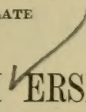


THE SERMONS
AND OTHER
PRACTICAL WORKS

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.

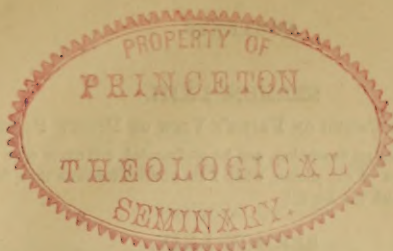
"By these he, being dead, yet speaketh."—HEB. xi. 4.

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RALPH ERSKINE'S SERMONS.

SERMON LII.

THE SUM OF THE GOSPEL ; OR GOD IN CHRIST.¹

MAT. iii. 17.—“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

THIS chapter shows us two things principally : 1. The rising of the morning-star, John the Baptist, to prepare the way for Christ's appearing. 2. The more glorious rising and shining of the Sun of righteousness himself, particularly in Christ's baptism. Here is an objection John makes against baptising Jesus, when he came to him to be baptised, ver. 13, 14 : “ But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me ? ” Here is Christ's over-ruling objection, insisting upon the being baptised of him, and giving the reason of it, ver. 15 : “ And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now : for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” We have here the solemnity of the baptism ; and here is from heaven a special display of heavenly glory, both to encourage Christ in his undertaking, now when entering upon his work, his public ministry, and to encourage us to receive him, in and through whom the heavens are opened to us. And hereupon we have,

1st, A messenger from heaven, and then a voice ; “ He saw the Spirit descending like a dove, ver. 16. If there must be a bodily appearance, it must not be that of a man ; for the being seen

(1.) This sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, at Dumfermline, July 10, 1737, with some additional enlargement.

in fashion as a man, was peculiar to the second person : none, therefore, more fit than the shape of one of the fowls of heaven, and of all fowls, none so significant as the dove. Why ? The Spirit of Christ is a dove-like Spirit ; not a silly dove, without heart ; but an innocent dove, without gall, and harmless, inoffensive. The dove was the fowl offered in sacrifice ; and Christ, by the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God. The tidings of the falling of the flood was brought by the dove, with an olive branch in her mouth : fitly, therefore, is the glad tidings of peace with God brought by the Spirit as a dove, by the voice of the turtle heard in our land ; by which the Chaldee Paraphrase understand the voice of the Holy Spirit.

2dly, We have a voice from Heaven. As the Holy Ghost manifests himself in the likeness of a dove ; so God, the Father, by a voice ; and it is a voice that brings the best news that ever was heard, and that ever came from God to earth : for it speaks plainly forth God's favour to Christ, and then to us in him.

1. It speaks forth God's favour to Christ Jesus our Lord ; " This is my beloved Son." This expresseth both his relation and affection.

(1.) It expresseth the relation he stands in to him ; He is my Son. Christ is his Father's Son by eternal generation ; thus, as God, he is co-equal with the Father, begotten of him before all worlds, Col. i. 15 : " Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature ;" as man, he is the Son of God, by supernatural conception, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. Also, he is the Son of God by special designation to the work and office of Redeemer ; he is sanctified, sealed, and sent upon this errand, brought up with the Father for it, and appointed to it.

(2.) It expresseth the affection the Father hath for him, " This is my beloved Son ;" he is his dear Son, the Son of his love, Col. i. 13. He had ~~lain~~ in his bosom from eternity, John i. 18 ; was always his delight, Prov. viii. 30. But particularly as Mediator, and in undertaking the work of man's redemption, he was his beloved Son ; his Elect, in whom his soul delighteth, Isa. xli. 1. " Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again, John x. 17. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand," John iii. 35. Surely thus we may know and admire how he loved us, and the like of us, that he hath not withheld his Son, his only Son, his Isaac whom he

loved, but give him up a sacrifice for our sins; and therefore he loved him, because he laid down his life for us. Therefore,

2. Observe God's favour to us in him. He is my beloved Son, not only with whom, but IN whom I am well-pleased. Not only well-pleased with all that are in him, and unite to him by faith; but, being in him, I am well-pleased, and declare myself well-pleased and satisfied.

