escape these, through the knowledge of Christ, and yet be apostates, the latter-end worse than the beginning, 2 Pet. ii. 20. Sure then, they are in a sad state that never escaped sin at all : they are not the spots of God's children.

6. These that being strangers to a working faith, are never brought beyond the legal or gospel-hypocrite. By the legal-hypocrite, I understand, the man that is full of good works, yet they have not faith for their root : these are cast : for, " Without faith it is impossible to please God." By a gospel-hypocrite, I understand, these that profess faith in Christ, yet their faith has no good works, as the fruits thereof : these are cast : because, " As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

[3.] We come to show, that the suffering and afflicted circumstances of God's people, are not inconsistent with his love to them. This may be clear from the following remarks.

Remark 1. " That God has connected sin and suffering : "—

By his decree ; " Though hand join in hand, sin shall not go unpunished : " By the law ; " The soul that sinneth shall die, or suffer : By the gospel ; " If his children break his law, and keep not his commandments ; he will visit their iniquity with the rod : " By his providence, wherein he declares himself a God that will by no means clear the guilty. What God has joined, we naturally separate, saying, " We shall have peace, though we walk after the imagination of our hearts." This was the first heresy the devil bred in the world, " You shall not surely die," though you sin ; but God has connected sin and suffering.

Remark 2. " God's own people may lay their account with suffering, while they have sin." Though, through Christ, in a way of faith and repentance, they are freed from hell, and eternal damnation, yet they are not always freed from temporal punishments and chastisements ; nay, " You only have I known of all the nations of the earth ; therefore will I punish you." Though he pardons their sins, yet he may take vengeance on their inventions. Therefore,

Remark 3. " There are many rods they are visited with." Sometimes desertion, sometimes affliction, sometimes temptation, sickness, death of friends and children : " Many are the afflictions of the righteous ; but the Lord delivereth them out of them all," Psal. xxxiv. 19

Remark 4. " God has glorious and merciful designs in afflicting them." Glorious with reference to himself ; and merciful with reference unto them. As to himself, it is to clear his justice, and manifest his equity in the administration of his government, and that the world may not think he bears with sin in his own, or indulges them in their rebellion ; therefore though David repented of his adultery and murder, and got a pardon : yet because his sin was scandalous and offensive and made the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme ; therefore he must be punished with the sword of a bloody enemy, and a bloody sword must not depart from his house. As to them it is to do them good, to humble and prove them, to imbitter sin to them, and to make them forsake sin and flee to Christ, and that in their affliction they may seek him early, saying, " Come let us return to the Lord, for he hath broken, and he will heal us ; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up," Hosea v. 15, and vi. 1, compared.

[4.] We now proceed to give a discovery of these whose car-

riage in afflicted circumstances is, indeed, inconsistent with this complacent love of God.

1. Such as grow worse by their afflictions, and, instead of turning unto God, turn from him; that gnaw their tongues and blaspheme, like these, Rev. xvi. 10. Is it not with many, as with Ahaz, 2 Chron. xxviii. 20, 21. In his distress he sinned yet more? It is to be feared, many are worse instead of being better by the rod.

2. Such as are neither better nor worse, but rather stupid and sottish, never affected though afflicted. A child of God may become, in some respects, senseless for a little, with the acuteness and severity of his affliction; but he comes to his senses again, and is stirred up to a suitable affectedness before the Lord; but it is sad when people are no way touched and moved with the hand of God upon them. It is a stubborn child that will not weep when the father chastises; "Thou hast smitten them but they have not grieved," Jer. v. 3. Some are past feeling, they are, as it were, threshed on, and yet they feel it not.

3. Such as feel their misery and trouble, but do not see the cause of it; and therefore never take the right way to be rid of it; but being sensible of external trouble, look out for external help as Ephraim saw his wound, and went to king Jarib; but none says "Where is God my Maker? Job. xxxv. 9, 10. "Though they cry, by reason of the arm of the mighty, yet none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" Few prayers to God, little amendment.

4. Such as in their affliction turn to God, but it is not with their whole heart, but feignedly, Jer. iii. 10. They pray and cry fervently for ease and relief, yet hold fast iniquity; or if they forsake some sins, yet not all; their main business is to get ease from trouble; thus Pharaoh cried, turned, confessed; "Pray for me, that this death may be removed." Some never desire a prayer to be made for them, till they fear they are on their death-bed: they go to God in affliction, like one that goes to a great man about business, not about a loving visit; and if the business be done, they part and leave him and perhaps never wait upon him again; they have got their business done, and they seek no more: such are selfish seekers, that seek Christ only for the loaves.

5. Such as seem to turn cordially, and to return but it is not to the Most High; they not only pray that God would remove the

outward trouble, but they acknowledge sin, and resolve never to be so bad again ; but it is merely a moral turning, whereby many deceive themselves : they think their forsaking of some things, and reforming of some things, and performing of some duties, wherein they may be wonderfully affected, that this is true grace, but it is not so ; it is a turning, indeed, but not to the Most High. Distance from God is the great evil ; and nearness to him, through Christ, is that wherein our great happiness lies. Now, though men should go never such a length in reformation, if they live at a distance from God, it will be of little stead to them ; the great design of the rod is not obtained ; our righteousness must proceed from the influence of another covenant. People may turn to duty, and not to God ; and they may turn to God, and yet not to Christ, or to God in Christ ; as Christ said to the disciples, “ Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” If we believe in God, and yet not believe in Christ, we believe not in the Most High ; for God is most highly exalted only in Christ : “ He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father.” He that turns not to Christ by faith, never turns rightly to God by repentance.

6. Such as seem to turn to God and Christ, but turn away from him again, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 23. And like these ; Psal. lxxviii. 34, 37, “ When he slew them, they sought him ; yet their heart was not right with God, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” It is true, God’s children may have many changes in their frames, and back-drawings in their hearts ; but still they have a fixed purpose of heart to follow the Lord : like the mariner, that sets out for such a port, though he may be tossed at sea, and carried backward with contrary winds, yet his fixed purpose leads him to make for the designed haven, at which he at last arrives. God’s children may draw back, but they are not as these that draw back to perdition : “ The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own way.”

S E R M O N X L.

EZEK. xvi. 8.—“Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee; behold, thy time was a time of love.”

[The third Sermon on this Text.]

As a throne of grace is erected for a time of need, Heb. iv. 16, “Let us come boldly into the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need;” so a time of love is ordered for a time of need and a time of trouble; and, indeed, as none will apply to a throne of grace, but these that are poor and needy, and are really sensible of their poverty, and need, and necessity; so none will duly value and relish a time of love, but these that are brought to distress and trouble, especially under apprehensions of divine anger, wrath, and displeasure; hence our time of misery, and his time of mercy, are here joined together; “Behold, thy time was a time of love.”

We have already improven this subject in several uses: We shall now proceed to another use of the doctrine, and that is of examination. Try, then, if your time of trouble and distress has been a time of love; for I cannot well separate these which the text and context join so closely.

First, We may view this negatively. There are some whose time of trouble is evidently no time of love; as,

1. These whose trouble and distress never make them find more of the vanity of the world discovered to them; nor their hearts ever more separate therefrom than formerly. If your farms and merchandise, your worldly concerns, (Mat. xxii. 5,) keep your hearts as much away from the gospel-feast, or from Christ, as ever, thou hast got little good of thy trouble. If trouble in a world was blest to thee, the world would become more tasteless to thee; Jer. iii. 22, 23, “Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God: Behold, in vain is salvation looked for from the hills and multitude of mountains.” Intimating, that as the Lord draws to himself, he looses from the world.

2. Such as were never more awakened by their trouble to a serious concern about spiritual and eternal matters, surely they

cannot read a time of love in their trouble ; they continue asleep, still secure and careless ; they are so far from being turned to God, that they are not risen to their feet. See how David in his trouble is awakened to a concern about death and eternity, Psalm xxxix. He sees his age as nothing, and every man vanity ; then he said, " Lord, what wait I for ? my hope is in thee."

3. Such whose trouble never put them to pray more frequently and fervently than they were accustomed to do, and in another manner ; when there is no change in their prayers. It is true, some in trouble may turn from sottishness to seriousness ; natural seriousness for help and deliverance ; but never from natural to spiritual seriousness, so as to pray in a spiritual manner, for spiritual blessings, and wrestle with God for the blessing : it is said of the hypocrite, that he doth not cry when God enjoins him. See Dan. ix. 13, " All this evil is come upon us, yet made not we our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquity, and understand the truth." And Hos. vii. 7, " All their kings are fallen ; yet there is none among them that calleth unto me." When God makes our chief enjoyments fail, and yet we turn not to him by faith and prayer, is it a time of love ? Nay, rather of wrath and anger. You may pray indeed, and yet be guilty of this here challenged, because you pray not better than you did. If the Spirit of prayer was poured out upon us in affliction, it would be a sign of love.

4. Such as under trouble have no more hatred of sin, nor heart parting with it, and heart exercise about it, cannot say their time of trouble is a time of love. Love to God grows with hatred of sin ; but if you are no more burdened with sin than ever, your time of trouble hath not been a time of love. The troubles of God's people are to purge away the dross of sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. But if the bellows are burnt, and the metal consumed, and your iniquities not taken away farther from the heart, it is sad.

5. Such as under their trouble are brought to no more love to God and duty, so as to serve him better and more cordially in these duties, which before they either omitted, or slightly performed ; if your service be as faulty as formerly, you come under that charge, " I have so and so smitten thee, but thou hast not returned unto me."

6. Such as find not Christ more sweet and precious to them, by the means of their affliction ; the bitterness of trouble never made

Christ sweet to them, the grievousness of their trouble never made Christ precious to them. Is there the same strangeness between Christ and you that ever there was? No fellowship with him as your only help, and he in whom only God is well-pleased and reconciled? Then your time of trouble has not been a time of love. Alas! many wear off the sorrow of their affliction, partly by length of time, and partly by mirth and diversion, as Saul called for music to drive away the evil spirit; partly, by supply of comforts, yet remaining, and this lulls them asleep; but they know not what it is, like Hannah, to come to the Lord with a burdened spirit, and get ease from him; "They looked to him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed," Psal. lxxxiv. 5.

Secondly, Let us consider this positively. The time of trouble and distress may be known to be a time of love, 1. More generally, by the gracious effects of a sanctified trouble. 2. More particularly, by considering the particular troubles we have been under, and their particular usefulness, through grace, to us.

1st, More generally. Try it by the gracious effects of a sanctified trouble. I shall mention some of these by which you may try yourselves.

1. If your time of trouble and distress has been a time of love, then your trouble has humbled you.—God's design, by all the troubles in the wilderness, was to humble them, as well as to prove them, and do them good in the latter end: "Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end, Deut. viii. 16. Pride and folly is bound up in the hearts of the children of men, but the rod of correction drives it from them," Prov. xxii. 15. He designs to "hide pride from man, that he may keep his soul from the pit," Job xxxiii. 17, 18. We would be apt to say proudly with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" if he did not humble and lay us low. But happy is the man whom affliction humbles to the dust, for the pride of his heart; humbles him to a meekness of spirit, and submission to his sovereign will; humbles him to a sight and acknowledgment of his sin and wickedness, and of unknown corruption, to make him know what was in his heart, Deut. viii. 2. See 2 Chron. xxxii. 32, humbles him to a renouncing all confidence in himself, in his own righteousness, strength, and wisdom.

2. If your time of trouble and distress has been a time of love,

then your trouble has taught and instructed you : “ Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of thy law,” Psalm xciv. 12. Many a good lesson he teaches his own at that school : “ Whom he loves he chastens ;” and whom he chastens in love, he teaches. He gives them many sweet discoveries of himself ; he shows them their weakness, and his power ; their guiltiness, and his righteousness ; their emptiness, and his fulness ; their baseness, and his highness ; their blackness, and his beauty ; their folly, and his wisdom ; their treachery, and his faithfulness ; their sinfulness, and his holiness ; their misery, and his mercy ; their insufficiency, and his all-sufficiency, &c. What has he taught you by your trouble and affliction ? Has he taught you the sinfulness of sin, that not only it brings evil, but is evil, an evil against God ? Jer. ii. 19, “ Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding reprove thee : know therefore, and see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.”—Has he taught you the emptiness of the creature, and the vanity thereof, that all flesh is grass ? Isaiah xl. 6. You may have a strong imagination of this in your head, that all flesh is grass, but have you so learned it as to have a deep impression of it on your heart ?—Has he taught you the absolute usefulness of Christ, his fulness, worthiness, and suitability ? When the apostle is brought, Rom. vii. 24, 25, to an “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me ?” then follows, “ I thank God, through Jesus Christ :” here is my up-making ; here is my help and deliverance.—Has the God of heaven famished all your gods of earth, and starved you as to creature-comforts, so as to make you hunger and thirst after the fulness, sweetness, and righteousness of Christ ? Then your time of trouble has been a time of love.—Has he, by your trouble, taught you to pray, to weary of the earth, and to long for heaven, and to seek him early, and to seek him diligently, to seek him humbly, and to pour out your heart before him ?—Has your trouble taught you what is the one thing necessary, and set you in quest of that, with David, Psalm 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 all the days of my life ?” Has your trouble taught you the redemption of time ? In tranquillity, many golden hours are lost ; but has your trouble taught you to redeem your time, because the days are evil ?—Has your time of trouble taught you to improve your Bible, as well as your time ; to

search it more diligently, to understand it more clearly, and to relish it more sweetly? "This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word has quickened me."—Has your trouble taught you to prepare for death and eternity, by drawing out your soul toward an eternal God? You have heard of God before, but do you now see him? Moses never saw God so clearly as when he descended in a cloud; some never see God so clearly as when he descends in a black cloud of affliction; therein we may see his holiness, in hating sin; his justice, in correcting for sin; his faithfulness to his covenant, Psalm lxxxix. 30, 33; his power in supporting; his mercy in comforting.

3. If your time of trouble and distress has been a time of love, then it has taught you to forsake sin, saying, "What have I any more to do with idols?—This is all the fruit to take away sin."—Has he taught you to turn to himself, and his way, (by hedging up your way with thorns, Hosea ii. 6, 7,) saying, "I will go and return to my first Husband, for then it was better with me than now. It is good for me to draw near to God."—Has he taught you to turn to yourself, and to your right senses? Indeed, true conversion brings a man to his wits; it makes a change in the understanding, making him know, believe, and apprehend otherwise than he did: you before thought sin but a sport: but do you now understand it is the greatest of evils? You imagined a glory in a present world; but do you now apprehend the emptiness of it, and where true substantial comfort lies?—Has affliction awakened you out of your dream, so as you apprehend things to be quite otherwise than you took them to be in your sleep? Conversion is a bringing a madman to himself, Luke xv. 17. The prodigal is said to come to himself: true grace makes as great a change upon a man, as the restoring of a man to his wits does, Mark v. 15. It is like the man called Legion, clothed, and sitting at Christ's feet, and in his right mind. And, indeed, when a man comes to his right mind, he comes to a right carriage and countenance: we read of some, that the very show of their countenances witnessed against them: you will know some wicked men by their very outward countenance; for, ordinarily, a proud, haughty, and unhumbléd air is about them; whereas the grave, heavenly, gentle, and sweet behaviour and countenance of God's people does sometimes speak out the habitation of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and will distinguish them from the hypocrite, that but affects outward gravity.—When a man comes to his

right mind, then he comes to a right language, the language of heaven, instead of the language of Ashdod ; the earthly mind speaks earthly things natively ; but the heavenly-minded man speaks heavenly things as natively ; for, " Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." A new heart gives a man a new tongue ; a new heart brings him to new company, and makes him give up with his old, idle, graceless companions, and affect fellowship with them who fear God.—A new heart brings him to a new walk and conversation in heaven. It is true, the external change is less discernable in these who have been civilly and religiously educated ; yet there is even as great a difference between that man before and after conversion, though he was never so civil before, as there is between art and nature, or between some old art, he learned at the schools, and a new nature, he has got from God.

4. If your time of trouble has been a time of love, then your trouble brought you to submit to trouble, and cheerfully to welcome it as God's send : especially if it shall accomplish God's gracious design, to welcome it kindly as coming from his hand, especially if he himself come along with it : this is called a receiving it at the hand of God ; Job ii. 10, " Shall we receive good at the hand of God ; and shall we not receive evil ?" We kindly receive good at his hand, and every good thing we received, we ought to have acknowledged the hand of God in giving it, and so ought we to receive evil ; for example, affliction and trouble is God's thunder to awaken secure sinners ; now, do you welcome it with this view, and for this end ? " Lord, let me, by this means, be awakened out of security, and quickened to call upon thee ?"—Affliction is God's forge and furnace to soften hard hearts, and to refine base metal ; do you welcome affliction coming on this errand ? saying, " Now, Lord, let my hard heart be broken ; let me be purged and purified, and come forth as gold."—Affliction is God's pruning-knife, for lopping off luxuriant branches ; do you welcome affliction, providing it has this errand ? saying, " Lord, let me be pruned and purged ; if by this means I may bring forth more fruit." Affliction is God's school, where he disciplines his children, that they may learn obedience by the things they suffer : do you welcome affliction on this errand ? saying, " May I receive correction, and be made an obedient child to my heavenly Father, and have evidence of my being not a bastard, but a true child of God. No matter what be the affliction thou orders, if thereby I be a partaker of thy holiness."

Affliction is God's winnowing wind, or fan, to unchaff his corn, that it may be fit for his gardener: do you welcome it as coming on this errand? saying, "Lord, let my chaff be blown away, even all the chaff of my pride, unbelief, worldliness, and carnality, &c." Affliction is God's eye-slave, for clearing the sight of his people, that they may see things to be what they are: now, do you welcome affliction if it may accomplish this end? saying, with Job, in his affliction, chap. xxxiv. 32, "That which I know not, teach thou me; show me wherefore thou contendest; tell me what is the quarrel and ground of controversy; and if I have done iniquity, let me do so no more. What I know not of God, O teach thou me! What I know not about myself; what I know not about Christ, and the mysteries of the kingdom of grace, or about the mysteries of the kingdom of providence, teach me; make me know thy way that is in the sanctuary, and thy way that is in the sea."

2dly, We now proceed more particularly, to consider the particular times of trouble we have met with in our life-time, and whether or not these have been times of trouble to us. The text leads me to observe our particular times, "Thy time was a time of love; thy time, who art the favoured and beloved of God."—What time are theirs? The text allows me to speak of any time that has past over thy head, and enquire if it has been a time of love, of special love, I shall therefore speak a little, 1. Of some particular periods of your time. 2. Of some particular trials and troubles of your time; and enquire if they have been a time of love. As to the

[1.] The particular periods of your time; such as you are, or shall be capable to discern, are the time of youth, the time of middle age, the time of old age, and the time of death; and I would offer you a word of trial concerning each of these. By these we may be led to reflect upon the time of love either past, present, or to come in this world.

(1.) There is the time of youth, that is over with some, and present with others, and would you know if your time of youth has been a time of love? Here let young persons consider what is present, and older persons consider what is past: and both try if their time of youth is, or has been, a time of love. Alas! I fear few have it to say; because the most part spend their youth in childish trifles and vanities, little better than catching butterflies. But if there be any here, whose time of youth has been a time of love, it may be known by these four spiritual marks.

1. Have you been made to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, according to the commandment of God, Eccles. xii. 1? Have you been brought to a serious remembrance of God your Creator, God your Redeemer; and to remember him so as to love him above all things? For God has a kindly remembrance of young kindness; "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals," Jer. ii. 2. To remember him so as to seek him above all things; for God says, "I love them that love me; and they that seek me early, shall find me."

2. Have you been made to remember the day of judgment in the day of your youth? according to that advertisement, Eccl. xi. 9, "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Have you been brought to know, that for all the sins of your youth, God will call you to judgment? Have you got the humbling knowledge of it, so as you have born the yoke of humiliation in your youth? Lam. iii. 27, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." Have you got the upstirring knowledge of it, as to make you restless till you was reconciled with the judge, and got your judge to be your friend; God himself to be your God in Christ?

3. Have you been at the school with young Timothy, of whom it is said, 2 Tim. iii. 15, that from a child he knew the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus? These whose time of youth has been a time of love, are verily the students of the scriptures, and of the mind of God therein.

4. Have you been affected with the word, as young Josiah was; of whom it is said, 2 Kings xxii. 19, That his heart was tender, and he humbled himself before the Lord, when he heard the word of threatening read against Jerusalem? "To this man will I look, young or old, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." Did the word of threatening touch your heart with fear; and the word of promise touch your heart with love, delight, and desire? And does this work of God upon your heart continue, though not always at the same height and exercise, yet through all the stages of your after-life, and persevere to a progress in the way of the Lord, and acquaintance with him? For

some begin with the Spirit and end with the flesh ; they seem to begin their days in heaven, and end them in hell ; but where it is a sound work of God, it is durable ; “ The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” By these things you may try if your time of youth is, or has been, a time of love.

(2.) There is a time of MIDDLE-AGE, that is present with some of you, and over with others ; will you try if that is, or has been, a time of love. Indeed, if your time of youth has been a time of love, then your time of riper years, will be so too ; for, “ Whom the Lord loves, he loves to the end.” But more particularly,

1. If your time of riper years be, or has been a time of love, then you have got grace to lament the folly of your youth, saying, with the Psalmist ; Psalm lxxix. 8, “ O remember not against us former iniquities.” As you have been convinced of the sin of your nature, heart, and way, so you have been particularly challenged for, and made to go heavily under the burden of the sins of your youth. Job was brought to say ; chap. xiii. 26, “ Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth.” Was never the sin of your youth bitter to you before the Lord, and made you cry, with David ; Psalm xxv. 7, “ Remember not the sin of my youth ? ” If you can look back upon the follies of your youth with pleasure, and are never humbled before God for them, know that a sin never imbittered, is a sin never pardoned ; sin never hated, is sin never purged : but if thy time of riper years, be a time of love, it will be a time of hating sin, and of hating thyself for all sin, and even the follies of thy youth, which others make a sport of, as being nothing but the trick of youth. “ God will not be mocked.”

2. If thy time of riper years be a time of love, it will be a time of ripening for eternity by redeeming the time that is past in idleness, wickedness, and folly ; according to the call of God ; Eph. xv. 16, “ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time.” If you never began to redeem time, you never yet have had a time of love. O sligher and contemner of time, that knows not what to do with thy time, that idles and trifles it away, and has little or no remorse what time thou mispendest in idle work, idle talk, idle conversation, idle company ; thou knowest nothing of a time of love ; for time’s redemption begins with it. And now, that thou art come to thy middle-age, it is full time to

redeem time, as thou wouldst not be plunged unawares into eternity.

3. If thy time of riper years be, or has been a time of love, then it will be your desire and endeavour to give that strength of time and day to God, and his service, that others give to the devil, and their lusts. The time of middle-age is a time of service amongst men, then they are most fit for temporal service in their day and generation : even so, if we be servants to God at all, that time of life is most fit and proper for glorifying, and honouring, and doing something for his glory, and the good of our own souls, and the souls of others, and accordingly will be thus occupied, if our time in that period be a time of love : for, as his time of love begets love, since “we love him, because he first loved us ;” so, according to the measure of our love, such will be the measure of our service with delight from a principle of love. There may be a variety of changes in the measure and man of his loving service ; but this will be the habitual business of the man’s life, whose time is a time of love, then it will be a time of service ; and, as Jacob’s love for Rachel made his service pleasant, much more will the love of Christ constrain to serve him.

4. If thy time of riper years be a time of love, then it will be a growing time ; as you grow in years so will you grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. iii. 18. This will hold true of all the children of grace, notwithstanding of all their winter-decayings, yet they have also their spring-times of reviving and restoration, vastly different from all the changes of frames and moods that may be among hypocrites ; for, when the Lord restores his children’s frame, he, together, with it, restores their soul, and leads them in the paths of righteousness, for his name’s sake, Psalm xxiii. 3. And there they walk and go on in the strength of the Lord, and from strength to strength, pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God. Thus you may try if the time of your middle-age be a time of love.

(3.) There is the time of OLD-AGE that some are brought to. You that are to come to it, will you try if your time of old-age be a time of love ? In order to your trial, you may tell me,

1. What is the sorrow of your old-age ? Is the sin of your youth, and of your riper age, the sorrow and grief of your age ? Is it your sorrow and grief before God, that so much time has been lost, so many opportunities misimproven, and so little good has been

got and done by you? May you not say with Jacob to Pharaoh; Gen. xlvii. 9, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been?" Do you reckon you have lived no longer than since you began to live unto God? Is it your grief, that you have lived so little from him as your principal, and to him as your end, and that you lived so long without him?

2. What is the joy of your old-age? If it be a time of love, then as sin will be the grief, so Christ will be the joy of your old-age, when your joy and comfort in the world is withering and dying. Is your joy in the Lord Jesus beginning to live? "They are the true circumcision, that rejoice in Christ Jesus." Sorrow for sin, and joy in Christ the Saviour, are very consistent; yea, true sorrow for sin cannot be without joy in the Lord; and true joy in the Lord cannot be without sorrow for sin; and if this be your sorrow and your joy in old-age, it is a time of love.

3. What is the crown of your old-age? Solomon says; Prov. xvi. 31, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." Is the righteousness of Christ your crown? Is his righteousness imputed for your justification, your crown for to cover you before God? Is his righteousness of grace imputed for your sanctification, your crown for adorning you, and making you all glorious within, and being the principle of holiness and righteousness of life and conversation before men? Is this the crown of your old-age? And is Christ himself your crown, as the Lord your righteousness and strength?

4. What is the staff of your old-age? Is the word of grace and promise, the staff you lean upon for support and comfort in all your tribulations and difficulties? Do you walk and worship with his staff; as Jacob worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff, in a common sense, Heb. xi. 21; so, do you worship, leaning on the staff of the divine promise? And are you resolved to walk through death with this staff saying, "though I walk through the valley and shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and staff they comfort me?" Psalm xxiii. 4. Has God put this staff in your hand, and you resolve never to quit with it, but still to lean upon his word, and hope in his word? If so, it is a time of love.

(4.) There is the time of DEATH a-coming; and would you known whether that will be a time of love? Some go to the devil, or his instruments, to know what death they will die; but if you go to God, and his word, you may know indeed what death you will

die. I mean, whether you will die in the favour of God, or if your time of death shall be a time of love. Would you know what will come of you at death, and how it will fare with you? Whether you will fall in the lap of God's everlasting love, or fall into the fire of his everlasting wrath, when death comes, which may be nigh at hand? Why,

1. A time of love in life will certainly end in a time of love at death; for death cannot separate from the love of God, once manifested, Rom. viii. 38. If you be sure then of a time of love now, whether in youth, or riper age, or old age, you may be sure that the time of death will be a time of love also; for, "He rests in his love.

2. And more particularly, if Christ be your life now; Col. iii. 3, 4, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." If to you to live is Christ, then to die will be gain, Phil. i. 21. Is Christ the hope of your life, the joy of your life, the strength of your life, the glory of your life, the Alpha and Omega of your life? Have you come to him for life? And do you live on him as your life? And do you reckon your life without him, to be but death? Then your time of death will be a time of love.

3. If Christ be in you by his Spirit, then the time of death will be a time of love; for this is the well of water springing up to everlasting life; John iv. 14, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." But if you have the Spirit of Christ, he will abide with you for ever, John xiv. 16. This is the earnest of the inheritance, as he is a sanctifying and comforting Spirit, a Spirit of prayer and praise, a Spirit of grace and love, a Spirit of faith and of a sound mind.

4. Your time of death will be a time of love, if the sting of death be taken away by the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Now, is sin taken away in the guilt and rule of it? How shall I know that, say you? Why, do you flee to Christ for pardon of sin, as he is the Lord your righteousness? And do you flee to Christ for victory over sin, as he is the Lord your strength? And do you ever win to rejoice in his pardoning grace, having some peace of conscience in the faith of his atoning blood? And do you ever win to rejoice in his victorious grace, having some begun victory, and some hope of full victory over sin? Why then, according to the measure of this freedom from sin, which is the sting of death, such may be the measure of your assurance, that the time of

death, will be a time of love; and you may sing in the view of it with Paul, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 55. If you know none of these things in any measure, you then have no ground, as yet, to conclude but that your time of death will be a time of wrath, and a porch to eternal death.

[2.] As to the next thing, viz. the particular troubles and trials of your time, by which you may try the time of love: I cannot now insist upon them; I only mention these two at the time.

1. Perhaps your time, at present, is a time of fear and perplexity about your STATE, not knowing if it be a state of grace; fearing you know nothing of communion with God, or of the power of religion; and you would understand, if it is possible that such a time may be a time of love, and how it may be known? Why,

(1.) Some of the Lord's people may have communion with God, and experience of the power of godliness, and yet not be assured of it, because they have not that measure of it they would desire to have. It is communion with God, when you have a dealing with God, and God with you; when you ask, and he gives; you knock, and he sometimes opens a door of liberty unto you. There is somewhat of the power of religion, when at times you find your indisposition for duty, and that you can no more pray than remove a mounthin; yet, behold quickly the Lord looses your bonds, turns your darkness to light, your hard heart to a soft heart; and you pour it out like water; here is the finger of God; and these things demonstrate a time of love, an interest in God, acquaintance with him, fellowship with him, and the power of his way, though you discern it not.

(2.) Is thy fear in this matter not a lazy, idle fear, but an active, diligent fear, stirring thee up to be about the Lord's hand, and his way? Some have an idle concern; they are easy though they know not their state; they reckon it only the privilege of some, and attainable by few; and therefore no matter though they have it not. This looks like a total want of the knowledge of God and his way. But does your concern make you diligent? and are you as humble, holy, and circumspect in your darkness, as others are in their light of assurance? There is hope in Israel concerning thee, that thy time is a time of love, notwithstanding thy darkness.

2. Perhaps your time of particular trouble is a time of heavi-

ness with respect to temporal calamities. I shall say no more of this at the time, but to refer you to Psalm lvii. 1. What is your refuge in a day of calamity? If your time of calamity be a time of love, then such will be your exercise. Two things take place in all God's children in times of calamity, if faith be any way exercised; and in none else but them.

(1.) They have a refuge, and God only is their refuge; they are obliged to abandon all other refuges; and though they may use means, as well as others, yet they have no other refuge but God, that they run to; as Psalm cxliii. 9, "I flee to thee to hide me;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, *I hide me with thee*. They have no other refuge but the secret of God's presence, and the shadow of his wings; they are brought off from all confidence in themselves, and in the creatures.

(2.) They are humbled to be content with a refuge without a delivery; even though the day of calamity be not over, yet they can rejoice in their refuge, till the day of calamity be overpast. They can rejoice in God as a promiser, even when he is not yet a performer; and rest on a promise, without a performance; in a refuge, without a delivery.—Try if you know anything of this, and if your time of trouble has been a time of love.

S E R M O N X L I.

EZEK. xvi. 8.—"Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee; behold, thy time was a time of love."

[The fourth Sermon on this Text.]

BETWEEN the time of life and the time of death, our concern should be, that a time of love intervene. Solomon speaks of a time to be born, and a time to die, intimating, that there is no time to live, that we can promise upon; and therefore, between our birth and our death, our main care should be to have a time of love: for, if death prevent us before we know that, woe will be to us that ever we were born. As fire kindles fire, and one flame lightens another; so, nothing more reasonably demands love, than love; and no love so

powerfully commands love again as the love of God ; our love cannot but be best laid out upon one who is so far before-hand with us, that even, before time prevented us : he provided for our cure, before ever we had received our wounds : for our healing, before we had contracted our diseases ; for our deliverance, before we had been ruined ; for our redemption, before we were in thralldom ; for our rising, before we were fallen ; and for our advancement to heaven, before we were become heirs of hell. Thus was our kind Redeemer rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. The time wherein he vents his love is strange, even the time when we are most worthy of his wrath, and unworthy of his love.

In the preceding discourse, we mentioned two evidences, to know if the particular troubles and trials of our time were times of love. We intend at present to enlarge a little further upon this point. Try then if your time of need be his time of love, since infinite wisdom uses to make these two meet in the experiences of his own people, whose time in this world is a time of tribulation, wherein yet he has said, "In me ye shall have peace." What time of need is it with you ? Why, say you,

1. "My time is a time of want, even of outward want and poverty. I have very hard living in the world ; and can such a time be a time of love ?"

ANSW. Yea, it may be a time of love, if your want and poverty be weaning you from the world, and winning you to Christ, in whom is all store of provision ; and if you be living upon his promise and providence. Know you what it is to live upon such a promise as that ; Isa. xxxiii. 16, "Bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure ?" Have you got the faith of his providence, that he feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies ; and therefore you rely upon him for provision, though you should be kept as it were, from hand to mouth ? Christ says to the church of Smyrna, "I know thy poverty ; but thou art rich," Rev. ii. 9. It may be said of some, Christ knows their riches, but they are poor, not having Christ for their stock and store : but happy they of whom he says, "I know thy poverty ; but thou art rich ;" rich in faith, rich in grace : however poor in hand, yet they are rich in bond, by virtue of the bond of the covenant, wherein they have Christ bound for their support in a present world. If you know anything of this, your time may be a time of want, and yet a time of love.

2. "But, says another, my time is a time of inward want, spiritual want; want of faith, and want of grace; and can such a time be a time of love?"

ANSW. It may be so, if you are humbled under a sense of your want, and really see your want and poverty in spiritual things, you may reckon the Lord thinks upon you with thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end: "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me," Psalm xl. 17. Yea, you may reckon that the Lord looks towards you with an eye of pity, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word," Isaiah lxi. 2. And again, if your want and poverty commends Christ and his fulness to you; "To them that believe he is precious;" and even to them who believe their own want and fulness; who believe their utter insufficiency, and his infinite all-sufficiency; who believe they are nothing, and he is all in all. If you be kept empty, and sensible of your utter want, so as to have no confidence in yourselves, or in the flesh, and hence find no cause of rejoicing, but only in Christ, and his fulness, and dependent upon that, your time of want is a time of love. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Matth. v. 3.

3. Say you, "My time is a time of guilt; I have a sense of much guilt lying upon my conscience; and can that be a time of love, which is a time of the prevalency of sin, and the pressure of guilt?"

ANSW. It may be a time of love in the following cases:—If the prevalency of sin be humbling you to the dust, saying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" If the pressure of guilt be leading you to the fountain of Christ's blood for cleansing—if the pardon of sin be highly valued by you, above all things in this world, saying, "Blessed is the man whose transgressions is forgiven, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." And if at any time the sense of pardon, or the hope of pardon, melt your heart, and make you fear to offend any more, and afraid of falling into sin, and lead you to say, "Henceforth we will not go back; quicken us, and we will call upon thy name," Psalm lxxx. 18. Do you get any grace to hate sin, and to resolve a war against it? grace to hope for victory at last, though you should fight all your life? And are you made sometimes to fight in hope of full victory through Christ, saying,

"I thank God, through Jesus Christ." In this case, thy time of sensible guilt, and of the prevalency of sin, may notwithstanding be a time of love.

4. Say you, "My time is a time of weakness; I find no strength for duty, no ability for work or worship that God calls me to; and can that be a time of love?"

ANSW. Why, even that time may be proven to be a time of love. If the sense of thy weakness drives thee out of thyself to the strength and sufficiency of Christ, saying with the apostle, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. iii. 5. Do you know, when you are weak in yourselves, then to be strong in the Lord; strong in the grace that is in Christ? When you find in yourselves no grace to pray, yet even then have you gone to prayer, and found strength before you was aware, so as you could say, "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul," Psalm cxxxviii. 3. I found my soul weak and without strength; but when I began to cry in that case, he strengthened me with his secret power, his invisible hand. Did you find, that he who brings light out of darkness, brought strength out of weakness? And is your weakness sometimes the occasion of magnifying and setting off the strength of Christ? according to 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace shall be sufficient for you, and my strength shall be perfect in thy weakness." And are you thence sometimes made to glory in your infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon you? and content that your stock of strength is not in your own hand, but in Christ's? "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee." In this case, your time of weakness may be a time of love.

5. "Perhaps your time is a time of difficulty, about some piece of work, some step of your pilgrimage, wherein you know not what to do; can such a time be a time of love?"

ANSW. Yea, it may, in the following cases:—Are you getting grace to spread the case before the Lord, to acquaint him with your case, according to that call, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy steps?" Do you commit the guiding of your ways to him, according to that; Psalm xxxvii. 5, "Commit thy ways to the Lord; trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass?" Though you see no light, nothing but darkness, it is a sign he will direct according to his promise; "I will lead the blind in ways

they know not; and in paths which they have not trod." Are you waiting on him for his promised conduct, according to that promise, "They shall hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it?" Thy time of difficulty is a time of love; "He will guide thee with his eye."

6. Say you, "My time is a time of great affliction; affliction on my body, affliction on my soul, affliction in my family; how shall I know if this time of affliction be a time of love?"

ANSW. It is so in the following cases. Are you helped to cast your burden on the Lord, to roll this case upon him? Do you see the wisdom of God, in afflicting you, the holiness of God, the faithfulness of God, the mercy and love of God in your affliction? Do you see his name? Are you brought to submit to God, and put yourself in his hand, to lay the rod on your back as he pleases, if it be needful? And especially to look to him for sanctifying the rod, and concerned rather to have affliction sanctified, than removed, saying, O let the wind blow, till my chaff be blown away; let the fire burn, till my dross be purged out, &c. Thy time of affliction is a time of love.

7. "Oh! but my time, say you, is a time of rebellion and incorrigibleness; though I have been afflicted, yet I am not the better; I find my heart rebelling against his chastisements; and that though he hides himself, and smites, yet I go on frowardly in the way of my heart, as it is said, Isa. lvii. 17. I find corruption irritated by the cross, and enmity strong; can such a time be a time of love?"

ANSW. It may be terrible, indeed, to think of thy rebellion against word and rod; yet thy time notwithstanding all this may be a time of love; if thy enmity be afflicting to thee, and thou heavily lamentest it before the Lord, saying, "Lord, thou seest nothing will do with me; no word, no rod: such is the power of sin and enmity: nothing but a sovereign step of grace will overcome me, therefore, 'See my ways, and heal me,' in a way of sovereign grace." And dost thou therefore cast thyself down at the throne of sovereign grace, that thou mayest be conquered, pitied, and saved in this way? Art thou complaining of thy enmity before God, and of thy incorrigibleness, and waiting upon God for more and more of his power exerted for destroying it, and delivering thee? There is hope in Israel concerning thee, that thy time is a time of love; he will see thy ways, and heal thee.

But say you, "My time is a time of divine absence and anger;

I think the Lord has cast me off, and can such a time be a time of love?"

ANSW. Yea, it may be a time of love, notwithstanding these apprehensions of thine: if in this case thou art endeavouring, through grace, to look to the temple of God, saying, with Jonah, chap. iii. 4, "I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again to thy holy temple." Art thou out of the belly of hell crying to God; and against hope believing in hope, looking and longing for the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and a reviving in the bondage? And while he is absent and angry, can you say, The desire of your soul is to his name? A believer at his lowest, may be known by his hidden and holy desire.

QUEST. When is the desire holy?

ANSW. 1. When you desire to be justified, that you may be sanctified; or to be pardoned that you may be purified. 2. When you desire to be saved, that God may be glorified; or to have happiness, that God may have honour.

Again, try the time of love by the remarkableness of that time. And here I would offer two things for helping your trial. 1. The remarkable parts. 2. The remarkable attendants or properties of the time of love.

1st, Try the remarkable parts of it; I mean, 1. The commencement or morning of it. 2. The progress or mid-day, of the time of love; for it never has an evening.

1. One of the remarkable parts of it is, the commencement thereof; preparatively, by the law; effectively, by the gospel.

(1.) Preparatively, by the law; giving a view of sin, and the wrath of God for sin; for people never value the revelation of the love of God in the gospel, unless they have got a revelation of the wrath of God in the law: has ever the commandment come? Was you ever brought to the foot of Sinai, and there got you a discovery of your sin and guilt, and of the wrath of God you deserve, making you tremble, and fear hell and damnation, saying, O what shall I do? I cannot live, and I dare not die: "What shall I do to be saved?" Have you come under the spirit of bondage and conviction?

(2.) Effectively, by the gospel: the law breaks the hard heart, but the gospel melts it. A stone duly broken, may be still a hard stone; but the gospel melts, the Sun of righteousness dissolves, and that partly by the revelation of mercy to the sinful, guilty creature, partly, by the particular offer of mercy; here is mercy for you, a

Christ for you, salvation for you, that deserved damnation : O this melts ! And partly by the Spirit of faith, given to fall in with the gospel, and receive Christ for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and to enlist with Jesus Christ.—Then the time of love is commenced in the soul.

2. The other remarkable part of the time of love, is the progress thereof. The time of love is continued, and the design of love carried on more and more. And that,

(1.) By teaching ordinances ; as “ Faith comes by hearing ;” so, the increase of faith by hearing more and more.

(2.) By sealing ordinances, and solemn occasions ; they see his power and glory in the sanctuary ; get here a little and there a little. And,

(3.) By crosses and judgments ; for, “ By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is the fruit of all, to take away sin. It was good for me that I was afflicted, for now I have learned thy law.”

(4.) By mercies outward and inward ; they are brought to fear the Lord and his goodness ; get new discoveries of his glory from time to time, new communications of his grace, new restorations after decays : “ He restoreth my soul ;” and new conversions, as it is said to Peter, “ When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren ;” and David, “ Restore to me the joy of thy salvation ; then will I teach transgressors thy way.” They get new excitations and up-stirrings ; new drawings, new quickenings, new gales of the Spirit. By these means, the time of love is continued, even to the believer’s sense now and then ; and the design of love carried on.—This is the progress thereof.

2dly, Try the time of love by the remarkable attendants and properties thereof.

(1.) Try it by the remarkable attendants of it. I only mention two of them.

1. It is attended with remarkable power, Psal. cx. 3. The time of love is called a day of power : but how can this power be remarked ? Why, how do we remark the power of God in the works of creation, but by the effects thereof in the visible heavens, sun, moon, and stars ? so, how do we remark the power of God in the work of grace, but by this effect thereof, our being made willing ? The invisible power of God may be known by this effect. But many say, they are willing who are not truly so.

QUEST. When is one made truly willing?

ANSW. There are four properties of true willingness.

(1.) It is a pleasant willingness, not constrained by terror or dread only; but made freely willing, pleasantly willing. And this pleasant willingness hath two things in it, joy and generosity. It has joy in it; the man is glad to sell all, that he may buy the pearl. It has generosity in it; he would give a world for Christ: nay a thousand worlds for him, had he them at his command.

(2.) It is a present willingness; the man goes in presently to the call, according to that, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Many are content of Christ for the future, and they delay till some other time; but they are not for Christ's being a present portion; it is otherwise with such who are made willing.

(3.) It is a peremptory willingness: the soul says, O! I must have Christ; I cannot want him; I cannot live without him; I cannot die without him; I perish without him; give me Christ or else I die.

(4.) It is an universal willingness; the soul is made willing to have Christ for sanctification, as well as righteousness; to be saved from sin, as well as from wrath; to have Christ and his cross, as well as Christ and his crown.

2. It is attended with remarkable light and knowledge, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Try then your time of love by its being a time of light, and saving knowledge.—And this knowledge is remarkable for these four properties.

(1.) It is a down-casting knowledge and light; "The loftiness of man is brought low, and the Lord alone exalted," Isa. ii. 11. Other knowledge and learning puffeth up; the more a man hath of it, he is the more proud; but this knowledge casts him down to the dust, down to the ground; it casts down self, and self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-love, and self-seeking.

(2.) It is an uplifting knowledge; it exalts Christ in the heart, and lifts up the heart in the ways of the Lord, in respect of satisfaction; it brings in satisfaction to the heart and conscience; this water being given the man thirsts no more, in respect of absolute want, John iv. 14.—Nothing satisfies him but this knowledge of Christ; or, rather this Christ made known.

(3.) It is a singular knowledge; singular in respect of the object, author, and subject.—The object is a God in Christ; what-

ever men know, if they know not God in Christ, they are miserable ; though they had all scriptural knowledge, if they want the knowledge of Christ, it may be said of them, They know nothing as they ought to know. In paradise, there were many trees, and every one good ; but only one tree of life : in the scriptures, many truths, and all good ; but there is only one tree of life there ; and we perish, if we eat not that.—The Author of this knowledge is God : “Flesh and blood has not revealed these things to thee, but my Father who is in heaven.”—The subjects are ordinarily poor babes, who have neither wisdom nor prudence, in respect of others in the world ; “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes,” Mat. xi. 25. Some are capable of this knowledge of Christ, that are not capable of other learning.—A wooden candlestick can hold a candle as well as a silver one ; so are these capable of the knowledge of Christ, that are destitute of outward ornaments and literature.

(4.) It is a warming and working light and knowledge. We know so much of God and Christ, as we are affected, touched, and wrought upon. It is said, Jer. ii. 8, “They that handle the law, know not God.” Some may handle the law, and yet not know God : they may handle the gospel, and yet not know Christ, by his special, singular, and saving knowledge : they may have a vast deal of head knowledge ; but a spark in the heart is worth a torch in the brain. The knowledge of Christ feeds all graces. It feeds faith ; “They that know his name will put their trust in him.” It feeds repentance ; “They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn.” It feeds love ; they only who know him to be altogether lovely, do truly love him. It feeds all grace ; strengthening all grace.—Examine this knowledge, and be sure you find the difference between it and the form of knowledge, which never warms the heart, or works any change in you ; it is but like the sun painted upon a board for a sign ; you call it a sun, but it has no sun-light, no sun-influence, no sun-warmth ; so you may call that the knowledge of Christ, which hypocrites and profane graceless men may have ; you may call it knowledge, but is but a form, a shadow, a picture ; there is nothing of the light, heat, and influence that will take place when you come to the true light.—Examine yourself by these things.

[2.] There are some remarkable properties of the time of love by which you may try.

1. It is a time of remarkable joy and sorrow; sorrowing for sin, and yet rejoicing in the Lord: "They shall come with weeping; and with supplications I will lead them;" or with favour, Jer. xxxi. 9. He leads them with weeping, and with singing; weeping, for their sins; and singing, for his favours. The time of love is called, Song ii. 11, "A time of the singing of birds, and the voice of the turtle;" which, applied to the believer, is his mournful notes. It is remarkable, that the book of Lamentations is all poetical; every chapter, except the third, has twenty-two verses; and every verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet; the first verse with the first letter *Aleph*; the second verse, with the second letter, *Beth*; and so on to the close; and the third chapter has sixty-six verses, and every three verses begins with a letter thereof, three times over; the first three verses begins with the first letter, three times over; the second three verses, beginning with the second letter, three times over, and so on. What is the meaning of all this, but to show that a time of mourning and lamentation may be to the Lord's people a time of mirth and holy music? and ordinarily it is so: and when hath the believer more joy, than when in a flood of tears before the Lord?

2. It is a time of prayer; and very remarkable for it.

QUEST. What is there remarkable in the prayers of these, whose time is a time of love?

ANSW. There are two remarkable outpourings, viz. the outpouring of the Spirit, mentioned, Zech. xii. 10; and the outpouring of the heart, mentioned, Psal. lxii. 7. When these two concur, then it discovers a time of love. At other times prayer comes drop by drop, as water out of a still; but then it comes plentifully as water out of a fountain. See Isaiah xxvi. 16.

3. It is a time of praise; the heart is filled with the high praises of God. And this heart-exercise takes in both admiration and invitation: admiration, O wonder! says the soul, that ever God manifested his love to the like of me, "What am I, or my father's house?" Invitation, to all the creatures to help them to praise; "O let sun, moon, and stars praise him." This seems to be the temper of the heavenly harpers in their hallelujahs, "Praise ye the Lord," importing, that they cannot praise him; therefore let all the creation help us to praise; "Praise ye the Lord."

4. It is a time of love, a loving time; for love manifested begets love; the love of God kindles love in us in the time of love;

and it is remarkable in two things. The love that results from the manifesting of divine love, gives, first the heart; and secondly the hand to the Son of God.—The heart; “My son, give me thy heart.” Many say they love Christ, and yet give their heart to the world, and to their lusts; but as Delilah said to Samson, Judges xvi. 15, “How canst thou say, that thou lovest me, when thy heart is not toward me?” So, how can you say, that you love Christ, when your heart is not toward him, but given away to other lovers? If Christ be your treasure, your heart will be set upon him.—Again, the hand is given to him, to serve and work for him; we read of the labour of love. As Jacob served for love to Rachel, so the love of Christ constrains to this service; “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” It is true, the believer’s heart may frequently misgive him, and then he draws away his hand too; but this is not acted like a believer; this is his burden and disease; and he is never himself till his heart and hand be both given to the Son of God.—Try yourself by these things.

We shall now shut up our present exercise, with a short address to you whose time, either formerly has been, or at present is a time of love. And our advice to you is, O render unto the Lord, love for love. And to induce you hereunto,

1. Consider, how absolutely free, unmerited, and undeserved his love was to you. There was nothing that could induce him to love you; every thing about you was wretchedness and misery, as we endeavoured to show, in tracing the connexion where our text lies. You was lying in your blood, no eye to pity you: and yet, in these deplorable circumstances, in his passing by, “Behold, your time was a time of love.” It was said of Mary, that she loved much, because much was forgiven her. Well, see that you love the Lord more than ever, because much iniquity hath been forgiven you, and much love conferred upon you. “Thy time was a time of love.”

2. Consider, in order to persuade you to render him love for love, that he was before-hand in his love towards you: his love prevented yours; and if it had not been so, your time could never have been a time of love. Therefore, says the apostle, “We love him, because he first loved us,” 1 John iv. 19. Let the priority of his love to you, influence you to love him. “Behold, thy time was a time of love!”

3. Consider, what an agreeable and comfortable time your time

of love was, when he brought you into the banquetting-house, and displayed his banner of love over you. When you was enjoying these love-calls, love-visits, love-tokens, love-looks, and feasting upon the loving-kindness of God ; how was your soul ravished with his love ! Were you not made to cry out, " O the height, the breadth, the depth, and the length of the love of God ! " Should not this, then, be a powerful motive to engage you to render him love for love ? And is it not the best way to have his love-interviews continued with you ? " O love the Lord, all ye his saints. Keep yourselves in the love of God." We might adduce many other considerations to persuade you to this, but we defer them at present we may, perhaps, have an opportunity afterwards.

S E R M O N X L I I.

EZEK. xvi. 8.—" Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee ; behold, thy time was a time of love."

[The fifth Sermon on this text.]

THERE are two words that should take up most of our thoughts and cares, namely, Time and Eternity : time, because it will soon be at an end ; and eternity, because it will never come to an end. The candle of time is fast burning, and if we play the fool, and be idle about eternal work, till the candle be burnt out, we will have ourselves to thank, if we go to bed in the dark ; I mean, if we go to death and eternity, under the dark cloud of God's wrath, we cannot expect, unless we are madly deceiving ourselves, an eternity of happiness in the other world, if we are strangers to a time of love in this world ; for, whom God loved with an everlasting love from eternity, he draws them with loving-kindness in time, that he may crown them with loving-kindness to eternity. His everlasting love, in point of manifestation, hath its beginning in time, upon all the objects thereof ; and these in whom it has no beginning in time, will be the objects and vassals of wrath for ever. It is therefore a matter of the highest moment, to know what takes place in time now, and if your time be a time of love.

We have not only finished the doctrinal part of this subject ; but also insisted at considerable length, on the application, in the prosecution of several uses. It now remains that we conclude the subject with an use of Exhortation. And our exhortation shall be tendered to two sorts of persons : 1. To these whose time never was a time of love. 2. To these whose time has been such a time of love as I have spoken of.