The word signifies somewhat else than that love, affection, and delight in Christ, in the former clause. The word here *Ευδοκῆσα*, though it be a Greek word importing approbation and affection; yet it hath its signification, not from the Greek, but from the Hebrew; for this verse is taken from Isa. xlii. 1. "Mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth;" which, though it be rendered, as here, by the seventy interpreters, yet properly it signifies to be appeased, pacified, reconciled; and so it is not only in whom I delight, and am well-pleased for thyself; but also, in whom I am quieted, and satisfied with all these that belong to thee. This is the sum of the gospel, as it is expressed, 1 Cor. v. 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Out of Christ he is a consuming fire; but in Christ he is a reconciled God; he offering himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us unto God.

From the words we observed two doctrinal propositions. The first was, that Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is the beloved of the Father, the object of his highest love, delight, and esteem. This doctrine being formerly¹ spoken to, at considerable length, I proceed now to the second, viz:—

DOCT. That God is in Christ, and in him alone a well-pleased and pacified God.

For proving and illustrating of this doctrine, see these parallel texts, Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth:" compared with Mat. xii. 18, "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my Beloved in whom my soul is well-pleased. Isa. xlix. 3, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. John xiii. 31, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. Mat. xvii. 5, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased;

(1) This first doctrine was handled in several state^d discourses before the sacrament.

hear ye him. 1 Cor. v. 15, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."

The method we lay down, for the further prosecuting of this subject, through divine assistance, shall be as follows :—

- I. We shall speak of God's being in Christ.
- II. Inquire how God is in Christ.
- III. Show that in Christ he is well-pleased.
- V. Make application of the whole subject.

I. We are to speak of God's being in Christ. For understanding this, we may consider, 1. What God is out of Christ. 2. What God is in Christ.

1st, What God is out of Christ to the sinner. Why he is an offended, a threatening, a dishonoured, and a distant God.

1. God out of Christ is to a sinner an angry God ; Psal. vii. 11, "God judgeth the righteous ; God is angry with the wicked every day ;" or, it may be read, "God is the **RIGHTEOUS JUDGE** ; God is angry with the wicked every day ;" because he is a righteous judge, therefore he cannot but be displeased, offended, and angry with them ; and, oh ! but the wrath and anger of God is a terrible matter. "Who knows the power of his wrath ?" When it begins to burn, it burns to the lowest hell.

2. God out of Christ is a threatening God ; his anger manifests itself in threatenings and curses ; Ps. vii. 12. 13. "If he turn not, he will whet his sword ; he hath bent his bow and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death ; he hath ordained his arrows" for taking vengeance ; and his threatenings are not bare words ; but as God in Christ gives a being to his words of grace ; so God, out of Christ, gives a being to his words of wrath, saying, as it is, Deut. xxxii. 39, 40, 41. "See now that I, even I am he, and there is no god with me : I kill, and I make alive ; I wound, and I heal ; neither is there any that 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 mine hand take hold of judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and a reward to them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, &c." God, out of Christ, is a God whose mouth is full of curses and threatenings, and whose hand is full of terrible vengeance for executing the threatening : "Cursed is every one that continueth

not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them," Gal. iii. 10.

3. A God out of Christ is a dishonoured God; and this is the reason why he is an angry God and a threatening God, because he is a dishonoured God; for, "Sin being a transgression of God's law," 1 John iii. 4.; his authority is contemned, his wisdom slighted, his power vilipended, his holiness baffled, his justice enraged, and all his glorious attributes abused and affronted.

4. God out of Christ is a distant God: sin having set God and man at variance, and at a distance from one another; therefore men are said to be afar off, Acts ii. 39. Eph. ii. 13, 17. Not in respect of any local distance: for God is everywhere; but in point of moral distance. We are far from the image of God, far from the favour of God, far from the knowledge of God, far from the love of God, far from the life of God, being alienate therefrom, through the ignorance that is in us, Eph. iv. 18; and from any relation to God, except that of a vindicative judge, and an avenger of sin, a consuming fire, ready to break out every moment in everlasting flames; between which, and the Christless sinner, there is nothing but the weak, tender thread of life, which the least spark of that fire of God's wrath can burn and break, and then he falls into the depth of endless and irremediless torment. Thus you have a short account what God *out* of Christ is.