First, We tender our exhortation to you whose time never was a time of love ; I mean you, who notwithstanding of your living under a loving dispensation of divine grace, by the gospel, yet have never seen or believed the love and grace of God in Christ, so far as to draw out your heart-love to Christ. I would say to you,

1st, O consider what a miserable state you are in, and like to be into to all eternity. In time you are miserable ; for, you are empty of all good, and full of all evil. How empty are you of all good, while you are without Christ, and love to him, having nothing of the love of Christ ! you have no good in you ; you would think it a bad house to dwell in, where there is neither meat, nor drink, nor clothes ; but a worse house is your heart, while you have neither God, nor Christ, nor the Spirit. How full are you of evil, while destitute of the love of Christ ! Full of enmity against God, full of sin, full of hell, full of the devil, full of the wrath of God : it abideth upon you, and you are exposed to the utmost measure of it. You are miserable through all eternity, if you live and die in that state : “ If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be ANATHEMA MARAN-ATHA, [that is, accursed until Christ come,]” 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Let him come under the sentence of the greater excommunication, of being for ever banished from the presence of God.

2dly, Consider how it comes about, that your love goes not out after Christ, when you live in a time wherein his love and loveliness are manifested. Surely it must be from some desperate enmity. Have you not heard of his fame ? Is there anything in all the world challenges your love so much ? If you have heard and forgotten, I will just now lay before you so much of the loveliness of Christ as may for ever render you inexcusable, if you henceforth fall not in love with him above all things else. Consider what he is in himself, what he is to God, what he is to you, sinner.

[1.] Consider what he is in himself. Is he not altogether lovely, considered either in his natures or person ?

1. View him in his natures, divine and human. In his divine nature, he is God's equal : " Who thinks it no robbery to be equal with God ;" he is the true God, and eternal life ; and has in him all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, that is, personally : " The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." In his human nature, view his body and soul. His human body now glorified in heaven, what a glorious body is it ! The apostle speaks of the glory of bodies terrestrial and celestial ; how much more glorious are celestial above terrestrial ! And how glorious above all celestial bodies is that of the Lord Jesus Christ ! When Paul, at his conversion, got a view of it in a vision, it exceeded the sky in its meridian brightness. His human soul, how much more lovely is that ! By how much the soul is beyond the body, by so much the soul is more glorious than the body. All the excellent qualities that ever adorned a soul are in him to perfection ; and besides these, a supereminent unction of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit above measure, whereby he is immensely full of grace and truth. He is thus the most amiable object, viewed in both his natures human and divine, distinctly. But beside this,

2. View him in the union of both these natures, as different, as finite and infinite, in one person : This brings God down to man as near as he can come, and raises man up to God as high he can ascend. What a terror might unveiled Diety be to guilty sinners, were it not allayed with the veil of humanity ! But O how fit a Mediator is he, being Immanuel, God-man ! Thus he has a divine fulness and sufficiency to save us, together with a human meetness and congruity, for applying it in a manner most suitable and proper to our condition. Now, may not that question be for ever silenced with contempt, What is the Christian's Beloved more than another's beloved, that he should be so mightily extolled ? Is there one in the world so lovely and glorious ? Is he not white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand ?

[2.] Consider what he is to God ; particularly in these two respects.

1. Is he not God's darling ? Has not the Father testified his love to Christ above all things else ? Isa. xliii. 1, " Behold my Servant, whom I uphold ; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth. Mark i. 11, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." What honour consequently has he put upon him, in raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand, and giving him a

name above every name, committing all judgment, yea all things into his hand. He is the Son of his love. We are then to love Christ for his own sake and his Father's sake ; and ought we not to love him as the Father's favourite ? Is it not a sufficient incentive to our love, that, beside his own personal amiable qualities, he is so much the object of the Father's love.

2. Is he not the Father's representative ? God's greatest representative, in whom he displays all his perfection ? 2 Cor. vi. 6, John xiv. 9, John i. 18. The representations of the divine glory in Christ, exceeds all other representations, in these particulars.

(1.) It is the brightest : the glory of God shines no where so brightly, as in his infinitely fair face, who is therefore called the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image (or representation) of his person, Heb. i. 3.

(2.) It is the fullest : the representation of God's glory, in the work of creation and providence, set forth, in a most illustrious manner, some of his perfections ; but here all his glory shines with inconceivable brightness ; all his attributes, even his mercy and truth, meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. Here they all shine with a peculiar lustre, and harmoniously conspire and centre.

(3.) It is the most intimate and propitious : how could God reveal himself more nearly, than through the flesh of his Son ? How more graciously, than by giving him to us, and for us ? How more kindly could he represent his infinite justice and holiness, than as vindicated, satisfied, and glorified in Christ, by whom grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life.

(4.) It is the most safe representation of the divine glory, and secure from being perverted to an undue exaltation of the medium : for, the glory of God, represented by the heavens, has been abused to idolatry, men worshipping the means by which God manifests himself, but here there is a safe representation ; the mean and end meet in one : we cannot put too much honour upon Christ ; " He that honours him, honours the Father."

(5.) It is the most mysterious : here is the wisdom of God in a mystery, the manifold wisdom of God ; such a large compass, both in contrivance and execution, that none can penetrate into the depth.

(6.) It is the most durable and permanent : see Isa. li. 6, " The earth shall wax old as a garment ; but my salvation (through Christ)

shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." God will never cease to manifest his glory through Christ; though there may be different ways of that manifestation, yet it will be to eternity; Rev. xxi. 23, "The Lord God, and the Lamb, is the light of the place." Rev. xxii. 3, "The throne of God is the throne of the Lamb; and his throne is for ever and ever.

Now, consider what a sacred and precious thing the divine glory is, above all other concerns; and that a proportionable love and esteem is due to things, according to the impressions of God upon them, and their reference to God's glory. Doth not Christ then challenge our highest love and esteem on this account, besides what he merits from us by his original intrinsic excellency.

[3.] Consider, what he is to us, or what relation he stands in to sinners; and what he has done, or is doing, by virtue of that relation.

1. What relation he stands in to us, sinners, as a Saviour of God's appointing and anointing: "We testify that God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world," 1 John iv. 14. He is a Saviour of sinners by office; and should not sinners love their Saviour, and employ him? Should we not love him with a love of desire, to close with him as our Saviour; and then with a love of delight in him? The general relation to us arising from his partaking of the same nature, is the foundation of a particular relation, and should be improved to the nearest relation of being mystically one.

1. What he has done and is doing. He came from heaven to earth to seek and to save lost sinners; he made himself in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; excepted as to the inhesion of it, which was absolutely remote from him, but not excepted as to the imputation of it; for, "He bore our sins in his own body," and submitted to have the iniquities of us all laid upon him, that he, as our Surety, might become accountable and answerable for them; and as the Lamb of God, sacrificed for us, might take them away; finding us obliged to the perfect obedience the law required, but utterly unable to perform it, and so cut off from the remotest possibility of ever obtaining that life it was ordained to convey; he yielded, in our place, an obedience to it absolutely perfect, and meritorious of eternal life, and gives this his righteousness to us, to become our title to heaven and eternal happiness: finding us pressed down under an immense debt to divine justice, and the penalty of the law, he took it on himself, paid it off, and discharges us by suffering for us;

thus he is the end of the law, and perfection of it, for righteousness, which we could never attain ourselves, but do now in him, the end and determination of its penal sanction : finding us in prison, bound with the fetters of our own iniquities, held in the cords of sin and misery, and reserved to the day of wrath and vengeance, he comes and visits us in our prison, and is content to be kept there for a time, in our room, till he should satisfy for our crimes, that we might be set at liberty : finding us under the curse, he is made a curse for us, that we might be redeemed from it : finding us doomed to death, he died for us, that we might live ; finding us lying under the edge of the flaming sword of vindictive justice, he put his own neck upon the block, and made his soul an offering for sin ; finding a cup of heavy wrath and indignation prepared for us, he took it out of our hands into his own, and drank it off, in our stead, that we might not have the least drop to our own share, but in lieu of it a cup of salvation for us to drink.

Was there ever love like Christ's, which such floods of tribulation could not quench or drown ! Though he was God, yet he became man : yea " His visage was more marred than any man, and his form more than the sons of men," Isa. lii. 14. So that he was so far from appearing like a God, that he scarce looked like a man, but rather as a worm, Psalm xxii. 7. A worm trampled on by all ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. Why all this, but that his love might shine the brighter through the dark shades that eclipsed his glory ? The more he lessened his person, the higher he raised his love, which appeared in all his fulness, while the other disappeared, as it were, for a season, and seemed to fade away. Thus he is amiable in his poverty : for, " He was made poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich : " amiable in his stripes, whereby we are healed : amiable in all the amazing instances of self-abasement, providing for the greatest happiness to us, at the greatest expense to himself.

Ought he not to be loved, who thus has loved us unto death ? Who must be loved if not he ? And how sweetly may the love of a believer entertain itself at the very cross of Christ, which is a tree of life : of life to us, though it was a tree of death to him : a tree of blessedness to us, though a tree of bitterness to him ? We may gaze at the cross, and Christ hanging upon it, and have loving, ravishing prospects here, without the least partaking of the distress and bitter anguish of spirit Christ endured upon it : for the cross of

Christ being the greatest proof and pledge of his love, ought to be the joy, crown, and glory of every beholder ; and viewed, not with a sad, heavy and fearful, but with a glad, cheerful, and joyful heart ; at which we are to dry up every tear of heart-breaking grief, and vent none but tears of joy, mixt only with these of sweet relenting sorrow ; mourning over sin, which by no means mars, but friendly accords with this joy. We may sit under the shadow of his cross with great delight, with a rejoicing heart, and find all the fruits of it, being fruits of love, grace, favour, and happiness, inexpressibly sweet to our taste. Here the horror of his cursed, painful, and shameful death, can by no means damp the joy and satisfaction : “ Weep not for me,” said Christ. Why ? his sufferings were voluntarily necessary, designed for an happy issue ; and it was not possible he could be swallowed up, or consumed by them ; and they are now long since past and gone, as to the smart he felt below, though abiding still in their virtue, use, and excellent fruits, and are now so many trophies of honour ; beauties instead of blemishes, and highest matter of glory and triumph : hence he appears in heaven with the marks of his bleeding wounds, “ A Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne.” The shame and pain of his cross, redounds to him for an ensign of honour and eternal glory ; a perpetual memorial of his love, merit, and victory.

3. What is he still doing ? Still pursuing the same kind design, though in a new manner. As his love was proved here by poverty and tribulation, it is now proved by a fulness of glory and power : his love was here in labour and distress for us ; now it is enthroned and triumphing, yet still for us also. He remembers us so as to think himself imperfect and incomplete, and as only half glorified till we come to be glorified together with him. As he laid down one life for us on earth, so he employs another for our use in heaven ; living there to intercede in virtue of the obligations he made, Heb. vii. 25 ; living there to send down his Spirit, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, of grace, supplication, sanctification, and consolation ; and to lead, guide, direct, begin, and carry on his good work ; make application of his redemption, ; living to execute his offices fully, which he happily began on earth ; and to perform his promises, that are Yea and Amen in him. Is there no loveliness here ? Is this love and loveliness of Christ discovered to you, and yet no time of love with you ? No love of desire after him wrought in you ? How inexcusable art thou, and wilt thou be, that loves vanity instead of him !

Secondly, We next direct our exhortation in a word to these whose time has been a time of love. And these are of two sorts; either such as doubt if their time has been a time of love, or such as are assured their time has been a time of love.

1st, Such as doubt of it, and yet their time has really been a time of love. These doubters are of two sorts: some are waking and mourning doubters; others are sleeping and slumbering doubters.

[1.] Some are waking and mourning in their doubts, and apprehensive that they never had a time of love. "Alas! say such, many a sermon and sacrament have I attended; but, to this day, I never met with a time of love: woe is me, that I cannot get a discovery of the glory and loveliness of Christ, nor my heart engaged to love him!" If this be thy case and exercise, mourning and crying, O for a time of love! There are two scriptures I would direct you to for relief.

1. If you are mourning and in heaviness because you reckon your time has not been a time of love, or of power; read Isa. lxi. 1, 2, 3, "He is anointed to give these that mourn in Zion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise, for the spirit of heaviness."

2. If you are crying for a time of love; read Isa. xxx. 18, 19, "He is a God of judgment; and blessed are all these that wait for him. He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee." He will turn at a cry, as that word *need* signifies; Heb. iv. 16, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of *need*." Pressing need, that makes you cry: he turns, as it were, at the cry, according to the promise here, "He will be very gracious to thee at the voice of thy cry." Therefore wait patiently, hopefully, and carefully for him, who has either begun, or is beginning the good work.

[2.] Some are sleeping and slumbering doubters, that have had a time of love, but now it is out of sight, by reason of their backsliding, and leaving their first love. To you I would say,

1. O remember whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do thy first works! Consider what answer you will have to these questions: What iniquity have you found in him, that you have gone far from him? Have you seen anything in Christ to alienate your affections from him? Was he ever worse than his word Or, is there

an uncomeliness in his way? What comeliness have you seen in other lovers? Have you found any other object like him? Is there any among the creatures that can do for you, what he has done? Can the world give you that which he has to give you? Do you find rest and satisfaction to your heart and conscience elsewhere? What sweet days had you once when your heart went out after him? Could you not then have said, "My Beloved is mine, and his desire is towards me, and the desire of my soul is towards him," when he brought you to the banquetting-house, and displayed his banner of love over you, making you to drink of the spiced wines? May not a reflection upon these sweet days you had, when his candle shined upon you, break your heart, that now you are set to the back of the door, and say, "O that it were with me as in months past?" What sad days have you had since you departed from him, and was shut out of doors, and had a screen drawn between him and you? What a sad change is there, when you want that sweet communion with him that once you had? O then! remember whence you have fallen.

2. Return to him, saying, "I will go and return to my first husband. Return, ye backsliding children, though you have played the harlot with many lovers, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord. I hate putting away. I am God, and change not: therefore you are not consumed." Return for he stands ready to heal your backslidings.

To both sorts, whether you be waking or sleeping Christians, to whom a time of love is dubious, I would exhort you to hear his loving cries after you, and let it be followed with your cries after him.

(1.) Hear HIS loving cries after you. One cry he sends after you, is that of the angels; Luke ii. 10, "Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy; for to you is born a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. To you a child is born, to you a son is given." Another cry after you is that; Rev. iii. 20, "Behold! I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me," He is seeking to sup with you, to have communion with you, and you with him. I am knocking at the door of your understanding, at the door of your wills, at the door of your hearts and affections: do you not hear me knocking? Another call is that; Son. v. 2, "Open to me, my sister, my spouse, my love, my dove; for my head is filled with dew,

and my locks with the drops of the night." I have suffered the midnight-shower and storm of divine wrath for you, it fell on my head; I have suffered for you, and now I am here ready to apply the blessing of my blood; open to me: I own you for my love, my dove, and my undefiled, having no spot but what my grace shall cover. Another cry is that; Song. iii. 11, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him." He is holding forth the sceptre to thee, to go forth by faith and take a view of him, till your heart be fully satisfied? O come, taste and see; come and see him; see what he has done for you, what he is doing for you, and what he will do for you. Another cry is that; John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!" Are your sins great and many? yet, O let no sin keep you away! "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin:" there is infinite virtue in that blood for making you perfectly clean. Another cry is that; Mat. xxii. 4, "All things are ready, come to the marriage." O was you never married to the Son of God? Come, and be the bride the Lamb's wife; give your heart and hand to him, and take hold of him for your Head, Husband, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Or, have you been already, married to Christ? O come and get confirmation: get a new token of his love; come to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Another cry is, in case you think it is not a free wedding; Isa. lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye; buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." The poorer you are, the welcomer to the market; no money here is good price: here is grace and glory freely: "Who-soever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." But, are you sighing under the burden of sin and guilt? Then another cry is, Matthew xi. 28, "Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest to your souls:" Come, and get rest to your minds in him, who, as a Prophet, is the wisdom of God: come, and get rest to your conscience in him, who, as a Priest, is the righteousness of God; come, and get rest to your hearts in him, who, as a King, is the power of God, and has all the riches of divine fulness in him. Another cry that he is sending after you is; Jer. iii. 14, 22, "Return, O backsliding children: for I am married unto you, and I will heal your backslidings." As if he had said, "However grievously you have revolted and rebelled from

the womb unto this moment, all by-gones shall be by-gones ; only henceforth let it be a bargain between you and me, an everlasting bargain never to be forgotten." Another cry after you is ; Song. ii. 14, " O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rocks, and in the secret places of the stairs, let me hear thy voice, let me see thy countenance ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." " Do not hide your face from me for shame, might he say ; do not blush to look to me, nor be afraid to speak to me ; come boldly to my throne of grace, for I delight to hear thy voice of prayer and praise, though it be but a mourning like a dove ; and I delight to see you coming boldly and confidently, depending upon me : you need not fear to face me, for I am your kindly suitor ; come, trembling dove, and flee into my bosom." Hear his loving cries after you.

(2.) Let it be followed with an echo from you, even with a loud cry after him. I will tell you some of the cries you may send after him. One is ; Psalm xxv. 11, " O Lord, for thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity ; for it is great." Let not your great sin hinder your crying after him, but be made an argument, inducing you to cry after him more ardently and fervently. Another cry is ; Psalm cxliv, " O bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down ; touch the mountains, and they shall melt." Mountains are in the way, but let them skip like lambs, and the little hills like rams, at the presence of the Lord. Another cry you may send after him is ; Song. i. 4, " Draw me, we will run after thee." " Put forth thy drawing power ; for I cannot come, I cannot move, I cannot stir without thee ; but I promise to run if thou draw." Another cry you may send after him, is that of blind Bartimeus ; Mark x. 51, " Lord, that I may receive my sight." " O enlighten my eyes, that I may know the mysteries of the gospel, that I may see the glory, grace, and love of Christ." Another cry is ; Psalm xc. 13, 14, " Return, O Lord, how long ? O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may be glad and rejoice all our days." " Thou hast an infinite ocean of mercy, O let the waves of the ocean reach my soul ! pardoning mercy, purifying mercy." Another cry is ; Song. ii. 17, " Till the day break, and the shadows flee away ; turn, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." " I want ability to mount up the hills of sin, guilt, and difficulty between thee and me ; but it is the glory of the roe to ascend the rocks and mountains : O get glory this way !" Another cry is ; Song. iv. 16, " Awake, O north wind : come, thou south ; blow upon my garden,

that the spices thereof may flow out. Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." O send the promised Spirit like water upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." Another cry you should give after him that is thus crying on you is; Jer. iii. 22, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God;" and with the poor man in the gospel, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. O send forth thy light and thy truth to lead me."

2dly, We come next to address ourselves to these who are more assured their time has been a time of love. I offer these four advices following.

[1.] Do not deny or disown the time of love; beware of questioning if ever such a time went over you. Do not deny it to your fellow Christians, that you may have it to say, "Come hither all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he has done to my soul." Do not deny it to God, that you may have it to say, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord." And that you may maintain your confidence before him.

[2.] In all time coming, remember the time of love, for it may be very serviceable to you. In the time of temptation, remember the time of love; wherein God becomes forthcoming, that, with the temptation, he would give a way of escape. In the time of tribulation, remember the time of love; when it was secured, that he would be with you in trouble. In time of desertion, remember the time of love; wherein it was promised, he would never leave you nor forsake you. In time of defection and backsliding, remember the time of love; wherein it was secured, that he would heal your backslidings, and love you freely, and restore your soul. In time of want and poverty, remember the time of love; when you was made to believe that your God should supply all your needs, according to his riches, in glory, by Christ Jesus. In the time of reproach for his sake, remember the time of love; wherein it was insured, that, "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you." In the time of man's wrath, rage, and persecuting fury, remember the time of love; wherein it was secured, that the wrath of man should praise him, and that the remainder of his wrath he would restrain. In the time of divine wrath, heavy judgments, and gloomy, terrible dispensations, remember the time of love; wherein it was promised, that though in a little wrath he should hide himself for a moment, yet

with everlasting mercy he would gather thee : see Isa. liv. 7, 8. In a time of sin and corruption prevailing, remember the time of love ; wherein you was made to say, " Though iniquities prevail, yet as for our transgressions thou wilt purge them away. In a time of sorrow and heaviness, remember the time of love ; and then you may be led to say, " Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him." In a time of danger, remember the time of love, as did the apostle ; 2 Cor. i. 10, " We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver ; in whom we trust, that he will yet deliver us. He delivered me from the paw of the lion, and mouth of the bear, and will he not deliver from the hand of this uncircumcised Philistine ? " In a time of diffidence and distrust, remember the time of love, as a notable means and motive to faith ; Lam. iii. 21, 22, 23, " This I recal to mind, therefore have I hope : " *This*, what is it he recalls to mind ? even the time of love and mercy that follows : " It is of the Lord's mercy we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not : they are new every morning ; great is his faithfulness." In a time of darkness, remember the time of love ; and then you may say, " Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me ; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." In a time of deadness, remember the time of love, and say, " Quicken thou me, according to thy word." In a time of weakness, remember the time of love, and the words of love : " My grace shall be sufficient for you, and my strength shall be perfected in your weakness." In a time of death, remember the time of love ; and in the believing remembrance thereof, you may say, " Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me, and thy rod and staff they comfort me. O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?

[3.] Has ever your time of need been his time of love ; then in all future times of need come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may find grace in time of need : for, the time of love, in times of need formerly, secures his loving help in all time of need to come : only observe these rules about help in time of need.

1. " That your expectation of things not necessary, or absolutely needful, may fail you." You may be in a delusion in your expectation of certain out-gates you would have, and of sensible comforts at all times ; but you shall never be in a delusion in your expectation

of needful help from the throne of grace ; the matchless God of Jes-hurun rides in heaven, for the help of his people, and in his excellency on the sky, Deut. xxxiii. 26.

2. "That needful help and support comes from the same throne from which sensible comforts come." It is remarkable, you are called to come boldly to that throne, for these things you may be always sure to find there, namely, "Mercy and grace to help in time of need ;" you are not assured always of sensible comforts there ; be content of support promised in time of need ; and remember, it is no little mercy to get a little help ; that the same love may be read in the meanest, lowest measure of grace and mercy that is to be read in the greatest ; they come from the same fountain, the same throne of grace.

3. "That they that get this help, may lay their account, notwithstanding, to be kept weak and infirm." Look not for such help in this world as shall make you no more poor and needy beggars at the throne of grace ; help and assistance, you know, is for weak and infirm people. Look not for help that will make you better stored in yourselves than you were before ; you must be kept poor and needy, that the Lord may think upon you, as the Psalmist says, Psalm xl. 17 ; and as it is, Dan. xi. 34, you must be content to be holpen with a little help, and kept from crushing, though you be holden in the dust : "Troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down but not destroyed," 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. Lay your account, though you get help, that, as it finds you weak, so it will keep you weak in yourselves, and yet do your turn.

4. "Help is given to them who have their hand at a turn." We do not speak of helping or assisting such as desire and endeavour to do nothing themselves ; so here, expect not help but in God's way, and about his hand, and his throne ; aiming at duty, though you are not able to go through it ; when thy heart is overwhelmed, and yet thou art crying, when thou art sinking, it is in that posture, needful help uses to be given, Psalm lxi. 1, 2.

5. "That help comes not, and is not to be expected, till a time of need, and pressing need ; such as puts you to cry under the pressure of the need ; as I said before, the word in the original signifies to turn at a cry, as God promises to do, Isa. xxx. 19." People would be content of help if they could get it beside them, always at hand ; but, says the apostle, a time of need shall come, and help in

a time of need ; “ In due time you shall reap if you faint not.” This may be a cure to all anxiety about what shall happen hereafter, or what may be before us. We have no strength to grapple with such unforeseen difficulties ; why, but let us remember we are to be busy at the present work of the day, and leave the next day to God, who gives help in time of need : as Christ says in another case, Matth. vi. 34, “ Take no thought for to-morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself ; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.” What have we to do with help till it be needed ? To what purpose is it to have Jordan running dry, till the priests’ feet be set in the water ? To what purpose is it to know wherewith we shall serve the Lord, till we come thither ? And then it shall be given in the hour it is needed, as Christ says, of speaking to enemies, much more in speaking to our best friend. This may assure us also, that we cannot expect help till we cry, as David, “ Out of the depths have I cried to thee.” We are many times in distress murmuring and not crying ; we need help, but are not seeking help ; God is an observing God as well as a hearing God ; he would have us cry when he requires us.

6. “ Though secret support may be given to them that cry under their need, yet satisfying help may be delayed for a time.” And there are several causes of this delay ; some relative to ourselves, and some relative to the church, or the public.

(1.) Some causes relative to ourselves. The Lord will not always help when we are pressed under the need of help, that puts us to cry, until the trial comes to the utmost extremity ; Deut. xxxii. 26, “ He will judge his people, and he will repent himself for his servants, when he sees that there is none shut up or left.” As long as we have anything, that looks like doing our own turn without him, he will lie by, Psal. xciv. 16. It is not till the Psalmist said, “ My foot slippeth,” and I am just falling over, that needful help comes ; but then, “ Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.” Thus with Abraham in the matter of offering up his son Isaac, Genesis xxii. 10, 11. The Lord is not seen in the mount, till the knife is at the throat of Isaac. This is the Lord’s way, not to come just when we are really pressed, and hard put to it ; as long as there is a step further for the difficulty to go, he may let the trial go on before he comes with help, that we may be humbled under the pressures, under the guilt that drew them on ; and that we may be put in a

capacity of esteeming it a great mercy, when we are thus helped with a little help.

(2.) Relative to the public. The Lord suspends many a time, at least, the comfortable help of particular saints, till he bring up the public interest with it; and it is not unsuitable to see the children in distress, while the mother is wearing a mourning weed. Desertions are not readily the less frequent among saints, that God covers himself in a cloud in his anger from Zion; but there is a blessed time of relief coming, as you may read, Psal. cii. 20, 21, 22, and ver. 16, 17. When the Lord appears in his glory to build up Zion, then he will hear the prayer of the destitute, and the groaning of the prisoners. As we use to say, when a thaw comes after a great frost, or rain after a great drought, it looses many prisoners; so when a shower of the divine influences come from above upon the church, and an out-pouring of the Spirit, then many prisoners shall be set at liberty, many bonds shall be loosed, many a cord broken, that is fettering the people of God: therefore, we are to wait the Lord's time of giving needful help, and be thankful for needful supports, though we yet want sensible comforts; needful waterings shall not be withholden in the meantime, unless we, in our petted humour, will not be content with support and help, nor will bless him for it, and so provoke God to let us feel our own weight, that we may be humbled, and learn to gather our comforts among the midst of our crosses, and our mercies among our miseries, and pleasures among our pressures.

[4.] Has your time been a time of love, of God's love to you? Then let all your time be a time of love to him. "O love the Lord, all ye his saints," and let his love constrain you to his service; and for this end, maintain a deep sense and impression of his love to you.—Mind how ancient his love to you was, even prior to your being, from eternity; on the mere foresight of your sin and misery, his eyes affected his heart, and provided a cure before you got the wound.—Remember how free and generous his love is; how he loved you, not only when you was a stranger to him, a mean person, infinitely below him, a worthless person, having no good quality to recommend you, and endued with many odious qualities, but an enemy, a desperate rebel, mere grace only could draw out this love.—Recollect how unchangeable and everlasting it is, so as he will never cast you out of his affections, however deserving to be rejected; "He is God,

and changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed." He is still overcoming evil with good ; as he enjoins us to do it, so he is always doing it himself.—Call to mind how distinguishing it is not only when he passed by angels that sinned, but many of your fellow-creatures.—Remember how very sympathizing it is, causing him who suffered for you on earth, to suffer with you in heaven ; for, "In all your afflictions, he is afflicted."—Mind how manifold it is ; it is a love of desire after you ; he desires fellowship with you and will never rest nor reckon himself a complete Christ, as to his mystical body, till you be with him together with the rest of his members mystical.—It is a love of delight, he takes pleasure in your company ; "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the stairs, let me hear thy voice, let me see thy countenance ; for, sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. The Lord takes pleasure in his people."—It is a love of beneficence, always doing good ; and shall not love work love ? O let your time be a time of love to him. You that expect an eternity of love, let it be evident to the world, that your time is a time of love.

S E R M O N X L I I I.

SENSIBLE PRESENCE, SUDDEN ABSENCE ; OR, THE BELIEVER'S MOST COMFORTABLE INTERVIEWS, BUT OF SHORT DURATION.¹

GEN. xxxv. 13.—"And God went up from him, in the place where he talked with him."

I HOPE some, at this occasion (however few they may be) have had some access to God, and fellowship with Christ Jesus ; yet such are to remember, and consider that it needs not be thought strange, though they should sensibly enjoy him, and lose him in a moment,

¹ This sermon was preached at Orwell, on Monday, August 5th 1734, after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there. In the first edition of this sermon, we are told, it was printed, not from the Author's manuscript, but from the short-hand notes of one, who wrote it down in the time of the delivery. On this account, probably, it is neither so complete in itself, nor yet, perhaps, appears with such advantage as it would have done, had it been copied from the original.

as Jacob here; "He went up from him, in the place where he talked with him." What intercourse was between God and Jacob, you have an account of, from the 9th ver. "And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram; and blessed him." God met with him in this place, viz. Bethel, and blessed him, and he appears again to him. Those to whom God has once manifested himself, may expect a new visit of him. At this time, there are two notable effects of the appearance God made unto him.

1st, God confirms the name he had formerly given unto him, calling him Israel. As God gives to all his people, to whom he savingly manifests himself, a new name; so he loves to call them by that new name.

2dly, He confirms the promise he had made unto him of his own name El-shaddai, the Almighty God; the God that, when he pleases, can give a being to his word, and will make his promise effectual in his own time and way.—There are two things God promises unto Jacob.

1. That he should be a father of many nations, and great kings; and a nation and company of nations should be of him, and kings should come out of his loins.

2. That he should be the possessor of a good land, viz. the land of Canaan. These two things had a spiritual signification; and we now, who live under the gospel-dispensation, if our eyes be open, may see the meaning of them, perhaps, better than Jacob could, under this typical representation; the promised seed, pointed at, was Christ himself the Great King of Zion, who was to come of Jacob; and the promised land pointed at, was Heaven itself, the heavenly kingdom. The former was the foundation, and this the top-stone of the building of mercy¹ that we were hearing of. Here then is the promise that God makes unto him. God, when he savingly manifests himself to his people, he comes to them as a promising God in Christ Jesus.

But then, in the words of the text, you have an account how this intercourse is interrupted, and marred at present, "God went up from him, in the place where he talked with him."—Where we may observe two things. 1. How he left him. And, 2. Where he left him.

1. How he left him, "God went up from him." It was by

¹ Alluding to the action-sermon, preached on these words, Psalm lxxxix. 2, Mercy shall be built up for ever.

some visible appearance, that had hovered over him, while God talked with him. God may go up from his people in sovereignty, when he does not go away from them in anger. However, we are carefully to observe, that it is not visible appearances of God that now we are to expect, God is a Spirit, and invisible ; and as we are to worship him spiritually, so we are to see and enjoy him spiritually.

2. Observe where he left him ; it was "in the place where he talked with him." The name of the place is Bethel ; and you see that Jacob here sets up a pillar, as a memorial of the communion he had with God there, and calls the name of the place, Bethel ; he confirms the name formerly given to the place, when he had met with God there, he calls it Bethel, the house of God ; it was even here, in this very place, the house of God, that he went up from him, where he talked with him.

The doctrine, that I propose to speak a little unto is the following.

DOCT. That they who have had communion and converse with God, may miss him in the very spot where they enjoyed him. "God went up from him, in the very place where he talked with him."

Thus it was with the disciples at Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 31, their eyes was opened, so as they knew him, "And he vanished out of their sight ;" or, as it is in the margin of some of your Bibles, "He ceased to be seen of them. They enjoyed his presence and yet instantly he ceased to be seen of them. Again, you may observe, the passage in the mount of transfiguration, where Peter says unto Jesus, "Lord it is good for us to be here ;" and then it follows in the next verse, "While he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them," Mat. xvii. 4, 5. A cloud may quickly intervene between God and the soul that has communion and fellowship with him.

In handling this subject, I propose, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, to observe the following method.

- I. To touch a little at the communion his people may have with him, which is here called a talking with him.
- II. Offer a few remarks concerning their missing and finding the Lord.

III. Enquire in what respects they may miss him where they enjoyed him.

IV. I would give some reasons of this dispensation.

V. Make application of the whole.

1. As to the first of these, To speak a little of this communion that God's people may have with him, which is here called a talking with him : God went up from him, in the very place where he talked with him."

This communion and converse with God may import these five things.

1. It imports the presence of God, and his perfections round about them ; for, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear him," and so his perfections do surround and environ them. Indeed, we are to distinguish between sensible presence and real presence ; God is always really present with his people ; for he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee ;" but he is not always sensibly present. He may be present at their hand, when they do not see him, as in the case of Mary, when she was talking with Christ, and yet asked where she might find him. We are to distinguish also between his quickening presence and his comforting presence ; the Lord may be present with his people quickening them to duty, and yet they may want sensible comfort in duty. To this purpose says the spouse, "I sought him, but I found him not. I sought him ;" there is his quickening presence exciting her to duty : "But I found him not," I wanted his sensible comforting presence.

It imports vicinity and nearness ; the Lord is graciously near to them ; he is graciously near to all that call upon him in truth, a present help, especially in the time of trouble, as here he was to Jacob in his trouble.—Again,

3. This converse they have with the Lord not only imports vicinity and nearness, but amity and friendship, as says the prophet, Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed ?" So I may say, can two talk together unless they be agreed ? There is no sweet converse with God, but what imports agreement. It takes in, then, their friendship with him ; their being reconciled to him in the blood of Jesus.

4. It imports communion with him, such as that "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ." They

have fellowship with God in Christ ; fellowship with him in his life ; because I live, ye shall live also ; fellowship with him in his love, while he sheds abroad his love in their hearts. Again,

5. It imports communication ; and this communication, or God's talking with his people, it has many things in it.

(1.) There is therein, sometimes a mutual intimation of love ; the Lord sometimes intimates his love unto the soul, saying, " I have loved thee with an everlasting love ;" the soul sometimes intimates its love to him again, " Thou that knowest all things knowest that I love thee."

(2.) It takes in sometimes a mutual commendation of one another ; I say, mutual commendation ; the Lord, when he is talking with them, he sometimes commends them forsooth, " Behold thou art fair ; thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee : " and indeed they cannot but blush, when he commends them after this manner. Again, they commend him, (as it well becomes them), " My beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand ; his mouth is most sweet ; yea, he is altogether lovely," infinitely lovely. Again,

(3.) This communication has in it, sometimes, mutual counsels imparted, their minds imparted. The Lord imparts his mind to the soul, " The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant ;" and the soul imparts its mind again to God, and pours out its hearts unto him, telling him all his mind, that he cannot tell the world. Again,

(4.) This communication takes in the mutual confidence they express in one-another. It is wonderful that the Lord has a kind confidence and trust he puts in them : there are some believers he will not trust, knowing what is in their hearts ; but there are others to whom he commits a trust, he commits his name and truth to them, Rev. ii. 13, knowing that, through his grace they will be faithful. They put their trust in him ; Lord all my confidence is in thee ; I have no hope but in thyself ; and they express their trust in him, as Job does, chap. xiii. 15, " Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Again,

(5.) This communication, it takes in the mutual care they express to one another : O the wonderful care that Christ expresses of his people. That is observed by the church, when she says, " His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me," Song ii. 6. O the tender care of the Lord Jesus towards them !

And then they sometimes express a care with reference to him and his interest, and his concerns ; their great concern is, to have his honour and glory advanced in the world.

(6.) This communication sometimes takes in a mutual assurances of love ; he assures them of his love unto them : and relation unto them, “ I am thy God, I will be thy God.” Well, they acknowledge sometimes this relation, and therefore cry out, “ My Lord, and my God :” and sometimes, when they are under the influence of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of adoption, they acknowledge their relation, crying out *Abba, Father*.

In a word, this communication sometimes takes in a mutual dedication of themselves to one another ; the Lord gives himself unto them ; he gives himself, he gives his Christ, he gives his Spirit, he gives his blessing unto them, and they surrender all that they have and are unto him ; they give up themselves, their name, their children, their soul and body, and all their concerns unto him ; they put all into his hand. This is a part of their communication, their mutual talk with him.—So much shall suffice for a touch at this first head. I go on,

II. To the second thing proposed, viz. To offer a remark or two concerning the finding and missing the presence of God. O sirs, what know we, or do we know any thing of that presence and fellowship with God, that I have been mentioning ? That the Lord’s people may have some further view of this matter, there are those few remarks I would offer, concerning their meeting with him, and their missing of him.

The first remark I offer is this, “ That these who are acquainted with his coming and going, they are the seed of Jacob, praying Jacob, to whom God has said, they shall not seek him in vain.” And sometimes they have it to say, “ I sought him, and I found him ;” but many times they have it to say, We sought him, but we missed him ; “ We sought him, but we found him not.” There is a generation that seek the face of Jacob’s God.

But, secondly, I would here remark, “ That such an enjoyment of God’s presence, as his people desire, and would be at, is denied them while they are in the world.” And this he is pleased to do for many wise and good reasons : partly, to draw out their desires more after him ; partly, to quicken their endeavours, in seeking after him ; partly, to prove and humble them, and to do them good in the latter end.

But then, thirdly, another remark I would offer, is, "That the Lord's communicating himself unto his people, is in a way that is very variable." He many times surprises them with his visits. Sometimes he comes when they are in their worst case. He sometimes talks with them when they are napping, as it were; he takes them when they are dead, and like beasts before him. Sometimes when they are in their worst frames; "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me and was wroth; and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Well, saith the Lord, "I have seen his ways and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him, and to his mourners," Isa. lvii. 17, 18. Sometimes he comes to them, when they are just at the giving over; "I said, I am cast out of thy sight," said Jonah, "yet will I look again towards thy holy temple," Jonah ii. 4. Sometimes their ordinary attainments do exceed their communion attainments; and thence they have it many times to say, O that it were with me at a communion table, as in such a time, and such a time. The Lord's way is variable.

But again, in the fourth place, I would here remark, "That the Lord's hiding himself, and the soul's missing of his presence, when either they are seeking after him, and are disappointed; or, when they have found him, and do immediately miss him, I say, it is very heavy unto them." Alas! it is a great burden to them! Usually, when they thus miss him, they are compassed with clouds of darkness. It may be they are in darkness about duty, not knowing what to do. Perhaps, they are in darkness about their graces, not knowing whether they are gold or counterfeits. It may happen, they are in the dark about the promises, not knowing whether they belong to them or not. It is possible, they are in darkness about their experiences, whether they be delusions or not. They are oft-times filled with amazement, when they miss their Beloved. When their love is away, they think such a dispensation is contrary to his merciful nature; they are apt to think sometimes, that it is contrary to his gracious promise, and that it is contrary to the experiences of his people, and perhaps contrary to their own experiences, and contrary to the hopes they have had. They are, I say, in great heaviness, for ordinary, when they miss him.

But again, a fifth remark I offer here is, "That when the Lord has been long away from his people, and at last returns to them readily, the meeting is very remarkable." Their meeting with him

then is readily remarkable for its fulness : it is like a great shower after a long drought ; or, they get the more full meal, that they have been long fasting ; and the longer they have wanted access, the access is the nearer. Readily such a meeting is remarkable for the sweetness of it. O how sweet is it when the Lord's people meet with him, when he hath been long absent ! It is like the lost piece of silver, Luke xv. 8, 9. Here is a lost privilege I have found again ; I thought the Lord would never have returned to me again, but now I have got him again. Such a meeting is remarkable for the melting quality of it : it is like the meeting of two dear friends, that have been long asunder, that fall a weeping for joy in one another's arms. O the joy that a meeting between Christ and his people causes, after they have been long asunder ! It readily also is remarkable for the power and efficacy of it. It has a powerful and strong impression on them, when they meet with him, after he has been long away. It is a Bethel that they will not easily forget : " I will remember thee," says the Psalmist, " from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar," Psal. xlii. 6.

But again, in the sixth place, I would here also remark, " That these meetings with the Lord are very rare." They are not to be expected from the Lord often : they are feast days ; and every day is not a feast day. They must come down from the mount ; we must live here by faith, not by sight. The Lord's people, many times, cannot bear a full cup, far less carry with it for a long time.

But again, seventhly, I would here remark, " That the Lord's coming and going, His people's meeting with him, and their missing of him, are remarkable and discernible, according to the degree of His coming and going." Sometimes his coming unto them is more sudden and surprising ; and then they readily know his coming. Sometimes it is more gradual, and less discernible ; so it is also with his going. Sometimes he goes away more suddenly, and they miss him immediately ; and sometimes he goes away gradually, and then they may not so easily know that he is gone ; as it is said of Samson, " The Lord departed from him, and he wist it not."

But then I would remark, in the eighth and last place, " That this dispensation of divine grace, his manifesting himself, and allowing his people access to him, and such communication with him, as it is a rare thing, so it is a great mystery." It is even a mystery to them who know it ; for they know but darkly : " Now we see

through a glass darkly, but then face to face." It is a hidden mystery to the most part of the professors: it is like the holy of holies, that none but the priests entered into: so none but these that are kings and priests unto their God, know anything of it.

Having offered these remarks concerning this his coming and going from his people, I go on,

III. To the third thing proposed, which was, To inquire in what respects they may miss him, where they enjoyed him: "God went up from him, in the place where he talked with him." On this head, there are these eight particulars I would shortly touch at.

1. They may miss him in the duties wherein they have enjoyed him. They may miss him in the word wherein they have enjoyed him to their sweet experience: "I will remember thee," says the Psalmist, "from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar," Psalm xlii. 6. I will remember by-past experiences. But it seems, for all that, he missed him there; for he says in the next verse, "Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." They may miss him in the duty of reading the Scriptures, wherein sometimes they have enjoyed him. It is sometimes the food of their souls; at other times it may be a sealed book to them. They may miss him in the duty of meditation, where sometimes they have enjoyed him: "My meditation of him shall be sweet," says the Psalmist, Psalm civ. 34. But again, they may have it to say, "I remembered God, and was troubled." They may miss him in the duty of prayer, wherein they have frequently enjoyed him, and got him in their arms; they may so miss him, as to be obliged to say, "Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? Wherefore hidest thou thyself from me? But again,

2. They may not only miss him in the duties wherein they have found him, but they may miss him in the frames wherein they have enjoyed him. They may miss him sometimes even in a mourning frame, and may go mourning without the sun. Mary seeks him weeping and mourning, and she misses her Lord, though she was in that frame. Again, they may miss him in a melting and a loving frame; so it was with the church, when she says, "I sought him whom my soul loveth, but I found him not." They may miss him, even when in a right lively frame: "I sought him, (I was quickened to seek him), but I found him not." They may miss that presence

that sometimes they had, and that they would gladly be at. But again, in the next place,

3. They may miss him in the best cases wherein they have enjoyed him : they may miss him in that case they think to be best, and that case which is really best. They may miss him, when they think they are best, viz. in a joyful case ; yet they may miss him, in regard of that measure and degree of presence they would be at. They may miss him in that case when it is really best with them. When is it best with them ? It is best when they are believing, and their heart is opening to the Son of God ; and yet in that case they may miss him : the spouse says, Song v. 6, " I opened to my Beloved ; but my Beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone." When they have much and sweet enjoyment of him, they may suddenly miss him ; and when they are opening the door of their heart to him, he may disappear. But again, in the

4th place, They may miss him not only in the best cases, wherein they have enjoyed him ; but they may miss him in the worst cases, wherein they have been prevented and surprised with the communications of his favour : for instance, they may miss him in confused times, when the enemies of the Lord are making a tumult, and when all things are seeming to run to disorder and confusion, though the Lord uses sometimes to refresh them in such circumstances, according to his word : " There is a river," says the Psalmist " the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." Psalm xlv. 4. I remember it is said ; Psalm lxxxiii. 1, " Keep not thou silence, O God ; hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God ; for lo, thine enemies make a tumult, and they that hate thee have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones ;" and at the same time it supposes, that the Lord is silent, was not taking notice as he used to do, and as they expected he would. Again, they may miss him in the time of persecution, when he uses to stand by his people, as Paul says, " The Lord stood by me ;" even in such a time they may miss his presence, as the church says ; Song. v. 7, " The watchmen, that went about the city, found me ; they smote me, they wounded me ; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me : " there was persecution, and at the same time she is crying, and yet finds him not. Again, they may miss him in the time of temptation, when he uses to stand up in succouring them, making a way to escape ; thus it was with Paul, he was buffeted by Satan : he prays and prays again, yet the temp-

tation continues; and he misses him, until he goes on and finds him; and the answer the Lord gives him is, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfected in thy weakness." However, I say, in the times of temptation they may miss him. Again, in times of tribulation and affliction, he uses to come to them, according to his word: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee," Isa. xliii. 2. Yet even when going through fire and water, they may miss him; as it was with Job, when, in great affliction, he cries unto the Lord, and he does not regard him: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: 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," Job xxiii. 89. O, say the Lord's people, I would think nothing of my affliction, if the Lord did not hide his face: this is not a strange case; you may miss him even then, as is evident from what I have said.—Again,

5. In the next place, the Lord's people they may miss him, in the words of grace, wherein sometimes they have enjoyed him. The Lord manifests himself sometimes in the word, and gives them his presence by means of his word; and then they have it to say, perhaps, with the Psalmist, "The Lord hath spoken in his holiness, and I will rejoice," Psalm lx. 6. But at other times, they may so far miss him, that they may cry out, "All men are liars." But how, sirs, can believers make God a liar, but by making the prophets liars, and the words of the prophets lies? "Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Psalm lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. They may at some times meet with a promise, and rejoice therein; but at other times, that promise may be tasteless to their souls; they can see nothing of God there. I say, they may miss him sometimes in the words wherein they have enjoyed him. Again.

6. In the next place, they may miss him in the instruments whereby they have enjoyed him; it may be such a minister, and such an instrument, is blasted to them. He comes to them sometimes with full breasts, and they sweetly suck out of these full breasts of consolation; but behold, at other times, he comes to them

with dry breasts, as it were; they can find nothing of God in his sermon, where they have formerly met with God by him. Why, sirs, we ministers are the savour of life, just as the Spirit of life is pleased to go along with the word; and therefore we have little need to idolize instruments. We may miss him in the instruments, whereby we have enjoyed him. Again, in the

7th place, We may miss him in the society of the Lord's people, wherein we have enjoyed him. It is a commendable practice of some of the Lord's people, that they meet for social prayer and conference, and the Lord many times countenances them in it. It is said; Mal. iii. 16, "They that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." They sometimes meet with the Lord there; but at other times they may miss him very suddenly, and be obliged to say with the church: Lam. iii. 8, "When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer." And in the 44th verse, "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayers should not pass through." But again,

8. In the next place, to add no more, they may miss him in the very place where they have enjoyed him: "God went up from him, in the very place where he talked with him." I say, they may miss him in the very times and places where they have enjoyed him; and they may enjoy him, but suddenly the Lord may withdraw from them. They may miss him in the public places, the ordinances where they have enjoyed him; they may miss him in secret places, in the chamber, in the field, in the spot where they enjoyed him; "God went up from him, in the place where he talked with him." So much shall suffice for the third head.

IV. The fourth thing I proposed was, To give the grounds and reasons of this dispensation: Whence is it that the Lord's people may enjoy God, and yet may quickly miss him, even in the very spot where they have enjoyed? I cannot stand to enlarge upon this; I shall offer some reasons in so many words.

1. By this the Lord shows his sovereignty, that he is the sovereign dispenser of his blessings, and confers them when, upon whom, and in what manner, he pleases.

2. The Lord by this would also confirm his people unto their Head, Jesus Christ, who was deserted of the Father, "My God, my God," says he, "why hast thou forsaken me?" Alas! this was a

bitter cup, yet the Lord will have his people to be plunged in it, so to speak, to know the bitterness of that cup of desertion.

3. It is ordered also, to make a difference between heaven and earth. We are but strangers and pilgrims here ; and are not to expect an uninterrupted enjoyment of our Lord in this world. There is an eternity of the enjoyment of God a-coming, unto all the children of grace ; and therefore he takes the liberty with his people now, to hide himself from them. Again,

4. It is ordered also, for showing unto us that the Lord may approve of his people, and accept of their services and duties in Jesus Christ, even when they miss that in duty which they would be at, namely, his blessing of them with his comfortable presence ; this is what he will give unto them as he pleases.

5. He would have them to know they are not to rest on the means ; that they are not to be depended upon, but that they are to use the means, with a respect to his command, and a regard to his authority, even though the Lord should deny his comfortable presence therein. The Lord orders it also, it may be,

6. To chastise their former misbehaviours, either in seeking, or in the enjoyment of him : he will learn to value his presence, by absenting himself from them.

7. Many times he does it, to quicken their endeavours after him, and to lead them unto the due acknowledgment of their sins, by which they have provoked him to depart and hide his face ; as the Lord says by his prophet, " I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face : in their affliction, they will seek me early." Many such reasons might be given, why the Lord orders matters thus.

8. I shall give you one reason more (and, sirs, we may tremble when we speak of it) ; the Lord may hide his face, in many of the duties of his appointment, to show his displeasure against his church and people ; and to show what vengeance may be a-coming upon them, because of their sins and provocations ; and the Lord may withdraw from his own people, and hide his face from them, because of their sinful accession to the evils of the time and place wherein they live. Ah ! what strokes may be a-coming upon a sinful generation ! And also, for this reason, he may hide his face from his people, that it may not be in their power to stand up in the gap, to hinder the stroke to come on ; and therefore he hides his face, and hardly allows them to pray. What is the language of it ? It is to

this effect, "Pray not for this people," when I am peremptorily resolved to bring down vengeance upon them; therefore he withholds the Spirit of prayer. And he sometimes withdraws with reference to this very point, that they have not so much as the assurance of the delay of a stroke, because he is quick to bring it on: and, perhaps, this may be one great complaint of the Lord's people, and of some that go many a foot to his ordinances; Oh! the little communion they meet with in them! It may be, the Lord is reserving the comforts of communion till the time of a wilderness want shall come: "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness," saith the Lord, by the prophet, "and speak comfortably to her," Hosea ii. 14.

V. I come now, in the last place, to make application of the whole. I shall confine my Application to these two uses: 1. By way of trial and Examination. And, 2. By way of Exhortation.