2ndly. We may consider what God is *in* Christ: Why?

1. God in Christ is a reconciled God, whose anger is appeased and quenched by the blood of his eternal Son, offering up himself a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God; upon which account he proclaims here, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And sends ministers to proclaim the word of reconciliation, viz., "That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them," 2 Cor. v. 19.

2. As a God out of Christ is a threatening God, so a God in Christ is a promising God. The covenant of promise being sealed and confirmed by the death and blood of Christ, which covenant is therefore called the New Testament in his blood, 1 Cor. xi. 25. And the condition of all the promises being so well fulfilled, the price of them being so well paid, they come to us in the dispensation of the gospel freely and absolutely, to be received without money, and without price, because the money and price is already paid down to the full, in the liquid gold of the blood of the God-

man ; that being freely received, we may wait with assured hope till they be fully accomplished, because, " All the promises of God are in Christ, Yea, and in him, Amen, to the glory of God," 1 Cor. i. 10.

3. A God in Christ is a glorified God : as God out of Christ to a sinner is a God abused and dishonoured ; for God in Christ is a God glorified and honoured ; Christ having fulfilled, yea, magnified the law, Isaiah xlii. 21 ; he hath brought in everlasting righteousness ; made restitution of all that honour to God and his perfections that sin took away ; " Then I restored that which I took not away," Psal. lxxix. 4. And Christ testifies this : " I have glorified thee on earth," even on earth, where thou wast dishonoured : Why ? " I have finished the work thou gavest me to do," John xvii. 4. God in Christ is a God not only whose mercy is magnified, but also whose truth is vindicated, whose holiness is celebrated, whose justice is satisfied, whose wisdom and power, and other attributes, are made more conspicuous in redemption-work, than ever they were in making heaven and earth ; and a God in whom we may look for salvation through Christ to the honour, the highest honour and glory of all his excellencies.

4. A God in Christ is a nearly approaching God, a nearly related God. In Christ, he comes near graciously, saying, " I bring near my righteousness ; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry ; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory," Isaiah xlii. 13. And he comes near relatively, saying, " I will be *thy* God, and thou shalt be *my* people : " and that upon account of Christ's approaching to God in our room, as our surety ; " Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord ? " Jer. xxx. 21. Hence the near relation is promised ; " And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God," ver. 22. And this near approach and relation of God to us in Christ, is an everlasting nearness, and hence we have him saying, " I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5 ; and the church saying, " This God is our God, for ever and ever ; and he will be our guide even unto death," Psalm xlviii. 14. Thus much for what God is in Christ.

II. The second thing proposed, was, To shew how God is in Christ. For clearing this, we may consider, 1. What it is of God, that is in Christ. 2. How, and in what manner God was and is in Christ. 3. What of Christ God is in.

1st, What it is of God that is in Christ. I shall confine myself

to these two comprehensive things, namely, 1. All the persons of the Godhead are in Christ. 2. All the fulnesses of the Godhead is in Christ. And here is a subject for deep momentous thoughts and considerations.

(1.) All the persons of the Godhead are in Christ; I mean, God the Father is in Christ; God the Son is in Christ; God the Holy Ghost is in Christ; one God, in three persons is in Christ.

1. God the Father is in Christ; "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me," John xiv. 10. And ver. 11, "Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." And hence he is called the *way* to the Father, ver. 6. And there is no coming to the Father but in him, because the Father is in him; that is, even the first person of the glorious Trinity: and yet not excluding his being the way to the other persons of the glorious Trinity: therefore,