1st, Is it so, that the Lord, when he allows communion and fellowship with him to his people, may suddenly withdraw, and they may miss him in the spot where they have enjoyed him? Then, O sirs, you should try what you know of his presence, and of communion and fellowship with him. It were the less hazard that you knew, to your experience, that of missing him, if ye really knew, what it were to find him, and what it is to enjoy him, and to have communion with him. Why, sirs, I would have you put it to the trial, if God has been talking with you at this occasion, or at any other time. Do you know what it is to have God talking with you: I mean, to have communion and fellowship with him? You cannot expect to have the enjoyment of glory hereafter, if it be not begun in grace here. Why, how shall we know, say you, if we have met with the Lord? Or attained anything of the enjoyment of him? Why, in the

1. Place, you may try it by this, There are some things you will be hardly able to endure, if you have met with him. The Lord's people they cannot endure that God go away from them again; or that God should hide his face. Oh! it is heavy to think of the Lord's withdrawing from them: they cannot endure to think that God should be angry with them: they cannot endure that any thing should have Christ's room in their hearts: they cannot endure that anything should hinder or mar that meeting with, and enjoyment of God they have: they say with the Psalmist, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for I will keep the commandments

of my God." What will all the world be to me, says the soul, If I have not communion and fellowship with my God? Again, the soul cannot endure anything that tends to mar the enjoyment of God; when he has it, when he is brought into the banquetting-house, and has the light of God's countenance, he is ready to charge all about him, with the spouse, that they do not provoke the Lord to depart: "I charge you," says she, "O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please," Song. ii. 7. What know ye of this? Again,

2. If ye know his gracious presence, you will be one that rejoices in his presence, and laments at his absence. His presence will be your chief joy; his absence will be your chief sorrow: his presence will give you more joy than all the world can: his absence will make you more sorrowful, than anything in time can make you joyful. This is the import of that word, "Thou hast put," says the Psalmist, "gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased," Psal. iv. 7. Again, if you be one that has had a meeting with the Lord, then, to be sure, his absence will be a distressing thing to you. As you desire his presence above all things, and count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and communion with God in him; so, when you cannot win at the enjoyment of him, when you cannot get your heart brought up to love him, when you cannot get your eyes open to see him, you look upon yourself as a distressed person, as a broken person, as a miserable person, by reason of the absence of God and the presence of Sin. A child of God looks upon himself to be, and is really, an afflicted and a broken body, by reason of the presence of sin, and the absence of the Lord; and therefore he cries out, "O that I knew where I might find him!" But again,

3. If you are one that have experience of this presence of God, and fellowship with him; then you will have some fellowship with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. What know you of this? I think this is a good sign, when the heart warms towards one that is a child of grace, though he be a beggar, or in poor circumstances, or one of little wit otherwise; when your heart warms towards the picture of Christ, when your heart warms towards one, because he has the image of Christ; "By this we know, says the apostle John,

that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 1, 4. The heart warming towards these that have the image of God, it has in it something of heart-warming towards Christ himself. Again,

4. We may know it by the humbling effect of it. When a person has the image of God on him, he will be humbled; thus Job, when he had got a clear sight of himself, says to the Lord, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job xlii. 5, 6. O the presence of God makes the person hate sin; it humbles him to nothing, as the Lord says by the prophet, Isa. ii. 11, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down," when the Lord alone is exalted in the soul, when he is present on the throne of the heart. Again,

5. We may judge of it by this, they that have met with God and have his presence, whether they have it sensibly or not, they have still an high esteem of Christ, even though he should be absent. They have also an high esteem of his ordinances, even when but dry breasts; they dare not undervalue them; nay, they have a great regard for every thing that appertains to him, and bears an impression of his image.

6. They have something also of a tenderness of heart, that they dare not allow themselves in sin; they dare not live in the omission of known duty, or in the commission of known sin; and they have something also of a tenderness of walk; though iniquities prevail against them, yet they never dare run into an excess of riot with the wicked world. They are such as fear the Lord; or have the character given them that we find recorded in the first chapter of Nehemiah, verse 11, they desire to fear his name. You may inquire by what I have been saying, whether you know the presence of God, and fellowship with him.

I thought to have spoke by way of address, 1. To these who have known fellowship with him, but now they have missed him. 2. To these who at present may be under the joyful impressions of their having fellowship with God, so that he is talking with them. And, 3, To these that know nothing of this intercourse with God, and as little care for it. I would say but a few words to each of these.

1st. As to these who found the Lord talking with them, and who have had some intercourse with him allowed them; but now

they have missed him, and it may be, have provoked him to hide his face. All I would say to you, is, to offer you these two or three advices.

1. I would have you to study divine providences towards yourself, and the providence of the Lord towards others of his people in his coming and going towards them. Eye the sovereignty of his dispensations. Why it may be, in this study, you may meet with him; "whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord," Psal. cvii. 43.

2. I would advise you, in these circumstances that you are in, if you would have your captivity returned, be concerned on your knees before the Lord, about your friends, and others you should be concerned for, it is remarkable; Job xlii. 10, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he was praying for his friends:" when you are applying for your friends or others, you may find the Lord turning your captivity.

3. I would advise you to be concerned for the church of Christ. It may, perhaps, be one cause of the Lord's withdrawing from you, in your private case, on account of your having little concern about the church of Christ. You will find, that when Daniel was applying to God for his church and people, then he met with that intercourse with God, wherein he spake unto him, saying, "O man greatly beloved:" and, says the Lord to Baruch, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not: for behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey, in all places whither thou goest," Jer. xlv. 5. Well, be concerned for the public; and in this way you may come to meet with the Lord again. But, then again,

4. Another thing I would advise you to, is, endeavour, through grace, to be concerned for, and weighted with, the sins of the day and generation you live in: by this you may get a mark set upon you: for, he sets a mark upon the foreheads of them that sigh and cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst of the city. But then, again,

5. Believer, see that he have you alone, if you be complaining that you miss him in ordinances. I remember what was said concerning Christ and his disciples, Mark iv. 34, "When they were alone he expounded all things to his disciples." See that he have you alone, and see that you be much in secret with him; and thus the Lord may communicate himself to you. He will not readily

tell you his mind until he get a convenient time ; you may get that in secret, that you have not got at a communion-table. Again,

6. I would have you to beware of conformity to the generality of professors in our day. O beware of being conformed to them in their neutrality and indifferency about the work of God ; and bringing their neutrality this way under the good names of moderation, good breeding, and the like : beware of conformity to these ; for it is your reproach to be conformed to them in their selfishness, while most part seek their own things, and few the things of Jesus Christ ; and in this way you cannot expect to meet with Christ.—In a word, Do you yet miss him ; Wait on him ; “ The Lord is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.”

2dly, But I would now speak a word to these who have found the Lord at this occasion, so that he is talking with them. It is possible there are some that have the joyful impressions of communion with God, and with Jacob, are talking with God, and God is talking with them. Are you brought into the mount of communion and conversation with him ? Then I would give you two or three advices.

1. O believer, if that be thy case, O be thankful, let God have the praise of his mercy ; remember to adore and stir up others to adore and magnify him. You are dignified before many others that are in many respects better than you ; what are you that you should be so dealt with ? Again,

2. O beware of idolizing your entertainment : when you are enjoying these fruits of the Master’s kindness, beware of resting upon the fruits ; for they will not bear you ; but you must rest upon the Tree of life ; beware of making a Christ of them : beware of being strong in the grace received ; but be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Again,

3. I would advise you to entertain Christ well, when he is with you ; and beware of provoking him to depart from you. There are several things we should beware of, that provoke him to depart. He may go away in sovereignty, and it is best when he does so, and you have not a sinful hand in it. Beware of unbelief : this is readily the first door, by which your comforts will go out from you.—Beware of doubting of his love, and disputing of the mercy of God. Do you enjoy his love ? Are you sure concerning it, as having an infallible mark of it in his word ? Then take instruments, that it is no delusion ; that so when the Lord hides his face, you may not raise the

foundation calling all in question.—Again, beware of security and sleeping after you have got a good meal. If a friend should come and pay you a visit, and you should fall asleep beside him, he will think that you make very little of his visit, and he will soon make away from you.—And then I would have you beware of covetousness and worldly-mindedness ; “ For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him ; I hid me and was wroth,” says the Lord, by the prophet, Isaiah lvii. 17. There you see is both anger and absence, by reason of a covetous heart, a worldly heart, and worldly-mindedness ; I say, beware of this.—Again, I would advise you to beware of defiling the Lord’s house ; keep the house, where he is clean, so as he may not be provoked to depart. Keep the house clean for him, endeavour, through his grace, to keep the heart clean, to keep it clean from secret sin ; “ Who can understand his errors ? Cleanse thou me from secret faults,” says the Psalmist, Psalm xix. 12. Endeavour to be clean, not only from secret faults, but public faults and sins in the day and generation wherein you live. The neglect of this may greatly provoke him, to withdraw his presence from you. Endeavour to be faithful to his truths that are controverted. Some will be ready to say, Why should we be concerned for controverted truths ? If, indeed, we do not stand up for any but these which are uncontroverted, the devil and his instruments will not trouble us ; but if we do not so, we cannot be faithful to God. And we are to be faithful to the least truth of Christ. Some may be ready to say, “ If, for the cause of truth, we are to suffer, why not ? But many are contending about these things that are trifles.” O sirs, If they be the matters of Christ, beware of calling them trifles. I remember to have read of a lady in France, at the time of the massacre there, that was led away to be drowned for the sake of her religion ; her persecutors promised her life, if she would but say, Ave Maria, or Pater Noster. She answered, “ I might easily repeat these words : but if my doing so, be interpreted by you a renouncing of my religion, and a yielding up of the cause of Christ, in that sense I will not do it ;” and so she was drowned. If we come to yield in smaller things, we may do it in greater. We are to reckon nothing small in the matters of Christ. Then,

4. See that you improve his presence, if you have got it at this occasion. How shall we improve it in the behalf of Christ, to commend him more to you than ever : and sure, if you have his presence

you cannot say too much of it ; O improve it for the commending him more and more to you.—Improve it in behalf of his ordinances making them more precious in your view. And improve this presence of the Lord in behalf of your children : Have you children, man, woman ? Improve it in behalf of them, and cry to God, wrestle with him for a blessing to you and your seed, seeing he has brought you near. Improve it in behalf of the Church of Scotland : plead that he may not take a farewell of Scotland ; that he may return to his ordinances ; that he may return to the judicatories. O improve your enjoyment of the presence of Christ, in behalf of the churches abroad, that are brought very low. O improve his presence in behalf of your friends in Christ, these that are in Christ, that have not win your length, that have not win half your length. Are you brought into the King's court ? O speak a good word for the Josephs that are in prison, that are under the hatches, that the Lord may advance them as well as you. Then improve his presence in behalf of strangers, who never saw any thing of his glory, as we find the church in the Song does, Song viii. 8, " We have a little sister," says she, " and she hath no breasts ; what shall we do for our sister, in the day when she shall be spoken for ? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver ; and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar." We should pray for a blessing upon the design of preaching the gospel unto a Pagan and a Heathen world ; we wish that you would mind them that are called to preach the gospel to the heathens. O pray that the Lord may be with them. Then remember the advice that Joseph gave to Pharoah, " Lay up for the years of famine ;" lay up comforting promises and experiences ; you may need all that you have got ; yea, you may need much more.

3dly, I shall only speak a word to you that know nothing of this presence of God, of his coming and going ; that know nothing of finding or missing him ; and, perhaps, as little care. You never had any concern about his presence ; for you are strangers to fellowship and communion with the Son of God. O man, woman, I would say a word to you ; O hear what God says to you, before he go away from the place where he is speaking to you ; he is speaking to you in this everlasting gospel. We are not to stay here, but we are to part : and we will probably never meet all again, until we come before the tribunal of God, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire,

taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Before God go away, who is talking to you in this gospel, come to Christ, who is dealing with you and speaking to you. Consider, that if these messages of grace, that you have got already at this occasion, be all slighted by you, there are more terrible ones abiding you than ever came to Job, and they were right fearful ones; there came one to him and told him, "The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain thy servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." That man is hardly done speaking, when another comes and tells him, "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burnt up the sheep, and servants, and consumed them; and I am escaped alone to tell thee." While that man is speaking, another comes in and tells him, "The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon your camels, and have carried them away; yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." While that man is speaking, another comes in and tells him, "Your sons and daughters were eating, and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are all dead and gone; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee," Job i. 14, 19. These are heavy messages; but they are nothing in comparison of the heavy messages that, a few days hence, it may be a few moments for ought you know, at death, is abiding you. One message will be That you must part with all your dear and near relations you have had upon the earth, and you must part with them for ever. Upon the back of this message another comes, Man, you must part with all your enjoyments of time; you must part with all profits, pleasures, or honours. Ere that message is given, another comes, Man, you must part with your soul; however near the relation was between your soul and your body, yet your body must go down to the dust, and your soul to God who gave it; yea, a sadder message comes yet, Man, you must part with the presence of God, and you must be sent to hell and there punished with everlasting destruction, and be banished for ever, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 9. Why, poor Christless man, you must lay your account with this message; unless you could

make yourself immortal ; this will infallibly come upon you. This will be the message of death.

And there is a fourfold woe that will come upon you, if you continue in this natural state.

1. Woe unto you, for you are certainly miserable : "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," Psal. ix. 17.

2. Woe unto you, for you shall be suddenly miserable : when you are saying, Peace, peace, to yourselves, then sudden destruction shall come upon you, as travail upon a woman with child, and you shall not escape, 1, Thess. v. 3.

3. Woe unto you, for you shall be doubly miserable ; you are not only despisers of God's law, but despisers of the gospel ; therefore your damnation shall be double. Then,

4. Woe will be unto you, for you shall be eternally miserable ; as long as God lives, you shall live in Tophet ; and when you have lived in it as many thousands of years, as there are piles of grass on the earth ; and when these are expired, and you have lived as many thousands of years in it, as there are pickles of sand on the sea shores ; and when these are also expired, and you have lived in it as many thousands of years as there are stars in the firmament : and when these are also done, and you have lived in it as many thousands of years, as there shall be moments from the beginning to the end of the world ; and when you have counted numbers until they come to be innumerable, one of your great miseries will be, that it is eternal ; for time is gone, and there is nothing but eternity remains.

O consider thy dreadful case that hast no concern about the messages of the gospel, that hast not been affected with it to this day : I would have you to consider this, that Christ is yet in your offer, before we go from the place we are in ; he is yet in the place. I would give you another offer, and if you do not accept thereof, it will make you the more inexcusable. What should hinder your acceptance, but your unbelief ? Has he not condescended to be a Saviour to you ? Yea ; for he is exhibited as the Saviour of the world. He is as much your Saviour, as a physician of an army is so to the whole army, whether they employ him or not. You have a right to close with him ; ye despise your own mercy if you reject him. O sirs ! has he come in your nature, and will you not come

to him? Has he become sin for you, and will you not come to him? Has he become a curse for you, and will you not come to him? Has he come at this occasion to you, and will you not come to him? Has he not said, "To you is the word of this salvation sent," man, woman, every individual of you? Has he come and declared, upon his veracity, that "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no-wise cast out?" O sirs! why then will you not come to him? If thou wilt not let him in at the door of thy heart, thou must answer for it at the great day; "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder; wonder and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no-wise believe, though a man declare it unto you," Acts xiii. 41.

It may be, you have been wondering at all these offers of Christ, and at all these sermons and sacraments; if you will not wonder and be saved, you must wonder and be damned; "Behold, ye despisers, wonder and perish." What is it, man, that is the matter with you? What is thy case? Art thou not fully warranted to come to this Jesus? What sort of sinner art thou? Art thou destitute of knowledge? Why, he comes to be wisdom unto thee. Art thou guilty? He comes to be righteousness unto thee. Art thou a polluted sinner? He comes and offers himself to be sanctification unto thee. Art thou a miserable sinner? He comes to be redemption unto thee. Art thou lying among the unclean pots of hell? He comes to thee, to make thee as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Art thou a backslider, He says unto thee, "Come unto me, and I will heal thy backslidings, I will love thee freely; for mine anger is turned away from thee. What sort of a sinner art thou? If you be upon the face of the earth, you have a right to accept of the offer of Christ made to you in the gospel; "Look unto me, saith the Lord, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22. O that the power of divine grace may draw you! Are you destitute of all grace? Christ comes to you with the offer of his grace in his hand; who is full of all that grace and truth you stand in need of. Are you unable, and saying you cannot come to him? Why, that need be no hinderance: you cannot come to God but by Jesus Christ; and not only as he is the Way to God, but as the Leader, the mighty God, on whom God has laid thy help; and he says, Will you be helped out of that horrible pit and miry clay you have fallen into? O! will you take the Mediator's help? Sirs, go alone whenever you have time and plead

that the Spirit of the Lord may back the word to you, for without this, it will all fall to the ground.

I shall only speak a word (and close with it) to the Lord's people. Perhaps your hearts have been touched, and you have seen something of the Lord's glory in his sanctuary. O improve what you have got for strengthening you: remember what is said of Jacob, after he got a view of God at Bethel, it is said, "He went on his way;" it is in the original, "He lifted up his feet." He was, as it were, dragging his feet before, but then he went on his way, and walked without wearying. O improve anything you have got at this occasion for exciting you to run your Christian race, and for fighting your Christian battles. Go forth in the name and strength of the Lord, depending and leaning upon your Beloved. "Walk in the fear of the Lord," and so you shall also walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, as it is said, Acts ix. 31. If you walk under the influence of the Spirit as a sanctifier, you shall walk under his influence as a Comforter.

May the Lord back his own word with his own blessing; and
and to his name be the praise.

S E R M O N X L I V.

THE MOUNTING CHRISTIAN; OR, THE EAGLE-WINGED BELIEVER.¹

ISA. xl. 31.—"They shall mount up with wings as eagles."

WE have a remarkable question of the disciples, and answer of our Lord, Luke xvii. 37. 'The question is, Where, Lord? The answer is, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." Christ had been speaking of days of great tribulation a-coming; and the meaning of the question seems to be, Lord, where shall these that fear thy name, fly in these days of trouble and distress? Where shall we find peace in the midst of war? Where is he who gives peace to the world? Where is Christ to be found, to

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whom the believer shall fly like an eagle to his prey ? Faith needs not be at a loss in this inquiry, Where, Lord ? In the womb, in the rags, in the manger ? thither may we go to see the Son of God in a low humbled state. Where, Lord ? Go to the garden, and see him suffering for your sins the wrath of his Father. Where, Lord ? Fly to Mount Calvary, and see him on the cross ! there may the eagles gather together, and behold him bleeding, suffering, crying, dying for them. Again, Where, Lord ? From Calvary to heaven, there he is now, and there must the soul fly, and see him crowned with glory and honour. Where, Lord ? Even at a communion-table, where he is spiritually present to be fed upon like a carcase, by the poor, believing, greedy, hungry eagle. Where, Lord ? Wherever he be, the believing souls must be at him ; if on earth, no corner must be unsearched : if in heaven, distance must not keep them from him : nay, though he be mounted up to glory, yet they must mount up after him, according to his promise, " They shall mount up with wings as eagles."

In the four preceding verses we have the prophet,

1. Reproving the children of Israel for their unbelief and distrust of God, their dejection, and despondency of spirit ; " Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel ; My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God," ver. 27. Why do you think and speak, as if God did not heed and observe you, and as if God could not help and save you, whatever be your afflicted miserable case ?

2. He reminds them of what is able to silence all their fear and distrust, " Hast thou not known ? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary ? There is no searching of his understanding." Ver. 28, *q. d.* He is an eternal God ; so that there is no defect, no decay in him ; he is an omnipotent God, who created the ends of the earth, and doubtless is as able to save, as he was at first to make the world. He is of infinite wisdom to contrive your salvation ; " There is no searching of his understanding : " none can say, so far God's wisdom can go, and no further ; for when we know not what to do, he knows ; and he is a God of infinite power, he faints not, nor is wearied ; he upholds the pillars of heaven and earth, and is neither wearied nor toiled with it.

3. The prophet relates to them God's communicative goodness, " He giveth power to the faint ; and to them that have no might,

he increaseth strength," ver. 29. He is not only powerful himself, but he communicates power and strength to these that need the same; "He gives power to the faint." Many out of weakness, even of body, are made strong, and recovered by his providence; and many that are feeble in Spirit, unable for service and suffering, yet are strengthened by his grace, with all might in the inward man; and especially to them that are sensible of their weakness, he increases strength: for when they are weak in themselves, they are strong in the Lord.

4. The prophet states the difference betwixt them that trust in themselves, and them that trust in God: as for them that trust in themselves, and trust to their own sufficiency, they shall find their strength to be but weakness; "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail," ver. 30; the young men who are strong, and apt to look upon themselves as stronger than they are, and so look not unto God for his grace to be sufficient for them, they shall faint and fail, and be made to see the folly of trusting to themselves. But as for them that trust in the Lord, and wait on him for supplies of grace, "They shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not weary; they shall walk and not faint, ver. 31.

Thus you see the connection of the words with the preceding; and in them you have three things, 1. The exercise of God's people. 2. Their privilege, "They shall renew their strength." 3. The effect of this privilege, "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

1. The exercise of God's people; they are such as wait upon the Lord. Now, who are these that wait upon God? I answer, in the words of the Psalmist David, Psal. xxiv. 6—"This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob:" that is, O God of Jacob. And hence seeking and waiting are joined together; "The Lord is good to them that wait for him, and to the soul that seeks him," Lam. ii. 25. The true waiter is a seeker, and the true seeker is a waiter upon God. It is a duty comprehensive of the whole character of the religious person. If you be truly seeking God, man, woman, at this ordinance, then you are waiting upon him.

2. But what advantage have they that thus seek and wait upon God? This is shoven us in the second part of the words, their privilege; "They shall renew their strength." Their strength shall

not only be increased, but renewed: as there is new occasion, they shall have new supplies, and so "they shall renew their strength;" or as it is in the Hebrew, "They shall change their strength," as a man changes his raiment: as their work is changed, their strength shall be changed, whether it be doing or suffering work; they shall have strength to labour, strength to wrestle, strength to resist temptation, and strength to bear burdens; "They shall renew their strength:" get new strength for new duty. The best of God's children, if continuing long in duty, their spirits are wasted: well God will renew their strength, especially their spiritual strength, which is from God himself, from whom is their new temper and disposition, their new nature. But what of all this, say you: indeed, they shall have much benefit, if you consider,

3. The effect of this privilege, or how it is made evident; that is evidenced in three particulars.

(1.) "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." O it is a great privilege for a believer to be brought, through grace, to fly; yea, not only to fly like a weak bird, but to mount up like an eagle, the strongest of flying birds: the weak believer, by waiting on God, becomes strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Grace strengthens the soul to mount heavenward, and carries it above the world and the things of it.

2. "They shall run and not be weary;" that is, they shall run in the way of God's commandments cheerfully, and with alacrity, constancy, and with perseverance.

3. "They shall walk and not faint;" weak and sickly persons are in danger to faint and fail when they walk, but "they shall walk and not faint." You have a word, Gal. vi. 9—"Let us not weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." O says a child of God, that is endeavouring, through grace, to wait upon the Lord, I fear I never reap, because I will soon be faint and weary: but here is the promise you are to take hold of, "You shall run without wearying, and walk and not faint:" and in this way, there is no fear but you shall reap: grace is promised, as well as the reward of grace.

We have already discussed one doctrinal observation from these words, viz, That as it is the duty and practice of God's people to wait on God; so it shall be their privilege to have their strength renewed. But having finished what we intended upon this doctrine, we come now to consider the second observation, namely.

DOCT. That believers, who, in waiting on the Lord, get their strength renewed, they shall mount up on wings as eagles.

The scripture is full of parables, where spiritual things are represented by natural ; so here, the believer is compared to the eagle : the gospel of Christ is full of them ; and it may be for these two reasons,

1. Because parables make a lively impression on the minds of auditors, and convey the truth to the person before he be aware : some, who are ready to forget the truth, will mind the simile ; and so it leads them back again to the truth, which they had forgot.

2. To teach us a spiritual and sacred use of the creature, like Jacob's ladder, the foot on earth, and the top in heaven ; that by these we may ascend to heaven, and by the creature look above the creature.

The method we would propose, for illustrating this subject, through divine assistance, shall be the following :—

I. We shall speak a little of the wings wherewith they mount up.

II. The things wherein they mount up.

III. The seasons when it is especially they mount up.

IV. The manner how they mount up.

V. The reasons why they mount up. And,

VI. Make some application of the subject. And in the whole of these particulars, study as much brevity as possible.

1. We are to speak of the wings wherewith they mount up. And here I might tell you the wings wherewith they are mounted up, and the wings wherewith they do mount. The wings wherewith they are mounted up, are nothing else but the influences of the Spirit of Christ ; the enlightening and enlivening influences thereof : they are, indeed, more passive than active at first ; “ When I am lifted up I will draw all men after me.” Christ being mounted up, he makes all his remnant to mount up after him : and herein they are acted before they act ; for, “ He works in them both to will and to do.” They are carried up, as it were, on the wings of the wind : for these influences of the Spirit, wherewith they are mounted up, are compared to the wind, Song iv. 16—“ Awake, O north wind ; come thou south : blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may

flow out." Believers know well enough what it is to be mounted up on the wings of the Spirit. But more particularly, as to the wings wherewith they do mount up, they are especially these two, viz., the wing of faith, and the wing of love.

1. The wing of faith they have, and must have, who would mount up heavenward. Now, there is not a feather in this wing, but is made in heaven: "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"—Eph. ii. 8. Yea, after the believer hath got faith, he cannot spread out his wing without God; "To you it is given, not only to believe but to suffer for his sake"—Phil. i. 29. To you, believers, it is given to believe: not only the habit of faith, is the gift of God, but the exercise of faith is his gift also. Now, this is one wing, and none can mount up to heaven without it; for it is a grace that looks not at things that are seen in this world, but at the things that are not seen; it is the evidence of things not seen; it mounts the soul to heaven and heavenly things, and makes them evident.

2. There is the wing of love, by which the believer mounts up to heaven: and this is a wing made also by God; "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," Rom. v. 5. This is a wing then framed in heaven, a grace that comes from the God of love; and therefore it flies up to heaven again: the holy spark of this fire flies upward. This grace is of such a mounting quality, that it unites the soul of the believer to Christ, as well as faith. As Jonathan's soul was knit or joined to the soul of David by love; so is the soul of the believer knit and glued to Christ by love: and, O this wing of love is a strong wing! Song viii. 6—"Love is strong as death;" yea, stronger than death and life, and principalities, and powers: "I am persuaded, says the apostle, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 38, 39. This is such a strong wind that the fire cannot burn it: martyrs have found that it would abide the fire, when they glorified God in the fires; the fire did not burn their love, no; it mounted up to heaven with the flame.

II. The second thing was, To shew the things wherein they mount up. Here we shall give you both a negative, and a positive account of them.

1st, We propose to give you a negative account of these things.

1. They do not mount up in airy speculations : some mount up only in airy notions ; they have a great deal of head-knowledge, but no heart-love to the truth , “ They receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved ; for which cause, God sends them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie,” 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. The devil himself knows God and Christ ; but hath no love to God or Christ in his heart : there may be much speculative knowledge, where there is no saving grace.

2. They do not mount up in sinful curiosity, to pry into the secrets of God, “ For secret things belong to God, to us the things that are revealed,” Deut. xxix. 29. Many mount up too far into the decrees of election and reprobation. Oh ! I fear I am a reprobate, say some. Alas ! sirs, beware of such blasphemy ; as if, forsooth, you were omniscient, like God ; and as if you had been upon the privy counsel of God from eternity, when he marked down the names of elect and reprobate : this is a thing that cannot be known. In this side of time you cannot be sure you are a reprobate, as long as you are out of hell ; but I can give you an assurance, better than the stability of heaven and earth, that if you truly repent of your sin, and flee to Christ, the only Saviour, you are no reprobate ; “ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon,” Isa. lv. 7. But if you will not part with sin, nor flee to Christ, you subscribe your own reprobation. Now, I say, the believer doth mount up in sinful curiosity, concerning the decree of election and reprobation ; but in so far as it is revealed to him, to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure : neither doth he pry curiously into the secrets of God’s providence : “ It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” Some have been very rash in telling when the day of judgment would be ; we should not meddle with such secrets : “ For of that day and that hour knoweth no man,” Matt. xxv. 13.

3. They do not mount up in self-conceit and self-estimation, as some do, who mount up in the pride of their hearts ; God abhors the proud, and he will cast them down, let them mount up never so far : “ He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble,” James

iv. 6. Pride was the sin of fallen angels ; they would be as high as God, viz., self-dependent : and therefore God casts them down. This was the lesson that the devil taught our first parents, " You shall be as gods ;" and they were taken with this bait, to their overthrow and ruin ; and ever since, pride and self-conceit hath been natural to their posterity ; and hence it is, so much self is mixed with all our preaching, praying, communicating. But when the believer mounts, he mounts in some measure above self, and gets it trod under his feet in self-abasing, self-abhorring thoughts.

4. They do not mount up in fits and starts of devotion, in modes and pangs of affection in a transient way. Many professors, when they hear the word, they seem to be mounted up in joy ; but what comes of it ? It is but a flash, and like a land flood. The stony-ground hearers may receive the word with joy ; but having no root, they wither and dwindle to nothing, Luke viii. 6, 13. Some, when they hear of Christ's sufferings, and see him sacramentally crucified, it draws tears from their eyes, and they never mount further.

2dly, We come now to give a positive account of these things wherein the believer mounts up. Believers mount up with wings as eagles, in these following things, or the like.

1. They mount up in spiritual-mindedness, contemplation, and holy meditation. Hence, says David, " My meditation of him shall be sweet," Psalm civ. 34. Having got the Spirit, they mind the things of the Spirit : " They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit : that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit," Rom. viii. 5. Their heart is set and bent to mind the great mystery of godliness, " God made manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. " And to know the height, and depth, and breadth of the love of Christ." They do not suffer their thoughts to wander on the mountains of vanity.

2. They mount up in high designs and intentions : their ultimate design is the glory of God, and the enjoyment of him, which, you know, is man's chief end. This is the winged Christian's end : he mounts up in this high and holy end, and that in all his actions ; in his civil actions, as in his buying and selling, travelling, labouring : and in his sacred actions ; as his praying, reading, hearing, communicating ; or, in his relative actions, what he doth as a father, master, servant, or child ; and in his natural actions, whether

he eat or drink, or whatever he doth, he doth all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. At least, his shortcoming herein, is matter of sorrow and shame to him.

3. They mount up in holy desires, saying with Job, "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" And their desires are not like the faint, languishing wish of the wicked, such as Balaam had: no no, their desires are spiritual and sincere, such as these spoken of; Isa. xxvi. 9, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; and with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early." Their desires are strong and fervent; none but Christ will satisfy them. "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" said Abraham, Gen. xv. 2. So says the soul, mounting up towards God, O what wilt thou give me, seeing I go Christless? It pants after God, the living God. Their desires are restricted to God and Christ alone: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may 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. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25. Their desires are dilated on a whole God, and a whole Christ: "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, my God, my King," Psalm xvi. 2. They will have a whole God in all his essential perfections, and in all the relations he stands in to his people. They will have this God for their God for ever and ever, and for their guide even unto death. And they will have a whole Christ; Christ for sanctification, as well as for salvation; yea, Christ for their all in all.

4. They mount up in pious inclinations; they have an aversion at sin, at the sinful pleasures of this life; yea, they abhor them with Ephraim, "What have I any more to do with idols?" That is the language of the eagle-like believer; he hath a great inclination, a strong bent of spirit after a God in Christ, as the top of his perfection, as the very spring of all his pleasure, and as the magazine of all his treasure, as the rest of his soul; if the devil and his evil heart hath set him at any distance from God, his mind is restless till he return to him again: "Return to thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee," Psalm cxvi. 7. The top swarm, as it were, of his inclination, mounts up this way.

5. He mounts up in heavenly affections: hence is that injunction, "Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the

earth," Col. iii. 2. He endeavours, through grace, to have his affection some way corresponding with God's affection, so as to love what God loves, and hate what God hates ; yea, to love as God loves, and to hate as God hates. God loves holiness with a strong and great love ; so doth the believer. God hates sin with a perfect hatred ; and so doth the believer : " I hate every false way." See also Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22.

They mount up in a gospel-conversation : so saith the apostle, " Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," Phil. iii. 20.

7. The winged saint mounts up in a heavenly walk : as Enoch and Noah walked with God, so doth the winged soul, whose strength is renewed ; he runs without wearying, and walks without fainting, on the Lord's way. His heavenly walk discovers itself, 1. In his heavenly words ; they are seasoned with salt, and edifying. And, 2. In his actions, wherein he studies sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, in all the duties of religion, prayer, and praise. And, 3. In his company ; for he can say with David, " I am a companion of all them that fear thee," Psalm cxix. 63.

II. The next thing was, The seasons when it is that the believer, whose strength is renewed, doth mount up.

1. Whenever he gets the new nature, and the disposition ; whenever he is converted, he mounts up on wings as an eagle. It is said of Paul, Acts ix. 11, whenever he was converted, " Behold, he prayeth : " think you Paul never prayed any before that time ? Yea, many a prayer had he uttered, no doubt ; for he profited in the Jewish religion, above many of his equals in his own nation ; he had learned to say his prayers as well as the best of them ; but he never prayed spiritually and acceptably before ; he had never mounted up to heaven in his prayer before : but now, " Behold he prays ; " behold he mounts up, whenever he is converted.

2. He mounts up to heaven, all the days of his life, after his conversion ; he is still making some progress heavenward ; whatever backsets he may get by sin and Satan, now and then, yet he gets up again, and still ascends nearer and nearer heaven : " Nevertheless, I am continually with thee," Psalm lxxiii. 23. Whatever I do, I endeavour still to be on the mount with God. David would have both day and night spent with God : " The Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life," Psalm

xlii. 8. He went to bed, as it were, with God in his arms; for he remembered him upon his bed, and meditated on him in the night-watches; and his soul was satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and when awakened out of his sleep, he found him in his arms; "When I awake, I am still with thee."

3. He mounts up, when he gets a fresh gale and new influences of the Spirit. The believer, at his lowest, is like a ship wind-bound, lying at anchor, but ready to set sail whenever the wind is fair; he can but make small progress with the oars of diligence, when the wind and tide is against him. O sirs, if there be any gale of the Spirit blowing among you this day, then mount, mount, mount; you may make more progress then in an hour, than you will do without it in many a year, yea, in a whole life-time.

4. The believer uses to mount up with wings about a communion-time; nothing less will serve him than to come to Bethel, the house of God; he will go into the chambers of presence, and never rest till he be at the end of his flight. Where is that, say you? Doth he mount to a communion-table? nay, he must be farther; doth he mount to the top of duties and ordinances? nay, he must be farther; doth he mount to heaven? nay, he must be farther yet. Strange! where would he flee next? Indeed, he would flee into the heart of Christ: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart;" yea, and which is more yet, he would not only have himself in Christ's heart, but he would have Christ in his heart; "Christ in him the hope of glory." And what would he do with him when he hath got him there? O then, saith he, "he shall lie all night between my breasts;" if I can, I will keep him all the night-time of this life, which is but a night, "till the day of eternity break, and the shadows fly away."

5. The believer mounts up on wings, as an eagle, at the day of death; then he soars aloft: "This night thou shalt be with me in Paradise." It is said of the adder, that when she is old, she goes through some strait passage, and leaves her old skin in the passage, and thereby renews her vigour and life. This passage of death is strait, and uneasy to the body, which, like the adder's skin, is left in the way; and not without much pain and difficulty to it; but the soul passeth through without any harm; and the next moment mounts up to her state of immortality and happiness: then the believer mounts up indeed to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to the innumerable company of angels, to God the judge

of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant ; yea, then he is mounted up a pillar in the temple of his God.

6. The believer will mount up at the day of judgment as with eagle's wings ; then will he flee up to meet Christ in the air ; "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord," 1 Thes. iv. 17. You see then when the believer mounts up.

IV. The Fourth thing is, To speak to the manner how the believer mounts up, *He mounts up with wings as an eagle*. In whatever respects the eagle mounts up, the same way doth the believer.

1. The eagle mounts up freely and naturally ; God gives it a mounting nature : "Doth the eagle mount up at thy command ?" says the Lord to Job, chap. xxxix. 27, nay, it is by the instinct which the Lord hath given it ; so that it is natural to it. Thus the believer mounts up naturally after God hath given him the new heart ; it is natural to him to be mounting towards God ; when the hypocrite mounts, he is forced up contrary to his natural tendency, as it were, like a stone cast up into the air ; it is not natural to it to fly up, but rather to fall down ; but the believer mounts up naturally and freely.

2. The eagle mounts up highly ; she flies higher than other birds : she makes her nest on high, on some inaccessible rock ; not like the ostrich, that leaves her eggs in the sand, as some leave their souls here on earth ; but these spiritual eagle believers, these heavenly birds, they fly high, even to the Rock of ages ; and hence their daily desire is, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

3. The eagle mounts up strongly, vehemently, and violently ; it is a strong bird, and when it hath got the prey, it flies with violence. Thus doth the believer mount up ; "For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." With such earnestness and intentness doth he mount up towards heaven, that no difficulty in the way shall hinder him.

4. The eagle mounts up swiftly and suddenly : this follows upon the other ; for its strength and violence in flying, infers celerity : so doth the believer, under the lively influences of the Spirit. O how quick is his motion ! "Ore'er he is aware, his soul makes him like the chariots of Aminadab." It is a speedy flight, that the believer makes towards Christ ; he mounts swiftly.

5. The eagle mounts up gradually ; though its flight be strong and swift, yet it is gradual ; it comes not to the utmost extent of its motion, but by degrees : so the believer mounts up gradually ; he goes from strength to strength, till he appear before God in Zion, Psal. lxxxiv. 7. He flies still higher and higher ; and so the object of his aim draws nearer and nearer to him, while he comes to more and more knowledge of God, and more and more communion with him, till faith and hope land in vision and fruition.

6. The eagle mounts up frequently and daily ; and in respect of its mounting disposition, constantly ; so it is with the believer, he is always mounting ; he hath still a mounting disposition, and he is constantly endeavouring to be actually mounting. The carnal professor never mounts up, but about the time of a communion, or the time of some sore affliction or conviction ; and whenever these seasons are over, he goes as fast down as he went up ; but it is the believer's trade of life to be mounting on week days, as well as on Sabbath-days ; and on ordinary Sabbaths, as well as communion-Sabbaths.

V. The next thing is, To show the reasons why the believer, who hath his strength renewed, mounts up on wings like an eagle.

1. Because he hath an eagle's nature. I said before, that the believer mounts up naturally ; why, because he hath an eagle's nature. It is the natural disposition of the eagle to fly upward ; so the believer hath a disposition to mount up to God, he being a new creature ; " If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. This new nature ascends to heaven from whence it descended : the old nature goes always downward, but the new nature mounts upwards. If you want the new nature, you want the mounting disposition.

2. He mounts up on wings like an eagle ; because he hath an eagle's eye : so the believer, he can see that invisible Sun, which no natural eye can attain to ; " The poor in spirit, and pure in heart, shall see God, Mat. v. 3, 8. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him," 1 Cor. ii. 14, but the believer knowing the mind of Christ, sees farther than the world ; he sees the King in his beauty and the land afar off. When he sees these things, he cannot but mount up to them ; " He endures, as seeing him who is invisible," Heb. ii. 27. He is far sighted : " Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day afar off, and he saw it, and was glad." This is that blessed object,

which every believing soul doth see, even when he is in this world.

3. He mounts up on wings like an eagle ; because he hath his nest on high, like an eagle : no wonder then he flies up, for his nest, I mean, his seat, his food, his treasure, his heart, his head, his all is above. His seat is above ; the believing eagle cannot find himself safe while here below ; therefore he flies to the Rock of ages, and there he sits. His food is above : Christ is his food ; “ My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” Now, his food being above, “ Where the carcase is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” His treasure is above ; he hath an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, that is reserved in heaven for him ; and up he must to visit his inheritance. His heart is above, where his treasure is ; yea, Christ hath gotten his heart a-keeping ; and he must be where his heart is. And, in a word, his head is above ; and must not the members be where the head is ? And must not the stones of the building be where the foundation is ? Christ is the head corner-stone. His *all* is above : Christ is all in all to him : and, therefore, mount he must ; for this eagle hath a rich nest above.

4. He mounts up with wings as an eagle, because his strength is renewed, like the eagle’s ; “ Who satisfies thy soul with good things ; so that thy strength is renewed like the eagle’s,” Psal. iii. 5. Therefore, having renewed his strength, he mounts up on wings, like the eagle. Some say the eagle is renewed, when it casts its old feathers, and gets new ones ; so the believer gets the old feathers of corruption removed, and puts on the new man, Eph. iv. 24. Others say, the eagle’s youth is renewed, when, its stomach being thirsty, it drinks the blood of the prey ; and so the believer gets his strength renewed, by drinking the blood of Christ by faith, Eph. iv. 13. It is in the unity of the faith, that he comes to the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. If you have got a drink of the blood of Christ this day, to be sure your strength will be renewed ; and if your strength be renewed, you cannot but be mounting up on wings as an eagle. Here we might show the influence between the renewing of the believer’s strength, and his mounting up ; but this is easily perceived, especially by these that know it experimentally.

VI. The Sixth thing in the general method, is the Application. Is it so, That believers, who in waiting on the Lord, have their

strength renewed, do mount upon wings as eagles? Waving several uses that might be made, hence,

1st. May we not see ground to lament, that so few are mounting up as on eagle's wings at this day. Many people's mind are no-ways with God; "God is not in all their thoughts." Some mount up only in vain thoughts: and, Oh! "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?" Jer. iv. 14. Some spend their thoughts on wordly affairs, the profits, pleasures, riches, and honours of it; they mind earthly things. Some seem to mount, and they mount a little, but they come down again; like Herod, who heard John gladly, but soon did he fall. Some when they are young, they are very religious, but their religion is easily rubbed off again: They begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh. Some mount no farther than restraining grace, while the Lord with-holds them, as he did Abimelech from sinning against him; but they want restraining grace; they know not what it is to have the love of God constraining them. Many, instead of mounting in time of ordinances, the devil and the world run away with their hearts: or if they get any kindly frame about a sacrament, whenever they go home, they forget all, and give loose reins again to their thoughts and words, to their affections and actions.

2dly, We may apply it for examination and trial. Try whether you be mounting Christians or not: to be sure you are mounting or sinking. You need to try after as well as before you go to the Lord's table. How shall I know, say you, whether or not I be mounting up as on eagle's wings? I shall keep by the simile, and give you the following marks.

1. If you be mounting up on wings like an eagle, then God hath opened the iron cage, and set you at liberty. While a man is in a state of nature, or in legal bondage, he is like a bird in an iron cage; he cannot mount, till God come and knock off his fetters, and loose his bands, and proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound; and so lets them out to the free air, that they may fly. If you be a mounting soul, you will know something, more or less of this; you have found yourself in the iron cage, in the devil's claws: and you have found the Lord turning you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; at least, you can say, in some measure, "Once I was blind, now I see?" once I was bound, and now I am set at liberty.

2. If you be mounting up on eagles' wings, then you will have something of an eagles' appetite; "Where the carcase is, thither will the eagles be gathered together. The eagle, it is said, doth very greedily devour her prey; and if you be a true eagle, you will eat greedily of the flesh and blood of the Son of God. It is not a little of this heavenly carcase that satisfies the believing eagle: he must feed upon him greedily, and daily; yea, and live upon it constantly: "The life that he lives, is by faith on the son of God."

3. If you be mounting up on eagle's wings, then you have got something of an eagle's heart: the eagle is a noble kind of creature, disdaining to prey upon mean birds. We have a common Latin proverb, *Aquila non captat muscas*; [that is, The eagle doth not catch flies.] It preys only upon creatures worthy of it; so, the noble generous soul of the mounting believer, will not stoop to these things that are inferior to him, or unworthy of him: no kingdom will please him, but the kingdom of heaven: no heritage, but the heritage of Jacob; no rock, but the Rock of ages; no portion but a portion in the Son of Jesse.

4. If you be mounting up on eagle's wings, then you will be daily casting off your old feathers: such as, the old feather of self-righteousness: you will never allow yourself to mount up with the wing of your own righteousness. You will know that the devil clipt old Adam's wings; yea that by the fall he brake his wings, and that never one since the fall could mount up to heaven on the wing of this old-covenant righteousness, unless it was the double eagle, if I may so express it, the God-man in two natures, and one person, who came to bring in everlasting righteousness: under this great wing, do all the little eagles flock, as the hen's chicken's do under her wings, desiring to be found in Christ, "Not having their own righteousness, which is after the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 9. And as they will be casting the old feather of their own self-righteousness, so the old feather of self-conceit. O the mounting believer thinks little of himself; so little, that he thinks nothing of himself. If nothing could be divided, he is less than nothing in his own sight; and if nothing could be disparaged, he is worse than nothing; he is the least of saints, and the chief of sinners, as Paul was in his own eyes; he casts down all his attainments, all his enjoyments, all his qualifications, all duties at Christ's feet as nothing;

that so he may have nothing to be a weight to keep him from mounting up. In a word, he casts off the old feathers of sin and corruption daily; also enmity, unbelief, hypocrisy, carnality; he seeks to have these works of the devil destroyed wholly. It is said, that there is antipathy between eagles and serpents: so there is a continual antipathy between the believing eagle and the old serpent; and all the serpent's brood are abominable to him.

5. If you be mounting up on eagle's wings, then you will be clothed with the sun; the sun will be big in your eye. The mounting eagle gets a view of the sun: and the higher it mounts, the bigger doth the sun appear. If you be a mounting Christian, you have got above the clouds of darkness and unbelief now and then, and got a view of the Sun of righteousness; and he hath been so big in your eye, as to darken the glory of all created objects; yea, so big in your eye, that you have seen him all in all; to be the all of the covenant, the all of the sacraments, the all of the gospel: you have seen him to be all things, and above all things, and better than all things: you have seen him to be heaven itself, yea, more than heaven, yea, more than ten thousand heavens: you have seen all things to be in him; election, redemption, justification, sanctification, grace, glory, and all. O sirs, "To you that believe, he is precious," and a pearl of great price.

6. If you be mounting up on wings as eagles, you will be clothed with the sun, and you will have the moon of this world under your feet, Rev. xii. 1. The mounting eagle being above the clouds, sees the sun big above, and the earth little below; and the higher it mounts the less will the earth appear. O the mounting believer thinks little of the world; if we were as high as the stars, we would not see the earth; the higher we fly to heaven, the more doth the nothingness of the earth appear to us. The believer sometimes mounts up so high, that he flies out of sight; the world is out of sight to him, and out of his sight and mind also; when he is on the mount of communion with God, glad would he be that he might never come down to the world again, as Peter on the mount of transfiguration, "It is good for us to be here."

3dly, This doctrine may be applied for Exhortation, which I shall form in a short address. 1. In a word of terror to the soul that never mounted. 2. A word of comfort to the mounting soul. 3. A word of counsel to the hovering soul.

[1.] A word of terror to you that never mounted up to heaven

towards Christ. Alas ! what shall we say to you ? You are not like eagles, but like filthy black ravens, that do not mount heavenward, nor look upon the sun, but wander to and fro upon the earth, as Noah's raven did, and feed upon dung-hills and sordid things : you cannot fly to heaven, but flutter upon the earth : but if you do not mount up to heaven, the curse of God will come upon you ; all the curses mentioned, Deut. xxvi. 15, 29. You will be "cursed in your basket, and in your store ; cursed in your out-goings and incomings." The curse of God will be in your house, Prov. iii. 23. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked ;" that is, the man that doth not mount up to Christ by faith, nor mount up in the ways of God. The curse of God will be in your prayers and duties ; "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to God : your sacrifice will be cursed to you : the word you hear will be a curse to you ; it will be a savour and seal of death, and not of life to you, 2 Cor. ii. 16. The sacrament of the Lord's supper will be cursed to you ; for there you eat and drink damnation to yourself. If you never mounted by faith, and yet went to a communion-table, you have been eating and drinking God's curse, which you will never vomit up again, unless you mount up to Christ with the wing of faith. What shall I say ? If you do not mount, Christ himself will be cursed to you : "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." If you do not mount, you will stumble into hell ; and Christ himself will be a stumbling-block over which you will fall and break your neck, and perish for ever. O then, do not tempt Christ by lying still in your sin and unbelief, when you should be mounting. See a remarkable word, 1 Cor. x. 9. "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." If you do not mount, with the eye of faith towards Christ, the mystical brazen serpent, you will be destroyed with worse serpents than the Israelites were ; he will let loose the old serpent, the devil ; he will let loose the young serpent, your conscience, upon you ; and both these will tear you to pieces to all eternity ; besides, the fiery serpent of God's everlasting vengeance : if you do not mount, God will cast you down into the dungeon of hell, to live among all these serpents as long as God lives. Think not these to be words of course, man, woman ; I am not jesting with you ; nay, I declare to you, in the name of the everlasting God, that if you do not mount up to Christ you shall go down to hell with the devil : Matth. xxv. 30, "The unprofitable

servant shall be cast into utter darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Rev. xiv. 10. They shall have no rest. Consider this, all ye that forget God," and forget to mount up to him.

[2.] A word of comfort to the mounting soul. Are you a mounting eagle? Then you shall be blessed in your out-going and in-coming: God's blessing will be in your house: "For he blesseth the habitation of the just:" you will be blessed in your prayers and duties: "For the prayer of the upright is his delight; the word will be blessed to you; it will be a river of life to comfort you, poor believing eagle, when you droop your wings: the sacraments are blessed to you; the communion-table is a foretaste of the fruit of the vine, which you shall drink for ever new in your Father's kingdom, where you shall be for ever with the Lord: you are happier than the tongues of men and angels can tell. And as the mounting soul is blessed, so he is safe: as long as he is mounting, he is out of the reach of this world's misery; safe against death itself; yea, safe against the wrath of God; you are above all this, for you are mounted up to the love of God, and that is above his wrath. O believer, if you be mounting, keep up your head, and be always mounting, till you come to the throne of God and the Lamb. O mount, mount, mount, till you come to heaven, to the top of the tree of life, where the birds of Paradise shall sing, "Hallelujah, to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." The eagle is never in danger, but when she is on earth: we are never in danger when we are in Christ, but till we fly down to the earth; therefore, seeing God hath renewed your strength to mount up as on eagles' wings, O soar aloft; look down with a generous disdain upon the world, and the vanities thereof, and keep your heart up in heaven.

[3.] A word of counsel to the hovering soul. Perhaps there are some hovering sinners and some hovering saints here.

(1.) As for hovering sinners that never yet mounted, they have some thoughts of mounting; but some objections come in their way, and they are in a hover.

Object. O, say you, you are desiring us to go about a duty we are not able to do; alas! I am a poor thing, not able to fly up to heaven; how is that possible to me that want the wing of faith and love?

Answ. 1. Up you must go, or else go down to the bottomless

pit ; God commands you to mount ; and if you be not able, consider whence your inability flows ; the fall brake your wings : “ For God made man upright, but he found out many inventions : ” thou hast disabled thyself in Adam, therefore God may condemn thee.

2. The reason why you do not mount up, is, because you are wilful : “ You will not come to me that you might have life,” John v. 40. Your weakness flows from your wilfulness : if the weakness of your will were taken away, then you would mount up with ease.

3. Do what you can to fly up ; if you cannot fly, endeavour to run without wearying : if you cannot run, endeavour to walk without fainting ; if you cannot walk because of your broken leg, then will you creep to the Physician with it, and hold out the broken leg, the withered arm to him ; if you cannot creep, will you cry to him : “ He hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain ; ” if you cannot cry, will ye look to him : “ Look to me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; ” if you cannot look to him, will you long for him ; for “ He satisfies the longing soul : ” sigh, and sob, and groan after him. And if, after all, you think you can do nothing, because of your absolute weakness ; then, O will you wait on the Lord, and you shall renew your strength ; wait on him in the use of means : lie at the pool, and you cannot tell how soon you shall get strength to mount : “ Wait, I say, on the Lord.”

Object. Alas ! say some, my mounting time is gone, my day of grace is past ; I have been a long hearer of the gospel, and many a call have I slighted ; I fear Christ will never take pains on me, to make me mount up to heaven.

Answ. To you I would say, 1. O how dare you meddle with God’s decree ? I said something to this already ; mind this is a stratagem of Satan, to keep you from coming to Christ. I have read that the devil said once to a man, “ You need not serve God any more, “ for you will not win to heaven.” The man was troubled at this ; but what was his answer ? “ If I cannot win to God in heaven, I shall have as much of God as I can on earth.” O man, you will cheat the devil effectually, if you tell him in earnest, I will take all of God that I can now, though I should never get any more of him.

2. Are you not waiting on God in ordinances, and sorrowing at

your heart, that you have sinned so much, and slighted Christ so long? Then your day of grace is not past; it is yet time to mount. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;" and it is, perhaps, now or never. O young sinner, old sinner, your mounting-time may be gone before you get another call. Death will dismount you from these high privileges in a little, and then you shall never mount again; but sink, sink, sink for ever in fire and brimstone.

(2.) There may be some hovering saints here, who know what it is to have mounted some-time-a-day, but now they are fallen down again; gladly would they mount, but many things hinder them from mounting.

Object. 1. Alas! say some, the woeful world keeps me from mounting; the losses and crosses, and temptation of the world are a clog; whenever I go home, I will meet with something that will draw me down by the heels again, as it were.

Ans. O believer, be not discouraged, but set a stout heart to a steep mountain: oppose the love of the world as much as you can; and see vanity written on its forehead: you know that communion with God is better than all the enjoyments of this life; cast off these things that trouble and afford vexation to you; O let not the world get into your heart; if the world mount up in your heart, it will indeed draw you down, that you shall not mount up to heaven. Beware of your graceless friends; their carnal walk and conversation may rob you of all your spirituality in half an hour, and spoil a good communion in two minutes. O sirs, be as little in their company as you can; and when you are obliged to be with them, yet let your heart be always mounting, and giving a stolen look to Christ. But perhaps, there are other things in the world also that keep you from mounting, and keep you down with discouragement: you see things going all wrong in the Church; grievances lying heavy upon us, zeal decaying, and iniquity abounding, and the like. O how can I get mounted up under such discouragements! As to all which, I shall only say, you have the more need to mount up to heaven, that you see things so far wrong here below.

Object. 2. But O, say you, there is another thing that hinders me from mounting; I have a stone in my heart that bears me down; the dead weight of corruption that draws me downward: how can I mount with such a rock on my back, such a heavy, stony heart in my breast.

Answ. O believer, that art groaning under the sense of your heart-evils, will you go to God with your stony heart; none can cure the spiritual gravel but God himself; he can cut the stone out of the hard-hearted sinner, and he hath promised to do it. Ezek. xxxvi. 26—"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." O sirs, go and tell him, that it bears you down when you would mount up to heaven, and seek to have the stony heart softened in the blood of Christ; for Christ's blood is a heart-softening blood; look to him whom you have pierced, and mourn: if you but mount up with your eye to him, it will melt your stony heart; and then the melted heart will be a mounting heart. Alas! say you, I have a worm at my heart; iniquity prevails against me, and this is a heavy thing that bears me down, sorely down; and, I think, it will wear me down to hell; mine iniquities are a burden; they sink me down, terribly down into the mire. But what shall I do; I will never win up, I think, from under this burden: Poor soul, cast your burden upon Christ; "God laid on him the iniquity of us all. Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee." Doth the guilt of sin burden you? Look to him who is made of God to you righteousness. Doth the power of sin burden you? Look to him who is made of God to you sanctification. "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Object. 3. O, say some, there is another thing that hinders me from mounting up; the devil steps in between me and heaven, between Christ and me, and so I cannot get mounted; he assaults me sore with many sad temptations, he scares me from duty, and tempts me to sin.

Answ. Poor believer, be comforted; it seems you are not on Satan's side; it seems you are come out of his camp; and therefore he assaults you so sore; meantime, O endeavour to mount up notwithstanding of all temptations; for, within a little, "God shall bruise Satan under your feet,"—Rom. xvi. 20. The believing eagle shall get day about with the devil, and tread upon this old serpent. Again, tell me, hast thou not wings to fight against the devil, as they say the eagle doth? When any come to take her young, then she fights with her wings. So do you fight with the wing of faith, that is the shield that quenches the fiery darts of the devil. The devil's darts cannot pierce the believer's wing of faith. Fight with the wing of love; love is a strong wing, like coals of fire, it hath a most vehement flame; this fire of love will burn the devil's darts

that he throws at you ; the love of Christ will constrain you to resist him boldly. But, alas ! say you, for all that I cannot fight ; my faith is feeble, and my love is faint. Then I only say to you, O poor soul, go to Christ ; Christ is like the old eagle that helps the young ones ; yea, Christ takes the young eagles on his wings. Deut. xxxii. 11, 12—"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings : so the Lord alone did lead him ; and there was no strange God with him." Exod. xix. 4—"I bear you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself." Christ will carry you on his wings ; and for your encouragement, know that he hath fought with the devil already, and overcome him ; he hath overcome principalities and powers ; yea, by death he hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

OBJECT. 4. And lastly, Alas ! say you, there is another thing yet that hinders me from mounting ; I would not think much of the common enemies of my salvation, sin, Satan, and the world : I know they will do their utmost to keep me out of heaven ; but, oh ! God himself is pressing me down, and that is saddest of all, he doth not give the wonted communication of his grace nor strength to mount : though I had habitual grace that will not do, I must have auxiliary grace.

ANSW. It may be, when you got additional grace at the last communion, you have sinned it away ; and no wonder, when you turn the grace of God into wantonness, that the Lord make you go empty-handed. But again, he may do this to let you see, that habitual grace is not sufficient, in order to your mounting up to heaven, without actual grace ; "It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that showeth mercy." However, know that God is a sovereign God, and he will let you know that he is so, by giving you new supplies of grace, and withdrawing them again when he pleases ; but wait on him, and you shall renew your strength.

OBJECT. "But oh ! how can I mount, when he not only denies his grace, but HIDES his face from me ? The eagle mounts towards the body of the sun, but my sun is covered with a cloud, and I go mourning without the Sun. A day-bird cannot fly in the night ; and alas ! how should I mount in the dark night of desertion ?"

ANSW. It may be, you have hid your face from God, and that makes him hide his face from you : you have sinned away his pre-

sence, by turning away from his presence; or, perhaps, God doth this for the trial of your faith, love, and patience. However it be, you must exercise your wings of faith and love, and mount up notwithstanding that you be in the dark; "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God,"—Isa. l. 10. The spouse was busy even when Christ was gone, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?"

OBJECT. "Oh! but how can I mount, when he is not only an absent, but an angry God; I see nothing but surly looks in his countenance; and he is shooting arrows against me; yea, "His arrows stick fast in me, and his hand presses me sore;" when I mount up, he shoots me down with his arrows; "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me:" and when my wings are wounded, down I fall."

ANSW. God may do so to humble you; you must be humbled; and the more humble and low you are, the higher you shall be advanced, and mount up the higher after your humiliation: never was the believer highest, than after he was lowest. James iv. 10—"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up;" and remember how you may meet with barbed arrows, poisoned arrows of God's anger, and yet all in love: "In a little wrath have I hid myself from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee." Isa. liv. 10—"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee." You shall at last find all these things well ordered. What think you when you shall come to heaven, and Christ say to you, Welcome, believer, when I hid my face, did I not deal kindly with you? When I shot the arrows into your heart, did I not deal kindly with you? And the believer will then say, Indeed Lord, thou hast done all things well: all is well that ends well.

OBJECT. "Alas! but I think the Lord will kill me with his arrows; and will I fly to heaven, if he kill me?"

ANSW. There is no fear that your kind Lord will kill you; but though he should, yet make use of your wings, and fly to him, as Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." I read of a sparrow, that when pursued by a hawk, flew into Xenocrates' bosom, his words were, *Non oportet supplicem prodere*; "It were barbarous

to betray a poor supplicant." If you fly to God's bosom, no fear that he kill you: when his wrath pursues you, he is but chasing you into his bosom; therefore let nothing hinder you from mounting.

The Lord himself engage you to wait on him, that you may renew your strength, and mount up on wings as eagles.

S E R M O N X L V.

THE RIVER OF LIFE, PROCEEDING OUT OF THE THRONE OF GOD,
AND OF THE LAMB.¹

"And he showed me a pure river of water, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb."—REV. xxii. 1.

AT the last sacramental action, that fell to my share here, I took occasion to speak of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, Rev. vii. 17. And now I would speak a little, as the Lord may assist, of the great blessings that proceed from that throne, to the everlasting salvation and consolation of all the redeemed.

Some understand all that is said in the two last chapters of this book, of the state of the Church even here on earth, in the glory of the latter days. Others view it as a representation of the perfect and triumphant state of the Church in heaven. I reckon it safest to exclude neither of these; and apprehend it takes in the heavenly state of the Church, and the happiness thereof, commenced in time here, and consummate through eternity thereafter. That glorious state begins here, since grace is the beginning of glory and glory the perfection, of grace. Now, this happy state is described here, in allusion to the earthly paradise, that was lost by the sin of the first Adam, as another, a better paradise, restored by the righteousness of the second Adam.

In this verse you see a revelation made to John of the river of paradise; and by this river I understand the Spirit and all spiritual

¹ This sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, at Dunfermline, July 6, 1735.

blessings: for so I find the Spirit frequently in scripture, represented as a river, or a flood of water; Isa. xlv. 3, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." What is that? Even my Spirit, and my blessing; as it is explained in the words immediately following. But then you have the quality of this river: it is a PURE river of water of life, CLEAR as crystal. All the streams of earthly comforts are muddy and polluted, and polluting; but these are pure, clear, healing, and refreshing; giving life, and preserving life for ever to them that drink thereof. You have the rise of this river, or whence it flows and proceeds, namely, "Out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." The Spirit, and all the blessings and comforts of grace and glory, proceed from a God in Christ. As the Spirit with reference to his personal property, proceeds from the Father and the Son; so, with reference to his office in the economy of redemption, he, as a Spirit of all grace and comfort, proceeds like "a pure crystal river out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb;" the Spirit, and all spiritual blessings being from God, through the mediation of the Lamb. But I shall further explain the words, upon the prosecution of the following doctrine.

OBSERV. That the living Spirit of God, communicating all the blessings of everlasting life, graciously here, and gloriously hereafter, proceeds like a pure crystal river out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.

And here I shall, as the Lord may please to assist, essay to do the following things.

- I. Offer some remarks for clearing and confirming the doctrine.
- II. Observe the property and quality of the water of this river.
- III. Show what may be imported in its being said to "proceed out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb."
- IV. Inquire whence it is, or assign the reasons why this river of life is said to proceed out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.
- V. Deduce some Inferences for the Application.

1. We are to offer some remarks for clearing, confirming, and illustrating the doctrine.

Remark 1. "That communion with God in Christ, "in his blessings and comforts at his table, whether above or below, is by his Spirit." For, as through Christ we have access to the Father by one Spirit, Eph. ii. 18 ; so all the blessings and comforts of the new covenant are communicated from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Ghost : and hence we enjoy the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, through him, in the communion of the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

Remark 2. "That all spiritual blessings, thus communicated, are everlasting." They are the blessings of everlasting life, begun in grace here, and consummate in glory hereafter. God himself, the prime and principal blessing, is the everlasting God ; and the everlasting light, the everlasting life, the everlasting heaven and happiness of his people. And all the streams of blessings that flow from this fountain of living waters are everlasting. For example, is peace a stream of this river ? Rom. v. 1, " Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." This peace is everlasting : and hence departed saints are said to enter into peace whenever they die, Isa. lvii. 2. Peace here enters into them, and there they enter into peace. Is pardon of sin a stream of this river ? Yea, " We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin," Eph. i. 7 ; and this pardon is everlasting : and it is said of the inhabitants of heaven, " The people that dwell there, shall be forgiven their iniquity," Isaiah xxxiii. 24. Here they are pardoned, and there the pardon is lengthened out to eternity. Is sanctification and holiness a stream ? Yea, " Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image." Well, it is an everlasting blessing, for in heaven it is perfected ; " We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. Again, Is the life of comfort here a stream ? Yea, we joy in God through Christ. This blessing is everlasting, and therefore called *everlasting consolation*, 2 Thes. ii. 16. And hence the Comforter is said to abide in us for ever, John xvi. 25. Even when the sensible comfort is withdrawn, yet the Comforter abideth for ever. Again, is the begun life of communion with God a stream of this river of the water of life ; What is this fellowship with the Father and the Son, but the beginning of everlasting communion ? In a word, Is grace a stream of this river of the water of life ? What is the life of grace here, but the beginning of the life of glory, which

is everlasting, and commenced whenever the soul believes in Christ? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Thus you may see what I mean by the blessings of everlasting life, to be enjoyed graciously here, and gloriously hereafter, called *the water of life* in the text. And so far I have here designedly prevented myself the necessity of explaining much further this water of life, or the streams of this river.

Remark 3. "That the Spirit of God, as the great blessing of the covenant, and all the other spiritual blessings of everlasting life, are compared frequently to water in scripture, John iv. 14, and 10th verse compared." There Christ is said to give us living water; and again, "The water that I shall give him that drinketh it, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." And John vii. 37, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly, out of his very heart and soul, shall flow rivers of living water." This he speaks of the Spirit. But I insist not on all the instances I might offer; only the Spirit and his influences, graces, comforts, and blessings, may be on many accounts compared to water. I insist not upon the parallel; only, as water is for quenching of thirst, washing of stains, cooling of heats, healing of wounds, softening of hard earth, and fructifying of barren earth; so the Spirit, in his various influences and operations, is of manifold such like use to the souls of all his people.

Remark 4. "That this river of water of life, that waters the church, militant and triumphant, with all spiritual and everlasting blessings, proceeds out of the throne of God, and the Lamb: I mean, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son." Not only doth he so, as he is the third person of the glorious Trinity, and that by an eternal and ineffable procession; but also, as he is clothed with the peculiar and glorious office of applying the purchased redemption. He comes forth from the Father and the Son, by a voluntary subordination. This is plain from several scriptures, particularly, John xiv. 16, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth." John xv. 26, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." John xiv. 26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in

my name, he shall teach you all things." And again, John xvi. 7, 14, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He will guide you unto all truth. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Whence then shall we have a good communion with God this day? Whence shall we have the Spirit, or any spiritual blessing and comfort? It is from the throne of God and of the Lamb: it is from the Father and the Son. This water is from God, through the mediation of the Lamb.

II. The second thing proposed was, To point out some of the qualities of this great blessing, comprehending all other blessings of everlasting life. The text calls it a "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal;" where the water is described four ways, namely, from the plenty, the purity, the virtue, and the splendour of it.

1. It is described from the plenty, or great store of it, and therefore it is called a River. This is that river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, Psal. xlv. 4. No pleasures are like these that flow from the Spirit of God. "The fruit of the Spirit is peace and joy:" but here it is only the streams of this river that we enjoy; but in heaven, the river itself will be enjoyed. The holy Spirit is a river, not a cistern, to show his infinite plentitude and fulness, and the great abundance of heavenly blessings that flow from him. Our Lord Jesus hath received of this river, above measure, and yet the river is as full as ever. All believers, in all ages, from the beginning of the world, thousands and ten thousands, have drawn out of it: yet it is still an overflowing river. O let us bring all our empty pitchers here! For there is enough here for every son of Adam, if he would come; enough for time, and enough for eternity: the river is flowing by our door; O may we draw water out of this well of salvation!

2. It is described from its purity, it is a *PURE river*. The Spirit of God is a pure and holy Spirit: and all his blessings and comforts are pure and holy, purifying and sanctifying blessings. A pool or a standing water may be impure; but a river though it should run through a loathsome ditch, will carry away the pollution of it; no man's heart, be it never so polluted, like a stinking ditch, but if a stream of this river be let into it, and have a free passage, it will carry away all the filth, and pollution thereof. And why is it said

of heaven ; Rev. xxii. 27, that "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth?" Because there is the river ever running. Here we have only the streams running sometimes, but there is the river itself; the pure river continually running. O let impure polluted souls come now to the streams of this pure and purifying river, as they are running from Christ in a gospel-dispensation : and never rest till they win to the river of perfect purity.

3. It is described from the quickening virtue of it : it is a "pure river of water of LIFE." This river of water is the living Spirit of God : the Spirit of life, that quickens whom he will : he hath life in himself, and by him dead souls are quickened, and made to live for ever. All earthly elementary waters have a beginning ; but this river, the Spirit of God, is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning, and without end. Other rivers are fed by springs and fountains ; but this river of the spirit is himself the fountain of living waters, as well as a river. This river proceeds from God, and yet the river is God himself. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are One." Though God hath provided a channel of ordinances to convey some of the water of this river to us, for quickening and refreshing us ; yet the river cannot be circumscribed or limited as it is in itself. O let dead souls conceive hope of life ! here is the living and life-giving Spirit of God, to give the life of grace, the life of peace and pardon, the life of holiness and sanctification, the life of joy and consolation, the life of communion and fellowship with God, which are all the beginning and commencement of everlasting life, as I have already shewn.

4. This river of water is described from the brightness, splendour, and glory of it : it is CLEAR as crystal. This, I think, may point out both the pleasure and perspicuity of the river. What a pleasant river is the Spirit, in the everlasting emanation and flow of his influences and comforts ! How sweetly do the redeemed drink of this river of pleasure ; Psalm xxxvi. 8, "In the presence of God there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. 11. And what a perspicuous river is that of the Spirit, "clear as crystal?" The Spirit as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, makes clear discoveries as a crystal glass, or a crystalline transparent river. It is by the Spirit we behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is the Spirit that glorifieth Christ, by showing the things of Christ ; he giveth clear

discoveries of the glory of Christ, and the glory of God's perfections in him. The Spirit of life is the Spirit of light, that giveth the fiducial vision here, and the beatifical vision hereafter.

III. The next thing proposed was, To show what may be imported in this river being said to proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

1. It imports, that God and the Lamb have but one and the same throne, from whence the river of the Spirit and all spiritual blessings do proceed. Here are good news to us this day, when we are to commemorate the sufferings of the Lamb of God; that, as the Lamb that was slain upon the cross is now sitting upon the throne, so that God and the Lamb have not two thrones, but one and the same throne. The throne of God is the throne of the Lamb, and the throne of the Lamb is the throne of God; Rev. iii. 21, "I am set down with my Father in his throne." He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne of God: but of this I have formerly treated.

2. It imports, that God and the Lamb have but one and the same Spirit. The river proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of the Lamb; and the Spirit of the Lamb is the Spirit of God. Happy they that have the Spirit of Christ in them; for the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God. He is the Spirit of both, of the Father and of the Son: "All things that the Father hath, are mine," says Christ, John xvi. 15. And particularly, the Father's Spirit is the Son's; hence it is said; Gal. iv. 6, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, *Abba*, Father." This river proceeds not out of the throne of God, or the Father's throne only; but out of the throne of the Lamb also, the Son's throne. The Spirit of life, for quickening dead souls into everlasting life, proceeds not out of the throne of God as an absolute God, but as a God in Christ; and therefore is said to proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

3. It imports, that the fulness of the Godhead, that is in Christ, is a communicative fulness; and hence the river is said to issue from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The everlasting spring of the river is within the throne of God, where the Lamb sits; and the Lamb is anointed with the Spirit above measure; for the Father giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him, John iii. 34. And this ocean of divine fulness that is in him, is not shut up within the throne, but proceeds like a river out of it, that we, out of his

fulness, may receive and grace for grace, John i. 16. This communication is free, as free as the run of a stream out of a spring. And as the river proceeds freely out of the throne, so we may as freely come and drink of the water of life, that runs out towards us. But again it imports,

4. That the giving out of the Spirit, and of all spiritual blessings, is a part of the royalty of Christ, and the fruit of his mounting the throne of heaven after he had finished his work upon earth; and hence, "When he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious," Psalm lxxviii. 18. The giving out of the Spirit, in the most plentiful manner, was deferred till the Lamb that was slain should be in the midst of the throne. It is said: John vii. 30, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified;" but whenever he is glorified, then the river, in a plentiful manner, was to proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come: but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Whenever I am glorified upon the throne, then I will show the river of the water of life proceeding out of the throne. The giving, then of the Spirit of life, is a part of the Mediator's royalty. Christ, as a King, hath the giving of the Spirit; this belongs to his administration, as the Lamb now upon the throne: hence says Christ; John xiv. 26, "The Father will send him in my name," even in my name and authority, as the crowned King of Zion; and John xvi. 7, "I will send him." Thus God and the Lamb agree from the imperial throne, to send from thence the river, the Spirit of life, as an evidence of the Mediator's exaltation, and of his glorious kingdom and royalty. Our Lord Jesus Christ sways his sceptre of grace, and erects and maintains his kingdom, by sending his Spirit. The Lamb was sacrificed to purchase eternal redemption, and is enthroned to give the Spirit; and, O but the Spirit is a royal blessing! As Christ is a Priest upon the throne, so these that share of his Spirit are a royal priesthood; and, having the Spirit, they are kings and priests to their God. Let us wait this day about the throne for this glorious fruit and effect of his royal bounty.

IV. The Fourth thing proposed was, To inquire into the reasons, or whence it is that this river of life, for quickening dead souls to everlasting life proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

1. It is to show, that as the grace of God towards sinners is reigning grace, enthroned grace ; so it reigns through the righteousness of Christ to eternal life, Rom. v. 21. And that no life, no spiritual life, by the word and Spirit of God, is to be expected, but as it runs in this channel. No life by the law or covenant of works is now to be expected. God and Adam are now separate ; and the channel of the communication of life, or of living waters, by his covenant with the first Adam, is quite cut off : but, behold, God and the Lamb are joined together in an everlasting covenant, to sit together on an heavenly throne. The fulness of the Godhead is gone in to the second Adam ; the fulness of the Spirit of life is given to the Lamb above measure, John iii. 34. And now the Lamb, being the Lord our righteousness, is exalted to the Father's throne ; a throne enriched with the river of life. Grace reigns on that throne, through the righteousness of Christ, to the communication of all the blessings of everlasting life. Mercy vents through the blood of Christ, through the blood of the Lamb, once hanging upon the cross, and now reigning upon the throne.

2. This river of life is discovered as proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, to show the distinct economy of the glorious Trinity in this business of our redemption, and of the eternal salvation of lost sinners. God the Father, the first person in the order of subsistence, sits upon the throne of his sovereign grace ; God the Son, the Lamb that was the purchaser of life on the cross, is made the administrator thereof upon the throne ; God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is the great Applier, bringing home the blessings purchased to all the redeemed in a perpetual egress the flow of divine communications : and hence all the store of divine things and blessings, that the Spirit communicates, are said to be the things of God the Father, and Christ the Son, discovered and dispensed by the Holy Ghost : " He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine ; therefore said I, He shall take of mine, and show it unto you," John xvi. 14, 15. And hence also believers are said to receive the Spirit which is of God, that they may know the things that are freely given them of God, 1 Cor. ii. 21. Thus we see the distinct economy of each person of the glorious Trinity in this matter, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God in three persons ; and how we are equally indebted to each of them for the benefit of redemption.

3. This river of life is discovered as proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, to show the essential unity and glorious harmony of the ever-blessed Trinity, notwithstanding of their personal distinction; according to 1 John v. 7, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." And this essential unity or natural oneness is, I think, pointed out in our text, where the throne being called the throne of God and of the Lamb, declares what Christ himself declared; John x. 30, "I and my Father are one." And if the Spirit were not the fountain of living water, equally and essentially one with the Father and the Son, how could he proceed like a river out of the throne of God and of the Lamb? So that, as in this clear glass of the gospel we see the distinct economy of the glorious Trinity, in the work of redemption, and their personal distinction, so we may see their essential unity or natural oneness: "These three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." And in the same light we see their glorious harmony in our redemption-work. As it is said of the Three that bear witness on earth, "the Spirit, the water, and the blood," that, as these Three are One, one in nature; so they agree in one, in one great and glorious work and design towards the salvation of poor sinners. There is a perfect harmony and agreement between God and the Lamb upon the same throne: and how doth the Spirit agree with the Father and the Son proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb like a pure crystalline river? And thus showing, that everlasting life is from God in Christ, by the Spirit. Again, another reason is,

4. To show the excellent firmness and stability of the new-covenant blessing, and on what a sure ground and bottom the eternal life and happiness of the church-militant and triumphant is built. These blessings are equally secured with the throne of God and of the Lamb, and the perpetual flow of the river or the water of life that proceeds therefrom. The everlasting life of the redeemed is some way interwoven with the personal properties of the glorious Trinity: for, as the Spirit, personally considered, proceeds from the Father and the Son; so he proceeds communicatively out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, to water all the redeemed as an everflowing and overflowing river of everlasting life. A glorious Trinity may be seen in every spiritual blessing: hence may a believer say, This pardon, for example, is a divine blessing, it is from

the throne of God ; it is a purchased blessing, it is from the throne of the Lamb ; it is a sealed blessing, by the Spirit, as a river running from the throne of God and of the Lamb, so as the happiness of the redeemed cannot fail, nor the river cease to run out to their everlasting life, no more than God can cease to be God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one everlasting God in three persons. The stream of grace here, and glory hereafter, proceeds from a fountain that can never be drained : here they will drink, and bathe, and swim for ever, if we may be allowed the expression. The throne of God will still be the throne of the Lamb ; he will still be a God in Christ : and the throne of the Lamb will still be the throne of God ; for to him the Father says, "Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever." And the throne of God and of the Lamb will still be a throne whence the everlasting Spirit will proceed like a pure crystal river ; for he will never cease to be a free Spirit, a free fountain of living waters. O glorious and blessed security !

V. The Fifth thing proposed was, To deduce some inferences for the application. Is it so, that the living Spirit of God, communicating all the blessings of everlasting life graciously here, and gloriously hereafter, proceeds like a pure crystal river out of the throne of God and the Lamb ? Then,

1. Hence see the harmony between the church-militant and triumphant ; they drink of the same river : only here we have but drops, but there they have the ocean, and drink at the fountain-head : the utmost here is a staying us with flaggons, but there the redeemed swim in the river of life. The saints in glory, as well as believers on earth, hold their title unto everlasting life of Christ : their everlasting happiness is grounded upon the blood of the Lamb, and flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Christ will be the glass, even in heaven, wherein the glory of God will be seen through the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal.

2. Hence see the happiness of every believer who has got but one saving drop of this river poured out upon his heart : for this Spirit of God and of the Lamb will be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life, John iv. 14 ; and that because this water proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is a royal blessing from the divine throne ; and the blessings of the throne are the best blessings. Many are content with the blessings of the footstool, and hunt only after these, saying, "Who will show us any earthly good ?" But, blessed are these that cannot be satisfied

with anything less than throne-blessings ; “ Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me : then shall I have more gladness than the wicked world, in the time that their corn and wine increase,” Psalm iv. 6. O see what a royal gift it is to get the Spirit ; Christ ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, Psalm lxxviii. 18.

3. Hence see the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, shining in the work of redemption through Jesus, and in the way of our salvation through his blood and righteousness. Here, as in a glass, we may see the glory of God the Father, sitting on the same throne with Christ, that is, appearing as a God in Christ ; the glory of Christ the Son, our Redeemer, exalted to the Father’s throne, after he had finished his work ; and the glory of the Holy Ghost in his breathings and blessings, graces and comforts, proceeding like a pure crystal river, out of the throne of God and of the Lamb : and also the glory of all the divine attributes ; their honour is secured in this throne of grace, from whence grace and mercy vents, to the credit and honour of justice and truth, through the justice-satisfying blood of the Lamb ; therefore it is said, “ Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”

4. Hence see how glorious the gospel is, and how powerful, while it is in the channel wherein the Spirit of life, and the river of the water of life runs from the throne of God and of the Lamb ; “ Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ? ” Gal. iii. 2. It is by the hearing of faith ; and hence the Spirit and the word are put together in a promise to Christ, and in him to all his seed : “ This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit is upon thee, and the words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever,” Isaiah lix. 21. This river of life, for quickening dead souls, runs always in the channel of the word of grace and promise ; and the gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, in the hands of his sent servants : and this ought to be highly prized by all that are followers of the Lamb, and would enjoy the witness of his Spirit from the throne. There are, indeed, in our day, many that are but ministers of the letter ; these ought to be discouraged and discountenanced : but there are some evidently ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit ; these ought to be highly encouraged and countenanced ; for, though the

letter kills, the Spirit gives life, 2 Cor. iii. 6. It is dangerous to desert a ministry wherein the Spirit of life runs; this were to run away from the river that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

This, by the bye, may show us a rule for our conduct in this day of division, when many of the Lord's own children are ready to run to some dangerous extremes, with reference to their countenancing this or the other minister. Why, if they are ministers of the letter, that have nothing of a gospel spirit, or of the Spirit of faith or faithfulness in preaching or managing; and if this be evident, why not? Let us testify duly against them; but, if we have to do with ministers of the Spirit, let us remember, that some of these are appointed of God for such a work; and some for another work: and some of them have a greater measure of the Spirit of faith and zeal than others; and some of them have a lesser measure given them of God, according to the work he hath for them: but, if they have any measure of a gospel-spirit, and of the Spirit of faith and faithfulness in their station, though they come not up to the same measure and degree with others, nor be set upon the same ground, beware of slighting and despising them; for the great river of the city of God runs out in many streams, some greater and some lesser, and to despise the least stream, is to despise the river; "He that despiseth you, despiseth me."

5. Hence see what it is that would make good and happy days in the church militant; namely, the running out of this river more plentifully: "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever," Isa. xxxii. 15, 17. O when may we expect such a day! Indeed, such is the universal corruption of church and state, and such has been our perjury, covenant-breaking and blood-shed, unrepented of; and such is the profanity, error, and blasphemy of the day we live in, that in all appearance, before the happy day of the outpouring of the Spirit, we may expect a terrible day of the outpouring of blood. Our national bloody sins are crying for bloody vengeance; and many see it hastening on. But, sirs, what is it that will wash away Scotland's bloody guilt, and bloody gore at once? What but a flood from heaven; even a flow of the pure

river, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb! Whatever sad days may come before it, yet this is the happy day you ought to seek, for Zion's sake, and for the sake of the rising generations in Scotland, and of future ages.

6. Hence see what would make a heartsome communion solemnity among us this day, amidst all the sad signs of the times, namely, the running down of this river. And see, at the same time, what ground we have to expect this river of life to run out: the ground of hope is, because the Lamb is enthroned. The time was that the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, was not given plentifully, "Because Jesus was not yet glorified," John vii. 39. But now Jesus is glorified, the Lamb is sitting on his Father's throne; therefore, we may seek and expect that the Spirit may be poured out. Let faith act, for supplies of this water, upon Christ's exaltation to the Father's right hand to give repentance and remission of sins; exalted to give the Spirit of faith and repentance, to give the Spirit of holiness and comfort; exalted to the well-watered throne to let out the river plentifully. Again,

7. To raise our hope and experience, let us from this doctrine see, that the throne of God and of the Lamb is no penurious throne, that hath little to spare; as in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare, so about our Father's throne, the throne of God and of the Lamb, there is water enough and to spare, the pure river of the water of life fully and freely proceeding out of it. The seven Spirits are said to be before the throne, Rev. i. 4; that is, the one eternal Spirit of God as a river flowing out in all his various streams of gifts, influences, operations, breathings, blessings, and comforts; this river is before the throne. Which says, by the bye, that it is good to go boldly and frequently to the throne of grace; for this quickening river will meet us by the way; and whenever our feet touch the river, then, like a flood, it will carry us off our own feet, and bear us up towards the throne, as the water did the ark to the top of Ararat.

8. Hence see how we may attain communion with God at a communion table, and how we are to go there: you ought to go with as great awe and reverence, as if you were going to the throne of God, for his throne is at the head of the table. But then, how shall we go to the throne of God, who is an infinitely holy and just God, whereas we are guilty, guilty sinners? Why, we cannot go to the throne of God but through Jesus Christ; and through him

we ought to go boldly, because it is not only the throne of God, but of the Lamb, by whose blood we have boldness to enter into the holiest. But again, if you think, how shall we go thus to the throne of God and of the Lamb, having no life or power to do anything? Why, indeed, we cannot win to it, but, as it were, swimming in the river that is before the throne, the river of the Spirit's influences and graces, that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. That which brings us to the throne, must proceed out of the throne; therefore we are to go believingly and dependently, being strong only in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, the grace that is in the throne of grace to be freely communicate from it.

9. Hence we may see the marks and characters of right and worthy communicants. They are such as have got a discovery of what is here shewed unto John: "He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." I do not mean, that every true believer gets such an extraordinary discovery as John here got the revelation of; but there is something of the mystery thereof in some degree that, I think, every believer gets some view of, particularly in these three things, by which you may examine yourself.

(1.) Have you got a view of the throne of God; I mean, of God himself, in his infinite holiness and justice? For God sits upon the throne of his holiness, justice, and other glorious attributes: and to see the throne of God, is to see and know him to be Majesty itself; for a throne points out majesty. Have you ever apprehended the majesty of his holiness and justice, and that the throne of iniquity cannot have fellowship with him; that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; that he is a God that will by no means clear the guilty. And hath ever the view of this made you tremble and quake, and fear, lest you should never have fellowship with him, because you are nothing but a mass of sin and guilt?

(2.) Have you ever, upon the back of this, got a view of the throne of God as the throne of the Lamb, so as the terrible majesty of the throne, hath been allayed by the apprehension of divine mercy, venting through the blood of the Lamb that was slain; slain virtually from the foundation of the world; slain actually on the cross at Jerusalem, and now sitting gloriously upon his Father's throne? In this light have you seen infinite holiness honoured and vindicated by the obedience of the Lamb, and infinite justice pleased and satisfied by the death and blood of the Lamb? And hath the

view of this turned the throne of God from a terrible to an amiable throne in your eye? The throne of God and of the Lamb is nothing else but a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself; a God declaring himself well-pleased in Jesus Christ. Hath the view of this turned your fear to hope, and your terror to triumph?

(3.) Have you ever hereupon seen and felt, to your experience, living waters proceeding from the throne of God, and of the Lamb? Have you seen the fulness of the Spirit to be in Christ, as anointed therewith above measure? And have you ever found this living water gushing from the throne, as it were, in a sweet blood of influences? When you was pouring out your heart before the Lord, he was pouring out this flood upon you, and making you, as it were, swim in this river. Believer, know you not something less or more about this? Well, what was the quality of the water which you was then baptized with? Perhaps you came to the throne empty and destitute, and like dry ground; but, before you went away, you was filled as with the fulness of a river gushing out upon you. Possibly you came to the throne very dead and lifeless, saying, Oh! is it possible that these dry bones can live? But your soul was quickened, and brought to life and liveness, so as you found the river to be indeed a river of the water of life; of life to your dead soul. Maybe you came polluted and unclean, crying out, "Behold, I am vile!" Will ever such a vile beast have access to God, or be washed from stains? Yet behold, you found your soul surrounded with purifying waters, with the pure river of the water of life, inso-much that perhaps, at that time, though it was a mistake, yet you joyfully imagined, that all pollution, corruption, and impurity, was washed away with the happy flood that sweetly overwhelmed you, and drowned all your lusts? Was not the river then in your view, as a pure and purifying river? Again, perhaps, you came to the throne under many doubts and fears, and dark clouds; but, say you, before I went away, I got a clear view of the mercy of God in Christ, a clear view of his everlasting love, a clear view of the door of hope open to me; or, at least, that there was hope in Israel even for me. You thus found the pure river of the water of life to be clear as crystal, when a gush of that water was able to clear your eye when it was dim; to clear your mind when it was dark and confused; to clear your conscience when it was black with guilt; the streams of the river, clear as crystal, running through your heart made all clear before it.

Have you ever got any view and experience of these things in some measure, however small the degree be? Then you have the mark and character of such as have a right to the communion table; but, if you never got a view of the throne of God, or of the majesty of God, so as to fear his wrath because of your sinfulness; and if you never got a view of the throne of the Lamb, or of the mercy of God in Christ, so as to hope in his mercy, as venting through the blood of the Lamb; and if you never felt any drop of this pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of that throne; if you never found one gush of that river of the Spirit's influences, either filling your empty soul, quickening your dead soul, purifying your polluted soul, or clearing your dark mind; then surely you have no right to the communion table, as being a stranger to communion and fellowship with a God in Christ, by the Spirit.

It may be some poor, weak believer, will tell me, "Sir, I think, indeed, I am no utter stranger to what you have been saying: there was such a time, and such a time, wherein I thought I got a view of these things; but, alas! all is now gone! the throne of God and of the Lamb is out of view, and the gush of influences from the throne, that I was watered with, is all dried up, and I am nothing but like a piece of parched ground." Well, it may be so; but here is good news: the throne of God and of the Lamb still remains; the pure river of the water of life is still subsisting; and the throne of God and of the Lamb is still the fountain of living waters, that can never be dried up or drained, but is as full as ever. Therefore, wait about the throne for the pouring out of the Spirit, as waters upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.

10. Hence see the duty of all that hear this gospel, namely, to come and take of the water of life freely; to come to Christ, and drink of the river that proceeds out of the throne. This inference is drawn from this doctrine, in the 17th verse of the same chapter; "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Isa. lv. 1—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters." John vii. 37, 38, 39—"On the great day of the feast Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; for he that believeth on me, out of his belly, out of his heart and bowels, shall flow rivers of living water. This he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."

He who then stood and cried in this manner before he ascended

to the throne, he appointed us to be criers in his name, with this encouragement, "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world." Indeed, if it were not for this encouragement, in vain would we cry to you, but, O regard the cry of the Son of God, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink of this pure river of living water." I cannot offer you the sacrament safely, till I offer Christ to you, the substance of it; and you cannot take the sacrament honestly, till you accept of the offer, otherwise you will eat and drink unworthily. Let me therefore press this exhortation on you, before I close, with a few considerations: and, O look up for power to accompany them. I shall go no further than my text and context.

(1.) Consider the authority by which you are called to come to Christ, and drink of these living waters. It is a divine authority; the orders are issued from the throne of God: "This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ"—1 John iii. 23. Are orders from an earthly throne to be regarded, coming in the name and authority of the prince? O what infinitely more regard is to be had to the throne of God! to the divine authority! If a poor man only were calling you to come to Christ, you might safely sit the call, and say, "By what authority do you these things?" But all the authority of the throne of God and of the Lamb is here interposed; and you cannot sit the call, without trampling on the authority of God.

(2.) Consider the glory of that Jesus, who invites you to come to him and share of this living water, and drink of this pure crystal river. O that in this clear stream of the Spirit's illumination, you could see the glory of Christ, who says, "He shall glorify me!" There is a twofold glory of Christ here: he presents, 1. His imperial throne: 2. His glorious mediatorial fulness. His glorious throne: how glorious soever the throne of God is, so glorious is the throne of the Lamb; for here you see the throne of the Lamb is the throne of God; and though he be the Lamb that was slain, yet he is God equal with the Father, and thinks it no robbery to be equal with God; and the Father thinks it no disparagement to him to set the Lamb in the midst of his throne. O glorious Jesus! His blood was the blood of God: his righteousness the righteousness of God; his wisdom is the wisdom of God; his power is the power of God; and his throne is the throne of God. Angels and archangels worship with reverence before his throne. His glorious fulness is here

also presented, all the fulness of the Godhead is in him : all the Father's fulness is in him, and all the Spirit's fulness is in him. The fulness of the Sprit, that ever any mere creature had, is but like the fulness of a vessel ; but the fulness of the Spirit that is in Christ, the Lamb of God, is the fulness of a fountain : and hence it is, that the Spirit, and all spiritual blessings, proceed like a pure river of water of life out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.

(3.) Consider the qualities of these waters which Jesus calls you to come to him for. They are such as, whatever be your sad natural state, or your miserable present case, there is suitable relief presented therein.

[1.] Are you destitute and empty of all good, empty of all grace ? O let that be no hinderance, but a reason to move you to come to Christ, and look to the Lamb that is on the Father's throne ; for here is a full fountain, a flowing river : he calls you not to come and give, but to come and take what you need. O bring all your empty vessels here ; this river comprehends no less than God himself, and all his perfections ; Christ himself and all his fulness ; the Spirit himself and all his graces, blessings, and comforts.

[2.] Are you dead in law, and dead in sin, dead in state, and heart, and frame ? Let that be no hinderance, but a reason to move you to come to Jesus for a drink of this river ; because it is the river of the water of life. Christ's great complaint is, " Ye will not come to me, that you might have life : " the life of absolution from the sentence of the law condemning you to eternal death ; together with the life of grace here, and glory hereafter : life to your dead souls ; present life, future life, everlasting life.

[3.] Are you polluted with the nastiness of hell about you, and altogether filthy and unclean ? This is another reason why you must come to Jesus, and share of this pure river, and purifying water. This is the quality of the river to which you are invited to come ; the streams of this pure river will wash and cleanse your impure heart, and wash you from all filthiness of the flesh and of the Spirit.

[4.] In a word, Are you dark and ignorant, and unclean in your mind about the knowledge of God, and the things of God : and in your conscience about peace with God ? Why, here is no bar, but a motive to come to Christ and take of the water of life freely ; for another quality of the waters is, that they are clear as crystal. And how shall you get either the mind cleared from darkness, or

the conscience cleared of guilt, but by looking, as it were, through this crystal flood that proceeds out of the throne ; I mean, the clear glass of the Spirit's illumination, to see by this means that the throne of God is the throne of the Lamb ; that is, that God is a God in Christ, whom, to see and know, is life eternal ; there is clearing to the mind. And to see also, that the Lamb upon the throne of God now, is the Lamb that was slain to be a sacrifice to satisfy justice and expiate guilt ; there is clearing for the conscience, when discerned, that, being justified by faith, you may have peace with God. Consider then the quality of these waters which the Lord Jesus calls you to come and take, to come and drink ; they can answer every case.

(4.) Consider what is the quality of those that are invited to come to these waters, and upon what terms you may have a drink here, and live for ever : why, the exhortation here says, " Let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," ver. 17. Here is the quality, " Let him that is athirst come." Who is the thirsty person ? I answer, It is the man that stands in need of a drink. If you need a drink of this water ; if you need Christ ; then you are invited to come and drink. Why, say you, we all need Christ ; then say I, you are all welcome for to come to Christ ; and I dare seek no other qualification of you.

" But pray, sir, say you, tell us plainly what you mean by this thirst : for I thought I would have been excluded by this qualification, because, perhaps I have not a right thirst ? " Why, man, I dare not, upon my peril, add anything to this word, only, " Let him that is athirst come ; " because of the word that follows that text, ver. 18. " If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." Now, if I should add anything to this word, " Let him that is athirst come," by saying, The call is only to you that thirst rightly, to you that thirst greatly, to you that thirst vehemently, to you that thirst spiritually, to you that thirst after nothing else but this water of life, then I would run the terrible hazard of adding to God's word, and also the hazard of scaring you from coming to Christ, saying, I fear I want this and that qualification. God hath set down the word universally, without qualifying what kind of a thirst it is, that so the call may be widely extended to all that thirst under heaven : therefore says Christ again ; John vii. 37, " If any man thirst, let

him come to me and drink." *If any man*, that is, any man or woman under heaven; for God created man male and female: if any man, any person of Adam's race, needs a drink of these waters of life, let him come. But some are thirsting after the world, after their vile lusts; are not these excluded? No, no: the Spirit of God comments upon this thirst, and invites even these by name, as persons that stand much in need of Christ; Isa. lv. 1, 2, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, &c. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" That is, All ye that are seeking and thirsting after satisfaction in the muddy waters of the world, and in the filthy water of your lusts, come to me, and you will get better water for nothing, even the pure river of the water of life; and so it is all thirsters under heaven that hear this gospel, even all that need a drink of this water. And why doth Christ, think you, offer himself to you all, and every one of you? Not only because you all need him, but because his Father gives him to you, as he says; John vi. 32, "My Father gives you the true bread from heaven:" Even so, which is the same thing, his Father gives you the true water of life, everlasting life is given in the word: "This is his record, that God hath given you eternal life, and this life is in his Son." You have a right to it, and a right to take what God gives. Say not, If he be given to me, there needs no more, I am happy: Why, man, you might die of thirst, though one gave you a cup of water, if you would not take and drink what is given you; so you may die and perish for ever, though Christ, and the water of everlasting life be given you, in this word, if you do not take and welcome the gift of God to your heart; and you perish fearfully if you reject and neglect what was thus given you. If you ask, What is the least qualification required, in order to come to the throne of God and of the Lamb for this river of the water of life? Indeed, I cannot tell you what is the least: for, let us seek from you never so little a qualification, Christ will seek less; let us go never so low, Christ will go lower. He that came down as low as hell to make the purchase, will come down as low as hell to make the application. Therefore, sinner, though you be in a deep hell of sin and misery, out of the belly of hell look to him and be saved. If you need Christ, and think he can do you any good, it is qualification enough. For God's sake, shut not the door of hope against yourself, when God is opening it to you. Though your thirst be no other than like that of the dry

ground, that needs a shower, O come to him that says ; Isaiah xlv. 3, "I will pour water upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." God is at pains to find out words to fit your condition, and to shut all back doors, that your unbelief may have no excuse, and that none here may have it to say, The offer was not made to me.

If these considerations and arguments were duly pondered, they might have weight : but, alas ; no argument will do but an argument of power ; no motive will do, if God be not the mover. You remain dead carcasses, dead souls, notwithstanding all the words that can be said concerning these living waters that issue from the throne of God and of the Lamb. But, O ! since it is life eternal to know God and the Lamb, I must tell you, that this moment, that spiritual life, which is and will be eternal, will begin to stir in your heart and soul, be it never so dead ; if this moment you begin to know, that this God that sits upon the throne with the Lamb, is the living God ; and that this Lamb that sits upon the throne of God, is the Lamb that was dead and is alive, and lives for evermore ; and that this river, that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, is the river of the water of life, the living Spirit of God and of the Lamb : "They that know his name, will put their trust in him." If you know the name of this living God, though you were never so dead, the life of faith, and hope, and trust in him, will begin. And there are two parts of his name, that, I think, I am commissioned to declare among a company of dead souls here, which you shall no sooner savingly know, but you shall instantly live.

One part of his name is, Exod. iii. 4, "I AM THAT I AM." And, I think, he, whose name is, I AM, hath sent me to tell you, that this is his name ; the God of beings, who hath life and being in himself : He is being itself, and none can say, I AM, but himself. All the creatures in heaven and earth are nothing before him : He brought them out of nothing, and they are reducible to nothing if he pleases.

Another part of his name is ; Rom. iv. 17, "The God that quickens the dead, and calls the things that are not as though they were." Now, O dead and lifeless soul ! if you have but ears to hear this gospel, do you know that this is the name of God ? I ask not, if you think and fancy so ; but do you know and believe that he is the God that quickens the dead, and quickens whom he will, and

is able to quicken you? Do you know and believe that he is the God that calls things that are not, as though they were: who with his bare word can give a being to that which is nothing, and create light and life, where there was nothing but darkness and death, saying, "Let there be light:" let there be life! Now, if you know your own name to be darkness and death; and if you know this name of the Lord to be the Lord of light and life; the God that quickens the dead; then I know there will be some stirring among the dead and dry bones and hearts here: "Ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live," Ezek. xxxviii. 13, 14.

There is no room then for any to object, Why is the minister calling us all to come to Christ, and take of this water of life? How can one come to Christ for life, that hath no life enabling him to come? Indeed, I could not well answer that, if it were only the word of the minister that was calling: but he calls you who hath the words of eternal life, and whose word creates life, whose word recovers life, whose word maintains life, whose word perfects life, quickening whom he will to everlasting life, and whose words are Spirit and life; insomuch, that one drop of this river of the water of life, mixed with this word, will make it a life-giving word: Therefore, in his great name, who says, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;" in his name and authority, we say, O dead and dry bones, rise and live; for, the God that quickens the dead calls you. O lame and diseased souls, that cannot stir, rise and come, for the Lord of life calls you. O dead sinner, dead Lazarus, that hath been so long rotting in the grave of sin and sloth, come forth, come forth; for he that is the resurrection and the life calls you. However long or short time you have been dead in sins and trespasses, and stinking in that filthy sepulchre, yet if there be any stream of the water of life running from the throne this moment, any motion of the living Spirit about your heart, then a quickening voice from the throne of God and of the Lamb is calling you. Words without power will not do with you; the words of men and angels cannot give you the least degree of life, nor quicken that dead heart of yours; but, "Where the word of a king is, there is power." Rise then, dying, drooping soul, the Master calls you. The King of glory, that sits upon the Father's throne, is speaking to you, and saying, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away:" however foul and filthy,

black and ugly in thyself. Lo ! "The winter is past, and the rain is over and gone ;" the storm of divine wrath, that should have fallen on thee for ever, is over thy head, and hath fallen on my head, when I sweat in the garden, and hung upon the cross : and now I have mounted my Father's throne, to draw thee up to me, and to send down my Spirit as the river of life, to run into thy heart, and quicken thee to hear my voice, and answer my call. Come then, though you see yourself black like hell, and like a devil ; "Rise my love, my fair one, and come away. Come with me from Lebanon ; from the lions dens and mountains of leopards." Come away from this vain world, this vile world, this venomous and viperous world ; come and share of my grace in time, and my glory for ever after time." Blessed are they that hear his voice, and open to him. If the river of life that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb be running through any heart here, the work is done, life is begun, and open doors are made for the King of glory : if it be otherwise, I have no more to say, but, Glory to God and the Lamb, that "As many as were ordained to eternal life, shall believe," and live for ever

S E R M O N X L V I.

THE COMER'S CONFLICT: OR, THE BEGINNER'S BATTLE WITH THE DEVIL, WHEN ESSAYING TO COME TO CHRIST BY FAITH.¹

LUKE ix. 42.—"And as he was yet a-coming, the Devil threw him down, and tare him."

HERE is the history of Christ's healing a lunatic child, whose father came to the disciples, and they could not cure him ; and now he cometh to Christ. As we ought to come to Christ ourselves for

¹ This subject was handled in two Discourses : The first was delivered at an evening exercise, on Saturday, July 19, 1735, before the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, at Kinglassie, on the 20th. The second was preached on the Monday, after the administration of that ordinance.

healing, so we ought to bring our children to him ; and when servants and other means can do us no good, we ought to go to the master, and look over the head of all ministers and servants. After Christ had reproached the disciples for their unbelief, he gives the poor man an encouraging word concerning his son ; "Bring thy son hither," ver. 41. Bring him to me. We ought to bring our sons and our daughters to Christ ; to bring our diseases and all our various cases to Christ. But after this encouragement, follows a trial in the text : "As he was yet a-coming, the Devil threw him down and tare him."

In which words we have three things observable, namely,

1. An excellent duty : that is, coming to Christ.

2. An eminent trial and heavy dispensation that befel the comer ;

"The Devil threw him down and tare him."

3. The time and juncture when this heavy trial and great affliction befel him, namely, "As he was yet a-coming."

Hence we may observe the three following particulars,

(1.) The best course that any man can take for relief from whatever afflicts them, is to come to Jesus the Saviour.

(2.) They who come to Christ for help, will be an eye-sore to hell and the devil ; he will be sure to fly upon them.