2. God the Son is in Christ: as God the Son is Christ; so God the Son is in Christ: that is to say, God the Son, considered as the second person of the glorious Trinity, is in Christ, considered as Mediator between God and man. The divine person of the Son is as inaccessible to us, as the divine person of the Father; and we need a mediator between him and us, as he is God, as well as between the Father and us; for, as there is an essential Oneness between him and the father; "I and my Father are one," John x. 30: so there is a personal equality; "Being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God," Phil. ii. 6. Therefore his infinite holiness and justice must be satisfied, as well as the Father's, by the doing and dying of Christ, as Mediator, otherwise we could never have access to God; Christ the Son, being God co-equal and co-essential with the Father: and hence, Christ, as Mediator, is the way to himself: as God, as well as he, is the way to the Father; because he is the way to God: "Christ having once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. 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," 1 Pet. i. 21. And hence, as Saviour, God-man; and Mediator, between God and man, he calls us to come to himself, as God; "Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22. As Mediator, he is the means by whom; and as God, he is the end, to whom we come. Here you see it is necessary we understand and distinguish between

Christ, considered essentially, as to his divine nature, and as he is one with the Father; and personally, as to his divine person, and as he is equal with the Father; and economically, as to his divine office of Mediator, and as he is God's Servant in the work of our redemption: servant to himself, as well as to the Father, while he came to fulfil his own law, and satisfy his own justice, being in this service considered as a middle person between God and man, and that contradistinct from his being the middle person between the Father and the Holy Ghost: therefore,

3. God the Holy Ghost is in Christ. The third person of the glorious Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son, he also is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. v. 20; for he is one God with the Father and the Son: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost;" and these three are one, 1 John v. 7. When I say the Holy Ghost is in Christ, I mean not here the super-eminent unction of the Spirit, that is so much spoken of in scripture, his being anointed with the Spirit above measure, to qualify him for his mediatorial office; but I mean that the Holy Ghost, who is one God with the Father and the Son, is in Christ, reconciled in Christ, satisfied in Christ, appeased in Christ, as well as the Father and the Son; for, God is one; and it is God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that was offended by sin; and it is this God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is reconciled, through the mediation and satisfaction of Christ; so that if this reconciliation had not been made, we could have approached to none of the persons of the glorious Trinity with acceptance; but now access is made to all alike, because access is made to God, or to the divine nature, which is the same in all the three persons.

Well, when you consider what of God is in Christ, remember that all the persons of the Godhead are in Christ; and let this rectify their misapprehensions, who have dreamed that Christ is Mediator between God and us; whereas, God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is, that ONE God between whom and us Christ is Mediator. When we address ourselves to God, through Christ, for example, in prayer, most usually we do, and should pitch upon the Father by name, being the first person in order of subsistence; but we are to beware of thinking, that he alone is prayed unto, and none of the rest of the persons; or whatever of the three persons we have occasion to name, think not that he alone, and none other, is

prayed unto, excluding the rest; for this would not be a worshipping the true God, who is one as to essence, and three as to persons, or personal subsistence. We cannot look aright to one person without eyeing the others: for, "He that sees the Son, seeth the Father;" and he that sees the Father and the Son, sees the Holy Ghost; for the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father, and the Holy Ghost in both. The object of worship is ONE, viz., Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God; and the object of faith is one, namely, God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in and through Christ. It is a mental error to worship first one person and then another, as the Popish and Prelatical forms seem to lead unto: "Lord have mercy on us; Christ have mercy on us," &c.; as if there were divers objects of worship. We are to beware of worshipping God, as if they were distinct objects of worship, otherwise we worship not the true God. The proper object is not God and Christ as two; but God in Christ, and so the object is one.

[2.] As all the persons of the Godhead are in Christ, so all the fulness of the Godhead is in him: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9. I shall here mention a three-fold fulness, viz., A fullness of divinity, a fulness of sufficiency, a fulness of efficiency.

1. A fulness of divinity, or of the Godhead; and all the fulness of the Godhead. God's gifts and graces are found in others; but the Godhead itself is to be found in Christ; and not a partial, but all the fulness of the Godhead, and that bodily; that is, really, substantially, or personally. The Son is the same individual nature with the Father; and Arians must answer for their blasphemy, who would rob Christ of the honour of his Deity, seeing there is but one Deity, one Divinity, one Essence, between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