(3.) They who come to Christ for help and healing, though they may be sure he will help and heal them, yet they may find their case worse, before the relief come ; they may be thrown down, and torn, as it were, to pieces by the way. Or thus, Christ may undertake to deliver people, and yet their distress may grow upon their hand before their deliverance come. Here is Christ's undertaking, "Bring him hither to me." Here is the person coming with hope of deliverance, he is on his way coming to Jesus ; and yet, behold, here is a dreadful dash, a mighty trial to faith and hope, both in the father and son : yea, after he was come to the physician, and the healing word spoken, as you see ; Mark ix. 25, 26, where this same history is recorded, with other circumstances, "The spirit cried, and rent him sore, before he came out of him, and so he was as one dead, insomuch, that many said, He is dead."

Well then, the doctrinal observation, we would ineline briefly to prosecute from these words, may be framed as follows :—

DOCT. That people, who come to Christ, and whom he undertakes to heal and help, may have their distress growing on

their hand, before the deliverance come, which yet will certainly come.

It is in this case, as it was with Israel in Egypt "God saw their affliction," and undertook to come, and save them; and yet, behold, before their deliverance comes their bondage becomes heavier than before. The darkest time of the night may be before day-break. Thus it was with Israel, in returning from Babylon, to rebuild the temple in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. The king gives commandment to go and build; God stirs up the civil authority to give encouragement to them; but quickly the haters of Zion, misrepresenting the work, procure an order to cause them desist from it. This doctrine then is verified both with relation to God's public work towards a church, and his particular work on the souls of his people, as you see it was with the ruler of the synagogue, Mark v. 23, that applied to Christ in behalf of his daughter at the point of death, that he might come and heal her. Christ went with with him; but see what sad news he gets from his house, "Trouble not the Master, for your daughter is dead," ver. 35. And now they looked upon the matter as hopeless, though yet Christ was on his way to save her.

The method we would lay down, for the farther prosecuting this subject, through supernatural aid, shall be the following:—

- I. We will speak a little of coming to Christ.
- II. Enquire in what respect matters may grow worse with people, even when they are thus coming to Christ.
- III. Enquire into the reasons whence it is that people who come to Christ for help, and whom he undertakes to help, may find their distress grow before their deliverance come.
- IV. Make some Application of the whole.

I. We are to speak a little of coming to Christ. There are only two things I would observe here.

1. Coming to Christ imports a view that vain is the help of man; vain is the help of the creatures; vain is the help of ministers, means, and ordinances of themselves. Thus it was here with the father of the child; "I besought thy disciples to cast him out, but they could not," ver. 40. So they who come to Christ, find all

other refuges fail them, Psal. cxliii. 4 ; other physicians were of no value. None come to Christ till they can do no better ; yet he is content with such comers, that see there is no other shift for them.

2. This coming to Christ imports a putting the work in his hand ; " Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son : " he prays, and he brings him to Christ, at the Lord's call. They that truly come to Christ for help, put the work in his hand, and give him employment in his saving offices, looking on him as able, and willing, and ready to save : the disease is half cured when it is laid at Christ's feet. Happy they that come thus to him, and intrust him with their souls, and trust him with their cases : " Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass," Psalm xxxvii. 5.

II. The second head proposed was, To enquire in what respects may matters grow worse with people, even when they are thus coming to Christ. Here two things are recorded ; 1. Satan's assault, " The devil threw him down." 2. How he used him, " And he tare him."

1. They who come to Christ, before they get the deliverance which is insured to them, they may meet with down-casting providences ; " The devil threw him down." They may be cast down with discouragement and despondency for a while ; cast down with fears and doubts ; cast down with jealous apprehensions and unbelieving thoughts. Believing souls, after their coming to Christ, much more as they are coming at first, may be greatly cast down ; " O my God, my soul is cast down within me," Psalm xlii. 6. They may be cast down with a multitude of perplexing thoughts, despairing thoughts, and manifold objections and scruples, their mind raises, or rather unbelief frames within them.

2. They may not only be thrown down, but torn by the way : " The devil threw him down, and TARE him." Whenever a man begins to come to Christ, and the devil begins to fear he shall lose his possession, then he rages against that man, and would tear him to pieces. Therefore think not strange, that beginners in religion, and such as are coming, or but lately come to Christ, or even these who have come formerly, and are coming again to him, may be mightily assaulted and attacked by all the powers of hell. So long as people remain at a distance from Christ, the devil does not meddle with them ; " He keeps the house, and the goods are at peace ; " but in

coming to Christ they may lay their account to be torn by torments, torn by terrors, and blasphemous suggestions : they may lay their account with fiery darts. When we expect the Lord is about to remove one burden, he may lay on another, that he may have the more mercy on us.

III. The next thing proposed was, to enquire into the reasons whence it is that people, who coming to Christ for help, and whom he undertakes to help, may find their distress grow before their deliverance come. Whatever malicious hand the devil hath in this matter, God hath a holy hand in permitting it.

1. God's design in it, is to show his wisdom and power.

(1.) It is to manifest his wisdom : how he can advance his work, by the stops in the way of it ; and enrich his people, by impoverishing them ; enlarge them, by imprisoning them ; and give them meat out of the eater, and sweat out of the strong.

(2.) It is to evince his power : how he can support them under, and deliver them from their distresses, which would not appear so much, if their distress came not to a height. He suffers them to be dejected and torn, that his wisdom and power may appear the more evidently, in lifting them up and healing them.

2. It is to check the unbelief that attends our faith in coming to Christ. Sometimes when we commit our case to him by faith, we do not exercise this faith to a patient waiting for the Lord. Christ's first word to his people is, *Come to me*, Matth. xi. 28 ; and his last word is, *Abide in me*, John xv. 4. It is well done to come, but, alas ! we do not abide ; and therefore, to check our unbelief in coming, as it were, but one step, and going back the next step, he shows the need of going forward, by letting loose the enemy, and suffering matters to grow worse with us.

3. It is to raise the worth and esteem of his mercies in the hearts of these who come to him. We usually do not know the worth of mercy, till we be deprived of it ; nor the worth of deliverance, till the distress be extremely great : help is then highly esteemed, when we can say, " I was brought low, and he helped me."

4. It is to try our faith, whether or not it be such as will not only come to Christ, but also abide with him till he work the deliverance ; and if we can keep our eye upon the deliverer, when the deliverance is delayed ; our eye upon the promise, when cross providences appear ; and can hope against hope. He designs the

trial of faith for the present, and a more glorious issue thereafter.

IV. The last general head proposed was, To make some Application. Is it so, That people who come to Christ, and whom he undertakes to heal and help, may have their distress growing on their hand, before the deliverance come, which yet will certainly come? Hence we may see.

1. What a cruel enemy the devil is to immortal souls, and their eternal salvation: for, whenever the soul begins to mind religion in earnest, and to come to Christ for help and deliverance, then that soul becomes the object of the devil's spite and malice. As long as people remain graceless, and Christless, and formal, the devil will let them enjoy themselves, and hugs them asleep in their security; but as soon as they begin to come to Christ, then he will attempt to cast them down and tear them, and stirs up all his wicked instruments, either to discourage and ridicule them, or to tear their name and reputation to pieces, and to persecute them with tongue or hand, or to raise a hue and cry against them, as if they were turned distracted, and out of their wits. As they are coming, the devil throws them down and tears them.

2. Hence see the reason of all the melancholy moods, heavy damps, and great discouragements of many beginners, that are setting on in the Lord's way; though Wisdom's ways be ways of pleasantness, yet Satan, who is a liar from the beginning, would make the world believe that it is a bitter and unpleasant way; and that the beginning of religion is but the beginning of sorrows.

3. Hence see the difference between the conviction of the Spirit and the temptation of Satan; and the difference between the distress of soul, that arises from a law-work before conversion, and that which arises from the assault of the enemy of our salvation; whenever conviction begins, and the soul comes to be troubled for sin, and under fear of hell and wrath, Satan indeed fishes in the muddy water, and mixes his temptations with the Spirit's convictions; and if he can bring all convictions to nothing, either by force or fraud, he will do it, that the convinced soul may never come to Christ for a cure; Satan will stand at his right hand to resist him. But the difference between them is,

(1.) The convictions of the Spirit are before a man come to Christ, and tend as a severe school-master, to lead him to Christ, Gal. iii. 24. But the temptations of the devil are especially when a

man is coming to Christ, in order to keep him from coming. If the Spirit of God, by a law-work, seem, as it were, to cast down the man, and tear him to pieces, the design is to oblige him to go to Christ for help and healing ; and to provoke him to come to the Saviour, and fly to the city of refuge. But the design of the devil's temptations, when he throws down and tears the soul is, when he is coming, or as he is coming to Christ, in order to detain him from coming, or discourage him in coming.

(2.) The convictions of the Spirit are humbling, tending to make the soul despair of help in himself, or in God out of Christ. The temptations of the enemy are terrifying, tending to make the soul despair of help in Christ, or in God through him : the former shuts the door of hope by the law ; but the devil would shut the door of hope by the gospel.

4. Hence see there is no ground to blame religion and religious duties, notwithstanding discouragement and down-casting trials in the way of duty : though matters grow worse with you in the way of duty, and in the way of coming to Christ, blame not yourself for coming to Christ, because the devil attacks you by the way. You have enough to charge yourself with, though you charge not yourself foolishly. It would be far worse with you, if the devil and your own wicked heart prevail to take you off from the use of promising means. When, like Peter, you cast yourself upon the water to come to Christ, be not terrified, though the devil raise a storm ; the Lord Jesus sits upon the floods, and is mightier than the noise of many waters, Psalm xciii. 4. Never think the worse of Christ, though matters seem to grow worse with you, when you come to him for rest, and yet find trouble : for it is the devil and the ill heart that breeds all the trouble : keep honourable thoughts of the Lord Jesus ; believe he can do for you, and wait till you find that he will do. Bring wind from all cross providences to hasten you nearer to your resting place ; for all that come to him shall find rest in spite of the devil ; some begun rest here in time, however disturbed by the devil from time to time, and unbelief, until rest be perfected in heaven.

5. Hence see an evidence of a true believer and comer to Christ ; if the devil be no enemy to your faith, you may know it is a false faith. Many have a faith that the devil is well enough pleased with ; and therefore he never troubles them nor it ; but if you have saving faith, it will be the eye-sore of hell ; or if you be truly com-

ing to Christ, you may expect the devil to be upon your top. No sooner doth true faith begin, but the fight of faith begins. Some may bless themselves they were never assaulted by the devil, and yet they are but sleeping as it were, in the devil's cradle; he is rocking them. Try your faith; if it be from heaven, it will meet with opposition from hell; "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," Eph. vi. 12. Therefore we are called, as part of the Christian armour, to take the shield of faith, whereby we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, ver. 16. The devil may let you peaceably go about duty; read, and pray, and communicate, because you may do these things carnally and formally, and go to hell when all is done; but if once you begin to come to Christ, or to go about any duty believingly, then you are on the way to heaven, and if the devil can, he will draw you back, and throw you down with discouragements, and tear you with temptations, either as you are coming, or after you are come. But it is always the best faith that is most opposed by the devil.

This doctrine may be applied by way of address, 1. To these who never yet came to Christ for help and salvation. 2. To these who are coming in obedience to his call.

1. To you who never yet came to Christ for help and salvation. Oh! stay not away from him for fear of the devil, lest he throw you down and tear you. Better be thrown down by the way in coming to Christ, than thrown down to hell, with the devil at last, by the hand of God, who will throw you and the devil down to hell, if you do not come to Christ. Better that the devil tear you to pieces, when there is a Deliverer, even Jesus, at hand to deliver you from him, than that God himself tear you to pieces, when there shall be none to deliver: "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver—Psalm l. 22. Come, otherwise you remain slaves to the devil and your lusts. O be sensible of your slavery and malady! Know none can save you but our Lord Jesus Christ; he is a mighty Saviour, and a merciful one: "No name is given under heaven, whereby a sinner can be saved, but the name of Jesus." Put the work in his hand; put your soul in his hand. "Bring him here to me," says Christ, to the man here. O come, and bring your children with you; hear him saying, Bring your son to me, bring your daughter to me, bring

your soul and your case to me ; O bring your disease to me, bring your hard heart to me, and I will soften it ; bring your filthy heart to me, and I will cleanse it ; bring your heart possessed of the devil to me, and I will cast out the devil ; bring your seven devils to me, and I will cast them out.

2. We address ourselves to you who are coming in answer to his call. O be not dismayed, though the devil throw you down and tear you as you are coming. Here is a Saviour ready to lift up, whom the devil throws down : ready to heal, whom the devil tears ; ready to help all that are hurt by the old serpent. It is his trade to destroy the works of the devil. You may be always sure that it is an evil spirit that is dealing with you, that would mar and hinder you in your coming to Christ ; for the voice of the Spirit of God is, "Come ; The Spirit and the bride say, Come." The Spirit of God, as a Spirit of bondage, may cast down the soul before it come to Christ, and in order to its coming ; but it is not the Spirit of God that casts down the coming believer ; no, "We have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear"—Rom. viii. 15. After coming to Christ, and believing in him, it is only the devil that casts down and tears you. Fear not the lion of hell : here is the Lion of the tribe of Judah to defend you ; it is unbelief and departing from Christ, that may bring you to the greatest danger ; therefore, "Fear not, only believe."¹

S E R M O N X L V I I.

LUKE ix. 42.—"And as he was yet a-coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him."

[The Second Sermon on this Text.]

THIS doctrine may be applied at the time, in an exhortation or advice, particularly to these that are tempted and torn of the devil,

¹ This ends what was delivered on the Saturday evening. In the first edition of this discourse, we are acquainted that the author enlarged the application, in some other inferences, upon the Sabbath-day ; but the notes of that discourse were not written. What follows, we are told, was delivered upon the Monday after the Sacrament.

when they essay to come to the Lord Jesus. In order to your being fortified, through grace, against his assaults and fiery darts, there are only six sorts of temptations, I would, at present, endeavour to fortify you against. 1. With reference to heart blasphemy. 2. With reference to heart-wandering. 3. With reference to the commission of sin. 4. With reference to the omission of duty. 5. With reference to unworthy apprehensions of God. 6. With reference to self-murder. There are temptations with reference to all these that you need to be fortified against; while you are coming to Christ, Satan may attempt to throw you down, and tear you in all these, and many other respects; but I shall touch a little at each of these.

1st, There are temptations of Satan with reference to blasphemy, whereby he would throw down and tear in pieces as it were, the souls of these that come to Jesus Christ. They may be tempted to dreadful blasphemous thoughts, which are not to be named, they are so detestable and abominable; they are fearful injections upon the mind, and very terrifying to a weak believer, that is coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to your being fortified against these, I would offer you the following advices:—

1. Be not terrified with them, since they harm you more by their horror, than by their guilt. It is true, the guilt of them is so great that it is unpardonable to whom it belongs. These are Satan's sins, and not thine; and he shall answer for them, and not thou. Though he lay these blasphemous thoughts at your door, he is the father of them. Such thoughts are like lightnings cast into a room, they have a great deal of horror; but as the lightning springs not from any cause in the room, so these thoughts proceed not from any thing in thee; not properly from thy corruptions, for unregenerate men themselves abhor them: and though the seed of all sin be in our nature, yet scarce, if ever, doth this sin spring up even in reprobates; nay, the devil himself doth not think of God, that which these thoughts signify. Since thou dost not actually, nor did originally, in Adam, give consent to these thoughts, they are not thy sins. Suppose some villain should meet a chaste virgin in a field and ravish her, if she struggles and cries, she is innocent by the law of God; this is her affliction, not her sin. She may mourn for her suffering, not her guilt; especially she doing nothing to provoke him. It may be the villain finds her at a prayer, as the devil doth find thee, when he injects these thoughts. Therefore, be of

good comfort, thou art more afraid than hurt ; for a careless, wandering thought in prayer, hath more guilt in it than these have. If one attempt suddenly to strike our eye, though we know he doth not intend to strike it, yet it cannot but wink ; so we can scarce but be terrified with these thoughts ; but we must resist and conquer such fears. I say not, we should not abhor such thoughts, for then we should be worse than heathens : but we should not be terrified out of our faith, our duties, or comforts thereby.

2. Do not give over your duties for these blasphemous thoughts and injections ; for, though these thoughts are not thy sin, yet they may be the cause of thy sinning, if they cause thee to abstain from prayer, reading the word, attending upon the ordinances, and the like duties. You may, perhaps, think it better not to pray than to have these thoughts ; but thy prayers may do thee more good than these can do thee harm ; and how wilt thou conquer, if thou cast away thy weapons ? Neither hasten from duty ; for thus you do the devil too much homage ; his temptations should make you pray the more, not seldomer, or shorter.

3. Think not over these thoughts again, even when thou goest to God to complain of Satan and his dreadful assaults ; for, if thou yield not unto the tempter, these blasphemies are not the matter of confession, but rather of complaint ; as a woman that is ravished doth not confess, but lament her affliction. Neither speak them over when you go to a minister or Christian friend for advice or comfort ; but only mention in general, that horrid thoughts and blasphemies trouble you ; they will understand what you mean ; but perhaps they had as good Satan should inject such thoughts as to hear you name them.

4. Pray much against these blasphemies, and thus study to be gainers by them, and to be avenged upon Satan, which you may, if you do as they did (Acts xix.) when they heard that some would speak against their goddess Diana, they cried out for the space of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians, ver. 28, 34 ; so that whosoever should go about to speak against Diana, could not be heard. Do thou likewise : when Satan throws in blasphemous thoughts, break thou forth into blessing and praising of God ; and if thou canst not do so, try to read or sing some psalm full of praises, as Psalm ciii. cv. cxvi. cxlv. &c. ; and if thou art private enough, read or sing them with a loud voice, and when Satan shall see that thou art the gainer by his temptations, he will be weary of

tempting thee. These blasphemies are Satan's railings and revilings against the God of heaven ; therefore you are to do with them as Hezekiah did with Rabshakeh's railing letter—Isa. xxxvi. 21—he went and spread the blasphemy before the Lord. He did not so much as read over the letter, but spread it before the Lord ; so, without naming over that blasphemy, you should pray against it, that God would suppress this smoke that ascends out of the bottomless pit.

You may lawfully dispute and argue with Satan against some of his blasphemies ; as when he tempts you to question the being of a God, and the truth of divine revelation, as the archangel disputed with the devil about the body of Moses ; so when you are tempted, for example, to doubt if the Scripture be the word of God, you may consider the plain arguments that prove it, and ask Satan, Why dost thou fly before it ? If the ark were not the ark of God, why doth Dagon fall before it ? If it were not the word of God, why doth Satan tempt me not to believe it ? But do not depend upon thy arguing ; Satan is too strong for reasoning ; betake thyself to the Lord Jesus by prayer. Though Satan may stand out against thy arguments, he will not be able to stand against the prayer of faith. The archangel said, "The Lord rebuke thee." Though he will not fly at thy rebuke, yet he will and must at the rebuke of God. And by the way, see the excellency of Christ above the archangel : Christ rebukes Satan by his own power and authority ; for he said not, "The Lord rebuke thee ;" but, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

2dly, There are temptations of Satan with reference to heart-wanderings in duty. Satan knows, that if he can get these flies to come and rest in this precious ointment, they will putrify it. He knows, if the thoughts wander, God regards not what the tongue says ; and if he can spoil your prayers, he fears not any ordinance what good it can do thee. If your thoughts be earthly, he cares not how heavenly your words are. Herein Satan gets assistance from the evil heart : "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," Matt. xv. 19. They arise out of the heart as sparks out of a furnace ; they stay not in the heart, but are active, and ascend up to the head ; and they come out of the heart, not as sparks out of a flint, by concussion and violence, forced out ; but they proceed out of it, says Christ ; they come out of themselves, and they proceed always in a continued act. Satan's temptations to heart-wandering in duty,

are also furthered by a multitude of business, and that two ways.

(1.) If we come from a multitude of business ; for our hearts are like the troubled sea, it must have some considerable time before it be composed, though the winds that raised the storms cease ; so when we come from business, there must be some time after our business is ended before our hearts can be sedate and quiet, and fit for prayer ; nay, in this our hearts are worse than the sea, because,

(2.) Future business will distract us before it come. The sea is not tumultuous before the wind blow, but the business we have to do, will trouble us before it comes to be done. It is a hard thing to keep business out of our thoughts when we pray, and make it stay till our prayer be ended.

Now, to fortify against these, I offer the following four advices shortly :—

1. O study to mortify the love of the world : where our love is, there will our thoughts be. To set your love on the world, and your thoughts on God, you will find altogether impossible : “ He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” O seek to mortify this.

2. Lay up your treasure in heaven : “ For, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,” Matt. vi. 21. The heart of the Jews went after their covetousness, Ezek. xxxiii. 31 ; when they were hearing the word, they could not keep their hearts where their bodies were, but they would be where their love was, and where their treasure was.

3. Let not the world be your familiar friend, for familiar friends come in without knocking or asking leave ; therefore be thou a stranger in this present world, Heb. xi. 13. They were not strangers in this or that part of the earth, but in the whole earth ; be a stranger to the world, and the world will not visit you in prayer.

4. Make prayer your delight, not your task. Children are subject to look off their books, because they delight not in them ; but when they are playing, they are eager and earnest. The bird flutters in the cage, but sits quietly on the tree, and sings there. “ I will go to God, says David, to God my exceeding joy,” Psalm xliii. 4. When our thoughts find satisfaction, they set up their habitation and wander not.

3dly, There are temptations of Satan with reference to omission

of duty : as for example, he represents to them the difficulty that there is therein. O I cannot pray nor hear aright, I cannot meditate nor mortify aright ; therefore I may let it alone. Now, in order to fortify against these temptations, consider,

1. That this is necessary : you must be exercised unto godliness ; exercised in keeping a conscience void of offence toward God and man ; and “ Be stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord,” 1 Cor. xv. 58. As for the wicked, who are otherwise disposed, having no heart nor will to the Lord's service at all, what can they expect at his hand, but this : “ Take these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me. Yea, he will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel.” It is therefore absolutely necessary.

2. Consider, that it is possible to serve the Lord acceptably by his grace. Though duty be difficult to nature, yet, if you get the Spirit of God to help you, you will do well enough ; and God hath promised his help. Isa. xl. 29-31—“ He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength,” &c. “ They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.” Hence all the saints of old, and of late too, have tried the Lord's way, and found that the way of the Lord was strength to them ; yea, that wisdom's ways are pleasantness ; their delight was in the law of the Lord ; in keeping of his commands there is a great reward. One smile of God's countenance is worth all your pains, though you were at a hundred times more. There is always something savoury and sweet in religion, that accompanies the sedulous exercise thereof. Though the soul hath nothing to claim on the account of its own works or duties, yet the Lord is graciously pleased to own and countenance his own way, when the soul is found in it, beside the glorious and gracious reward that abides it in heaven.

Therefore, let faith batter down this temptation of Satan, say, What though Satan present difficulties in the way, Christ underwent greater difficulties : He hath borne the burden and the heat of the day. I am not called to go and satisfy justice ; Christ hath done that to my hand ; I am not called to go and fulfil the law as a covenant of works ; Christ hath done that to my hand ; I am not called to work for life, but to work for love to him that worketh all my works in me, and for me ; and who, as he calleth me to this

work of love, so promiseth to work in me both to will and to do ; and therefore, in his name and strength, I will go forward, making mention of his righteousness, and his only ; and, in his name, I will encounter and grapple with the devil himself, for Christ hath conquered him to my hand.

4thly, There are temptations of Satan with reference to the commission of sin : he will suggest to them that it is but a little sin, and God will not be angry for a little sin ; such as a lie in a droll, an idle word, &c. Can such a little sin endanger the soul ? Now, to guard you against this temptation, consider,

1. That the first sin which brought all mankind into a miserable state, was, in appearance, but a small and little sin : it was but eating a little forbidden fruit, the tasting of an apple ; yet, had it not been for Christ's satisfaction, it would have destroyed irrecoverably all the posterity of Adam. There was a man, sirs, that gathered a few sticks upon the Sabbath-day ; you would have thought that was but a little sin, yet God's thoughts are not your thoughts, for God thought that sin worthy of death, Num. xv. 32, 33. Uzziah's putting his hand to the ark, and touching it when it tottered, seemed to be but a small sin, and yet you know he was smitten instantly with death for it, 2 Sam. vi. 7. It is dangerous to give even a little wrong touch to a tottering ark.

2. Consider the nature of every sin : though some are comparatively small, and others greater ; that is, by reason of several aggravations, more heinous in the sight of God than others ; yet, in themselves, none are small. The least sin is against an infinite God, and infinite authority ; and so, objectively considered, an infinite evil ; and therefore cannot be expiated without infinite satisfaction ; and it is not little promises, or little threatenings, that your little sins do slight ; yea, there is no little ingratitude towards God in little sins ; there is great unkindness to God in little sins. To displease God, your best friend, for a little sin, O ungrateful thing ! " Is this your kindness to your friend ? The wages of every sin is death eternal." It is not little misery that every sin doth expose you to. Will you make light of the wrath of the infinite God ? Then do not make light of little sins. In a word, remember that boldness in little sins, will be an encouragement to greater. Sin is of an encroaching and bewitching nature ; a little theft may open the way to a greater. The devil tempts people to go from one degree to another ; he tempts them to the reverse of the blessed man

mentioned, Psalm i. 1. He tempts them to walk in the council of the ungodly ; having taken a walk with them, he tempts them next to stand in the way of sinners, which is more ; and then having stood a while with them, he tempts them last of all to sit in the seat of the scornful, even to the height of wickedness. The devil first makes you sit down with the drunkard, then to drink with him, and at last to be drunk. Thus he leads people from unclean thoughts to unclean looks, words, and actions : therefore, let faith resist this temptation, and set you upon your watch against that which you call a little sin. No man, that ever saw sin, can truly call any sin little or small, nor can it ever be, till there be a little law to break, a little God to offend, a little guilt to contract, a little wrath to incur ; all which are impossible to be, blasphemy to wish, and madness to expect.

5thly, There are temptations of Satan with reference to unworthy apprehensions of God. Satan may suggest very strange thoughts of God, very base thoughts of God, most unsuitable apprehensions of him, such as are not to be spoken of ; and the prince of this world hath much in us, who are so ignorant of God, to further these misshapen thoughts of God. And to fortify you against these assaults, there are these two directions I would offer concerning the way how we are to conceive of God.

(1.) We are to conceive of him as inconceivable : for the thoughts we are to have of him are overwhelming thoughts. As long as we are merely active, and are able to master our thoughts of God, they are utterly unworthy of him. Whatsoever we know, comprehensively, I mean, except we see it to be infinitely beyond us, that is not God, nor to be adored. I have read a dialogue between a Christian and a Gentile : the Gentile seeing the Christian very fervent in prayer, and seeing no image before him, asked him, " Whom he worshipped : " he answered, " I know not. " " Why then do you worship him ? " " I therefore worship him, says he, because I cannot know him. " " It seems strange, said the Gentile, to see one so seriously worship that he knoweth not. " " More strange it is for one, said the Christian, to worship that which we can comprehend. " If we are not lost in our thoughts of God, our thoughts of God are lost. When we throw a stone into a pond, it makes circles larger and larger, and quickly they come to the shore : but if one should throw a millstone into the midst of the calm ocean, though it would make larger and larger circles, yet it would not reach the

shore, because the strength would be spent long before it come the length : So, when we think on the creature, we easily enlarge our thoughts so as to see an end of their perfection, and to be more than comprehensive of their excellency ; but when we think of God, we can never know him to perfection, Psalm cxix. 96. Here our knowledge must end in admiration, and our love in extacy. Nay, we must conceive of God as above all words, above all knowledge, and above all admiration ; above all love, and above all extacy. But let us go to scripture, God knows best how to speak of himself, and we may safely acquiesce in scripture expressions, Neh. ix. 5. " Thy name is exalted above all praise, above the praise of men and angels." This is a very high expression ; but doth this reach him ? Nay, if it did, God should not be exalted above all praise, since this would reach him.

(2.) We are to conceive of God in Christ ; Christ must be eyed in our addresses and acts of worship. All the former considerations set us but a greater distance from God, and make us afraid of God, and fly from him if we go no further ; and, indeed, human reason can go no further. The utmost it can do, is but to think of mercy without a promise, which is a very arbitrary thing ; and we see that God hath not shown mercy to fallen angels ; for never was any devil converted ; therefore we must necessarily have thoughts of Christ : We are to honour the Son as we honour the Father ; and to honour him,

1. As a King. God hath exalted Christ far above all heavens ; and hath commanded us to do all in his name ; " And whatsoever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," Col. iii. 17. He orders that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, John v. 23. I shall relate a history to this purpose ; it is this, Theodosius the emperor having made an edict for the giving liberty for the Arians to preach ; Amphilocheius took this course for prevailing with the emperor to recal that edict. Theodosius having made Arcadius co-emperor and Cæsar with him, several bishops came to salute the emperor, to congratulate Arcadius, and to signify their consent to Theodosius his act, and by their respect and honour done to Arcadius, to show that they took him for the successor of Theodosius in the empire ; among others came this Amphilocheius, bishop of Iconium, who, after he had done obeysance very submissively to Theodosius, was going away without showing any respect to Arcadius, though he sat by Theodosius in all his

royal robes ; Theodosius therefore called to Amphilochius, saying, " Know you not that I have made Arcadius, my son, emperor with me ? " Upon which Amphilochius went to Arcadius, and striking him on the head, said, " He was a very hopeful boy." Theodosius being very angry at this indignity done his son, commanded him to prison. Amphilochius, after he had gone a little way, turned back, saying, " O Theodosius, you are angry that I give not your son the same honour I give you, since you have made him equal in majesty to yourself ; and think you God will be well-pleased that you suffer the Arians to abuse Christ, whom he hath set at his right-hand in glory, and will have all men to honour the Son, as they honour the Father." Upon which the edict was reversed. I may say, Can you think that God will accept your worship to him, be it never so great, if you take no notice of Christ ? be sure, God will reject you and your services. But then again,

2. As God will have Christ to have the glory of his kingly office, so also of his priestly. Thus suppose some great monarch, his son consenting, should lay upon his son the punishment due to some rebellious subjects, intending the son's honour as well as their pardon ; the king sends forth a proclamation to them, to let them know that his son had satisfied justice, and procured a pardon : but many of them not trusting to this, would not come in, but would send the king gifts and presents to gain his favour : the emperor scorns their gifts upon that account ; especially they thus robbing his son of the honour of making their peace, and thereby also plainly showing, that they thought their crime was not so great, but a small matter would make it up, such as their gifts. Surely, if gifts would have done the business, his son had greater gifts than theirs ; so that he needed not have died or suffered. The reditio of this simile may be easily made ; God abhors our prayers, alms, and all our services, if we bring them as satisfactory to his justice, and sprinkle our puddly waters, our tears, upon the mercy-seat, and fill the holy place with the stinking savour, the stinking vapours of our prayers, which are unperfumed with the incense of Christ's righteousness, or that are no better than the reeking steams of a dunghill, the noxious vapours of an hollow cavern, or the smoke of some sulphureous volcano ; I say, to go to the holy place with these, instead of the incense of Christ's merit and intercession, is not to make atonement, but a provocation. This makes popish austerities to be acts of pride, instead of being acts of mortification.

3. God will have him get the honour also of his prophetic office ; for it is by his Spirit that he instructs and teaches us how to pray as well as perform. By his merit we have acceptance, and by his Spirit assistance. If a child should write some excellent tract in the mathematics in Greek, we would infallibly conclude some did learn him, or dictate to him ; so when you pray in the Spirit, and spiritually, for such or such spiritual blessings, who do you think dictates to you ? This is not your mother-tongue ; doubtless it is the Spirit of Christ that helps your infirmities. In a word, Christ, by his active and passive obedience, whereby he hath satisfied justice, hath a wonderful interest with God, more than all the angels of heaven, insomuch, that God delights to pardon the greatest of sinners for Christ's sake ; therefore, in prayer, conceive of God as a great, an infinitely great God, and as a God in Christ. Look on God through Christ, keeping the humbling sense of your own distance and provocation ; looking upon God as through Christ the most compassionate fondest Father in the world ; if he give thee not everything thou thus askest, it proceeds not from his unwillingness to give, but thine unfitness to receive.

6thly, There are temptations with reference to self-murder : Satan many times tempts people, particularly these that are coming to Christ, he throws them down and tears them, urging them to tear themselves to pieces to make away themselves, and cut off the thread of their own life. This is a subject I seldom or never took occasion to speak in this manner upon ; but now, I think it the more necessary that we are living in a time, wherein we are compassed about with awful instances of professors being left under the power, and swallowed up with the violence of this temptation ; yea, such instances thereof, as have perhaps made the hearts of many here present to tremble. And since what hath been, may be, and not knowing but in such a great company as is here, some one or other may be, under such temptation, I would offer these following advices shortly, to fortify you against these assaults :—

1. Consider that self-murder is a sin against the very light of nature, and the very letter of the law of God, Exodus xx. 13, "Thou shalt not kill." And you may be sure, that no thought of this sort that enters into your heart, can be from God ; for it hath the very image of the devil upon it ; "He was a murderer from the beginning."

2. Yield not to the tempter ; for, though this is a temptation

incident to God's people, insomuch that, perhaps there are few of them that have not been thus tempted, as our Lord Jesus Christ himself was, to whom the devil said, "Cast thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple;" yet we read of no saint in scripture that yielded to the tempter. We are therein told of none but wicked wretches that destroyed themselves, such as Saul, Ahitophel, and Judas; and sure you would not desire to be like them.

3. Consider the contrary practice of the saints in scripture, both in their best and worst time. Old Simeon got an armful of Christ, and did he now attempt to cut off his own life, that he might win away to heaven? No; he wishes to be away, but he puts himself in God's will, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Paul is wrapt up to the third heaven, and his desire of death must have been very great; yet he is content to stay till he was dissolved. Again, on the other hand, if pains of body, and terrors of mind, might contribute to strengthen such a temptation, Job did not want his share of both; yet, instead of putting a period to his own days, though indeed he cursed the day of his birth, and wished for the day of his death, yet he says, "All the days of my appointed time, will I wait till my change come," Job xiv. 14.

4. Consider that by such horrid suggestions as these, you are tempted to assume to yourself a prerogative that belongs to God only. It is he that lives for ever and ever that says, "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal," Deut. xxxii. 39. Your life is not your own to dispose of; and as you cannot lengthen your life, so you may not shorten it. Therefore,

5. When you are thus tempted, keep not the devil's counsels, nor be thou his secretary; go to some faithful minister, or experienced Christian, and tell them how you are tempted; for this temptation is partly conquered, when it is revealed.

6. These who think they shall be damned, and go to hell when they die, it is the greatest madness in the world for them to hasten their death. That the fear of hell should make them leap into hell, is so contrary to all common sense, that it is a wonder that any one should so much cease to be a man, not to say a Christian, as to do a thing so contrary to nature, let be to grace. Let me ask you, Can you endure to be among blasphemers? Can you endure to blaspheme God yourself for a year together, or an hour, and to spend it all in cursing and blaspheming? If your soul abhor this, why will you leap into hell, a place of everlasting blasphemy? I read of one,

who having been a long time tempted to make away with herself, at last resolved to do it, for the thoughts of the torments of hell were not prevalent enough to deter her ; but as she was going to destroy herself, it was brought to her mind, that in hell she should blaspheme God for ever ; which she abhorring to do, upon that very account forbore the wicked action. If you were to be only in a state of horror and torment, it were sad enough ; but for to put thyself into a state of blasphemy, how canst thou endure to think of it ?

7. Take heed of fighting against Satan with human reason, for this Leviathan laughs at the shaking of this spear : his scales are too close to be pierced by it : but take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, which divides between the joints and the marrow ; say to Satan, " It is written, Thou shalt not kill."

8. Pray, pray much ; for the sword of the Spirit must be wielded by the skilful arm of the Spirit. If thou goest out in confidence of thy being able to manage scripture by thy own strength and skill, it will fare with thee, as it did with these ; Acts xix. 15, 16, " They thought to cast out devils by the name of Jesus, but the devil rent them and wounded them, and made them to fly, saying, Jesus I know, and Paul I know : but who are ye ?"

The great argument that the devil uses to persuade thee to self-murder, is by persuading thee that thou art a reprobate ; but thou mayest consider that Satan cannot know that thou art a reprobate ; Was Satan, think you, on God's council, when he made his eternal decrees ? Satan, who is not so much as one of God's hired servants, but a slave and a malefactor kept in chains, he is so far from being of God's council, that he is not so much as one of his family. If thou sayest thy conscience tells thee that thou art a reprobate ; know, that no man living can tell who are reprobates ; nor can any man know himself to be a reprobate, except he hath committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, which no man hath committed, that is sorry to think he hath committed it : " For it is impossible that such a man should be renewed, either by or to repentance," Heb. vi. 6.

Ye that walk in darkness, and see no light, that are haunted with these temptations, consider what a God we have to do with ; we serve such a great Lord, that all the monarchs of the world are beggars to him : and such a gracious Father is our God that the ten-

derest parents in the world, and your dearest friends, are tyrants, yea, wolves and tigers, compared to him. And if we should provoke them, as we provoke him, and they could as easily crush us as God can, we would quickly find that their tenderest mercies are cruelty : whereas the several providences of God will be to thee, not like the gall of asps, bitter and deadly, but like God's rhubarb and aloes, by which thine iniquity shall be purged, and all the fruit of it shall be to take away thy sin ; and though for the present the afflicting hand of God upon thee, is not joyous, but grievous, yet if thou art exercised thereby, it will bring forth in thee the quiet fruit of righteousness. Lay aside therefore your fears of hell, and hard thoughts of God.

But now, to add no more particulars, let me exhort you and all that hear me, to come to our Lord Jesus Christ, whatever opposition from hell stands in your way ; and though the devil should throw you down and tear you as you are coming, yet Christ will lift you up, and heal you. Oh ! what offends the world at our Lord Jesus ? Will you tell me, sinner, what ails you at Christ ? What disoblige you at his person ? Is he not the brightness of the Father's glory, and the chief among ten thousand ? Is he not the rose of Paradise, the heart of heaven ? What ails you at his offices ? Is he not a Prophet, that can teach you—a Priest, that can atone for you—a King, that can conquer for you ? What ails you at his relations ? Is he not a Shepherd, to feed you—a Physician, to heal you—a Father, to pity you—a Husband, to cherish you ? What ails you at his doing, to fulfil the law for you ; or his dying, to satisfy justice for you ? What ails you at his yoke ? Is not his yoke easy and his burden light ? his ways pleasantness and his paths peace ? What ails you at his grace and glory ?

What ails you at him, sirs ? O ! is he not worth your while, though you should run through hell to come to him ? Is there not a heart in all this company, that would fain be at him ? Alas ! would you rather go to the devil than come to Christ ? That a comely Jesus cannot get two or three hearts in all this company, O pity, pity ! and a thousand pities that the beauty of the Godhead cannot get a lover ! Will you all be so mad as to run by Christ to other lovers, while he begs your love, as if he were upon his knees, and sends us to pray you in his stead to be reconciled with him, and come to him ?

And therefore, sirs, in his blessed name, I pray you, go not by

him. I beg it as the best favour you can do to my Master and me, that you come to him ; I beseech you, by the mercies of God, and by the bowels of Christ, that you come to him. He will welcome the worst of you that will come to him ; and if you but endeavour to stretch out the withered hand, or put out the withered heart toward him, he will help you to it, and embrace you with hand and heart both. He is content to come to you on any terms ; and, will you not come to him ? He stands at the door of your heart, and waits that you will but allow him to come in, and let him have access. Have you a hard heart ? He would be in to soften it. Are you pleased ? Have you a filthy heart ? He would be in to wash it. Are you content ? Have you a wicked heart ? He would be in to renew it. Are you satisfied ?

If you will not come to him, will you let him come to you, that he may make you willing ? Consider what is a-coming. O sirs, is not a day of calamity coming ? And why will you not come to Christ ? Is not a day of death coming ? And why will you not come to him ? Is not a day of judgment coming ? And why will you not come to him ? Or, why come you to anything else ? Why come you to ordinances, if you will not come to Christ, for he is the life of ordinances ? Why come you to sermons, if you come not to Christ, who is the substance of all sermons ? Why come you to a communion table, if you will not come to Christ ; for he is the heart of the communion ? Why do you hope for heaven, if you will not come to Christ, for he is the all of heaven, the heaven of heavens ? A thousand heavens are lighter than a feather, when laid in the balance with him. Had I the tongue of a seraphim, I could not commend him enough to you ; but, O may he commend himself to your heart, and cause you to throw your immortal soul into his saving arms, notwithstanding all the downcasting temptations of Satan, and whatever objections and oppositions stand in the way of your coming to him.

S E R M O N X L V I I I .

PRAYER FOR MERCY A SEASONABLE DUTY IN TIMES OF SIN
AND WRATH.¹

HAB. ii. 13.—“O Lord, in wrath remember mercy.”

I HOPE we are come to this place to seek mercy at the hand of God, and to compass his altar of mercy. There is no hope for miserable sinners, but in a merciful God; a God sitting upon a mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of Christ. But yet it is hard and very rare to see any rays of mercy in a dark day, wherein the sky is covered with clouds of wrath. And indeed, if we expect a merciful meeting with God to-day, or at this occasion, we need that clear eye of faith, that can look through the dark clouds of wrath, and say, with the prophet here, “O Lord in wrath remember mercy.” This text is a branch of the first part of Habakkuk’s prayer here; wherein this good prophet is making intercession for the Church in his day, which was a day of great sin, a day of great anger. The first part of this verse points at the report made by God to the prophet, concerning the destruction to be brought upon them by Babylon. This had a double effect upon him. 1. It made him tremble at the thoughts of it: “O Lord, I have heard thy speech and was afraid.” God’s wrath, even at a distance, is terrible to a tender soul. 2. It put him to his prayer; and so should all the tokens of divine anger. Here you have his prayer and his plea.

1. You have his prayer: “O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years.” By God’s work here, we may understand his Church and people. All people are God’s workmanship; but the true members of his Church invisible, are his work in a peculiar manner, and his work by way of eminency; but here they are fallen into a dead sleep; “Revive thy work,” the work of grace in

¹ This subject was handled in two Sermons. The first was preached on Sabbath, Oct. 12, 1735, at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper at Queensferry; and enlarged upon at Orwell, on the Tuesday thereafter, at the meeting of a Presbytery. The next was delivered at Abbot’s Hall, on Saturday the 18th of said month, being the preparation before the Sacrament.

the hearts of thy people, and thy work of reformation in thy Church. Revive it in the midst of the years. By the years, may be understood any time within the term of the seventy years' captivity. In the midst of these dark and dreadful years, make known thy name, for "Verily thou art a God that hideth thyself." Make known thy power, thy pity, thy promise, thy providence in the safety and welfare of the Church. This prayer was several ways answered: particularly by God's owning the three children in the fiery furnace, and humbling Nebuchadnezzar in the midst of the years of the captivity.

2. We have his plea, containing also a sum of his prayer, here again resumed in short—viz., "In wrath remember mercy." The plea is mercy, not merit. These words comprehend as many purposes as there are words.

(1.) The sad case they were in, held out by the word wrath; they were under the heavy tokens of God's wrath.

(2.) The suitable remedy or cure; the only cure for that case is mercy; the mercy of God in Christ.

(3.) The application of that cure here sued for: "Remember mercy. The prayer of faith is a putting God in remembrance of his mercy in Christ; and in this way the remedy is applied.

(4.) The season wherein this remedy is sought, and this plea is used, "In wrath;" in a time when wrathful dispensations compass us about, and fearful tokens of his anger.

We propose to speak to this last branch of the text, because I think it comprehends the former petition, "In the midst of the years;" that is, in this wrathful time, "Revive thy work, and make it known;" that is, "Remember mercy," make it known in reviving and restoring us.

OBSERV. "That in wrathful times, wherein God's Church and people are under many tokens of his anger and displeasure, it is most seasonable for them to plead with him, that he would *remember mercy*."

This we find was the constant practice of the Church and people of God: "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy loving-kindness; for they have been of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; but, according to thy mercies, remember thou me; for thy goodness sake, O Lord," Psalm xxv. 6, 7. In a day of wrath, when it is said of enemies, "They

devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place," we have this petition, "O remember not against us former iniquities; let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low," Psalm lxxxix. 7, 8. Thus Dan. ix. 17, 18. He prays that God's anger and fury might be taken away from Jerusalem; and that the Lord would cause his face to shine upon his sanctuary; and adds—"O my God, incline thine ear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name; for we do not present our supplications before thee, for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies." Thus David also, Psalm xlii. 7, 8. When deep called unto deep, and all his waves and billows had gone over him, he adds, "Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time; and in the night my song shall be with him, and my prayer unto the God of my life." And when out of the depths he cries to the Lord, he looks to mercy, saying, "There is forgiveness with thee. Yea, with the Lord there is mercy. Let Israel hope in the Lord," Psalm cxxx. 1, 4, 7.

When God calls his people to the prayer of faith, he enjoins them to put him in remembrance; "Put me in remembrance, let us plead together," Isa. xliii. 26. When God is pleading against us, by his dispensations, he allows us to plead with him, by supplication; and to put him in remembrance even of his mercy; "In wrath remember mercy." Not that God is capable of forgetfulness: but when we put him in mind, we put work in his hand; and he loves to be employed: and when he shows mercy, he is said to remember his holy promise, and covenant, and mercy; "He remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies," Psal. cv. 8, 42, cvi. 45. But to offer all the instances to this purpose, would take up too much time.

The method we propose, for illustrating this proposition, through divine aid, shall be as follows:—

- I. Enquire when may a time be said to be wrathful?
- II. What are the instances of mercy we need to seek, at such a time?
- III. What is imported in the Lord remembering mercy; and in our praying that he would do so?
- IV. Show that it is both seasonable and reasonable to plead that he would remember mercy in wrathful times.
- V. Make application of the whole subject.

I. We are to enquire when may a time be said to be wrathful-like? "In wrath remember mercy." What are the tokens of God's wrath that a people may be under, that denominates it a wrathful time? I only premise, That wrath is either to be considered as vindictive, towards all the enemies of God; and thus it comes for demanding satisfaction of the Christless soul, and as so many drops of vengeance, before the deluge of wrath be poured out: or, it is to be considered as fatherly towards the children of God; and so it comes for correction, chastisement, or trial. When wrath comes upon a visible church, towards the wicked therein, it is judicial; but towards the invisible church, it is paternal, and for chastisement. Now, we might give many instances of a wrathful-like time; such as,

1. A sinning time is a time of wrath; when iniquity abounds, and the love of many is waxen cold; when the Lord gives up a generation to their lusts, saying, "They are joined to the idols, let them alone. My people would not hearken; Israel would have none of me; therefore I gave them up to the lusts of their own hearts."

2. A sleeping time is a time of wrath; when wise and foolish virgins are slumbering and sleeping; and security is universal; "As in the days of Noah, when they were eating and drinking, and marrying, and giving in marriage, till the deluge of wrath came upon them."

3. An erring time is a time of wrath; a time wherein errors of all sorts abound, and God gives up men to strong delusions, to believe a lie; because they receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved, they are left to receive and embrace errors, that they may be damned; "That all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness; giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." When grievous wolves enter in to destroy the church of Christ not sparing the flock: and when little foxes as well as great ones, spoil the vines and the vineyards; and yet no due care exercised to take the foxes, and to try and cast them out, and say, "They are apostles, and are not; but are found liars."

4. A time of apostacy and falling away of professors, when the pillars of the house of God, are, as it were, bowing and bending: when Christ is saying to his few followers, in effect, "Will ye also go away?" And when there are few to stand in the breach, and to put hand to the Lord's work, as it is said, Jer. x. 20, 21.

5. An hiding time, wherein there is occasion to say, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," &c. When his people go forward, but he is not there; backward, but they cannot see him; on the right and left hand, but they cannot behold him. When, not only in a little wrath, he hideth himself, for a small moment; but in great wrath he hideth himself for a long time: and standeth not behind our wall, near at hand, and ready to come in; but standeth at a great distance, and, as it were, at the back of the mountains. When the Comforter, that is to relieve our soul, is far away. When we see not our signs, nor see the power and glory of God in the sanctuary. When he seems to cast off his people, to forsake and forget them. When he withholds his Spirit, his enlightening, quickening, nourishing, and cherishing grace; and says, in effect, "Behold your house is left to you desolate." When he lets loose the evil spirit, and Satan's temptations and delusions, saying, "I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets." When he leaves a people so far, as that they forsake him, and break his covenant; and then he forsakes them, and his anger breaks forth; that they have occasion to say, "Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us?" Deut. xxxi. 16, 17.

6. A dead time is a time of wrath; a time wherein the work of God is under a dreadful decay, and the things that remain are ready to die. This especially seems to be that token of God's wrath, intended here in the text, where the prayer is, "Lord, revive thy work." And if it is enquired, How doth this death and spiritual deadness appear? Why this deadness is evident when the word and rod of God doth not awaken us; but we remain stupid both under mercies and judgments. This deadness is evident, when sin doth not affect or afflict us; but we go on securely in an evil course, and make a sport of sin. This deadness is evident from our unconcernedness for the future, and taking no care to be delivered from impending wrath. This deadness is evident from our being regardless of all religion, and religious duties; careless whether we hear and pray, or not; and begin to entertain contemptible thoughts of religion and religious persons; and have no exercise of spiritual senses, no motion heaven-ward, or God-ward.

These are some evidences and effects of the Lord's anger and absence; for, as his favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life; so his fury and anger is death, and worse than death. Death among the wicked, and deadness among the godly, are the sad

fruit of his anger and our sin : for, as "The wages of sin is death," either of body or soul, or both ; so, "If we live after the flesh, we shall die." In a word, as it is the anger of the Lord that weakens and kills us ; kills our souls, kills our comforts, and kills our zeal and concern about spiritual matters : so it is the anger of the Lord that divides us ; divides our hearts, divides our tongues, divides our judgments, divides our counsels. And it is the anger of the Lord that wastes us ; it wastes our souls, wastes our bodies, wastes our substance, wastes our days and years, and consumes us insensibly ; as well as exposes us to terrible outward calamities, confusions, and disorders, in church and state.

II. The next thing proposed in the method was, To enquire what are the tokens of mercy we need to seek, amidst such are the tokens of anger ; "In wrath remember mercy." What mercy ? I am of opinion, that the mercy here especially intended, is the reviving-mercy sought after in the preceding part of the verse ; "O Lord, revive thy work." Now, there is a twofold reviving that is here imported ; and hence a twofold mercy that a dead languishing church and people need to seek after. 1. Sin-subduing mercy, in order to a life of peace with God, in opposition to his wrath and anger. 2. Soul-healing mercy, in order to a life of fellowship with God, in opposition to his absence and hiding.

1. People need, in a time of wrath and anger, to seek sin-pardoning mercy, in order to a life of peace with God, whose favour is better than life. Hence we find, in a time of great wrath and indignation, this pardoning mercy implored ; "O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee ; by whom shall Jacob arise ? for he is small," Amos vii. 2. Here the prophet makes pardon his great petition, in a time of judgment ; "O Lord, forgive : " it is not, remove the stroke, but, forgive the guilt that brings it on, and provokes God to smite ; especially to smite with spiritual judgments. Let our punishment be what it will, it is our wisdom to get the sense of the guilt of sin ; till guilt be set home, and impressed upon the conscience, we will never pray to purpose. To tell a story of the divisions, errors, heresies and evils of the land ; and the danger it is exposed to, by a foreign enemy, will be to little purpose, if we are never sensible of the guilt of them, so as to cry for the removal of national and personal guilt. And if any inquire, Why should pardon and forgiveness be sought, in times of wrath and judgment ? Why, because pardon of sin speaks a man in favour with God ; and a sense

of pardon speaks a man's assurance of divine favour : and his favour is life ; yea, it is worth ten thousand worlds : "Blessed are they, whose transgressions are forgiven," Psal. xxxii. 1. Because, also, safety is secured, when forgiveness is granted ; "Lift up the light of thy countenance. Cause thy face to shine, and so we shall be safe," Psalm iv. 6. Because the sting of all afflictions is removed, when pardon is granted ; yea, the sting of death too, and the sting of wrath, in so much that it is not vindictive wrath, but fatherly. And hence, in that case, the soul can conclude, that affliction is kept upon him for good ; "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is the fruit of all, to take away sin." Therefore pardoning mercy is to be sought : "In wrath remember mercy."