2. He hath a fulness of sufficiency, besides his natural fulness as God: "It pleased the Father, that in him (as Mediator) all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19. As Joseph filled the granaries of Egypt with corn: Why? because not only Egypt, but all the nations round about were to be supplied with corn in time of famine; so it pleased God that in Christ should all fulness dwell, that all Jews and Gentiles might come to him for grace; all must go through the hand of Joseph to his people. The sea is full of water, because it is to convey water to all the rivers. The sun is full of light, because it conveys light to all the world;

so Christ is full of grace; because he is to be the conveyer of grace: "He is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." And there is, therefore, this fulness of sufficiency in Christ, because there is in him a fulness of divinity. The human nature, being personally united with the Godhead, must partake of all grace; and it is necessary he should have a fulness of sufficiency, because of his threefold office; hence, as a Prophet, he hath a fulness of wisdom; as a Priest, a fulness of righteousness; and as a King, a fulness of power. Therefore,

3. He hath a fulness of efficiency; such a filling fulness, wherewith all believers are filled, Eph. i. 23, which is his righteousness; "The fulness of him that filleth all in all." In all believers, Christ fills all the faculties of their souls; the understanding, with light; the will, with liberty; the heart with life; and every member of Christ's body is filled according to its measure; "The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 13. All have not alike measure; one is full as an arm, another is full as a finger; yet every one hath the fulness of a member; and all put together, make up the fulness of Christ-mystical. In a word, all God's blessings are in Christ, all his consolations, attributes, and promises are in him; of which more afterwards.

2ndly. We may consider how and in what manner God was and is in Christ.

1. God was in Christ in the counsel of peace, federally; making a covenant with his chosen; preparing a remedy from all eternity against that ruin he foresaw man would run into, Psalm lxxxix. 3. Hence the grace of the new covenant is said to be given before the world began, 2 Tim. i. 9.

2. God was in Christ in the promise representatively, Gen. iii. 15. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." As he was represented by the seed of the woman, so by the seed of Abraham in the promise: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxii. 18. Now, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one: "And in thy seed, which is Christ," Gal. iii. 16.

3. God was in Christ, in the ceremonial law, typically; the paschal lamb, typified the lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world, John i. 29. The ark of the covenant, typified Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. The blood of the sin-offering, typified the blood of Christ, that cleanseth from all sin.

4. God was in Christ, in his incarnation, actually and perfectly according to both natures of God and man, in one person; then the promise was performed, when it was said, "Unto you is born in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," Luke ii. 11.

5. God was in Christ, in his mediatorial office, obedientially; and that both in the active obedience of his life, and passive obedience at his death; for, he came to do the will of him that sent him; and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Phil. ii. 10.

6. God was in Christ, in his resurrection, victoriously; for then he abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, 2 Tim. i. 10. "Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. ii. 14.

7. God was in Christ, in his ascension, triumphantly: for, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them," Psalm lxviii. 18. And, having received gifts for men, he gave gifts unto men, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. iv. 12.

8. God is in Christ, in his kingdom, gloriously; he being now crowned with glory and honour, Heb. 2, 10. "Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name," &c., Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. Thus you may understand in what respect God is in Christ.

3dly. It may be enquired, what of Christ, God is in.

1. God is in the human nature of Christ: "The Word was made flesh;" and, "God is manifested in the flesh," John i. 3, 1 Tim. iii. 16. This is the special way wherein God is in Christ by a hypostatical union, he being God-man in one person. His human nature is God's temple, where he dwells; his mercy-seat, where he abides; his throne, where he reigns graciously and gloriously; and, Oh! what good news is it, God is in our nature; God is in our flesh!

2. God is in the mediatorial offices of Christ; every office of Christ is an habitation of God; the wisdom of God, is in his prophetic office; the righteousness of God is in his priestly office; the power of God, is in his kingly office; therefore he is called, "The power of God, and the wisdom of God, and the righteousness of God." Hence,

3. God is in the name of Christ; and there is not a name that Christ hath, but if we could believingly view it, we would find God in it. Is his name Immanuel? God is there, as a God with us. Is his name Jesus? God is there, as a Saviour for us. Is his name Christ? God is there, anointing him to save sinners. And because God is in his name, therefore, "His name is as ointment poured forth," Song i. 3.

4. God is in the Church of Christ; therefore her name is called JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, *the Lord is there*, Ezek. xlvi. 35. In the invisible church, God is in every member of Christ; in every friend and follower of Christ; and the more they follow the steps of Christ, the more of God is to be seen in and about them.—And when they have much of Christ in them, then it is sometimes observable by on-lookers, "That God is in them of a truth," 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

5. God is in the treasure of Christ; "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. All the treasures of grace and glory, all the treasures of light and life, and spiritual blessings which he hath purchased, God is in them all; yea, God himself is the sum total of the treasure that is in him.

6. God is in the cross of Christ, in the worst as well as the best of Christ; and hence the apostle glories in the cross of Christ, Gal. vi. 14; and his people glory in tribulation, Rom. v. 3. When he orders a rod, a cross, a trial to his people, God is in it; hence the fiery trial doth but purge away their dross. A reconciled God is in the cross of Christ; and hence it is made so light and easy, so sweet and portable, so beneficial and profitable, that it comes to be among the best of their blessings: "It was good for me that I was afflicted. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teaches out of thy law." The cup may be bitter to flesh and blood, but there is no death in the cup; nay, God is in it, his blessing is in it, and his Spirit is in it, if it be the cross of Christ.

7. God is in the work of Christ; not only in his work of creation and providence, whereof Christ is the author and upholder, is God to be seen in his infinite power and wisdom, but especially in his works of grace and redemption. God is in his work that he works for us. As God was in all his miracles, so in his doing and dying on earth, and in his pleading and interceding in heaven. God is in these works of his: "They are the doings of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes." God is in his work that he works in us, when he comes to convince and convert sinners, and draw them

to himself; O Sirs, the finger of God is in it; then is the arm of God revealed, Isaiah liii. 1.

8. God is in the word of the gospel of Christ. When Christ is offered in this gospel, God is offered in him; when Christ is revealed, God is revealed in him. And, O! when the gospel revelation is effectual, then it is the very power of God to salvation, Rom. i. 16. Thus there are some outward visible things, wherein you may see and discern the invisible God, if they be the things of Christ, such as the gospel of Christ, the preached word, the outward dispensation of the gospel, and the written word; say not, God is far off, if the word be nigh you, even in your heart and mouth, Rom. x. 18.

9. God is in the heart of Christ; why, the love of God is in his heart, and the law of God is in his heart; "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, It is in the midst of my bowels, Psalm xi. 8. As Christ lies in the Father's bosom; so the Father lies as it were in his bosom, in the midst of his bowels. If you could look into the heart of Christ, you would see nothing but God, the love of the law of God there, the glory of God.

10. God is in the hands of Christ; as God is in the heart of Christ, insomuch that he is the greatest lover of God; so God is in the hand of Christ, insomuch that he is the only giver of God? What is the great gift of the new covenant? Why, God himself is the great gift, according to that promise, "I will be thy God." Who is the giver of such a great gift? Who but Christ, into whose hand all things are given, and all the new covenant goods and blessings, even he whom God hath given to be the covenant of the people. It is strange, and yet true, Christ is the great gift of God, and God is the great gift of Christ; God gives Christ to us, and then Christ gives God to us. He gives God, and he gives himself, and he gives his Spirit: and he comes with all these gifts in his hand and presents and profers them to us freely, under the notion of living waters: "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. Thus you may have some view how God is in Christ.

III. The third thing proposed was, to shew that in Christ alone God is a well-pleased God. This will appear, if you consider, 1. What God hath done with respect to Christ himself. 2. What he doth for his people, in him.

1st, We may consider what he hath done with respect to Christ himself.

1. He hath solemnly proclaimed his approbation of his person and undertaking from heaven, three several times, with an audible voice, namely, at his baptism, transfiguration, and passion: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." Agreeable to which is that open proclamation, Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold, my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth."

2. He hath released him from the prison of the grave, in which, as our surety, he was detained for a time: "He was taken from prison and from judgment," says the prophet, Isaiah liii. 8. He was taken from thence by a public sentence; which was an undoubted argument, that the debt, for which he was thrown in prison, was fully paid; and the Lord was well pleased with the ransom. Hence it is very observable, that the resurrection of Christ is ascribed unto God, as reconciled; the God of Peace is said to bring again from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the Sheep, Heb. xiii. 20.