2. Soul-healing mercy is another part of the reviving to be sought for, to a sinful land and people, in a time of wrath and anger. As we cannot have peace with God, without forgiveness, through the blood of Jesus ; so we cannot have fellowship with God, without healing, particularly the healing of holiness and conformity to him, in some degree ; and the healing of comfort and satisfaction in him, in some measure. This healing mercy is the great thing that the Lord's children use to seek after, in a time of wrath and judgment ; "Heal me, O Lord ; for I have sinned against thee, Psal. xli. 6. O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased ; O turn thyself to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble, thou hast broken it ; heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh," Psal. lx. 1, 2. This is one of the greatest mercies can be showed, in the midst of wrath, when the Lord saith, as it is ; Isaiah lxvii. 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him : I hid me and was wroth ; and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart ; but yet I have seen his ways, and will heal him ; I will lead him also, and restore comfort to him, and to his mourners." There are many promises of this healing mercy to encourage prayer for it ; "I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord." Jer. xxx. 17. He takes his name from this healing work of mercy, "I am the Lord that healeth thee. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up all his wounds. And this healing mercy brings in a train of other mercies with it ; "Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun ; and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound," Isa. xxx. 26. Therefore, the great suit and supplication,

in such a time of wrath should be, that the Sun of righteousness may arise with healing in his wings : then life and health comes in to the soul.

When this healing mercy comes, then cometh a sense of our dead condition. If ever God revive us, he will make us know our deadness ; if he put sap in our dry bones, he will make us know our dryness : if he pardon, he will make us know our guilt. When this merciful reviving comes, then cometh a longing after him ; he prepares his way into the soul, by creating a longing in his people's heart, and a panting after him, Psalm xlii. 1. When this reviving comes, then cometh a spirit of mourning : he makes them meet him weeping ; "They shall come with weeping, Jer. xxxi. 9. Going and weeping," Jer. l. 4, 5. Weeping for their old and late sins ; weeping for their bold and daring sins, their sins against light and conscience, their sins upon small temptations, and their sins that are accounted small in the world. When this reviving comes, then cometh a spirit of supplication, Zech. xii. 10. And thereupon follows the opening of the fountain, and the purging of his house, and causing the false prophet, and the unclean spirit to cease out of the land. When this reviving comes, then cometh a stop to the tokens of his wrath ; "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind," Isa, xxvii. 8. He casteth away the rod that he smote withal. When this reviving comes, then cometh many tokens of his love, instead of wrath. Sweet embraces ; his left-hand being under their head, and his right-hand embracing them. Sweet intimations of peace and pardon ; "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." Sweet cordials, with kindly words, looks, and smiles : He speaks comfortably to Jerusalem. Sweet communications of his mind, and of the secrets of his covenant ; "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" He speaks no more in parables, but plainly ; giving them to know the mysteries of the kingdom. Then the righteousness of Zion goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. Then his people, being brought out of the horrible and miry clay, have their feet set upon a rock, and their goings established, and a new song put in their mouth, even praises to their God, Psalm xl. 2, 3. Then doth the day break, and the shadows fly away, in a great measure, and the tabernacle of God is with men. Holiness and comfort take place, instead of sin and sorrow.

These are the effects of his remembering mercy, by pardoning,

healing, and reviving his people ; and also reasons for seeking this mercy.

III. The next general head of method was, To enquire what is imported in the Lord's remembering mercy, and our praying that he would do so. Here we may consider the import of it in a threefold view. 1. Actively, as it is God's act. 2. Objectively, as it is our plea. 3. With reference to the season, viz. God's remembering mercy in the midst of wrath.

1st, We may view the import of it actively considered as it is God's act. What is it for God to remember mercy ? It doth not suppose oblivion, or forgetfulness in God, as if he was capable of forgetting the perfection of his nature ; no : he can no more forget mercy, than he can forget himself. But there are three ways he may be said to remember mercy.

1. When he hath thoughts of mercy ; " 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." And then it follows also, " Ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me ; and I will hearken unto you," Jer. xxix. 11, 12. In time of wrathful dispensations, we are ready to think that God hath no thoughts of mercy : but even then he saith, " My thoughts are not your thoughts, Isa. lv. 8. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord ; because they called thee an outcast, saying, This is Zion whom no man seeketh after," Jer. xxx. 17.

2. He may be said to remember mercy, when he speaketh words of mercy : though he bringeth to the wilderness, yet he speaketh comfortably, Hos. ii. 14. He remembers when he speaks comfortably to Jerusalem, and cries to her, that warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, Isa. xl. 2. When the Lord remembers mercy, he speaks it both outwardly into the ear, and inwardly into the heart ; " God hath spoken once ; yea, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God ; also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy," Psalm lxii. 11, 12. He speaks it once into the ear, by the word ; but he speaks it again, and that is twice, when, by his Spirit, he speaketh it into the heart ; then, indeed, the heart rejoiceth : " God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice."

3. He may be said to remember mercy ; when he doth acts of mercy ; such as these I have mentioned already in the instances of his pardoning and healing mercy. Thus he remembers mercy

when he shows or manifests mercy : and when he exercises mercy in manifold acts, fruits, and effects of his mercy. Now then the prayer, that he would remember mercy, respects, his merciful thoughts, merciful words, and merciful acts in the midst of wrath.

2dly, We may consider the import of it objectively ; as it is our plea : "Remember mercy." Many deceive themselves with a false hope in the general mercy of God, and are ignorant of mercy, as it is the plea of faith. There are these twelve things contained in the plea of faith, when we plead that God would remember mercy.

1. We plead he would remember the place of mercy, what place it hath in his heart, and what place it hath in his Christ. Hath it not such a place in his heart, that it is his delight ? "He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy," Mic. vii. 18. As we are by nature children of wrath : so he is by nature merciful : his mercies are called his bowels ; Luke i. 78, "Through the tender mercies of our God ;" in the margin it is, "Through the bowels of God." Thus James v. 11, he is called, *POLYSPLAGCHNOS, full of bowels*. Mercy is most natural to him ; and therefore it is most natural for him to show mercy. Hath it not such a place in Christ, that he is said to be the *store-house* of mercy and grace ? "My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him, Psalm lxxxix. 24. God was in Christ," 2 Cor. i. 19. And of all the attributes of God in Christ, mercy is mentioned as the most triumphant, rejoicing over judgment ; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself *mercifully*. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased ; or, *merciful*, and *mercifully appeased*," Mat. iii. 16. When we plead he would remember mercy, in his heart and in his Christ who is the darling of his heart, in whom his soul delights.

2. We plead he would remember the ground and reason of mercy ; and that is mercy itself : "God saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," Rom. ix. 15. Though the immediate ground of God's manifesting mercy, is for Christ's sake ; yet the primary and original ground is for mercy's sake ; for mercy provided a Christ, a Saviour, a Redeemer : he shows mercy for mercy's sake. The supreme cause of divine love is divine love itself ; so God saith to Israel. "The Lord loved Israel, because he loved them," Duet. vii. 7, 8.

3. We plead he would remember the channel of mercy, and how it vents through a propitiation, to the honour of justice, Rom.

iii. 25, 26. We may plead that he cannot wrong his justice by showing mercy, since he hath found a ransom, and "Set forth Christ to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sin." Hence when we plead he would remember mercy, we plead he would remember Christ, and a mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of Christ. Christ is called *the mercy*, by way of eminency: "The mercy promised to our fathers," Luke i. 72. And it is a strong plea for faith, when pleading that he would remember mercy, that he would remember Christ, and not forget what he hath done; and how he hath done and suffered, and satisfied, and finished his work; and what he is still doing: and so that he would both remember mercy for mercy's sake, and remember mercy for Jesus' sake; yea, mercy in Jesus, so as to accept in the Beloved; since mercy in this channel, brings glory to every other attribute: here is grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life.

4. In pleading he would remember mercy, we plead he would remember the covenant of mercy, and the promise of mercy, sealed by the blood of mercy, the Mediator of the covenant; and how he hath made a covenant with his chosen, and said, "Mercy shall be built up for ever," Psal lxxxix. 2, 3. Though indeed, if his children break his law, he will visit their iniquities with rods, &c., yet nevertheless he hath said, "My loving-kindness will I not take from him," nor consequently from his seed; nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: my covenant will I not break; nor alter the word that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David," ver. 30, 37. And hence, when he performed the mercy promised to the fathers, he is said to remember his holy covenant, Luke i. 72. O sirs, it is a strong plea, in the midst of wrath, that he would remember his covenant and promise remember the word on which he hath caused us to hope, as a word sealed by the blood of Christ, and yea and Amen in him. And indeed, you cannot go safely to a communion-table, without the plea in your mouth, in your heart. For Christ saith of the sacramental cup, "This cup is the new-testament in my blood." It is a cup of promised mercy, purchased and secured by my blood.

5. In pleading this mercy, we plead he would remember the dignity of mercy, and the glory and granduer of it, as what he exalts and magnifies, above every other letter of his name; Psalm cxxxviii. 2, "I will praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and

thy truth ; for, thou has magnified thy word above thy name : " that is, thy word of grace, mercy, and loving-kindness ; which truth is engaged to accomplish, this mercy thou hast magnified above all thy name and dignity ; as it were above all thy perfections. Though the Lord consults the honour of all his perfections, in the method of salvation through Christ ; yet he consults their honour with this view, that especially mercy may be manifested, dignified, magnified, and aggrandized : therefore, faith saith, Lord remember the dignity and grandeur of mercy.

6. In pleading this mercy, we plead the dimensions of mercy ; the height, depth, length, and breadth of mercy, as well as love, spoken of, Eph. iii. 18. The dimensions of our sins are great ; and we cannot magnify sin too much, unless we magnify it above the mercy of God in Christ. O sirs, this divine mercy is as high as heaven, as deep as hell, as broad as time, and as long as eternity ! Here is an ocean without bank or bottom.

7. In pleading this mercy, we plead he would remember the associates of mercy ; or its companions and concomitants, with whom it hath struck hands and made up a blessed agreement ; " Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," Psal. lxxxv. 10. There was a seeming odds and contrariety between mercy and justice : Mercy saying, Pity and save the sinner ; Justice saying, Damn and destroy him : but now, in the death and satisfaction of Christ the Surety, the blood thirsty sword of justice hath drunk to infinite satisfaction, and hath no more blood to demand. The truth of God, in the threatening of the law, denouncing death and damnation to the sinner, is vindicated, by this substitution of Jesus in our room. Mercy and truth having met and kissed each other. We have not only mercy to plead, but the associates of mercy, and so may plead mercy for justice's sake, mercy for the sake of truth and holiness, mercy for the sake of all her associates and neighbour attributes that they may be glorified with her.

8. In pleading his remembering mercy, we plead he would remember the riches of his mercy : the Lord is said to be rich in mercy, and to show the exceeding riches of his grace, Eph. ii. 4, 7. O what a strong plea is it that God accounts mercy, beyond all things else, to be his riches ! the men of this world count gold and silver their riches : but God accounts his being merciful his being rich, and being communicative of his mercy to poor sinners.

9. In pleading his mercy, we plead he would remember the

multitude of his mercy ; this is frequently the church's plea ; " According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions," Psal. li. 1. And in Psalm cvi. 7. Israel is challenged for their not remembering the multitude of his tender mercy ; and v. 45, it is said, " He remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercy." We may as soon number the stars of heaven, as the multitude of divine mercy : and this we may set against the multitude of our sins, when we plead, that in wrath he would remember mercy.

10. In this prayer, we plead that he would remember the objects of mercy. It is not himself that is the object of his mercy ; but man, miserable and sinful man : " The kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared," Tit. iii. 4. But the love of God and the mercy of God in this differs : that whereas God himself, as well as man, is the object of his love : for he loves himself, and so is the greatest object of his love ; but God himself is not the object of his own mercy ; God hath no need of mercy, and is incapable of mercy for himself. What a comfortable plea is this, that the mercy which God accounts his chief riches and treasure, is what peculiarly concerns us, and our good and salvation ! Hence we may make our own misery a plea in prayer ; because this is the proper object of divine mercy : therefore, it is called, " His kindness towards us through Christ," Eph. ii. 7.

11. In this prayer, we plead that he would remember the qualities of his mercy : that his mercy is like himself, great and infinite mercy ; hence the church so frequently in scripture pleads the greatness of his mercy, and sets it against the greatness of their sins ; " For his merciful kindness is great towards us, Psalm cxvii. 2. Thy mercy is great unto the heaven," Psalm lvii. 10. Nay, " Thy mercy is great above the heaven," Psalm cviii. 4. We may plead that his mercy is free mercy : and, indeed, if it did not exclude merit, and were not free, it could not be so properly mercy. We may plead that his mercy is sovereign mercy ; regarding neither the worthiness nor unworthiness of the creature. We may plead that it is ancient mercy ; with reference to eternity, that it is from everlasting ; and with reference to time, that it is of old ; saying, " Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations : thou hast been favourable to thy land : " and so we may plead upon former mercies, saying, " Where is the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me ? Are they restrained ? " Isa. lxiii. 15. We may plead

not only the antiquity, but the perpetuity of his mercy ; that " His mercy endures for ever : " he hath commanded the house of Israel and the house of Aaron to say, " His mercy endureth for ever." We may plead the immutability of his mercy. Whatever changes befall us: yet " He is God, and changeth not ; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

12. In this prayer, we plead the kinds of mercy ; the various sorts of mercy. We may plead that he would remember his conquering and overcoming mercy ; that can conquer our enmity, conquer our guilt, conquer the curse of the law, and all the wrath we deserve. That it is preventing mercy ; that can and must prevent our faith, prevent our repentance, and prevent our prayers: otherwise we will never believe, or repent or pray ; hence, as it is mercy that comes over mountains, so it is called mercy found of them that sought him not. That it is following and pursuing mercy ; still following those whom it prevents and prevails upon : " Goodness and mercy shall follow me," Psal. xxiii. 6. Even when the soul forsakes God, grace and mercy will follow the soul, and bring it back, otherwise it would run to ruin. Again, that it is forgiving mercy, saying, " I will be merciful to their unrighteousness : their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." And that it is a forthcoming mercy, saying, " My grace shall be made sufficient for thee ; and my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness." In a word, all kinds of mercy are with God ; and we are to plead the variety of his mercy. There is no sin or misery, but God hath mercy for it, mercy of every kind ; and among others, uniting mercy ; " I will give them one heart, and one way," Jer. xxxi. 39. And as there is no disease but God hath a remedy for it ; so there is no misery but God hath a mercy for it. He hath in himself a treasure of all sorts of mercies, divided into several promises in scripture, which are but so many boxes or chests of this treasury. If thy heart be hard and untender, he hath tender mercies and melting mercies ; if thy heart be dead, he hath quickening mercy : if polluted, he hath purifying mercy : if thou art sick, he hath healing mercy : if sinful, he hath all-sanctifying mercy ; if sorrowful, he hath all-comforting mercy ; if lost and miserable, he hath all-saving mercy. As large and various as your wants are, more large and various are his mercies ; so that we may come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, and according to our need, Heb. iv. 16. O what a rich

product is to be had out of the womb of mercy ! And, O how many powerful pleas and arguments are there in this one *Remember mercy !* All the mercies that are in his heart, he hath transplanted them, as it were, into several beds, in the garden of the promises, where they grow ; and we are allowed to pluck these flowers, by pleading the mercies contained in these promises which are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God. O sirs, be intreated to come to the mercy of God in Christ.

3dly, We may view the import with reference to the season of God's remembering mercy, viz., "In the midst of wrath remember mercy." Now, What is it for God to remember mercy in the midst of wrath ? Why, the Lord may be said to remember mercy in the midst of wrath, in the following respects :—

1. When he imbitters sin to his people, which is the procuring cause of wrath, and weans their hearts from it : "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is the fruit of all to take away sin."

2. When he humbles them under his mighty hand ; makes the rod of correction drive away the folly that is bound up in their hearts ; and brings them to confess that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart from the living God.

3 When he makes them search and try their ways ; to inquire what meaneth the heat of his great anger ; and induces them to turn to the hand that smiteth them : to seek the Lord of hosts while he may be found ; and to pour out a prayer when his chastening hand is upon them.

4. When he enables them to exercise faith and patience, and other graces in the time of anger and wrath, and to justify God in all his procedure ; for, "Tribulation and the trial of faith worketh patience ;" and to acknowledge that he punisheth us less than our iniquities deserve ; and therefore to bear the indignation of the Lord because we have sinned.

5. In a word, God may be said to remember mercy in the midst of wrath, when he only corrects them in measure ; when he stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind ; when he grants them some little reviving in their bondage, and supporting cordials in these wrath-like dispensations ; and favours them with any secret interview with his gracious presence, and lets them see any love-designs that he has in these afflictions.

Thus much may suffice for the third thing proposed, viz., the

import of the Lord's remembering mercy in the midst of wrath, and our praying that he would do so.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, To show that it is both seasonable and reasonable to plead, that he would remember mercy in the midst of wrath, and wrathful times. This will appear evident, if we consider these six particulars.

1. It is both seasonable and reasonable to do so, because we are warranted of God to plead his promised mercy, at all times, and especially in the midst of wrath; "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," Ezekiel xxxvi. 27, compared with Psal. l. 15, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." There needs be no other reason; and there can be no higher reason, than the will and authority of God; his command obliging us to plead with him, and put him in remembrance, Isa. xliii. 26.

2. It is seasonable and reasonable, in the midst of wrath to plead he would remember mercy, because wrathful dispensations are ordered of God, for this very cause, to stir up his people to seek after him, and plead for his merciful return; "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face; in their affliction they shall seek me early," Hos. v. 15. And, indeed, seldom do we seek him in earnest, till the rod be made use of, and the way be hedged up with thorns; then we begin to say, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now," Hosea ii. 7.

3. It is seasonable, because as this hath been the way of God's people, in their distress and under wrathful dispensations to fly to his mercy; so it is God's way toward his people, to show mercy to them in their greatest extremity of distress. He makes their time of need, his time of love; their time of misery, his time of mercy: "I called upon the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place," Psal cxviii. 5. Their experience hath it to say, "Many a time I was brought low, and he helped me. He brought me out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

4. Necessity makes it both seasonable and reasonable: in the midst of wrath the people of God see their need of mercy; and see mercy to be mercy indeed: when all the waves and billows of God's wrath are flying over them, then it is time for the Lord to work, for his church and people, as the psalmist saith, Psal. cxix. 126. "It

is time for thee, O Lord, to work ; for they have made void thy law." It is time for us to pray and plead for mercy ; and it is time for God to work mercifully, when clouds of wrath are gathering, and showers of wrath are falling.

5. It is then reasonable and seasonable to plead he would remember mercy, because, in the midst of wrath, we are apt to conclude, that he hath forgotten mercy, and to say with Zion, "The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me," Isa. xlix. 14. Then it is that unbelief is ready to affront and deny the mercy of God : and to conclude he hath laid aside his merciful nature, saying, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? hath he forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercy?" Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. In time of affliction and wrathful days, they are ready to think mercy is drowned in the ocean of wrath ; therefore it is seasonable, in time of wrath, to plead he may remember mercy.

6. It is seasonable, because then faith hath sure and clean ground to go upon, when in wrath we plead mercy. A time of wrathful dispensations, and killing and slaying providences, is a proper time for faith to step in and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." To believe mercy in the midst of mercy, is no great matter ; but to believe mercy in the midst of wrath, is a great matter and argues strong faith. A time of contradiction is a time for faith. If we believe the promise, when Providence seems to contradict the promise in appearance, it is, like Abraham, to be strong in the faith, giving glory to God. Under a sense of guilt, to believe pardon—under a sense and feeling of wrath, to believe mercy, and plead that God would remember mercy, is the very season for faith to act ; and then God gets the glory of his mercy, and we the good of it.

V. The fifth thing proposed was, To make application of the subject ; which we shall essay with all possible brevity.

Is it so, as has been said, That in the midst of wrath, or wrathful-like dispensations, it is seasonable to plead mercy, and that the Lord would remember it? Then hence we may see,

1st, That it is now a fit time, and proper season for us to plead mercy, and a merciful visit from the Lord, notwithstanding that it is a time of Divine and great wrath, in many respects ; a time of great sin and security, great error and blasphemy, of great back-

sliding and apostasy ; a time wherein God hideth himself, and we are dead and senseless, through want of the presence of the living Spirit of the living God. Many are the tokens of the Lord's anger and absence. How far hath he left ministers and people, ordinances and judicatories, Church and State ? How much is the glory departed, our strength gone, our zeal blunted, and black clouds of wrath above our head ? And, indeed, there are more tokens of wrath, towards the generation, than I have either time or ability to tell. And many of us, even here under the sad effects of the Lord's anger, surrounded with symptoms of wrath ; witness our deadness and lukewarmness ; our coldrife hearing, praying, and praising ; our strong and prevalent corruption ; our weak and languishing grace, if we have any at all ; it may be heavy affliction on the bodies of some, on their friends, families, or concerns ; perhaps heavy distress upon the minds of others, through temptations, confusions, fears, damps, and discouragements of many sorts. Well, what shall we do in this case ? Shall we turn desperate, and reckon that now no merciful meeting with God is to be expected ? Indeed, if God had revealed nothing from heaven but wrath, we might be hopeless ; but now is the fit time to plead he would remember mercy. Now is a fit time to pray for mercy, to cry for mercy, to plead mercy, to believe mercy, to lay hold on mercy, to remember mercy, and to wrestle with God that he would remember mercy : mercy towards ourselves, towards our families, towards the land in general, and to the Church of Christ in particular.

2dly. If we may pray and plead for mercy in the midst of wrath, then we may hopefully plead mercy in the face of all other discouragements whatsoever. Here is a door of mercy opened in the midst of wrath.

Some, perhaps, may be ready to say, " Many things discourage me in prayer, blinds my confidence, and mars my hope." Why, but here is encouragement to sue for mercy, and to hope and plead for it, in the face of all opposition whatsoever, since we ought to plead mercy even in the face of wrath. This plea will stand good against all deadly, if faith take it up. I shall offer some instances here.

1. You may hopefully plead mercy in the face of old sins, former transgressions, and great iniquities : this we find the Psalmist did, Psalm xxv. 7, " Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions ; according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy

goodness sake." Here old sins came in view; yet here is faith pleading mercy. Unbelief may tell you so, and so you have sinned; and therefore there is no hope, nothing but wrath to be expected? Nay, but faith may look to the mercy of God in Christ, and say, as verse 11, "For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Great sin should lead to plead great mercy.

2. You may plead mercy in the face of present guilt staring you in the face, as the Prophet Jeremiah did, chap. xiv. 7, "Though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake." Present guilt cannot blot out the remembrance of mercy.

3. You may plead mercy in the face of present indisposition for duty. Present deadness and incapacity is the case here; "O revive thy work; in wrath remember mercy." Expect not that in yourself which only mercy can afford. It may be afflicting that you have no suitable frame of heart. But how soon can mercy frame your heart to holy worship? Quickening mercy is with him.

4. You may plead mercy in the face of dark and angry dispensations; as Psalm lxxix. 5, "How long wilt thou be angry? Shall thy jealousy for ever burn like a fire?" Psalm lxxx. 4, "How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?" The storm of wrath cannot blow away mercy: therefore plead, "In wrath remember mercy."

5. You may plead mercy in the face of great unworthiness, and fears of communicating unworthily; because mercy regards not our unworthiness, nor waits for our worth, but vents through the worthiness of the Lamb; and therefore you may say, "He is worthy for whom thou shouldest do this."

6. You may plead mercy in the face of many challenges, for omissions and commissions. You may take with the charge of the law, and the challenge of conscience against yourself, and yet hold your plea, and maintain your argument for mercy: "In wrath remember mercy."

7. You may plead mercy in the face of strong unbelief and weak faith; in the face of living unbelief and languishing faith; for though this way be saddening to your soul, and sinking to your heart, even unto fainting; yet the mercy of God in Christ being a root, cause, and spring of faith, when he remembers mercy, he revives every languishing grace: "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine."

8. You may plead mercy in the face of manifold miscarriages

in duty, such as want of faith, freedom, fervour, love, liberty, fixedness of heart, and the like ; for though this should be afflicting and humbling, yet the ground of hope and confidence is in the free mercy of God through Christ.

9. You may plead mercy in the face of seeming refusals and harsh answers ; when he not only delays to give you the mercy you seek, but seems to deny you, and call you a dog to whom the children's bread doth not belong, yet he allows for all that, to press in at the door of mercy, saying, " Truth, Lord ; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table."

10. You may plead mercy in the face of real refusals, rejections, and reproofs ; for though the door of mercy seem to be shut and barred, and though he may justly reject you for ever, and keep you long at the back of the door, yet he can soon open the door, and grant you access to his presence. And though he should not, it becomes you to wait on him who saith, " He will not contend for ever, neither will he be always wroth ; lest the spirits should fail before him, and the souls that he hath made."

11. You may plead mercy in the face of improbabilities ; yea, and seeming impossibilities, when there is no appearance of his shewing mercy ; yet, like Abraham, against hope you are to believe in hope. Dispensations seeming to contradict the promised mercy, must not stop our mouth from speaking, nor embarrass our faith ; but rather set our prayer on proper edge, and our faith on exercise.

12. You may plead mercy in the face of prevailing iniquity. Surely this should humble and afflict you ; and woe to them that live in sin, and presume upon mercy ; but when prevailing iniquity begins to discourage you from pleading mercy, shake off that discouraging temptation, and plead pardoning and purifying mercy the more earnestly ; for, mercy hath been pled and should be pled, in the face of prevailing sin : " Iniquities prevail against us ; but yet as for our transgressions thou wilt purge them away," Psalm lxxv. 3.

In a word, you may plead mercy in the face of all temptations to the contrary, from whatever airth. Though the devil should suggest to you that your pleading will bring a curse instead of a blessing, and that God hath decreed the contrary to what you ask, yet God's revealed will being the rule of your duty, and his revealed mercy, through Christ, being the ground of your hope, you are to have no regard to these wicked suggestions : " In the midst of wrath," in the midst of woes, in the midst of all the sin and

misery you can be surrounded with, as long as you are out of hell, there is ground to plead, "Lord, remember mercy."

But possibly one may say, What if I do not plead regularly and successfully so as to prevail? Why, if you plead so as your plea shall be regarded,

(1.) Your pleading for mercy will exclude your presuming upon mercy. The presumptuous sinner pleads mercy as an excuse for his sin; this is not pleading for mercy to his soul, but mercy to his sin; whereas they that duly plead mercy, they plead for vengeance upon their sins.

(2.) The pleading for mercy supposes a sense of sin and misery, and of wrath deserved. They who have no apprehensions of wrath, will have no due apprehensions of mercy.

(3.) True pleading for mercy excludes all other pleas; the man hath nothing to plead but mercy; he hath no merit of his own to plead, but the merit of hell. If he pleads the merit of Christ, this is the same with pleading mercy; for mercy vents no other way but through the merit of Jesus. The soul dares not plead his duties, prayers, or tears; his frames, affections, enlargements, or good qualifications; no, he hath nothing to plead but mercy.

(4.) The true pleader for mercy pleads it at the mercy seat, sprinkled with the blood of Christ: where he sees mercy secured by the blood of the covenant, which makes them the sure mercies of David. Now, would you share of this mercy of God to eternal life? Then, while you plead for mercy, plead upon Christ's plea, and come in upon his right; and you shall be sure to obtain.

Now, what shall I say to you who never yet truly pleaded mercy, nor fled to the mercy of God in Christ? Alas! how miserable are you, that never yet saw your need of mercy! and that are to this day despisers of mercy! What will become of you, if you remain in that case, when death and judgment comes! O Sirs, will you come in yet at the open door of mercy? Would you wish to share of the mercy of God, and avoid the vengeance of God, when grim death stares you in the face, and the awful tribunal appears? Then fly to the mercy of God now. But, say you, Where is the mercy of God? Why, all his mercy is in Christ; "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself." There is no mercy in God, out of Christ to any guilty sinner. O then, sirs, come to Christ for the mercy of God; for all the kinds of mercy that you need is in Christ. All the saving mercy of God is in Christ, as a Saviour; all the

healing mercy of God is in Christ, as a Physician ; all the teaching mercy of God is in Christ, as a Priest ; all the soul-sanctifying, sin-subduing, and conquering mercy of God is in Christ, as a King ; all the rich and supplying mercy of God is in Christ, as the store-house and treasury of grace, that out of his fulness you may receive, and grace for grace ; “ My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him,” saith God, Psal. lxxxix. 24. And since all the mercy of God is with him, O then, sirs, come : come to Jesus ; and so you will share of the mercy of God. If you say, you cannot come ; I tell you among the rest, the drawing mercy of God is with him ; and therefore he says, “ When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me :” and if when he says in his word, I will draw, your heart was saying, Lord draw ; draw me ; I hope drawing mercy is not far away. O may power accompany the call and offer of mercy in Christ.

Again, As for you who have fled to the mercy of God in Christ, and know what it is to plead mercy, even “ in the midst of wrath ;” O sirs, go on to plead that he would remember mercy, and to plead it joyfully ; whatever tokens of wrath you are encompassed with, it is but fatherly wrath, and mercy is in the midst of it : mercy is in the midst of your afflictions ; mercy is in the midst of your temptations ; mercy is in the midst of desertions ; mercy is in the midst of your reproofs ; mercy is in the midst of your sickness and sorrows ; mercy is in the midst of your wants and poverty ; mercy is in the midst of all your losses and crosses ; mercy is in the midst of all the wrath you are under ; and hence, in the midst of wrath he will remember mercy ; and therefore in the midst of wrath, remember ye his mercy, and do not forget it, though you should see nothing but wrath, Hab. iii. 17, 18. But possibly one may say, Why shall I not believe that he is in earnest, when I perceive nothing but wrath in his providence and dealing with me ? Yes ; you are to believe that he is in earnest correcting you, in earnest chastising you ; he is in earnest trying you, or he is in earnest visiting your iniquities with rods, and may be taking vengeance on your inventions : but for all that, never dream that he has forgotten mercy ; for “ His loving-kindness will he not take away, nor alter the word that has gone out of his mouth.—The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed,” Isa. liv. 10. Therefore, upon the strongest ground, you may still plead mercy, and with holy confidence expect it.

2. I would advise you, not only to plead he would remember mercy to yourselves, but mercy toward others. Plead his mercy to all his churches : plead mercy to the church of Scotland, in the midst of wrathful days : though you should see no particular promise in all the Bible to it, yet if faith can take a general promise, and apply it to a particular church, it will speak mercy to it, because the author of faith never creates any useless act of faith.—Plead mercy to the rising generation, that they may not be carried down the stream of impiety, profanity, and immorality ; nor drowned in the deluge of error and infidelity, that is like to overflow the present generation.—Plead mercy to your concerns, to your children, family, relatives, friends, acquaintances, and to all your neighbours about you.—Plead mercy to young communicants, who never trode that path before, that from this time the foundation of the spiritual temple may be laid, the building raised, and the promise made out, Hag. ii. 19. “From this day will I bless you.” Let mercy also be pled for old communicants, who are turned into an easy way of communicating by course, in a carnal, formal, customary manner, for the most part ; and who are not at suitable pains to stir up the grace of faith, love, repentance, and other graces, to a lively exercise.—Plead mercy for unworthy communicants, who have approached to God’s altar, and yet have not been prepared according to the preparation of the sanctuary, that the blood they have trampled upon, may wash away the sin of unworthy communicating.—Yea, let mercy also be pled for worthy communicants, that goodness and mercy may follow them, and that they may follow the Lord with full purpose of heart, and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things ; and that they never be left to be a stain to their profession, nor a reproach to their holy religion. Again,

3. While you plead that the Lord would remember mercy in the midst of wrath, do you yourselves also remember mercy in the midst of wrath. Are you tempted to wrath, and wrathful resentment against your friends, neighbours, brethren, and acquaintances ? O sirs, remember mercy in the midst of wrath ; remember pardoning and forgiving mercy. With what confidence can you expect that God should remember mercy towards you, notwithstanding your innumerable sins and provocations, if you cannot remember mercy towards others, notwithstanding some real or supposed injuries ? How can you pray that God would forgive your sins, if you forgive not those that sin against you, as you are taught both in your Bible

and Catechism? "To the merciful he will show himself merciful. Be ye therefore merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful." If you have beheld the glory of his mercy to you, you will be changed into the same image, from glory to glory; and may I not say, From mercy to mercy?—O remember mercy to all that are about you: mercy to the poor and needy; mercy to the destitute and afflicted; mercy to the souls and bodies of men: not only mercy to their bodies, by acts of bounty, alms, charity, and benevolence, as you know their circumstances require, especially if they be of the household of faith; but also mercy to their souls, by your acts of piety, by your prayers, and counsels, suitable reproofs, and religious example. And even though you should see them surrounded with the tokens of God's wrath; yet remember mercy towards them; because you expect that in the midst of wrath he will remember mercy towards you. If you remember mercy towards men, it is an evidence that he is remembering mercy towards you.

3. I would advise you to fill your memories with the mercy of God in Christ, and let your mind be a store-house, to treasure up his mercy in. One of the great reasons why the Lord saith, "Put me in remembrance," and allows you to plead he may remember mercy is, not that he can forget mercy; but because you are in danger of forgetting it: and by putting him in remembrance of it, you put yourselves in remembrance of it. Unbelief is ready to say, especially in the midst of wrath, "O! hath he forgotten to be gracious? Will he be favourable no more? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? But faith is a reminding the soul of the love and mercy of God, a recognition of his grace and goodness in Christ Jesus. Faith is acted to great advantage by a sanctified remembrance of the mercy of God in Christ: and whenever mercy comes into the believer's mind, the believer puts God in mind of his mercy, saying, "Lord, remember what thou didst for me at such a time; remember what thou saidst to me: Remember thy word on which thou hast caused me to hope: remember thy promise, remember thy name, remember thy Son's name, remember thy covenant, remember thy goodness." If you forget mercy, you will not plead with God to remember mercy: therefore let mercy be much in your heart and memory, that you may be still ready to plead and prevail, even when surrounded with the flood of wrath, saying, "Lord in wrath remember mercy."

S E R M O N X L I X

HAB. iii. 13.—“O Lord, in wrath, remember mercy.”

[The second Sermon on this Text.]

WE entered upon these words elsewhere; explained them, and illustrated the following proposition from them, namely, ‘That in wrathful times to the church and people of God, it is most seasonable to plead, that he would remember mercy. We showed when a time may be said to be wrathful; inquired what instances of mercy we need at such a time; opened up the import of the Lord’s remembering mercy, and our praying that he would do so; and showed that it is both seasonable and reasonable to plead that he would remember mercy in wrathful times; and also made some improvement of the point.

We shall now, at this time, add a Lesson deducible from the text and doctrine so clearly, that it might be viewed as another doctrine.

LESSON. “That God has terrible and wrathful ways of saving his people, while in wrath he remembers mercy, and allows them to plead mercy in the midst of wrath.”

In opening up and illustrating this lesson, we shall endeavour to do these five things:—

- I. We shall clear this lesson from Scripture.
- II. Observe some terrible and wrathful ways wherein he saves his people.
- III. Consider in what cases and seasons he brings them under these tokens of wrath.
- IV. Offer some reasons why he shows mercy in such wrathful ways.
- V. Deduce some inferences for the application.

1. For clearing and confirming this lesson from scripture, you

may consult the following passages. Psalm xlv. 4. "His right hand teacheth him terrible things; Psalm lxxv. 5. By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation. Psal. lxxvi. 11, 12, Thou broughtest us into the net: thou laidst affliction upon our loins; thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us into a wealthy place; Psalm lxxxvi. 7, Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah." Jacob saith, "All these things are against me:—But God meant it for good," Gen. xlii. 26. See Deut viii. 15, 16, and x. 21; Psalm lxxviii 35. Though we may apprehend God designs evil against us, and against his church; yet the Lord means it for good: "The Lord is with me, saith the prophet, as a mighty terrible one; Jer. xx. 11, I will bring her into the wilderness; there will I speak comfortably, Hos. ii. 14. Thou shalt go to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered," Mic. iv. 10; Ezek. xxii. 14, 15; Isa. lxiv. 3, 4.

II. We proposed, next, to observe some terrible and wrathful ways, wherein he saves. Some of these have been mentioned in the scriptures cited. He sheweth mercy to them by terrible ways, while he doth it sometimes by terrible providences; such as heavy afflictions, grievous rods upon their bodies, families, names, estates, children, and relations; of all which I might give instances, were it needful. "They are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world: and, "Their light affliction worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." By terrible temptations: so Paul had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, that he might not be exalted above measure. By terrible falls into the mire; so Peter fell into the horrible pit of cursing, swearing, and denying his Master. By terrible words: as when he tells them, in a manner, that he has no commission to save them; and that they are dogs, to whom the children's bread does not belong. By terrible commotions, disorders, and confusions upon their minds; "I am full of confusion; see thou mine affliction," Job x. 15. Thus the arrows of the Almighty may be within them, chap. iv. 4. By terrible commands, like that to Abraham; Gen. xxii. 2, "Go sacrifice Isaac." By terrible threatenings, like that to Israel, Judges x. 14. "Go to the gods whom ye have served; I will deliver you no more." By terrible challenges, like that; Isaiah xliii. 23, 24, "But thou hast not called on me, O Jacob; but thou hast been

weary of me, O Israel," &c. By terrible descriptions of them, like that; Isa. lvii. 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him," &c. By terrible fears and perplexing thoughts: so the Psalmist, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul:" fear of relinquishing, "When my foot nigh slipt, thy mercy held me up," Psal xciv. 18. By terrible storms and tempests of angry dispensations, like that towards Jonah, chap. ii. 6, "I went down to the bottom of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever." By terrible disappointments, making them say, "I sought him, but I found him not; I go forward, but he is not there." By a terrible confluence of trouble and mixture of adversity; troubled on every side with troubles of every sort, outward and inward trouble, deep calling unto deep. By terrible questions; such as that, "How shall I put thee among the children? Jer. iii. 19. How shall I pardon thee for this? chap. 5. 7. How shall I do for the daughter of my people?" chap. ix. 7. By terrible delays, making them cry, "How long? how long?" Psalm xiii. 1. By terrible tidings: "I will not be afraid of evil tidings;" importing that they are terrible. They may be scared with dreams, and terrified with night visions. By terrible turns, and various changes and vicissitudes: "Because of thine indignation and thy wrath; for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down again," Psalm cii. 9, 10. By terrible extremities, even to the sentence of death, 2 Cor. i. 9; yea, to the grave, and the grave-stone, Lam. iii. 53; yea more, to be as dead and dry bones scattered about the grave's mouth. These are some of the terrible ways wherein the Lord showeth mercy, or saves his people while he hideth his face from, and showeth his wrath against them.

III. The third thing proposed was, To consider in what cases and seasons he showeth himself in arms and in wrath against them.

1. When they degenerate and make apostacy from him, and from his truth, and their zeal for it, Jer. ix. 1, 7. Hence he saves them, yet so as by fire, 1 Cor. iii. 14. To this purpose see Ezek. xx. 33, 37.

2. When his people become careless and negligent in known duty. Thus God met Moses, and sought to kill him, for his neglect to circumcise his child, Exod. iv. 24. You read of Eli's neglecting to punish and chastise his sons, 1 Sam. ii. 12, 26, wherefore God breaks his neck, and slays his two sons in one day, chap. iv 10, 18.

3. When the people of God break out into any scandalous sins, whereby the name of God is blasphemed. You see David's murder and adultery severely chastised: "The sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah to be thy wife, and hast slain him: behold, I will raise up evil against thee, in thine own house. Thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun," 2 Sam. xii. 10, 14.

4. When the people of God undervalue their mercies, and do not observe the kindness of God, that conveys their mercies to them: "She did not know that I gave her corn, wine, and oil, and multiplied her mercies; therefore I will take away my corn, wine, oil, and flax, and none shall deliver her out of my hand," Hos. ii. 8, 9. How can we expect God should remember mercy towards us, when we do not remember, but forget his mercy?

5. When the people of God grow wilful and obstinate, and will not hear the call of God; as it was even with good Josiah, who will needs go and fight with Necho, king of Egypt, contrary to the call of God; and so he got his death's wounds, 2 Chron. xxxv. 20, 22. When they will not obey his voice, but walk after the imagination of their own heart, going after Balaam; then he is provoked to say, "Behold! I will feed this people with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink," Jer ix. 15. When they desert the call of God, and the cause of God, then he is exceedingly provoked. Jonah will not go the errand God sent him; and how terribly doth God deal with him!

6. When the people of God fall a-doating upon what God hath bestowed upon them, then God deals sharply with them: thus, when David falls a-doating upon Absalom, what a grieved heart got he with him, both in his life and in his death! Beware of doating too much upon your children, or idolizing your enjoyments, lest God break your idols, and break your hearts with them too.

7. When the people of God grow full of animosity, and fall out by the way: I mean, when even the friends of truth, and of the cause of God, are rent one from another. Many of God's saints, who could agree well enough in a prison, and at a stake, yet could not agree when at liberty. Sharp persecutions have been occasioned by the divisions of the saints, by the dissensions of Luther and Calvin. "Whereas there is among you envying, strife, and division; are ye not carnal?" 1 Cor. iii. 3. And particularly when, through

pride or selfishness, a faithful remnant, that would witness the best way they can for God, are left alone, and few or none will join them, to set up the curtains of the tabernacle: this tends to divide the pastors and scatter the flock. See Jer. x. 20, 21.

8. When the people of God turn carnally confident, still justifying themselves: "How canst thou say, I am not polluted? Thou sayest, Behold I am innocent: I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned," Jer. ii. 23, 35. This is quite the reverse of the precept, "Judge yourselves, and ye shall not be judged," 1 Cor. xi. 30.

9. When they break out into intemperate zeal, zeal without knowledge: this provokes God to bring terrible things upon them, to cure this distemper, and to calm and sober them. Thus it was with Uzza, when he gave a touch to the ark; and with the Jews, Rom. x. 2, "I bear them record," saith the apostle, "that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Zeal without knowledge, is heat without light; and let there be never so great a zeal for God and a good cause, if it be grounded upon ignorance and want of understanding, it comes to little account; yea, it brings to ruin: so it was with the Jews. Light and heat should bear a proportion to one another.

10. When they rashly approach to God in duties and ordinances, and worship him in a carnal, formal way; and particularly when they profane the table of the Lord, by unworthy communicating: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body: for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep," 1 Cor. xi. 30. Many are punished with sudden death for their sinful way of showing forth the Lord's death, yet all in mercy to his own; for though he pardon their sin, he takes vengeance on their inventions.

IV. The Fourth thing we proposed was, To give the reasons why he saves and shows mercy in such terrible and wrathful ways.

1. It is out of a gracious design; particularly to cause them to seek his face: "In their affliction they shall seek me early," Hosea v. 15. God's own people are sometimes ready to carry strangely towards him, and he saith of them; Jer. xii. 9, "Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her. Come up, assemble all the beasts of the field: come to devour." He

bringeth them into captivity. But notice how he speaks of them elsewhere ; Song ii. 4, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs : let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." He makes his speckled bird fly to the clefts of the rock.

2. It is to instruct them, that they may have experimental knowledge, what it is to want him, and what it is to enjoy him ; "Then mine anger shall be kindled against them in that day ; and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us," Deut. xxxi. 17. It is said ; Hos. viii. 2, "Israel shall say unto me, My God we know thee," namely, experimentally know. It is to instruct them of the evil of sin, so as to be purged from it ; "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is all the fruit to take away sin," Isa. xxvii. 9.

3. That his people may understand more fully the love of our Lord Jesus Christ toward them ; and that they may know or guess at the greatness of the affliction and trouble that the Lord Jesus underwent ; who suffered the wrath of God for our sake and in our room ; "He was wounded for our transgressions ; he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

4. That all may know that God will not spare sin, even in his own : "You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities," Amos iii. 7. And this he doth in a conformity to his promise, Psal. lxxxix. 30, 34. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments ; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments : then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes ; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail ; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the word that is gone out of my lips." See Deut. xxviii. 58, 59.

5. He saves and shews mercy in ways terrible and wrathful, that his mercy towards them may be wonderful and astonishing. When they are brought to the mouth of the pit, to the brink of destruction, to the midst of the furnace of wrath, and then plucked as brands out of the burning, how wonderful and astonishing is his mercy ! And how do they stand amazed, crying, "Is this the

manner of man ! Then he gives them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

6. He shows mercy in ways terrible, that his mercy may appear the more amiable. Mercy at any rate is desirable and lovely : but mercy in the midst of wrath and terrible tempests, O how sweet is it ! Light is precious when it shines out of darkness ; so is mercy when it arises out of wrath.

V. The fifth thing proposed was, the application of this point ; which we shall essay in a few inferences.

1. Hence see with what awful reverence we ought to compass the altar of God, and to approach to a communion-table ; our God is a consuming fire ; a God of terrible majesty, as well as of tender mercy, " Let a man examine himself," and prepare himself, that he provoke not God, by unworthy communicating, to display his wrath instead of mercy.

2. Let all the children of God be cautious and circumspect : though the Lord will save them ; yet he hath terrible ways of doing it. If they provoke their Father to anger ; he may write bitter things against them, run upon them like a lion, and break them with breach upon breach : " You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities," Amos iii. 7. You walk upon pinnacles ; none in all the world have more need to walk exactly. You are exposed to dangerous temptations, both from yourselves and from the devil : in yourselves, from the corruption and pride of your nature : and the lion of hell will be upon you with his utmost violence ; for he constantly goes about seeking whom he may devour.

3. Let the wicked tremble to meet with the great and terrible God. If he be so terrible to his own, what may they expect who are his enemies ! " If the righteous shall scarcely be saved, where shall the wicked and ungodly appear ?" When God comes even in mercy to his people, they have not been able to bear it, Exod. xx. 19. Thus Moses said, " I exceedingly fear and quake." Heb. xii. 21. — John fell down dead, Rev. i. 17. When God appears in mercy to his people, if there be but one bright beam of his majesty shining forth, it cannot be borne, it is so terrible ; if that bright beam of his majesty make them tremble, what will become of you when he appears in his wrath, when the terrible stream of fire and brimstone shall issue from his awful throne ! It is said of him, even when he

sits as a refiner and purifier, "Who shall abide the day of his coming!" Mal. iii. 2. How will he then burn up the chaff! O but sinners in Zion shall be afraid, fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites, Isaiah xxxiii. 14. If the saints may have the sentence of death in themselves, 2 Cor. i. 8, and if this be terrible, how will the execution of the sentence of death everlasting, terribly torment the wicked for ever!

4. Since the door of hope is yet open, hence let not terrible times, and terrible dispensations, create desperate thoughts; since God saves in terrible ways, look to mercy in the midst of wrath, for, "He multiplies to pardon, and keeps mercy for thousands."

S E R M O N L.¹

DARK PROVIDENCES CLEARED IN DUE TIME.

JOHN xiii. 7.—"What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

MY friends, the invisible God acts like himself, even amidst all the visible and sensible tokens he gives of his presence; such as he hath been giving you at this occasion: for, amidst all his ways and workings that are seen and felt, yet still his way is invisible, unsearchable, and mysterious. How small a portion do we know of him! What is said of his presence and absence, or of his coming and going sometimes, may be said also of his doing: his coming near once to Jacob, was dark to him: therefore he said, "Surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not." His going away from Samson was dark to him; therefore it is said "He wist not the Lord was departed from him." And what is thus said of his coming and going, may be said of his doing, and perhaps of his doings among us at this occasion: "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

We have here, in this chapter, the remarkable history of our Lord Jesus, his washing his disciples' feet while he was at supper

¹ This Sermon was preached at Dunfermline, on Monday, July 2nd, 1736, after the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there.

with them. It was great condescension to sup with them ; and yet greater to wash their feet. How far Christ will stoop down to the necessities of his people, is amazing ! It is observed, ver. 3, that, "Jesus knowing that the Father had committed all things into his hand, and that he was come from God, and went to God : he rises from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself, and poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples feet." ver. 4, 5. All power and sovereignty was committed to him, yet the knowledge of his excellency did not hinder his condescension ; in the view he had of his greatest glory, he evidenced the greatest humility. Neither the greatest sufferings he was just now to endure, nor the greatest honour he was advanced unto, could make him forget his poor people ; his heart was set upon them, as much as either upon his sufferings or his glory : why ? for them he suffered, and for them he was to be glorified. And as the thoughts of his glory formerly did not hinder his condescension ; so the possession of his glory now, doth not hinder his stooping down to serve, yea, to wash, and save them. And the higher the Father hath exalted him, the more hath he fitted him for doing service to us in our low case and condition.

Now, we have here Peter's amazement, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" ver. 6. What ! might he say, Thou, the Lord and Ruler of the world, dost thou stoop to do this for me, a worthless worm, a sinful man ? Here is a paradox I cannot understand ! O ! but Christ's condescensions, wherein we find ourselves taken notice of by his grace, are justly matter of admiration. "Is this the manner of man ? What are we, and what is our Father's house ?" It well becomes us, and the best of the sons and daughters of Adam to sit down at his feet and wash them with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of our head. But, O ! what is this ! dost thou wash my feet, Lord ! O King of kings, and Lord of lords ? Christ's abasing himself, and stooping so low to us, ought not to obscure his majesty, or make us think the less of him, as if he did what was too mean and unbecoming his grandeur ; nay, if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, the lower that he stoops towards us, the more will we honour him, and the higher thoughts will we have of him.

The text is an answer to Peter's amazement, "What I do," says Christ, "thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter." Where he tells him two things. 1. That the design of this work was at present hid from him. 2. That it should be after-

wards revealed to him. So ignorant was Peter of this work, which was afterwards explained to him, as signifying another inward washing, and giving to us a copy of humility, and of humble service one towards another ; so ignorant was he hereof, that his sinful modesty makes him refuse this act of kindness and condescension ; as you see in the following verse. Though it be commendable to fear the Lord and his goodness, and to be amazed at his condescending grace and mercy ; yet it is sinful to run to that extreme of fear and trembling, as to shun, decline, and refuse it : and though our Lord's stooping down be a great abasement ; yet it is the great error of the saints, to think he will not reckon it his glory and honour to serve them. It is a part of their ignorance and error, when he stoops down to them with his blessing, to think that he had forgot himself in his condescension, and that it is not possible he means such favour to them.

In the general, we may learn from the words in their connexion with the text,

1. That when we refuse any favour at Christ's hand, or shun any act of his condescending grace, as if unbecoming his greatness to grant it, or our meanness to receive it ; we but discover our great ignorance and error.

2. Christ may be very near to his people, and doing great things to them in steps of gracious condescension ; and yet they may be very ignorant of him, and of his acting : "What I do, thou knowest not."

3. Every work of Christ towards his people, carries something more great and precious in the bosom of it, than we are capable, at the time, to understand ; it is more laden with wisdom, power, goodness, grace, and faithfulness, than for the present we can apprehend : "What I do, thou knowest not now."

4. Though we cannot dive into the depths of Christ's counsel in his doing towards us ; yet we ought to reverence and adore him therein, and to yield implicit obedience to his will, without quarrelling his way, or censuring his proceeding, while through darkness and ignorance we are such incompetent judges thereof ; thus did Abraham ; Heb. xi. 8, "By faith, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed ; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

5. Our Lord Jesus doth not explain his mind to his people at the first ; what he intends by such a work, and such a promise, and

such a providence, until afterwards, that subsequent works explain preceeding works, and subsequent providences explain preceeding ones.

6. Learn, that we are therefore to wait upon him, till he see fit to explain what may now be dark and hidden unto us ; and we shall afterwards know and see, what was the tendency of events that seemed most cross and strange. We must let Christ take his own way both in ordinances and providences ; and we will find, in the issue, that it is indeed the best way. "What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter."

But passing all these, the point of doctrine I would speak to is this.

OBSERV. That the works of Christ towards his people, may be very dark and mysterious, hidden and unknown to them, till afterwards he make them manifest.

"What I do, thou knowest not now, Peter ; but thou shalt know hereafter ;" what need thou hast of being washed, when thou shalt be guilty of the heinous crime of denying me thrice ; or, when thou shalt, in the discharge of thy office, be employed as an instrument to wash away the sinful defilements of others.

But this doctrine may be verified from many instances. Joseph's dreams, as well as Jacob's, being bereft of him, was dark and mysterious, till afterwards it was manifested in the course of providence. Abraham's call, to go and offer up his son, as well as his being ordered to go, not knowing whither he went, was very dark and mysterious till afterwards. Esther's marriage with Ahasuerus was a kindly providence, but the design of it was not manifested till afterwards, to break Haman's cruel project. Christ manifested his glory to Peter, James, and John, upon the mount ; but what he did they knew not the design of, till afterwards it appeared what eminent duties and trials he was preparing them for. Moses little knew what was the mystery of the manifestation he got of God, when he saw him in a flame of fire out of the bush, and the bush burned, and was not consumed ; and when God spake to him saying, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob : " Moses hid his face, and was afraid to look upon God, till the Lord thereafter showed what was the design of this appearance, and what service he was calling him to. Little did Israel know, when brought through the Red Sea, and singing triumphantly at the shore over all their drowned enemies, that this glorious appear-

ance of God was to usher in a forty years' weary travel through the wilderness; and that what the Lord did then, by the hand of Moses, was but typical of the great salvation through Jesus Christ. Little did Paul, our apostle, while he was yet Saul the persecutor, know what the Lord did when he appeared to him in his road to Damascus, till afterwards that the Lord showed him what he was to do and suffer for the name of Jesus. His ways, even of grace and mercy, are dark and unknown; therefore says the psalmist; Psalm lxxvii. 13, 19, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary; thy way is in the seas, thy paths in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Psalm xxxvi. 6, "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgment are a great deep." Psalm cxi. 2, "The works of the Lord are great; sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."

The Lord works and carries on his gracious work, according to his rule of divine policy, that every one cannot penetrate therein. As great politicians carry on their designs in a way that ordinary onlookers cannot understand; so much more doth infinite wisdom work, as it were, by a holy and majestic stratagem, and carries on his work in the dark, and in a way much hidden and unknown to us; for "Clouds and darkness are round about him;" and hence says the apostle; Rom. xi. 23, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Whatever then God hath been doing or saying to you at this occasion, think not that you are wise enough now, or that you know all that he hath been doing or designing by this work. "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

Having thus confirmed the doctrine, the method for the farther prosecution of the subject, may be the following:—

I. To speak to some things the Lord doth towards his church and people, that are dark and mysterious, hidden and unknown.

II. To show in what respects these things that he is doing for them, may be hid and unknown to them.

III. Show for what reason the Lord takes this way of doing, so hid, dark, and mysterious, that what he doth they know not.

IV. Observe some of the seasons when it is that he makes them know what now they are in the dark about according to his word here, "Thou shalt know hereafter."

V. Deduce some inferences for the application of the whole.

1. We are to speak of some of these things the Lord doth towards his people that are dark, mysterious, hidden, and unknown.

Here we might, to view it more distinctly, mention some common steps of his dealing with his people, that for a long time, may be dark and unknown to them ; such as, what he doth with respect to their outward state in the world : what he doth by ordering such and such circumstances of prosperity or adversity in the world : what he doth with respect to their birth and education ; his design in their being born of gracious, or of graceless parents ; his design in ordering the bounds of their habitation, in such a spot of the world ; his design in bringing them under such and such a ministry ; to such a sermon, and such a sacrament, and such a table ; why he casts such a book in their way : all may be hid and unknown to them till afterwards, that the Lord discovers what good and great designs he had thereby ; what he doth by such a mercy, and such a judgment ; such a word, and such a rod.

Again, we might condescend on what he doth with respect to their inward spiritual state ; they may be greatly in the dark as to what he is doing, when, on the one hand, he is convincing and awakening them ; when he is humbling and breaking them ; when he is deserting and forsaking them to their sense ; when he suffers them to be tempted of Satan, and conquered by their lusts ; and leaves them under the power of their enemies ; denying their requests ; refusing to help them in prayer, and to hear them ; and seeming to reject and cast them off ; what he thus doth, they know not till afterwards that he return.

And then, on the other hand, his way and work may be hid and unknown, even when he returns, so as they know not what he is doing : when he washes their feet, or condescends to give them some tokens of his pardoning and purifying grace, they may expect fair weather and clean way, or a prosperous journey, all their life-time afterwards ; while yet he may be preparing them for a new storm. They may little know what he doth, when he is manifesting himself anew to them ; they may reckon it is a preparatory for more glorious displays immediately : but they may be mistaken, and may find themselves tumbling down the hill into a mire, or ever they are aware. They may little know what he doth, when, at a communion-solemnity, he comes to loose their bonds ; and when he is comfort-

ing, strengthening, or sealing them, and speaking in to their hearts, they may be thinking now that their mountain stands strong, they shall never be moved, never be what they have been, nor doubt as they have done ; yet quickly they may be at that with it, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." They may little know, when he brings them to the banquetting-house, and makes them sit down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to their taste, what he is doing and designing ; they may think, now this is for my present comfort, now my cup runs over, and I hope it will continue running ; while yet he may be feeding them for the hunger to come, victualling them for a voyage, laying in provision for a siege, preparing them for a battle, or perhaps anointing them for a burial. "What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter."

But here I shall mention some of the special works of God, that are covered with a cloud of majesty, that his people seldom know what he is doing with them. As,

1. When his word and his work, his promise and his providence seem to clash and contradict one another ; this is a dark and hidden rod. What he doth, we know not then, when his dispensations seem, to human reason, to be driving on a design to defeat the promise ; we cannot see through the cloud without an eagle-eye of faith, nor pry into the depths of his infinite wisdom. Thus Moses was sent to deliver Israel out of Egypt, and to tell them the good news, that now the Lord was to deliver them from their bondage ; but behold their bondage is increased, their slavery is doubled, they are filled with anguish, Exodus v. 21. Moses himself could not well see through this dark cloud ; and therefore complains to God of it, ver. 22, 23. When things like this fall out to the church of God, or a child of God, that here is a promise, but where is the accomplishment, when the quite contrary appears ? Then we are to think on his word, "What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter."

2. When his dealings and dispensations are so dark and unintelligible, that his people know not whether they speak mercy or wrath : thus it was with Job when he said, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me ?" Job x. 2, intimating, how utterly ignorant he was, as to what the Lord was intending by that strange dispensation : in such a case he is saying, "What I do, thou knowest not now."

3. When the Lord comes with salvation in a surprising way ; or, while his people are quite out of frame and fitness for it ; as when it is said ; Isa. lvii. 17, " For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him ; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart ; " and yet it follows, " I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him, and to his mourners." O what is this ! will he show himself a God of love to me, when I have been showing myself a devil of enmity against him ! Or, while he surprises them with a mercy that they were never hoping nor waiting for ; as Israel, when the Lord returned their captivity, were like them that dream. His stately march this way is so hid from their eyes, that what he doth they know not ; it is above their capacity to understand his sovereign way.

4. When salvation comes, not only in a way of merciful surprise, but notwithstanding all appearance to the contrary ; when enemies are strong and invincible, by them prevalent, and victorious over them ; and when his people's strength is quite gone, Deut. xxxii. 36. And when their hope is gone, and they are cut off for their parts, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. When in such a point of extremity he steps in and saves ; and saves, perhaps, by very unlikely means ; as by the blowing of rams' horns he throws down the walls of Jericho ; by the stripling David, he kills the great Goliath, and defeats the army of the Philistines ; in these ways there is much hidden majesty. " What I do, thou knowest not."

5. When hopeful beginnings of relief and salvation meet with unexpected stops and hinderances ; and when the building of the spiritual temple, after the foundation is laid, comes to be retarded, and the work seems to go back rather than forward, as in the building of the material temple in the days of Ezra. How little do we understand what that means, when the Lord says, by Jeremiah to Baruch ; Jer. xlv. 4, " Behold, that which I have built, will I break down ? " When he suffers enemies to prevail, and break down his carved work, as with axes and hammers, who can see through such a dispensation, when it befalls a church in general, as to the work of reformation ; or a child of God in particular as to the work of grace in the soul ? " What he doth, we know not now."

6. When the Lord's way towards the godly and the ungodly seems unsuitable to their different state, as if he frowned on his

friends and favoured his enemies : how dark and hidden is his work herein ? The prosperity of the wicked, and adversity of the godly was for a time a great mystery to Asaph, Psalm lxxiii. Yea more, sometimes the godly are left to be a great stumbling block to others ; as when the Lord left Aaron to make the golden calf in the wilderness, that brought so much sin and wrath upon the people. I might instance David, Solomon, Peter, and others : how dark is this, and the like dispensations ! And when, on the other hand, he employs the wicked themselves to carry on his work, and makes their wicked designs contribute to advance his holy end and glorious design ; as he did make the treason of Judas, the sentence of Pilate, the malice of the Jews, to contribute for the work of our redemption. Surely, " What he doth, we know not ; " his glorious works are hidden and unknown. He can necessitate enemies, contrary to their will, to do that which is a manifest forwarding of his work, as when the Philistines were constrained to send home the ark of Israel, 1 Samuel vi.

7. In a word, how dark and hid is his work, when he cuts off instruments that seem to be most fitted for it ; and that either before their work be begun, as David that prepared materials for building of the temple, but was not employed therein ; or before their work be ended, as Moses, that brought Israel though the wilderness, but is taken away then, and not employed to end the work of bringing them in to the promised land, which he would gladly have done ! How dark and unknown is his work, when he calls them to believe what seems contradictory to carnal sense and reason ; as that Abraham should have a son, when his body and Sarah's womb were both dead, who yet believed in God who quickens the dead, and calls things that are not, as though they were ? Or when he calls them to do that which seems expressly against his own revealed will ; as when Abraham was called to go and sacrifice his son ; this was a command of trial, and by faith, Abraham went all the length therein that was designed ! How dark is the providence and trial, when duty is seemingly set against duty, as when church-men and prophets set upon Nehemiah, and press him to that as duty which was no duty ; as you see the history, Neb. vi. 10, 14 ? And when prophets are set against prophets, not only Baal's prophets against the prophets of God, but prophets of the Lord against prophets of the Lord ; as in the case of the old prophet, pretending angelical information, and deceiving the man of God, 1 Kings xiii ? Finally, how

dark and unintelligible is his work, when he lifts us with the one hand, and casts us down with the other; when he heals with the one and wounds with the other. Thus the child; Mark ix. 19, 26, that Christ took in hand to cure, grew worse; for, "The devil threw him down and tare him." The ruler of the synagogue got Christ engaged to go along with him, and heal his daughter; but, behold what a wound is given, one coming from his house, saying, "Thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master!" In these, and the like works he says, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

II. The second thing proposed was, To show in what respects we may be ignorant, and in the dark about the Lord's doing towards us. And,

1. What he doth, as to the very matter of his works may be hid and unknown, whether it be a common or a saving work; whether it be a merciful or a wrathful work, such as what Manoah and his wife met with, Judges xiii. 22, 23. He and she differed in their judgment about what they saw; "Manoah said, surely we shall die, because we have seen God. "But his wife (on the contrary) said," if the Lord were pleased to kill us, would he have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hand? Or, would he have showed us all these things?"

2. What he doth may be hid and unknown to them, as to the manner and method of his doing. His way of bringing about his purpose is very strange and unperceivable; for he is the God that quickens the dead, and calls things that are not, as though they were, Rom. iv. 17. He brings things out of nothing, and one contrary out of another, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Light out of darkness, life out of death, strength out of weakness; "Meat out of the eater, and sweet out of the strong." How unknowable then to us is his work, who makes death the way to life, and wounding the way to healing, breaking down the way to building up, and losing the way to gain.

3. What he doth may be hid and unknown, as to the causes of his working. There may be reasons of state that we are ignorant of: the reason why he doth so and so now; and why he desists at another time; why Zion is filled with judgment: why he shines on the counsel of the wicked, that pray not to him; and why the just and upright man is laughed to scorn. Surely, "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: for who hath known the

mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" Romans xi. 34.

4. What he doth may be hid and unknown, as to the beauty of his work; "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Where is the beauty and glory of this work? Is it becoming for thee to do so? We may be ignorant of the glory of divine wisdom that shines in his dealings; the glory of his holiness, grace, love, and mercy, that shines therein, till afterwards he make his work appear. There is a beautiful connexion between what he hath done, what he is doing, and what he will do afterwards, that may be greatly hid, and the beautiful season of his doing; he hath made everything beautiful in his time. O! there is a lustre in the very time of his coming, when he makes our time of need his time of love, our extremity his opportunity; yet for a time this beauty may be hid.

5. What he doth may be hid and unknown, as to the excellency and greatness of his work; it may appear little, and low, and mean, as Peter thought, when he said, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Yet in due time, it may appear to be a very great and excellent work. His greatness and grandeur is not hereby diminished, but more and more displayed. "When the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion, they were like them that dreamed," did not see or consider the greatness of the work till afterwards they see and say, "The Lord hath done great things for us," Psal. cxxxvi. 1, 3.

6. What he doth may be hid and unknown, for a time, as the necessity of the work, and the usefulness of it: part of Peter's meaning here, when he said, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" was, Lord, what is the need of thy washing my feet? And therefore he ignorantly says in the following verse, "Thou shalt never wash my feet;" whereupon, Christ opens up to him the absolute necessity of what he now did, and designed by this work: "If I wash thee not thou hast no part in me." There is a great need for all that Christ doth to us, though we be in the dark about it; and we ought to see a need-be in everything he doth: "If need-be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations for a season;" and if need-be, he will give a more joyful and heartsome season: he knows best what you need, though you do not know.

7. What he doth may be hid as to the variety of his work, and the changes that befall us, through the various changes and turns of his hand in working; though his heart and mind, his love and covenant, be unchangeable. Sometimes he will let his people ask

what they will, and he will give them to the half, yea, to the whole of his kingdom ; and at other times they may cry and shout, and he shut out their prayers. Sometimes he will let them hold him, and not let him go ; yea, and command him, as it were ; “ Concerning my sons and my daughters, command ye me :” thus he let Moses ask, and he said “ Show me thy glory ;” and God says, “ I will make all my goodness pass before thee ;” and yet behold, at other times, he will condescend to nothing, and seem inexorable ; “ Though Moses, Daniel, and Job, were to make intercession in the matter.” Who can understand this variety of his doing, and the secret reasons of the vicissitudes and changes that hereupon befall his people in their inward frame and outward lot ?

8. What he doth may be hid and unknown, as to the end and design of his doing, as to the upshot and issue thereof ; and what he is to bring out of that which now he doth. What he did in washing the disciples feet, was not known in the design of it till afterwards. Many things he hath done, the meaning whereof was not known till afterwards. What he did, when he became man, when he became a worm, and no man ; what he did, when he lived our life ; what he did, when he laid down his life, and hung upon the cross between two thieves, were not understood till afterwards ; and then it appeared that it behoved him, Heb. ii. 17. And what he doth at this communion we know not now. The way that he takes may seem to be far about, and yet afterwards appear to be the only right way : and when he leads his people in a way they know not, and in paths which they have not known, may afterwards appear to be the best way for his glory, and for their good. And no wonder that we be in the dark, if we consider that the worker of these works is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, Isa. xxviii. 29 : infinitely beyond all wordly politicians, whose projects and purposes are often hid from us, and much more may the infinitely deep counsels of God.

III. The third thing proposed was, to offer some reasons, why the Lord takes such a hid, mysterious and unknown way of doing with his people ; and what he doth, they know not now. And,

1. It is to discover himself in a way suitable to himself and his own glorious perfections ; and to show that his thoughts are not our thoughts, as his ways are not our ways. If he should work according to our thoughts and imaginations, and in a way not transcending our apprehensions, how would it appear that he is JEHOVAH, a

sovereign God that acts like himself, whose will is a law to us, and a rule to himself; and whose way is in the deep waters, so as his footsteps cannot be seen. Herein he shows his wisdom to be hidden wisdom, while his own people are apt to think that he is about to destroy his work in them and in his church, when he is upon his way to raise them up, and to bring down the enemy. Herein he shows his truth and faithfulness miraculously when he comes with salvation, after he had wrought so long under ground, and out of sight, and all hope was gone; but when it shines out from behind the dark cloud, then it appears with a more than ordinary glance and lustre. O then, they see his mercy is in the heavens, and his truth reaches to the clouds, and his faithfulness to all generations, Psal. cxix. 90. So that no changes or vicissitudes here below can alter, no length of time can change his mind.

2. It is to discover his enemies, that they may appear to be what they are: what he doth for his people, they do not know themselves; far less do hypocrites and false-hearted professors know what he is doing for them, and what good he is doing for them. If the Lord were appearing visibly for his children, whenever they are in a strait, many false friends would take part with them, and seem to love and favour them; but that their enmity may be discovered, and they may be made manifest, he comes to his people in unknown ways, and hides his work; and then enemies show themselves openly to be enemies to God's people, while God doth not show himself openly to be their friend. He may hide himself and his work from his friends to discourage his enemies, and harden them in his righteous judgment; for, "Whom he will he hardens," Rom. ix. 18, by leaving them to themselves.

3. It is to discover the dross and corruption of his own people, that lies at the bottom of their heart unseen; for, while he keeps his work hid from them, how does then their unbelief appear in many doubts and scruples that rise in their souls about his design? How doth their impatience appear, while he delays to clear up matters to them? Thus he shows them their sin, and humbles them under a sense of their ignorance. Such a discovery the Psalmist got when he went to the sanctuary, and reflected on the mistake he was under, about what the Lord was doing: "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee." He makes them thus to know what is in them.

4. It is to discover their graces also, and to try and exercise

them ; thus he tries their faith, when they are to believe, though they do not know how his word shall be accomplished, as he did the faith of Abraham, Romans iv. Thus he tries their patience, when they are to wait upon him, and they know not how long, Psal. xiii. 1. "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Thus he tries their hope, when all human appearances and probabilities fail, and they can see no ground of hope from without ; for, "That which is seen is no hope." Thus he tries their submission to him, and their obedience to him, while he calls to stoop to his will, even when he hides his design, and gives not account of any of his matters ; that we may be still and know that he is God.

5. In a word, he takes this hid and unknown way, that we may learn to reverence and fear him, and to wait upon him, till he teach us what we know not, and expound to us what we do not understand : "He is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him." In this way he curbs the curiosity, and checks the pride of poor man, who, when he is done, must go to school again, and learn over what he learned before, and learn better. In this way he stirs up to prayer, that they may take every piece of his work back again to him, that so he may make them know the secrets of his counsels, and the depth of his government ; and that they may put no sense on what he doth but his own, which they are very ready to do, without waiting till he give them his own mind ; that we darken not counsel without knowledge. In this way he teaches us to be modest in our minds, and sober in our sentiments about what he doth, till once he hath done out his work, and told out all his mind ; and that, in a sense of our ignorance, we may daily be learned to read and speak, to read his mind distinctly, and to speak of his actings knowingly ; otherwise we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. In this way he not only quickens his people to prayer, but gives great matter of praise in the issue, when what we know not now, he makes known afterward, and brings light out of darkness, yea, and makes darkness light before us. How doth it accent their praise, when the dark clouds give way to the bright sun ? The issue of his dealing is the more glorious, when afterwards his gracious and glorious design shall be made known. But this leads me to the next thing proposed, namely,

IV. The fourth head, which was to point out some of the seasons when he makes them know afterwards, what now they are, or may

be in the dark about : "What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter."

1st, In general, this hath a reference to the partial discovery he gives of his mind in this world, and the perfect and full discovery he makes of himself in the world to come. Here he sometimes discovers what was dark and mysterious formerly in his work and dealing ; but still it is only a partial display ; "For now we know but in part, we prophecy in part : and now we see but through a glass darkly," 1 Cor. xiii. 9. 12. But in the world to come, that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part shall be done away ; and then we shall see no more through a glass, but face to face. "Now I know in part (says the apostle), but then shall I know, even as also I am known. At that day ye shall know (says Christ) that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you," John xiv. 20. Here we know him but as he is NOT, but then positively : for "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. Ye shall know hereafter perfectly. But then,

2dly, In particular, it hath a reference to some special seasons, wherein, even in this world, he gives his people to know afterwards what he doth, which at present they do not know or understand ; and I shall touch at some of these seasons.

1. Sometimes the season of making known what he doth, is very soon, very quickly after the work is done, and so it was here ; for, after Christ had washed his disciples' feet, he explains what he designed by it, and that first to Peter, by showing what washing he especially intended ; so that without it, they could have no portion in the son of Jesse : "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." And then afterwards to all the disciples he said, "Know you what I have done to you ;" and so explains it further to them. And as sometimes he very quickly explains his work ; so he doth his word that was dark and unknown. Christ had said, John xvi. 17. "A little while, and ye shall not see me ; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me ; because I go to the Father :" they were puzzled and perplexed about it, verse 18 ; and hereupon, before Christ was done with speaking to them, he explains it to them, ver. 19—28, whereupon they say, ver. 29, 30. "Lo now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee : by this we believe that thou camest forth from God." Yet this knowledge that now they got was but imperfect, as Christ's following answer shows.

2. Sometimes the season of making known afterwards what he now doth, is very long after the work is done, or the word spoken, which they are in the dark about. Our Lord may do great things, and speak gracious words to his people, and yet they may be in great darkness as to the meaning and design thereof for a long time. God met with Jacob at Bethel, and gave him a glorious manifestation of himself, and a sweet promise of his presence and blessing, and it was to him the house of God and the gate of heaven, Gen. xxviii. 17. But Jacob knew not what a feast this was to be unto him twenty years afterwards, when God gave him a new meal upon this old experience, saying, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me," Gen. xxxi. 13. He knew not that it was to be a preface to twenty years servitude; and that the new remembrance and reflection upon it was to be a pledge of a new visit of the like nature; that the recognition of an old Bethel was to be a preface to a new Peniel. What do I know but it will take twenty or thirty years to explain what some have met with at this occasion in Dunfermline. "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." But whether it be in a short time or after a long time, that he opens up the mystery of what he does, he is sure to choose the fit time, the appointed time, the best time; best for reaching the great ends of his glory and our good: "The vision is for an appointed time, at the end it will speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" beyond the due time, Hab. ii. 3.

Again, there are some circumstances of time, wherein the Lord thinks fit to communicate the knowledge of what was dark and mysterious, hidden and unknown in his work and doing to his people. Sometimes after he hath hid himself in the dark from them in private, he meets with them in public, and tells them all his mind: when David went to the sanctuary, Psalm lxxiii., he got a resolution of his cloudy case; and found that even at the time his feet was almost gone, and his steps had well nigh slipt, that even then the Lord was holding him by his right hand. They have seen his power and glory in the sanctuary. Sometimes he hides himself in public, and gives them more of his mind in a secret corner: "When the disciples were alone he expounded all things to them," Mark iv. 34. What they hear and yet do not know in public, he clears it up when he and they are alone. Hence the church affects retirement,

Song vii. 11, 12. "Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages; let us go up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, &c.; there will I give thee my loves:" sweet and sensible communion is sometimes reserved for a corner. Again, sometimes what he doth, he makes them know after a black and long night of desertion, when he surprises them with a new visit, and makes them say, "The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." Sometimes he explains his mind more clearly to them, after he hath tried their faith and patience for a while, and brought them into great tribulation. John, in the Revelation, never had so much of Christ's mind, even when he leaned upon Christ's bosom, as when he was persecuted and banished into the isle of Patmos. Thus it was with Ezekiel, when he was among the captives by the river of Chebar, then was the heavens opened, and he saw the visions of God. Sometimes it is after deep humiliation and fervent supplication; such as that of Daniel, chap. ix. 20, 21. Then he is informed by the angel Gabriel, of some great things he was in the dark about before. Sometimes the Lord hath remarkably countenanced his people with great and glorious discoveries of his mind, when they have set days apart for prayer and confession, afflicting themselves before him. But, Oh! where are the Christians of former generations, some of whom would have shut themselves up in their closets for many days, and got their meat shut in to them at the window, and holes of the door! Again, sometimes he reserves the discovery of what he is doing, till the time that he gives a more full and plentiful out-pouring of the Spirit. "What I do (says Christ here to Peter), you know not now; but you shall know" partly, just now after I am done with washing your feet; I will explain it, but you shall know afterwards more clearly and distinctly in the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit shall be poured out; and hence see, Acts ii. how Peter then preached and published the doing, dying, and rising of Jesus: what he did was then no more a mystery to him. And you see, John xxi. 26, the Spirit, the Comforter, is promised for this very end, to teach us all things, and to bring all things to remembrance, whatsoever Christ hath said unto us. And when the Spirit is more plentifully afterwards communicate, then he brings Christ's words and works to remembrance, in such a manner, as to tell us what he intended by such a word, and such a work; what he said and did at such and such a time.

Again, sometimes he doth it a little before their death ; he sometimes has anointed them before their death with eye-salve, and let them see farther than ever they saw ; as it was with old Jacob, when his natural eyes were dim, he saw Shiloh coming, to whom the gathering of the people should be ; he saw a little further, then, I think, than he did either at Bethel, or Peniel, and something more concerning Christ was then explained to him than he knew before. Thus it was also with old Simeon before his death ; he had got a believing sight of Christ before, but now he got an armful of Christ, and a more sensible sight than before ; “ Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” I have known some get very clear manifestations of Christ before their death.

In a word, sometimes at death itself ; though some of the Lord's servants and saints have died in much darkness, yet others have got Christ's doings explained at death, that have been hid from them all their days before. Death may make a breach among forty or fifty experiences, and bring them down to two or three perhaps. But death to some has multiplied their experiences, and made them go through the valley of the shadow of death, triumphing in God's everlasting love. I read of Adolpus Clarebachius, who had been all his lifetime kept under much bondage ; when he became a martyr, and went to the stake to be burned, he then said, “ I have lived a most melancholy and dejected life till this day ; but now I believe there is not a merrier heart in the world than mine.” What the lord did, by ordering his former dejection he knew not, till now that it appeared the Lord's design by his grievous and heavy life, was to be a lane and avenue to that glorious and joyful death. Some have gone through the dark trance between time and eternity with more light and knowledge of the Lord's mind and works, than ever they had. Jacob never had a brighter view of his old Bethel-visit than when he was upon his death-bed, and had all his children about him, and some of his children's echildren : he now saw more clearly what God had done, and what he was further to bring out of the Bethel-promise, with reference to his numerous issue, and their future possession of the land of Canaan ; and therefore he begins his dying words with what past between God and him at Bethel ; Gen. xlviii. 3, 4, “ God Almighty appeared to me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me ; and said, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee ; and I will make of thee a

multitude of people, and will give this land to thy seed after thee, for an everlasting possession." Then might he say, I had neither wife nor children; but now I see my children, and my children's children; and I see what God is about to do with them: and so he prophesies of their future increase and various circumstances and appearances they were to make in after-ages. Thus his Bethel-blessing was extended, and explained more clearly to him in his dying moments. What you met with, believer, in such a place, and what you have met with in Dunfermline, what he hath been doing at former occasions or at this occasion, may be, you do not see through at present, perhaps the further explication of it is reserved for a death-bed feast unto you, when he shines upon his former words and works, and makes you sing of his salvation, and say, "O! I remember what he said to me in such a place, and what he did to me at another. What he designed by it was dark and unknown to me, but now I see more of his mind; I see he hath been as good as his word, and that he hath done all things well. "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter," perhaps sooner or later, even before you go into eternity.

V. The fifth and last thing proposed was, To deduce some inferences for the application of the whole. Is it so, That the works of God, the doings of Christ Jesus, towards his people may be so dark and mysterious, hid and unknown, till afterwards he make them known? Hence,

1. See that we have great cause to be humble and sober: whatever the Lord hath been doing among us at this occasion, let us not think that we know all that he hath done, since he is saying, "What I do, thou knowest not now." Let that great question humble us under a sense of our own ignorance, Job xi. 7. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is higher than heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" Think not you have learned your lesson perfectly; the greatest believers on earth are but scholars, as long as they are in the body. Divine light shines gradually more and more to the perfect day of glory; therefore, whatever they see, they need to see more clearly; whatever they are taught, they need to be taught over again more perfectly: what a small portion of God do we know!

2. Hence see, what reason believers have to long for heaven, since clouds and darkness will never be altogether dispelled till the

beatifical vision of God and of the Lamb. That city hath no need of the sun, nor the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. "I saw no temple there; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it," Rev. xxi. 22, 23. It may be said of all the great works of God that at present he doth, "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter," when time shall discover it, even the Lord's time, the fit time; and even when that time hath made the discovery of what he was doing formerly, it may be also said of that discovery, "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter;" when eternity shall discover, and heaven make it manifest in another and more glorious manner; then all his dealings with his people will be conspicuous; and all his designs appear, that before were dark and mysterious.

3. Hence see, that the church and children of God, while in this world, must not think of being exempted from clouds and darkness, even when they have the Lord near to them; for "Clouds and darkness are round about him," Psalm xcvii. 2. And he makes the clouds his chariots wherein he rides to his people. It is true, the clouds that surround him have sometimes a dark side, and sometimes a bright side; yet even at the brightest, it is but a cloud, wherein he appears, and they know not how far he is to ride upon it, how soon it will disappear, and what weather it prognosticates. The Lord designs to give his people, while here, a proof of his promised care, Isa. xlii. 16. In leading the blind in a way they know not, in paths they have not known: making darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. And hence they are mostly kept in the dark; sometimes about providences befalling the church, while heavy clouds hang over it: sometimes in the day wherein they live, and the word of his patience; sometimes in the dark about their state, and their assured interest in Christ; sometimes in the dark, as to comfort, when destitute of that necessary consolation their heavy case may require: sometimes in darkness about the word of God, when a vail is drawn over it; sometimes about the work of God, and what he is doing, when they cannot see his steps, nor hear his voice, nor read his mercy and loving-kindness by reason of darkness.

4. Hence see, that the Lord's time of doing is not always his time of shewing what he doth. He takes his own time of working, and his own time of shewing his work. He may wash his disciples' feet, and not let them understand what he is doing, till a more

proper time, wherein he will show the glory of his work, which was hid. Hence prays the church, Psalm xc. 16. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children." And his time of showing himself and his work is ordinarily very surprising and unexpected, may be, it is when their night is at the darkest, and their darkness at the blackest, then, according to his promise, "To the upright there arises light in darkness," Psalm cxii. 4. He makes darkness light before them: "When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me." Sometimes indeed he manifests his work to them, when they are longing and hoping: "For he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry with good things," Psal. cvii. 9. And yet sometimes he doth it, when they have lost hope, as it were, and are least looking for it: "For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever," Psalm ix. 18.; intimating that they may be forgotten for a long time, but they shall not always be forgotten; their hope and expectation may seem to perish for a long time, but they shall not be forgotten for ever, when it is just at the perishing, he pities poor perishing hope. Sometimes to show his regard to holiness and strictness of walk, he makes his glory appear to them, when they are exercised in practical piety towards God and man. Hence, "To the upright there arises light in darkness," Psalm cxii. 4. And "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him," John xiv. 21, 22. And it is in this way we are to expect his coming to manifest himself and his work. Yet sometimes, to show the sovereignty of his grace, he manifests himself and his gracious work, when their religion is at a low ebb; their praying frame is gone; yea, and their backsliding multiplied, and their rebellion increased; Isaiah xliii. 22, "Thou hast not called on me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel;" yet upon the back of the challenge, that he may melt their hearts with his surprising grace, he says, verse 25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake, and will not remember thy sins;" Isa. lvii 17, 18, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: and I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners." Some think even this is the season the text hath a relation

to, "What I am doing, by washing thy feet, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." When after thou hast denied me thrice, I will give thee a look, and thou shalt go out, and weep bitterly. When, upon the crowing of the cock, thou shalt run away to a corner, and reflect upon thy grievous sins, and my gracious look, then shalt thou, with a melting heart, see more into the mystery of this washing: "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Again,

5. Hence see ground of enquiry, what the Lord hath been doing, and what you know thereof, and if it be hid and unknown to you or not.

[1.] Enquire what hath the Lord been doing, or what he is doing towards you at this occasion; hath he been stooping down to wash your feet?

Quest. When may Christ be said, in a spiritual sense, to stoop down and wash his disciples' feet?

Ans. (1.) Then he may be said to wash their feet, when he shews them their foul feet. O Sirs, hath the Lord been shewing to you, by his convincing grace, what foul feet, what filthy affections you have, what a filthy heart, and what a filthy walk and conversation you have had? Hath he made the iniquity of your heels to compass you about? as it is, Psalm xlix. 5. Hath he been making you say, with shame and sorrow, "Iniquities prevail against me? O wretched man that I am! How have I grieved his Spirit, and defiled my feet, by running into the mire? O was there ever such foul feet as mine, that carried any to a communion table.

(2.) Then he may be said to wash their feet, when he makes them dip their foul feet into the fountain of his blood, opened for sin and for uncleanness. Hath he been shewing you the fountain of sin and wickedness that is in you, and the fountain of cleansing and purification that is in Jesus; and making you, by faith, to run in to this fountain of the Lamb's blood, that cleanseth from all sin? If thus he hath sprinkled his blood upon your heart and conscience, and intimate peace and pardon in his blood, and made it precious to you, not only as pardoning, but also purifying blood, then he hath indeed been washing your feet.

(3.) Then he may be said to wash their feet, when he makes them, with the woman, Luke vii. 38, that stood behind him weeping, to wash his feet with tears, and to wipe them with the hair of your head. Have you been admitted to such nearness to him, that

with humble boldness you have laid yourself down at his feet? The woman was ashamed to look Christ in the face, but came behind him weeping. Have you been filled with holy humble shame, and confusion of face before him because of your sinfulness, and in the view and apprehension of his being pacified towards you, Ezek. xvi. 63.

(4.) Then he may be said to wash their feet, when they are made to wash their feet in the blood of his enemies; as is said of the righteous, "He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, and rejoice when he sees the vengeance," Psalm lviii. 10; so we may say of believers, when Christ is washing their feet, they desire to see the heart-blood of their and his enemies, their unbelief, atheism, and all their lusts and idols; their joy would be to see the vengeance of God upon them; they are filled with holy revenge against them, 2 Cor. vii. 11. The reason of this being an evidence of his washing, is, because when he washes them, he doth it according to that promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Now, hath he thus been washing your feet.

[2.] Inquire what you know, with reference to his work; if you know that he hath been washing you, this is more than simple washing; and in such a case he is saying to you in effect, "What I do, thou knowest, and thou shalt know more hereafter." It is one thing to be washen, another to be assured of it; and if he hath given you the assured knowledge of his work, surely somewhat of Peter's amazement will fill your heart, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" O Sirs, wonder, wonder men and angels, that the Lord of glory should have stooped down so far below himself to such a filthy worm as to wash me in his blood! "What shall I render to the Lord? Is this the manner of man?" But this is not every one's allowance. O be thankful and humble; and whatever you know this way, remember you know but in part, and there is much more in what he doth than yet you know. There are other believers here, that perhaps know not all that Christ hath been doing with them, "He hides his face, and they are troubled." They cannot say he hath been washing their feet, but rather wounding their hearts, and frowning upon them; standing at a distance, and keeping them at the back of the door; the Comforter that should relieve their souls being far away. Well, as the believer, that is clear,

knows not how soon he may be under a cloud, so the believer that is under a cloud, knows not how soon the sky may be cleared ; and both these cases may be paving the way for what is a-coming, when the Lord's design breaks out ; therefore, whatever be the case, let this world be still the consideration, "What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter." Therefore,

6. Hence let us see the duty of all, both saints and sinners, in this great meeting of people. It yields special instruction to all the saints and children of God, whatever their case be, and whatever the Lord is doing, especially if his way be hid and unknown, dark and mysterious in any respect to them ; and first to disciples.

(1.) It is your duty, O believer, to mark what the Lord is doing ; to observe his stately steps and goings in the sanctuary, though they be very hid and unknown ; yea, the rather that they are dark and mysterious, they are the more worthy to be known. It is a mark of the graceless, they consider not the operations of his hand. "But whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." This observing comprehends a believing that the Lord is carrying on his work, though clouds hide him from our sight, and a passing a suitable judgment on what he is doing, construing all for the best ; this is to consider wisely of his doing, Psalm lxiv. 9. Believing that all is good, and for the good of his people, we should consider his work, till we observe his loving-kindness therein. Therefore,

(2.) It is your duty never to judge harshly of his doings, however hid and unknown they may be ; yea, however heavy and afflictive. Will you measure God's love by outward dispensations, or even by inward desertion ? Though, indeed, it becomes you to weep when the bridegroom is away, as well as to rejoice when he is present, yet measure not his love by his providence, but by his promise. It is the foolish child that thinks the mother hath cast him off every time she is out of sight, or has given him out of her arms ; therefore, say not, when he hides himself, "Oh ! his heart is changed, his love is gone ; all he did, was but a delusion ; there is no hope, all is undone !" Whatever be his dealings, though you should not be able to give an account of them, yet what you cannot believe by knowing, you must know by believing ; we must believe when we cannot know ; wink at providences, and open your eyes to promises.

(3.) Do not quarrel and question what you do not know, but

stoop down and stand in awe ; “ Be still, and know that he is God,” and will act like himself ; set not limits to the holy One of Israel, by concluding that he will not come, because he comes not in the time and way that you imagine. Be afraid to think that you could manage otherwise, and do better than infinite wisdom sees fit to do. What abominable pride is that ! O entertain high thoughts of him, whose ways are so high above your reach, and what he doth, you know not ; and if his works are so high above you, how high and unsearchable are his counsels ; yet, O still remember, whatever clouds are or may be in your sky, he hath established a firm connexion between black dispensations and fair promises.

(4.) If you would know more of what the Lord is doing, you must study to be practical Christians, and to walk in the fear of the Lord ; for “ The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, Psalm xxv. 14. The nearer you live to God the more may you expect to know of his mind, and to be led by an unseen hand in a dark day ; for “ The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his ways :” study therefore to walk humbly with your God ; and what he doth, though you know not now, you shall know hereafter.

(5.) Be not proud and lifted up if you know more than others, and if he be using you as friends, according to John xv. 15. “ Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord doth ; but I have called you friends : for all that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.” And, lest you be exalted above measure, think not strange though he should order a thorn in the flesh for you, and a cross to keep you down ; remember how formerly the cross hath borne down your pride, restrained your predominant, and put you to your prayers, and sent you groaning to a God in Christ. Be not proud of what you know ; for though you be in higher favour than some of your neighbours, you know not what weather is coming, nor what storms may blow upon you, or upon the Church of Christ ; or whether this be your last communion.

(6.) If what he doth be dark and unknown to you now, O wait upon him who says, “ Ye shall know hereafter.” O wait upon him believingly ; when his work is dark and hid to you, it is the proper season for faith to bud and bring forth : “ I will wait upon the Lord that hides his face from the house of Jacob,” Isaiah viii. 7. Even when promised things look like improbable and impossible things ;

yet, having the firm word of God, that cannot lie nor change, there you are to rest as anchored upon that immoveable rock, and ride out all storms of carnal reasonings and corrupt suggestions. Wait upon him patiently : "The Lord is a God of judgment, blessed are all they that wait for him," Psalm xl. 1, 2. "I waited patiently upon the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings ; and he put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." Whatever be his dispensations, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him : whatever dark clouds appear, either in his work or his word. The poor woman of Canaan met with many discouraging things, even in her application to Christ : at first he answers her not a word ; and when he speaks a word the first thing he said, seeming to exclude her out of his commission, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Alas ! now might she say, I need pray no more, I am a cast-away ! Nay, but she goes on saying, "Lord, help me : " then he calls her a dog ; yet still she waits, and then gets a merciful and marvellous hearing : "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Go on thus, believer : O incredulous believer, give him trust, and give him time, and he will clear all to you in the issue, though it should be through fire and water that he brings you to the wealthy land. You have his promise sealed with his precious blood, and his solemn oath, that when you go through the fire and through the water he will be with you, whether you discern him or not. You know not now what he doth or designs ; you know not now what deep steps are before you in point of trouble ; but with his promise in your hand, you may say as it is, Psalm lxxi. 20, "Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shall bring me up from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." You know not what foul steps are before you in point of sin. Now I am washing thy feet, might Jesus say to Peter, but thou knowest not that this is but a dark specimen of another sort of washing you will very soon need : "For before the cock crow twice, you will deny me thrice," notwithstanding your present resolution, that though all men forsake me, yet will not thou. You know not now, that you will fearfully defile your feet, even after I have washen them. O wonderful Jesus that he should wash the

feet he knows will be so soon in the puddle again ! But whatever should come about, though Satan, through his temptations should hurry you into the mire of sin ; yet beware of being hurried on the back of that into the depth of despair : for that is what the devil drives at, that he may make you affront both the law and the gospel of God at once ; that having tempted you to dishonour his name, by breaking his commandments in the law, he may thereupon tempt you to discredit his grace, by despairing of any good from him by the promise of the gospel ; therefore, O believer, see the need of waiting and watching every moment, and the need of the Lord's washing and watering every moment, according to the promise, Isaiah xxvii. 3. " I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment." Think not that one washing or watering now will do your business ; though, through the Lord shining upon you, you were in a heaven of joy and consolation this moment, you know not but, through his hiding and withdrawing, you may be in a hell of sin and sorrow the next moment ; and though our glorious Lord were washing your feet this moment, I cannot promise, but, before the cock crow twice, your feet will be as dirty as ever they were : therefore, O wait and depend upon him, for washing and watering you every moment.

O beware of security ; for you never got so much of his grace and fulness one moment, as shall allow you liberty to slacken your dependence upon him in the next. In this way of waiting upon him, though now you know not what he doth, yet you shall know hereafter ; and he will give you occasion to see him bring his work, though it should be through terrible ways, to an amiable issue, and give occasion to say, as Psalm lxvi. 5, 6. " Come and see the works of the Lord ; he is terrible in his doings towards the children of men : he turned the sea into dry land, and there did we rejoice in him." He turned a sea of tribulation into a dry land of consolation ; and verse 10, " Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will tell what he hath done for my soul." What he doth now, by all the blinks and showers, the vicissitudes and changes, the storms and calms of your case, the dark and mysterious ways he takes you through, he will come, soon or late afterwards, and explain to you, saying, as it is, Psalm lxxxix. 7, " Thou callest in trouble, and I delivered thee ; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder ; I proved thee at the waters of Meribah." Isaiah xlv. 5. " I girded thee, though thou didst not know me. What I do, thou knowest

not now." It may take some days or years to explain what he now doth: however little or much you know, perhaps a day of approaching trial will make you know more; a day of death may make you know it better; but the day of glory best of all. You shall know, hereafter, believer, partly on earth, and perfectly in heaven; graciously in time, and gloriously through eternity.

I shall now conclude with a word to enemies, to sinners, that are yet utter strangers to our Saviour Jesus Christ. O ye that are despisers of the Lord of glory, though he hath been set forth evidently crucified before you at this occasion, What shall I say to you? May not I tell thee, O sinner, how this text may be applied to you? Christ is saying even to thee, "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." He hath been doing something before your eyes at this occasion, and you know it not; yea, he hath been doing something to you that you do not know and consider; though he hath not been washing your feet, yet he hath been offering to wash you, and not your feet only, but your head and hands; for the believer that is washed already by regenerating grace, needeth not, save to wash his feet; but you need that your head and heart be washen, as well as your hands and feet. You need to be washen from the filthiness of your state, as well as from the filthiness of your ways; but whatever washing you need, he hath been offering it, and himself to be the doer of it, saying, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." And to this moment he is offering himself to you, saying. "Wilt thou be made clean?" Wilt thou let me wash thy heart, and hands, and feet? No, no, says unbelief; thou shalt never wash my feet, it is too much for Christ the Son of God to do; I will wash myself, and repent, and turn religious against some other time; for the present I am otherwise taken up. Will you resolve to put no employment in Christ's hands? Is that the way you treat his kindly offer, when he opens the door of mercy to you, and calls you by this minister, and that minister, and the other minister, all telling you that you shall be welcome for all your sins, and saying, "Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out?" Be who you will, young or old sinner, behold the humble Jesus makes the most condescending offer to you that ever men or angels heard. O filthy sinner, will you let me wash you; "For, if I wash you not, you have no part in me," nor ever shall?

If you are so wedded to your filthy lusts, that you are not

willing to be washen from them, I must tell you, that you know not what you are doing, and know not what Christ is doing ; “but you shall know hereafter,” either in a way of wrath, to your great confusion ; or in a way of mercy, to your deep remorse.

1. What he doth by this offer to wash you, you shall know hereafter to your confusion. Perhaps, when you are gasping for breath upon a death-bed, and, conscience awaking, shall begin to say, O many a sweet offer of Christ and mercy did I get, and slighted, and this amongst the rest, when he offered to wash my feet, and I refused and rejected his offer ! You shall know hereafter, when you shall hear the awful doom pass against you, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ;” and when, with weeping and gnashing of teeth, you shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, apostles, and followers of the Lamb in the kingdom of heaven, and yourself shut out ; and when thou shalt think and say, “O vile wretch that I was, I might have been yonder in glory ; but I was taken up with the vain world, and my vile lusts, and was unwilling to be washen from them, and now I must be lodged in hell among devils and damned reprobates for ever.” Oh ! think upon this before it be too late !

2. If mercy prevent you after this refusal : What he now doth you shall know hereafter to your bitter remorse. If ever the Lord have mercy on you, and manifest himself to you, oh ! how will it go like a sword to your heart, and pierce you to the quick, when he shall say, “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt !” I am Jesus your Saviour, whom you slighted ! I am he whose cries you contemned, and whose kind offers you disregarded : when I offered to wash your feet, you lifted up your heel against me ; and now, “How shall I put thee among the children ?” How shall I deliver thee, that hast so undervalued my kindness, and trampled on my blood, wherein I offered to wash you ? What a knell will this be to your heart, if he have mercy upon you afterwards ; and O that the bitter remorse were begun in your bosom, this moment, with a woe is me that I have slighted such an offer so long. O ! is he saying to the vilest sinner in this company, Come and let me wash you ! O then, were your heart saying, Lord, come and welcome ! O come and wash my conscience from the guilt, and my heart from the filth of sin ; it were good. Are you cordially willing, and presently willing, and universally willing to be washen in his

blood from all your filthiness, and from all your idols? Why then? I hope he is doing something upon your heart and will, which, though now you cannot understand, he will explain mercifully in due time; for it is his own promise: "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

S E R M O N L I.

THE GREAT TRUMPET OF THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL.¹

ISAIAH xxvii. 13.—"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in his holy mount of Jerusalem."

My friends, it is only the trumpet of common providence that hath, perhaps, gathered you together to this place—you hearing the news go through the country, that the sacramental feast was to be kept here, and so you have come along with the rest; but it is the great trumpet of special powerful grace that can gather perishing sinners together to Christ, and make them come to him for life and salvation, liberty, and redemption from their spiritual captivity. And, O may the sound of this trumpet be so heard, as many may come to Jesus at this occasion, that they may worship the Lord spiritually in his holy mountain!

These words are to be considered, first, in their literal, and then in their typical and spiritual meaning, in order to deduce a suitable doctrine from them.

1st, As to the literal import of the words, they relate to the church of Israel that was scattered, their being gathered together and brought back to Jerusalem. Though the body of the people was abandoned as a people of no understanding, ver. 11; yet mercy was laid up in store for some that were to be gathered as the sheep of the flock, when the shepherds (the rulers in church and state) that scattered them should be reckoned with: "Thus saith the Lord God, behold I am against the shepherds and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall

¹ This Sermon was preached at Abernethy, upon Saturday, July 24th, 1736, being the preparation-day before the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's supper.

the shepherds feed themselves any more ; for I will deliver my flock from their month, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered ; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places, where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day," Ezek. xxxiv. 10—12. Now, concerning these scattered Israelites you may observe these particulars.

1. From what place they were to be brought and gathered. We are told, the Lord shall beat them off ; that is, as fruit from a tree, which is carefully gathered for the use of men ; and he should beat them off from the channel of the river to the stream of Egypt ; that is, from the river Euphrates to the river Nilus, which were the two borders of the land of promise. All the Israelites left in the land, are here opposed to these of them that are dispersed into foreign parts, such as Assyria and Egypt : he shall find out his scattered people, and separate them from these with whom they seem to be incorporated ; these that were driven to the land of Assyria, ready to perish for want of necessities, and ready to despair of deliverance ; and these that were outcasts in the land of Egypt, whither these that were left behind, after the captivity into Babylon, went, contrary to God's express command, Jer. xliii. 6, 7, and there lived as outcasts.

2. In what manner they were to be gathered ; ver. 12, "Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel ;" pointing out either the smallness of the remnant of that numerous people, or rather God's exact and singular care of them, that not one of them should be lost. As God had mercy in store for perishing outcasts, and will make it appear that, though they are cast out, they are not cast off ; so he takes particular of gathering them one by one ; not in multitudes, but first one, as it were, and then another. This, indeed, is the way of God's gathering his elect remnant : for ordinary they are but few : "And of Zion it is said, This man and that man is born there."

3. By what means they shall be gathered, "The great trumpet shall be blown ;" that is, by the proclamation of liberty by king Cyrus to the captives, which awakened the Jews, that were asleep in their thralldom, to bestir themselves and return to Jerusalem and their own land ; of which proclamation you read, 2 Chronicles

xxxvi. 22, 23. Ezra i. 2, 3, 4. This was like the sounding of the jubilee-trumpet, which published the year of release; thus God was to summon them, as it were, by the sound of a trumpet from the remotest parts of the earth, by an eminent call or act of his providence in their behalf; and particularly from Assyria, where the ten tribes were carried captive; and from Egypt, where many of the Jews were.

4. For what end they should be gathered, namely, To worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem. Though the holy temple was in ruins, yet they had the holy mount, the place of the altar, Gen. xiii. 4. Liberty to worship God in his instituted ordinances is a most valuable and desirable liberty.

2dly, As to the typical and spiritual meaning of these words. That they have a further view than what I have yet mentioned, will appear, if you consider that as King Cyrus was an eminent type of our Lord Jesus Christ, so the deliverance of Israel from the Babylonish captivity and Egyptian thralldom, by his means, was eminently typical of the redemption to be wrought for sinners through Jesus Christ, from their spiritual bondage. To this purpose you may read, Isaiah xlv. 28, and xlv. 1—4. In all this Cyrus was a type of Christ, who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and intrusted with unsearchable riches, for the use and benefit of God's servants his elect. When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, taking these captives who had taken others captive, and opened the prison to them that were bound.

Again, Cyrus' proclamation of liberty to the captive Israelites, which was here prophesied of, more than a hundred years before it came to pass, is compared to the blowing of a great trumpet, in allusion plainly to the silver trumpets which the priests were to use, Numb. x. 2, for assembling the Israelites: which signified how the ministers of Christ should lift up their voice like a trumpet, to shew the people their sins, Isaiah lviii. 1; and to call them home to Christ out of their captive state. To the same purpose, Lev. xxiii. 23, we read of the feast of trumpets; a memorial of blowing of trumpets on the first day of the seventh month, the beginning of the year of jubilee. This was typical of the preaching of the gospel: and in allusion to this, they are said to be blessed that hear the joyful sound, Psalm lxxxix. 15; that are invited to come to Christ, and to wait upon God in his public instituted ordinances. Mount Zion also here mentioned being an

eminent type of the gospel-church, this text is not only applicable to the preaching of the gospel of Christ for gathering sinners to him; but the typical and spiritual sense of it is a prophetic declaration and promise of the conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ, by the blowing of the silver trumpet of the everlasting gospel.

Here then in the words, you have these four things represented to you.

1. The sad and miserable case of sinners by nature, they are outcasts, ready to perish, under their spiritual captivity to sin, and Satan, and the wrath of God.

2. The relief provided and proclaimed in their ears, by the great trumpet of the gospel, which proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of liberty to perishing captives; "The great trumpet shall be blown."

3. The power and efficacy of this relief, thus proclaimed by sound of trumpet, for determining all the chosen Israel of God, to betake themselves to the city of refuge; "They shall come:" the gospel of Christ shall be the power of God to their salvation; they shall come to Christ.

4. The end and design of their coming to Christ, namely, that they may serve and worship the Lord in his holy mount, and that they may have fellowship and communion with God in Christ; and, being accepted in the beloved, may offer acceptable service to him in his holy place.

Passing many doctrines that may be drawn from the words, I shall, as the Lord may assist, speak to this only.

OBSERVE. That as it is the duty of perishing sinners, who hear the gospel, to come to God in Christ as the only Saviour and glorious object of worship; so it is an encouraging promise, that when the great trumpet of the gospel is blown a number, of outcast sinners, ready to perish, shall come, and shall worship and serve him acceptably in his holy mount.

I might, at considerable length, prove every branch of this doctrine.

1. That it is the duty of perishing sinners to come to Christ the Saviour: this is plain from all the calls of the gospel; "Who-soever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," Isa. lv. 1. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Mat. xi. 28.

2. That they ought to come to him as God the Saviour, and God the glorious object of worship, by whom we are to worship God, and whom we are to worship as God, Isa. xlv. 22. "Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," John v. 23. "All men must honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;" who therefore says, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him."

3. That it is the great trumpet of the gospel that is the means for gathering sinners to Christ is plain, Rom. x. 17. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." For this end a gospel-ministry is given, Eph. iv. 12; and therefore ministers are called to preach the gospel to every creature, Mark xvi. 15.

4. That a number of sinners, ready to perish, shall come at the blowing of this trumpet, and that it shall be powerful and effectual for bringing them, is also plain; for Rom. i. 16, the gospel is the power of God to their salvation: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. The election shall obtain. And as many as were ordained to eternal life shall believe, Rom. xi. 7, Acts xvii. 48. "His people shall be willing in the day of his power," Psalm cx. 3.

5. That, being thus brought back to God in Christ, they shall worship him acceptably in his holy mount, is also plain from these and the like promises, Ps. xxii. 27." "All the ends of the earth shall remember and return to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee; for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the nations. Psal. lxxxvi. 9. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name." They will worship towards his holy temple, Ps. cxxxviii. 2. Hence says David, Psal. li. 18, 19, "Do good in thy good pleasure to Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offerings, and whole burnt-offerings; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar." When he sends forth his light and truth, then he brings them to his holy hill and to his tabernacle; and then do they come to the altar of God, to God their exceeding joy, Psalm xlii. 3, 4; then they shall worship a God in Christ acceptably and joyfully, Isa. lvi. 6, 7.

Thus you may see the doctrine plain in every branch of it; "That as it is the duty of perishing sinners, that hear the gospel, to come to God in Christ, as the only Saviour and glorious object of

worship; so it is an encouraging promise, that when the great trumpet of the gospel is blown, a number of outcast sinners, ready to perish, shall come, and shall worship and serve him acceptably in his holy mount."

The method wherein I would speak to it, as the Lord may assist is the following :—

- I. To consider a little the state and condition of sinners by nature, as outcasts, ready to perish.
- II. The duty of sinners to come to Christ as the Saviour, the great Lord-deliverer, and glorious object of worship.
- III. Speak of the means by which the Lord gathers these sinners thus to him, namely, the blowing of the great gospel trumpet.
- IV. Touch at the efficacy of these means, and show why it is promised they shall come.
- V. Speak of the end for which they shall come, their worshipping him in his holy mountain.
- VI. Deduce some inferences for the application of the whole.

I. We are to touch a little at the sad state and circumstance of sinners by nature. Now, there are two words here by which, O sinner, your natural sad state is represented: 1. As outcasts, or sinners cast out. 2. Sinners ready to perish.

1. We are outcasts, as Israel in Egypt were designed: and this is the name several times given to sinners in Scripture, in allusion to the outcast Israelites; Psalm cxlvii. 2, "The Lord shall build up Jerusalem, the Lord gathereth in the outcasts of Israel." Isa. xi. 12, "He shall set up an ensign for the nations; he shall assemble the outcasts of Israel from the four corners of the earth." The Lord seems to glory in this name of gathering outcasts, for I find him again taking it to himself, Isa. lvi. 8, "The Lord which gathers the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet I will gather others to him, besides these that are gathered to him." Now, if you enquire in what respect sinners are outcasts (the consideration of this is necessary, in order to your coming to Christ, when the gospel trumpet is blown in your ears; for you will not prize the proclamation of mercy if you do not see what a miserable outcast state you are in), know then, O sinner, that by your sin and fall in the first Adam, you are cast out of God's favour and fellowship, being an alien

from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. Like the wretched infant, Ezek. xvi. 5, cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born; having no eye to pity, or have compassion upon thee. O sinners, you are such outcasts, that not only have you cast out yourselves, by sin in Adam, and in your own person, by original and actual sin, but you are cast out by the justice of God, executing the law sentence against you. You are under the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." You are not only under the sentence of the law, the sentence of condemnation, but the sentence is partly executed; the sentence is, "Thou shalt die, thou shalt surely die," Gen. ii. 17. And behold thou art dead, thou art surely dead in sins and trespasses. The sentence is passed on thee, thou art legally dead; the sentence is executed in thee, thou art spiritually dead: being legally dead, thou art condemned already; and, being spiritually dead, the sentence of condemnation is partly executed already: and there is nothing but the small hair of a mortal life between thee and the full execution of that sentence in thy eternal death. Thus you are cast out of God's presence, cast out of his vineyard; not only set out, or gone out, but by virtue of the law wrath you are under, cast out like a dead dog cast over the wall of a city; "For without are dogs," Rev. xxii. 15.

In a word, O sinner, you are cast out to the devil, and led captive by him at his pleasure. The devil hath possession of you, he works in the heart of the children of disobedience. The devil is your god, for he is the god of this world, that blindeth your minds that believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4.

In these, and the like respects, you are outcasts, cast out of God's house, and cast out to the devil; cast out into the mire, and wallowing in the mire of sin and lusts; poor, vile, and miserable outcasts.

2. You are ready to perish in your out-cast state, on the very brink of perishing for ever, if mercy interpose not; ready to die both the first and second death. Ready to die the first death; for your life is but a span, and the half of it is past already, and perhaps much more. Pray, where are your grandfather and grandmother? Yea, may we not say to some here, Where are your fathers and mothers? Is not their time past, and their acquaint-

ance, whom you and your neighbours knew ? Is it not just a dream to think on the days of old ? Are they not all gone like a shadow, and the place where they were know them no more ? Like a bird that flies through the air, leaving no vestige behind it ; or like a ship that cuts out its way in the sea, and immediately the water closes up behind it, and the place is not known through which it went. Is not your life perishing in that same manner ? And you cannot promise upon another year, nay, nor upon another month, nay, not upon another week, nay, not upon another day, nay, nor upon another hour, nay, not upon another minute, another moment. You are ready to perish in your out-cast state, ready to die ; and if you die in it, then you die for ever.

You are ready to die the second death, which you have described, Rev. xxi. 8, " But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." You have it described also, 2 Thes. i. 8, where it is said, " Christ will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power ;" or by his powerful and wrathful presence, which they shall for ever have ; and by being banished from his gracious and glorious presence, which they shall for ever want ; for as heaven is a being for ever with the Lord, so hell is a being for ever without him. The wicked may think it an easy punishment to be without God now, while they know not his infinite excellency ; but beside the punishment of sense, and sensible pain for ever, the punishment of his loss will be found to be dreadful. Hunger puts no positive torment or pain upon a man ; yet his suffering through hunger may be very great, when he can get nothing to ease it : now the nature of perfection is such, that whatever rational creature apprehends it, cannot but desire union with it, and be pained for the want of it. Now, if once God had unmasked his infinite glory and excellency (for there is no atheist in hell) they will see what infinite excellencies they are deprived the enjoyment of. What unexpressible uneasiness and torment will it be, to be under a necessity of desiring that happiness which can never be granted ! A man may be deeply in love with a mortal, a piece of clay which God hath painted amiable and lovely in his sight, and that mortal perhaps

painted amiable and lovely in his sight, and that mortal perhaps light his addresses, and he may suffer such torment by his being slighted as may pine him away to death : and if one bit of clay desired, and not granted, be so tormenting and uneasy to bear, let none have slight and light thoughts of the pain of loss that these will sustain who are secluded the presence of the Lord, and his infinite beauty and excellency. Here then is the second death ; God's everlasting wrathful presence, and privation of his glorious presence for ever. Thus you are ready to perish : O dismal case ! ready for hell, prepared for it, and ready every moment to be thrown into that place of perdition !

II. The second thing proposed was, To speak a little of the duty of outcast sinners, ready to perish ; and that is, to come to Jesus ; to come back to God, by this new and living way, that they perish not in their outcast state and miserable condition. I shall here consider a little what this coming imports, and in what capacity they are to come to him.

1. This coming to Christ, or to God in him, as it supposes that natural, outcast, perishing state and condition, which is a state of distance from God ; and a sense or conviction of this distant and dismal state, seeing the first step in God's way is to see ourselves entirely out of the way, and that the devil and our lusts are driving us to hell ; so it supposes, indeed, a drawing power of divine grace, making the soul willing to be saved in a way of free grace, both from sin and wrath, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It supposes one's hearing of the way of relief to be had in Jesus Christ, and a weighty errand that brings the soul to Jesus. Being sensible of blindness, he comes for light ; being sensible of guilt, and under fear of wrath, he comes for justification and reconciliation with God ; being sensible of the power of sin, and hell of corruption within him, he comes for sanctification and freedom from these massy chains of hell : being weak, they come for strength ; being weary, they come for rest ; being naked, they come for clothing ; being destitute of all good, they come for supply of all in him, who is "all in all." And hence,

More particularly, this coming imports a knowledge of the person to whom we come ; for there is a seeing of the Son necessary to believing in him, John vi. 40. By the light of heaven the comer is made to see his absolute need of Christ, and the glorious excellency and suitableness of Christ. A man's coming to any place,

supposes his knowledge where he is going. It imports spiritual life and motion, without which none can come or go any where in a spiritual sense ; no more than there can be any coming in a natural sense without natural life and motion. In the day of coming to Christ, the soul is quickened by the spirit of life, by the spirit of faith ; and quickened to a lively hope : for this coming imports a hope of coming speed, at least a may-be the merciful king of Israel will pity me. A poor man will not come for an alms to any person that he thinks hath nothing to give him ; the believing comer is persuaded there is fulness enough in Christ ; fulness of virtue, in his blood ; fulness of merit, in his death ; fulness of power, in his arm. And hereupon chiefly this coming imports a resolute outgoing of soul after Christ, as offered in the gospel ; an actual closing with him, by a practical assent of the understanding, a pleasant consent of the will, and a vigorous egress of the affection towards the Son of God. Seeing an absolute need, he ventures on an offered Christ for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. But this leads to the next thing here to be considered, for I must not enlarge.

2. In what capacity we are to come. We are to come to him in a twofold capacity. 1. It is to him as the Lord Redeemer. 2. As the Lord, the glorious object of worship ; “ They shall come and worship.”

(1.) It is to Christ as the Lord and Saviour, Redeemer and Deliverer. Christ stands as a Saviour upon Mount Zion, inviting all sorts of sinners to come to him ; old sinners, young sinners, great sinners, gross sinners, the vilest and blackest outcasts, to come and get salvation ; for it is his name to save ; it is his nature, his delight, his office, to save. We are to come as captives to a Redeemer, ready to deliver those who are ready to perish in their captivity to sin, Satan, justice, death, and hell ; and hence his voice is, “ Turn to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope :” come to me outcast sinners, ready to perish ; here am I, ready to save.

(2.) It is to Christ as the Lord Jehovah, the glorious object of worship. This, I think, is also imported in the words, “ They shall come and shall worship the Lord in his holy mount at Jerusalem.” Before men come to Jesus Christ, from their spiritual captivity, they are worshipping and serving the devil and their lusts ; but, whenever they come to Jesus, they both worship him, and worship God in him : “ He is thy Lord, worship thou him, Psal. xlv. 11. When

they saw him, they worshipped him," Mat. xxviii. 17. And then, and not till then, do they worship God acceptably, when they worship God in the Spirit, and by the Spirit of Christ; and worship the Father, in the Son, by the Spirit: for the Spirit is the way to Christ, "He shall testify of me;" and Christ the way to the Father, "No man cometh to the Father, but by me." Faith, in coming to Christ, takes him up both as God, the great Jehovah, the glorious object of worship; and as the Christ of God, the way to God: because he is both God and man; Immanuel, God with us. Thus he is both the end and the way; and so both the glorious object of worship, and the person in whom our worship is acceptable: "They shall worship the Lord in the holy mount." But of this more afterward.

III. The thing proposed was, To speak of the means by which the Lord gathers outcast sinners, ready to perish, and makes them come to him and worship him—namely, by the blowing of the great GOSPEL-TRUMPET: "The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come." This, as I have already showed, is the preaching of the gospel of Christ, and the proclamation of the grace of God therein to poor outcast perishing sinners.

That I may speak a little of this the more distinctly, I shall shew, 1. Why the preaching of the gospel is compared to the sounding or blowing of a trumpet. 2. Why it may be called a great trumpet. 3. What sort of a sound this great trumpet makes; or what the meaning of it is, as to the contents of the proclamation made by it. 4. The quality of the sound when blown.

1st, Why the preaching of the gospel is compared to the blowing of a trumpet. I design not to stretch the metaphor beyond the design of the thing: I shall only mention these two or three particulars.

1. A trumpet is a royal and majestic sort of an instrument, and hence usually kings of the earth are crowned and proclaimed by their heralds with sound of trumpet: so the gospel is the royal and majestic trumpet of the great King of kings, and therein he discovers his glory and majesty, when he rides prosperously on the word of truth, meekness, and righteousness, Ps. xlv. 3, 4. Therein is Christ proclaimed king of Zion, and the royalties of his grace published.

2. A trumpet is a high and loud sounding instrument, and the sound of it heard at a considerable distance. Such a trumpet is the

gospel ; and therefore it is said of the heralds of the great king, that preached the gospel, " Their sound went into all the earth, and their words into the ends of the world," Rom. x. 18. It is the loud voice of the Son of God by his ambassadors : and it is to be heard through all the earth before the end of time : " The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come," Mat. xxiv. 14.

3. A trumpet is a martial, warlike instrument, and usually blown to proclaim peace or war : and thus the gospel is a proclamation of peace with God, and war with the devil. The first sound that ever this trumpet made was a sound of peace and war both : war with the devil, the destroyer of mankind ; " The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent ;" and peace on earth upon this ground, because the God of peace was, in this way, to bruise Satan under our feet. The gospel is the great instrument, many ways useful in directing the holy war. Sometimes it is to sound a gathering, a gathering of the people to Shiloh : the rendezvous under the standard of the Captain of salvation, calling all to come to him, and enlist with him. Sometimes to blow an alarm ; " When ye blow an alarm, the camp shall go forward, and take their journey," Numb. x. 5, 6. Sometimes to sound a march, to go forward to the battle against the enemy in his name and strength, of whom it is said, Psalm lxviii. 7, 11, 12. " He went forth before the people ; he marched through the wilderness. The Lord gave the word ; great was the company of those that published it : kings of great armies did fly apace." It never sounds a retreat, nor a sist from war, except in so far as he himself sees fit to spare his enemies alive for necessary uses toward his people, saying, " Slay them not, lest my people forget." But when they fight the good fight of faith, and fight lawfully and successfully, the trumpet sounds the victory and the triumph. " Thanks be to God which always causes us to triumph in Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 14. We are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. Rom. viii. 37. O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? 2 Cor. xv. 55. To him that overcometh will I give to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with the Father on his throne," Rev. iii. 21.

4. The blowing of a trumpet requires life, breath, and wisdom also : even so, in order to the blowing of the gospel-trumpet, the spirit of life is necessary, and the breathing of the spirit of life.

They who are not quickened by the Spirit of Christ, and do not enjoy the breathing of the Spirit of Christ, cannot blow the gospel-trumpet to any good purpose, at least, they are not God's ordinary instruments of quickening others : but " Who is sufficient for these things ? Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the spirit ; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. The gospel-trumpet will do little service, if the Spirit of God be not the breath that blows it. A great trumpet requires great breath ; and therefore, O sirs, look to heaven for the great breathing of the Spirit to accompany the gospel. Yea, the blowing of the trumpet requires wisdom and skill ; one may have both life and breath, and yet want skill to blow a trumpet ; even so, much spiritual wisdom is requisite in blowing the gospel-trumpet, that we handle not the word of God deceitfully ; that we blow not a false alarm, or a false peace ; that we give not an uncertain sound ; for, as the apostle says, 1 Cor. xiv. 8, " If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle ?" If it be not precious truth, and pure gospel that is preached, we are not to regard it, though the trumpet were blown by the mouth of an angel : " If we or an angel from heaven preach another gospel, let him be accursed," Gal. i. 6.

2dly, I am here to inquire, why the gospel may be called a great trumpet. This I shall dispatch in a few words.

1. It is a great trumpet, because it is the trumpet of the great God, and of the great King, the great Saviour ; for so our Lord Jesus is called, Isa. xix. 20. " They shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors ; and he shall send them a Saviour and a great One, and he shall deliver them." O how great is this man, this God man ! How great in his person, being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person ; the Prince of the kings of the earth ; great in his offices : a great Prophet, a great High-priest, a great King ; great in his relations, great in his names ; great in his promises ; great in his purchase ; great in his victories ; great in his fulness ; having all the fulness of the Godhead in him. It is the trumpet of the great King.

2. It is the trumpet of a great salvation : Heb. ii. 3. " How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation," published by the gospel-trumpet ? The great Saviour comes with a commission

under the great seal of heaven ; “ For him hath God the Father sealed.” And he comes upon a great design, the salvation of great sinners, in such a way as the ultimate end thereof is the glory of God’s great perfections, and the praise of grace. It is salvation from the greatest moral evil—namely, sin ; and salvation from the greatest penal evil, from the wrath to come, that is proclaimed by this trumpet.

3. It is a great trumpet, in opposition to all other earthly trumpets, that are but little emblems of this great one. What are the trumpets of earthly kings and conquerors, when laid in the balance with the gospel-trumpet, sounding the triumph of our glorious Conqueror, and saying, “ Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah ? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength ? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save ?” Isaiah lxiii. 1.

4. It is a great trumpet, in respect of the great consequence of the sounding and blowing of it ; for, as the gospel is called the everlasting gospel, so everlasting life or everlasting death will be the consequence of your hearing thereof : “ To some we are the savour of death unto death, and to others the savour of life unto life,” 2 Cor. ii. 16. Not that the gospel brings a sound of death and damnation to any of itself ; no, by no means ; it is a word of salvation to sinners : but when this joyful sound is slighted by final unbelief and impenitency, then it brings the greatest ruin and perdition. See and read to this purpose, Heb. x. 28, 29, and xi.

25. To slight the sound of this great trumpet, then, brings the greatest damnation, the hottest hell ; but in itself it is a merciful sound. Therefore,

3dly, I am here to consider what sort of a sound this great trumpet brings, and what sort of a proclamation is made by it. In general, when this great trumpet is blown, it gives a sound of grace and mercy to poor outcast sinners ready to perish. It is called, Tit. ii. 11, “ The grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men,” as you may read in the margin. More particularly,

1. The sound of this great trumpet is a sound of life to dead sinners ; John x. 10, “ I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. John v. 25, The hour cometh when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live. John xi. 25, I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall

he live." This trumpet is for rousing and awakening the dead; and blessed are they that are awakened and quickened with the sound of it; for the voice of it is, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 4. No trumpet but that of the living and life-giving God can sound after this manner; and it is like himself; for he is the God that quickens the dead, and calls things that be not, as though they were, Rom. iv. 17.

2. The sound of this great trumpet is a sound of liberty to captive sinners; "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives; and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn," Isa. lxi. 1, 2. "O captive sinner, lying in the chains of sin and Satan, and in the chains of unbelief and enmity, would you have your chains loosed, and your soul set at liberty? Hear the voice of the trumpet;" "The Lord looseth the prisoners," Psal. cxlvi. 7. Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope," Zech. ix. 12. "By the blood of thy covenant have I sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water," ver. 11.

3. The sound of this great trumpet is a sound of pardoning grace to the condemned sinner; it proclaims indemnity to all the guilty rebels against heaven that hear and welcome the sound of it; "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin. And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," Acts xiii. 38, 39. It is free indemnity through Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace, that is proclaimed; "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the richness of his grace," Eph. i. 7. O! will any condemned sinner accept of pardon and indemnity upon these gracious terms? The condition is already fulfilled; the blood of Jesus Christ hath bought remission. This blessing of his blood comes therefore to you freely, that you may accept of it freely, and you have it. "Not for your sake, not for your sake doth he give it, but for his own name's sake: Isa. xliii. 25. I, even I, am he that blotteth out your transgressions for mine own sake;" for no other reason but that you may have the good of it, and I may have the glory of it.

4. The sound of this great trumpet is a sound of purifying grace to the filthy sinner; "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness," Zech. xiii. 1. The trumpet proclaims to you, O filthy, polluted sinner, going quick with vermin, all overspread with the ugly vermin of sin and corruption: it proclaims, saying, Behold, The God of Heaven, hath provided a fountain of purification, both for sin and for uncleanness; both for taking away the guilt of sin, and the filth of sin; yea, behold, he hath provided both a Red-sea, and a crystal river; a Red-sea of blood, The blood of Christ cleansing from all sin, 1 John i. 7; and the crystal river that proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb; and this is to be in you as a well of water springing up to everlasting life, in his quickening, purifying, and sanctifying presence and operation, John iv. 14. You cannot sanctify and purify yourself, no more than you can create a world: but here am I that can create a clean heart within you; "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world;" therefore, "Take with you words, and say, Take away all iniquity," thou whose work it is, and whose promise thus sounds in mine ears, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you," Ezek. xxxvi. 25. This great trumpet then, hath a sound of life and liberty, pardon and purity; life to the dead, liberty to the bound, pardon to the guilty, and purity to the filthy. These comprehend all that you need, both in time and for eternity; for the everlasting gospel proclaims everlasting blessings, everlasting life, everlasting liberty, everlasting pardon, everlasting purity and holiness; all to be had in Christ, the everlasting Lord and Saviour, who was dead, and is alive, and lives for evermore; and all to be had, partly and graciously here; and fully and gloriously hereafter.

5. In a word, the sound of this great trumpet is a sound of complete salvation, in all the respects wherein poor sinners that hear the joyful sound need to be saved. It is a sound of instruction to the ignorant, saying, "They shall be all taught of God." A sound of direction to the bewildered, saying, like a voice behind them, "This is the way, walk ye in it." The trumpet proclaims, saying, Here is rest for the weary soul; comfort for the drooping soul; strength for the weak; riches for the poor; raiment for the naked; sight for the blind; supply for the needy soul; here is salvation for

the lost soul; grace, glory, and every good thing for these that have nothing. Here, in short, then, is the matter of the proclamation by sound of trumpet from heaven. You have a sum of the joyful sound of this trumpet, Isaiah xxv. 6. "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. Isaiah lv. 1., Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Ho, every one that pleaseth, come and match with the Son of God: "All things are ready, come to the marriage," and so come to the marriage-feast. So much shall suffice for this particular.

4thly, I proposed here to speak a little of the quality of this sound of the great gospel trumpet, when it is blown in Zion. And,

1. It is a joyful and a charming sound, Psalm lxxxix. 15, 16, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day long; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." The voice of the trumpet is, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people: for unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," Luke ii. 10. Some that were once delivered by a conqueror, from outward bondage, made the elements ring, and the birds fall out of the air with their voice, crying out, SOTER, SOTER, a Saviour, a Saviour. O how much more should the glad news of a Saviour, to save from sin and everlasting wrath, be received with joy! It is a joyful and charming sound; shall the voice of the Charmer be rejected and despised by the deaf adders here?

2. It is a divine, awful sound; it is the voice of the Son of Man; yea, the voice of the Son of God; it is the voice of the great God that is to be heard through this trumpet, that voice that shakes the heaven and the earth, Heb. xiii. 26. It is a lofty sound, from the high and lofty One, that inhabits eternity: a majestic sound, for "The voice of the Lord is full of majesty." Though it be a still small voice, like that Elijah heard, 1 Kings xix. 12; yea, the Lord is in it; and happy they that, through the voice of a man, hear the voice of God, by receiving it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually in you that believe, 1 Thes. ii. 13. Hence,

3. It is an internal and spiritual, as well as an external sound;

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," John vi. 63. Hence it is a sound that both wounds and heals the soul; that first kills, and then quickens the soul; and so it appears to be the voice of the living God, who says, "I kill and I make alive; I wound, and I heal." It is external, in the publication to the ear; and faith comes by this hearing; and then it is internal and spiritual, in the operation of it upon the heart; and, O may it be a living and life-giving, and soul-quickenings sound to many here; for, it is the voice of the Son of God, that makes the dead to hear and live.

4. It is a long and lasting sound. The sound of common trumpets, when they are blown, is but a dying sound; but the great trumpet of the everlasting gospel is not so: it is the word of God that lives and abides for ever, 1 Peter i. 23. The echo of this joyful sound will be heard for ever, both in heaven and in hell. The joyful echo among the redeemed, and the dreadful tormenting echo among the damned, will be everlasting: it will not sound for ever as now it doth; but the echo thereof will be heard louder and louder to all eternity, when all things else will wither and fade; this you see clear from 1 Peter i., 24, 25, compared with Isaiah xl. 6, "The voice said, Cry. And I said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." And as to the present external dispensation of the gospel, God keeps the count of the time how long the trumpet sounds in your ears: "All day long have I stretched out my hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people," Rom. x. 21.

5. It is a near sound, not at a distance, like news from a foreign country, but near at hand, and bringing heavenly things near us: "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry." He placeth this salvation in Zion, for Israel his glory, Isaiah xl. 12, 13, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach," Rom. x. 8. The word is nigh to your heart; for the Lord is dealing with your by it; O may he not only deal, but prevail. For,

6. It is a powerful, conquering sound : it will overcome and prevail, so as to reach the end of it one way or another : " It shall not return unto me void ; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Isaiah lv. 11. God will not blow his trumpet in vain ; all rejectors and despisers shall be rendered inexcusable by it ; and all his elect shall be mercifully conquered ; for the trumpet hath a surmounting sound ; it sounds over the tops of all the hills and mountains of sin and guilt, and of unbelief and enmity ; " The voice of my Beloved ! behold he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills, Song ii. 8. The voice of the Lord is powerful, melting down mountains in his way. " The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon." This leads,

IV. To the fourth general head proposed, To touch at the efficacy of this means ; and why is it promised, that a number of outcast sinners, ready to perish, by the blowing of the great trumpet, shall come. Arminian doctrine, that aboundeth in our day, makes the efficacy of the gospel depend upon man's free will : but, we have not so learned Christ : he hath made surer work ; and all the efficacy to depend upon his free grace ; and this is secured by his shall be : " The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come." The Father's promise to the Son secures it ; " Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, Psalm cx. 3. He shall see his seed. He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." The Father's promise to the Son is secured and confirmed by his oath upon this head, Psalm lxxxix. 35. " Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever ;" his seed among Jews and Gentiles, and among the nations afar off ; " I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for thy possession. He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, and the isles shall wait for his law." Amidst all the discouragements that men may give us in our preaching the gospel, here is the encouragement that God gives us in blowing the great trumpet in the ears of outcasts, ready to perish. There is a number among them that shall come ; " Other sheep I have that are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice," John x. 16. I must bring them, and they must come. The sweet necessity he is under of bringing them, produces in the day of power, a sweet necessity in them, saying, O, we must come to Christ ; we perish without him : we hear the sound

of his trumpet; and therefore we say, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

Quest. Why is it promised, that a number of outcasts, ready to perish, shall come, when the gospel trumpet shall be blown?

Ans. 1. Because none would have encouragement to come, if there were not a promise that they shall come. Here is encouragement to all that hear the sound of this trumpet. It is true, may a soul say, I know not if I be intended, but I see the promise respects the like of me: the promise of drawing grace, respects the like of me, that cannot come of myself; the promise of pardon respects these that are guilty; the promise of cleansing respects these that are filthy; the promise of taking away the stoney heart respects these that have a hard, stupid heart. Now, this is my case, and therefore, here is a door of hope; here is some encouragement for me to come to him, and wait upon him. And as none would have encouragement if it were not so: so all may have encouragement here: the door of hope is open.

2. He hath promised they shall come, because as none would have encouragement to come, so none would have grace to come, if it were not promised; and if it were not by virtue of the promise made in Jesus Christ: for it is grace coming out of the promise, that is turned to grace in the heart. Then, indeed, the soul comes, when the grace that lies in the promise is turned to grace in the heart, and wrought there by the means of the promise. It is by virtue of the great and precious promise we are made partakers of the divine nature, and of the Spirit of faith; the promise being pleas and arguments for faith, and for the prayer of faith, saying, Lord, hast thou not so and so said to such as I am; and wilt thou not do as thou hast said: hast thou not said, That Solomon shall reign, that grace shall reign? and wilt thou suffer sin to reign? And the promise being the pipe and channel for the communication of grace, the conduit from Christ to us, "All the promises being Yea and Amen in Christ," and the conduit-pipe reaching from the heart of Christ to the mouth of faith, we suck in his fulness. As the law begets terror, so the promise begets faith; both by the freeness of it to the most unworthy, and the fulness of it, being a plaster as big as the sore, and exactly answering to its want; and by the efficacy of it, through the secret working of the Spirit, discovering this fulness and freeness of divine grace, and drawing the heart towards this promising God.

3. He hath promised they shall come, that thus he may secure his own glory, which he designs to show forth in his way. His great design, in saving any poor perishing sinner, is the glory of his name, and the honour of all his perfections: "Sing, O heavens; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel," Isa. xliv. 23. He designs, by redeeming them, to glorify himself; and that he may shew forth his perfections, and they may shew forth his praise: "This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise," Isa. xlii. 21. He thus shews forth the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, mercy, and truth; and therefore he hath promised they shall come: and this, with all the other promises of God, are Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God, 2 Cor. i. 20.

4. He hath promised they shall come by faith to him, that their salvation may be sure; "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed," Rom. iv. 16. As God's word, "Let it be," brought the world into a being; so his "shall be," is the cause of what comes to pass in the new creation. His saying, "they shall come," is the cause of their coming, otherwise they would never come. He hath declared his will in this world, concerning their coming to him for life and salvation; and by his will they are sanctified, and saved through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, Heb. x. 10. And what can be surer than the will of God, and that God will have his will? "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11.

V. The fifth head I proposed was, To speak a little of the *end* for which they shall come, namely, "To worship the Lord in the holy mount of Jerusalem." To speak now of divine worship at any length, is what I cannot propose; there are only four things concerning it, that, I think, the words here lead me to, namely, here is the nature, the object the manner, and the spring of worship.

1. The nature of it, imported in the name worship. "To worship is to give any one the honour due unto him; so to worship God, is to render that honour and homage that is due to him, Psa. xxix. 2." Now, the worship of God is twofold, internal and external. Internal worship, is to love God, to fear him, to believe and trust in him; these are acts of inward worship, and the sum of that honour we are required to give to God in the first command. External worship is the serving of God according to his own

ordinances and institutions, which is the sum of the second command, comprehending all the several ways wherein he will be honoured and served, such as prayer, praise, &c. Both these must go together : internal worship pleaseth God best : external worship honoureth him most, and setteth forth his glory in the world. Hence the temple was called, "The place where God put his name," *i.e.* his worship ; by which God is known, as a man is by his name. "They that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth : " in Spirit, that is, with inward love, fear, reverance, and uprightness ; in truth, that is, according to the true rule of his word. The former respects the inward power, and the latter the outward rule ; the former strikes at hypocrisy, and the latter at idolatry ; the one opposes looseness of our hearts in worship, and the other opposes the inventions of our heads.

2. The object of worship is the Lord ; "They shall worship the Lord." Hence we read, Matt. iv. 18, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." To me it would seem, that by the Lord here, in the text, we are to understand the Lord and Saviour Christ, because I see no difference made between the object of faith here expressed by coming, and the object of homage here expressed by worship ; "They shall come, and shall worship the Lord." However this be, it is God. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is the object of religious worship ; and the Unity must be worshipped in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity : and, when we direct our worship to any one person, we must include the rest in the same worship ; and we are to conceive of him as he hath manifested himself to us in his word. If we worship God out of a Trinity, as the Turks ; or God out of Christ, as the Jews ; we worship not the true God, but an idol.

3. The manner of worship, and the acceptable way thereof, is here pointed out : "They shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem ;" that is, to worship him in the beauty of holiness, Psalm xxix. 2, *i.e.* in his holy temple, or in his beautiful sanctuary : in a way honourable to him, which can only be in and through Jesus Christ.

Now, for the further understanding of this, you would consider, that Jerusalem of old was the place of worship, "Whither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord to the testimony of Israel," Psalm cxxii. 3, 4. But now, under the New Testament dispensation such is the great goodness of God to us, he doth not now tie us

to any place. See and read, John iv. 20, 21. He doth not tie us to go to the farther part of the nation to worship: no; the land is everywhere holy: wherever his name is recorded, there is a Jerusalem, there is a Zion.

Again, consider that the holy mount at Jerusalem, Mount Zion largely taken, including Mount Moriah, was the place of the temple, which was eminently typical of our Lord Jesus Christ. And as all the true worshippers of God then were to worship at or toward the material temple (hence the expression of worshipping at his holy hill, Psalm xcix. 9; and worshipping towards his holy temple, Psalm v. 7; "In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple:" and thus, (Psalm cxxxviii. 2); so, to worship the Lord now, in the holy mount, is to worship God in Christ. And as to ascend into the hill of the Lord, and to stand in his holy place, Psalm xxiv. 3, this to worship God in the holy mount at Jerusalem, is, in the language of the New Testament, to worship God in Christ: in the Spirit of Christ, for assistance; and in the faith of the merit and righteousness of Christ, for acceptance; for "We are accepted in the Beloved," Eph. i. 6. It is an entrance with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb. x. 19. It is to have access to God in our prayers and praises, and in the ordinances of the word and sacrament of his own appointment and institution; and access with boldness and confidence by the faith of him, Eph. iii. 12. This is the same with that of David, "Bring me to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacle: then will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy," Psalm xliii. 3, 4.

4. Here also is the root and spring, or the cause of this worship implied in these words, "They shall come, and shall worship:" importing that faith is the internal principle that leads on the soul to religious duties and worship; for first they shall come, namely, by faith; and then they shall worship. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and to worship him acceptably. And importing also that the power of the spirit is the internal efficient cause of spiritual worship, stirring up and exciting the soul to it; for here is a double promise; first, "They shall come;" and then, "They shall worship;" which says, that not only must the Spirit give us faith to come, but also grace to worship when we have come. One may be a believer in Christ that hath come to him, and yet out of case to worship the Lord in his holy mount, till the Spirit by his new breathing and influence raise up the dormant seed of grace;

and, by his blowing upon our garden, make the spices thereof flow out. The same power that is first put forth in the mighty sound of the great gospel trumpet, by virtue of that promise, "They shall come," is necessary also to be put forth by virtue of that promise, "They shall worship." Our coming to Christ believingly this day needs a powerful shall be, for that, "They shall come;" our communicating worthily to-morrow needs another powerful shall be, for that, "They shall worship." So much for this head, "They shall worship in his holy mount at Jerusalem." I come,

VI. To the sixth and last thing proposed, which was to draw some inferences for the application.—And,

1st, By way of information. If it be so, as has been said, hence,

1. We may see the infinite mercy of God towards poor perishing sinners, especially these within the pale of the visible church. Though they be outcasts, by casting out themselves, yet he sends the great trumpet of the gospel to call them in. They are ready to perish in their sin and misery, and behold, he here shows himself ready to pity, and ready to save them, saying, "To you, O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men. Incline your ear unto me; hear, and your soul shall live."

2. Hence we may see what is the work of ministers, whom the Lord sends forth, namely, to blow the trumpet in Zion, Joel ii. 1. There is a twofold trumpet they are to blow; the trumpet of the law, and the trumpet of the gospel.

(1.) Sometimes they are called to put the terrible trumpet of the law to their mouth, to "Tell Jacob their sin, and Israel their transgressions;" to "Cry aloud, and not spare," Isa. lviii. 1. They are to spare no pains, nor to spare their breath in blowing from Sinai, to show sinners both their sinful and miserable state, and how they are upon the very brink of ruin, and ready to perish. But then still they are to preach the law with a view to the gospel, and as a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ.

(2.) Again, they are called to blow the great gospel-trumpet to these perishing sinners, proclaiming life, liberty, and salvation to them in a way of coming to Jesus, as the end of the law for righteousness, that the curse of the law may be put to an end with respect to them; not that from henceforth they may be lawless, but that they may be conform to the law, as a rule; for, in coming to him, they come to worship the Lord in his holy mount. Thus, in-

deed, the true gospel-minister preaches always Christ, whether it be the law or the gospel that is in his mouth ; and he brings in more honour to the law than all the legal preachers in the world, with their moral harangues, and high encomiums upon moral virtue : for the gospel-minister preaches the law and its curse, to bring the soul to Christ, in whom the law gets full satisfaction and complete payment, as it is a covenant of works ; and the sinner coming to him, gets redemption from all the curses of it : and then he preaches the gospel of the grace of God in Christ, so as the sinner, being come to Christ, may come to his duty of right worship toward God, according to the direction of the law as a rule. He shows their perishing state, that they may come to Christ, and he calls them to come to Christ, that they may come to God in him, and worship the Lord in his holy mount.

Great skill then is requisite in blowing this great trumpet. It is true, some are qualified of the Lord for blowing more loud and awfully, like BOANERGES, as *sons of thunder* : others for blowing more softly and sweetly, like BARNABAS, as *sons of consolation* : and indeed, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit," 1 Cor. xii. 4. Some are qualified and set apart for one piece of the tabernacle work, and some for another : some to be founders, and some to be as it were, barrow-men in the work of the spiritual temple ; some for this post and station, and some for the other. Let the great God be revered in all this ; for it is he that qualifies and separates every one for his own proper work. If he call one and the same person, at different times, to different work ; or, if he call out one to go forth and blow an alarm, with a terrible sound, and another to trumpet forth grace, and make the people know the joyful sound ; there is need for each of them : let infinite wisdom be adored.

3. Hence we see may the duty of people, with reference to the ministers and their message, when blowing a great gospel-trumpet ; it is surely people's duty, both to pray for them, and to receive their message, by harkening to the sound of the trumpet.

On the one hand, it is their duty to pray for poor ministers, that they may blow the great trumpet with the breath of the Spirit ; and preach the gospel in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power, 1 Cor. ii. 4. "Brethren, pray for us," says the apostle ; pray that a door of utterance may be opened. Never was there a time wherein God's people had more need to pray for ministers ; it is a day wherein it is much for them to hold their feet. There are

grievous defections among the most part in Scotland, and these breaking out in judicatories, which we should lament over, and give our testimony against, as sometimes we essay to do : yea, there are sinful defects in testifying among these that desire to do so ; and yet sin in not doing so much as they ought. But I say again, ministers had much need to be prayed for : and I have a word to say to you upon this head, not to offend you but to deal plainly with you in the sight of the great God, whose trumpet I am honoured to put in my mouth. I see some offence is taken at some worthy ministers, whom you and I both, perhaps, reckon so ; I mean these that, upon the main, are known to be faithful, so far as their light and ability goes, and that have the seal of their ministry upon many souls, and whose ministry the Lord is still owning and blessing ; when these do anything that is amiss in your eyes, whether it be seemingly or really, I ask you, Whether you be more taken up in judging them or in praying for them ? As to rash judgment, there is nothing you are more cautioned against in God's word ; and as to praying for ministers particularly, there is nothing more expressly commanded. Now, I ask you again, before God and conscience, Whether you are more taken up in judging them, or in praying for them ? I shall suppose they are really left to some wrong step ; but, if you have been neglecting to pray for them, perhaps that is the cause why God hath left them, and thereupon you turn your back upon them also and revile them ; and so the poor men suffer both the rebukes of God, and the reproaches of men, for your sin in neglecting to pray for them : and, therefore, hereupon I ask you again, Whether or not, before ever you are offended with them before the world, you are first displeased with yourself before God, and humble yourself before him, for your sinful neglect in praying and wrestling with God for them ? If this be not your way, but, on the contrary, you be rashly disobliged at the poor honest ministers, for the evil which your sin hath brought upon them : then, I must tell you, in God's name, though you were as the signet of his right hand, God will take his own time and way of restoring them, and rebuking you.

But again, as it is your duty to pray for ministers, so also to receive their message, and hearken to the sound of the trumpet in their mouth ; and, indeed, if it be God's great trumpet that they blow, then surely not to listen to it is to stop your ears at the voice of the charmer, like the deaf adder, and to refuse him that speaketh

from heaven, which is a sin ; how deep it runs you may see, Heb. xii. 25, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh : for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

4. Hence we may see, from this doctrine, what it is that makes the preaching of the gospel effectual to the salvation of perishing sinners, when the great gospel trumpet is blown. It is not any virtue of this or that preacher ; no ; it is the power of God exerted according to the promise, that then they shall come and they shall worship. What is it that will make the dead sinner to believe savingly ? It is the efficacy of this word, "They shall come." What is it that will make the believer a worthy receiver at the Lord's table ? It is the efficacy of this word, "They shall worship the Lord in his holy mount." It is a day of power that is here promised to accompany the blowing of the great trumpet, which he makes the rod of his strength, and sends it out of Zion. The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit which is received by the hearing of faith. This leads me to the next use we intend from the doctrine.

The second use we make is for examination. You may try both your state and frame from this doctrine, in these following particulars, whether or not you be of these who, by the blowing of the great trumpet, have been made to come to Christ, and to worship the Lord in his holy mount. Examine by these two particulars, 1. If you have been made to hear the voice of God in the great trumpet of the gospel. 2. If thereupon you have been made to live, so as to come and worship. These two are the sum of God's saving work comprehending all ; "The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live," John v. 25.

1. Have you heard the voice of God in this great gospel trumpet ? I ask not if you have heard this or that man speaking to you ; but if you have heard God speaking by the word to you and heard it, not as the word of man, but as the word of God. More particularly, have you heard,

(1.) So as to be convinced of your Egyptian thralldom and Assyrian bondage ; and found yourself to be an outcast wretch, a sinner ready to perish, whereas before you was sleeping in your chains ? Hath God's trumpet alarmed you, so as you have seen

yourself lying under the curse of the law, and putting you in fear of everlasting wrath and damnation, as one lying on the very brink of hell, and made you to cry, "Oh! What shall I do to be saved?"

(2.) Have you heard so as to be awakened, as it were, from among the dead, to see that life and salvation is to be had in the glorious IMMANUEL, Jesus Christ, who is proclaimed a Saviour and Redeemer by the sound of the gospel trumpet? There is a seeing of the Son by a spiritual discerning, before there can be a believing on him, John vi. 40. Hath the great trumpet then so far roused and wakened you up, that you have got your eyes opened, not only to see the massy chain of spiritual captivity you were under to sin, Satan, and wrath; but also to see the Redeemer and deliverer that is come out of Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and that there is salvation in none other? Hath Christ revealed to you by the word, been thus revealed in you, so as you have seen and perceived him to be the glorious and only Saviour?

2. Have you not only been made to hear the sound of the trumpet, thus wakening you out of your dead sleep, to a sense of sin and sight of the remedy; but, have you thereupon been made to live? "The dead shall hear his voice, and they that hear shall live." Now, how may this life be tried? Why, the text mentions also two parts of this life; first, they shall come; and next, they shall worship in his holy mount.

(1.) Then, have you been made to come; that is, to believe in Jesus, to fly for refuge to him, and to fly out of yourself, as having nothing but sin and guilt, hell and misery about you; to him, as having all for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? Have you been brought under a sweet necessity of coming to Christ, and resolutely to throw yourself into his saving arms, saying, if I perish, let me perish there, where never one did? Have you found some secret drawing cord about your heart, making you restless till you come to Christ for rest to your heart and conscience? Faith is an entering into this rest, Heb. iv. 3.

(2.) Have you hereupon been made to come and worship in the holy mount; to worship God in Christ with holy fear and reverence, coming with humble boldness to the throne of grace? Hath your faith wrought by love, and the love of Christ constrained you to seek and serve him in his temple, and ordinances of his appointment. And, is this holy place the place of your abode

desiring still to ascend to the hill of the Lord, and to stand in his holy place? The sum of this mark is, Are you brought to David's one thing? "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire into his temple," Psalm xxvii. 4.

Now, examine yourself by these plain marks; for if you know nothing less or more thereof, whatever be your good disposition at the time, you are a stranger in Israel, and have no right to a communion table; but if you have the experience of these marks, then, whatever be the alterations of your frame, you may conclude you are in a safe state, as well as sometimes in a spiritual frame; and so have a right to the great gospel-feast of the Lord's Supper in the holy mount, and may venture to it in his name and strength.

The third use, with which I shall close, may be in a word of exhortation, especially to all the sinners here that are yet in a lost state and condition ready to perish, and like outcasts in the land of Egypt; and we would blow the great trumpet in your hearing, and "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Our preaching the gospel to you is the accomplishment of one promise: "It shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown:" and we are encouraged to this work by the promises annexed to it, concerning outcast sinners ready to perish, "They shall come, and shall worship." Why, then, in the name of the great King, whose unworthy herald I am, I do, as it were, by sound of trumpet, proclaim life to dead sinners here, and liberty to you captive sinners, pardon and indemnity to guilty rebellious sinners, and purifying grace to filthy polluted sinners, and all to be had freely: "Whosoever will, let him come and take of these waters of life freely." Will you give a hearing to our great Lord, whose treasure is put into earthen vessels, and whose voice sounds through earthen trumpets: for God's sake, look over the poor unworthy instrument; little matter who blow the trumpet, if the breath of the Spirit convey the sound into your heart. Look over the head of the poor servant; the Master calls you, even you that are afar off, and farther from God than Egypt and Assyria are from you; yet the sound of the trumpet reaches to you.

What is your name, man, woman? Surely your name is in this text, if you be a sinner, ready to perish. "Alas! may some say, I am so ready to perish, that I am ready to give over all

duties of religion, and ready to doubt of all revealed religion, and of the very being of God, and truth of the scriptures; I am ready to blaspheme, and to say, God is a liar. Oh! says another, I am ready to raze the foundation of all that ever was done in me, and ready to conclude, that now it is impossible I can be saved." Say on, soul! and tell me more in what respects you are ready to perish. "Oh! say you, I am ready to pine away in my iniquity, and live in rebellion all my days, such is the power of my corruption; yea, I am ready through fear and dread, and terrible temptations, to kill, destroy, and put away myself; and, while I suffer the terrors of God, I am distracted; I am ready to think, that the day of grace is past, and that I am a cast-away." Are you an outcast, ready to perish in the wilderness of darkness, ignorance, and confusion? Are you an outcast, ready to perish in the prison of unbelief, atheism, enmity, and hard bound with all the chains of hell about you? Well, whatever prison you be into, whatever outcast state you be into, and in whatever respect you are ready to perish, yet, O hear the sound of the great trumpet, saying, Come, ye that are outcast sinners; come all ye that are ready to perish; come to the great King, whose heralds we are; come to the great Saviour and Redeemer; you will never worship acceptably in his holy mount, till first you come; you will never communicate worthily, till first you come to Christ. O come while the trumpet sounds, come and take his helping hand, who comes to seek and save you that are lost. He offers to save you fully, to save you freely, to save you everlastingly. Since you cannot save yourself, will you welcome a Saviour? O what disoblige you at him, who is as ready to save as you are ready to perish; and who says, Welcome to the worst of you all; Young sinner, old sinner, great sinner, chief of sinners, come while the trumpet sounds.

The second coming of Christ to judgment is hastening on, and then the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall arise; dead bodies will then rise and come to the Judge, at the sound of the last trumpet. But now the great gospel-trumpet calls dead souls to rise and come to the Saviour; "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live." Whenever dead bodies hear the last trumpet, they shall live; and whenever dead souls now hear the voice of the Son of God, in the great gospel trumpet, they shall live also.

"Alas!" say you, "I do not find a quickening power, accom-

panying the word, and raising my soul to life." Why, what is the reason of that? Surely, where the voice of a king is, there is power," Eccl. viii. 4. And where the word, the voice of King Jesus is heard, there is power. Perhaps, you are hearing the word delivered by us as the word of a man, and not as it is indeed the word of God, which would work effectually. As long as you hear but the voice of a man speaking to you, there is no power, virtue, or efficiency; but, O, tell me, do you hear the voice of the Son of God through this trumpet of man's voice? For we speak to you in his name, whose name is the God that quickens the dead, and calls things that be not, as they were. O! then tell me, do you hear his voice, a voice that goes not into your ear only, but into your heart? Is the sound of God's trumpet going in through and out through your heart? Then, hope, there is some power, and if you be hearing his powerful voice, then rise, the Master calls you. Rise, dead Lazarus; rise, stupid soul, ye that are as stupid as the earth beneath your feet. "O earth, earth, earth, here the word of the Lord." The last trumpet will not be more powerful, to make the earth and sea give up their dead bodies than this great gospel-trumpet is powerful to raise dead souls, if the Lord by the breathing of his Spirit be blowing it, and if you be hearing his voice: "They that hear shall live." I have no more to say, and I have said nothing that will be heard, unless he say the word. Rise and live; rise and come to Jesus, and in this way come and worship in his holy mount. May the Lord himself speak powerfully to you.

END OF VOL. II.