3. The authority, and power, and honour, wherewith our Surety is invested, as a reward of his hard work, is an evidence that God is well-pleased in him.

QUEST. What reward hath he conferred on him?

ANSW. (1.) He hath set him at his own right hand in the highest heavens, Heb. xii. 2. "Looking unto Jesus, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God. The martyr Stephen, in his dying words, Acts vii. 56, says, that he saw heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Had he been shut out of his Father's presence, it had been a sign that anger still lodged in his breast, both against the Cautioner and the principal; but his being re-admitted into that glory which he had with the Father before the world began, is an evidence that he is well pleased in him.

(2.) He honours him with a complete victory over all his enemies. He makes all the powers of hell to be prostrate at his feet; Psal. cx. 1, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Phil. ii. 9, 10, At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," &c. When man sinned, God delivered the power of death unto the devil, as his executioner; but he found such a

sweet savour in the righteousness of the Surety, that he wrests the keys of death out of the devil's hand, and delivers them into the hand of our Redeemer. Hence Christ proclaims it as good news to all his friends, Rev. i. 17, "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death."

(3.) He not only makes him victorious over all the powers of hell, but, as Mediator, invests him with a precedency over all the angels in heaven; "And every name that can be named, either in this world, or the world that is to come. Heb. i. 14, Being made so much better than the angels, as by inheritance he hath obtained a more excellent name than they." And in the 6th verse, when he brings in his first-begotten into the world, he says, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Doth not this say, that God is well-pleased in him.

(4.) He hath clothed him with all judicative authority, and constitute him the sole Judge of the world: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world, by that man whom he hath ordained," Acts xvii. 31.

2dly, We may consider what he doth for his people, these for whom Christ is Surety; and from thence it will appear, that God is well-pleased in him.

1. In him, and for his sake, he pardons all their sins; "Whom God hath sent forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins," Rom. iii. 25.

2. In him, and for his sake, he hears their prayers; Rev. viii. 3, 4, "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand." This is the incense that renders them acceptable unto God, and without which they would be an abomination.

3. In him, and for his sake, he admits them into communion and fellowship with himself: "By the blood of Jesus we have access to the holy of holies," &c., Heb. x. 19—22.

4. In him, and for his sake, they have adoption, with all the privileges that attend it: "In the fulness of time, God sent forth

his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. iv. 4, 5.

5. In him, and for his sake, they have access to glory at last. The righteousness of Christ removes the bar that bolts heaven's gates against us, which was sin, Heb. ii. 10, and v. 9 ; there, says the apostle, " Christ was made perfect through suffering, in bringing many sons and daughters to glory." Now, from these things it is clear that God is well-pleased in Christ.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, To make application, and it may be applied.

1st, By way of information. Is God in Christ? Then let us see God here ; for here is the glass wherein we may see all the divine glory : in Christ we may see God in all his attributes and fulness ; in all his saving offices and relations to us ; in all his graces, and in all his blessings.

1. In Christ we may see God in all his attributes and fulness : there is nothing that the Father hath, except his personality, but the Son, as Mediator, hath : " All things that the Father hath are mine," John vi. 15 ; all things that God hath, they belong to the Mediator, also the God-man. Here then is an ocean where you and I may dive for ever, and never reach to the bottom. In him we may see the wisdom of God. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. Poor foolish sinner, who hast no wisdom, knowledge, or understanding, here is a treasure for you, Christ the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 30. In him we may see all the power of God : " We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them that are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 24. Poor weakling, that can do nothing, here is a bargain for you to lay hold upon : " It is he that can work in you, both to will and to do ; and make his people willing in the day of his power," Psal. cx. 3. You are not called to come to Christ, but by the power of Christ, which is the power of God ; you are to receive him, who can give you power to receive him ; and as an absolute weakling to take hold of his strength, and look to his power, to whom is given all power in heaven and in earth. In him we may see all the holiness of God ; he is said to be made of God to us sanctification ; and surely here is an immense fountain of sanctity, the infinite holiness of God. O poor, vile polluted sinner, that hast lost the image of God by the

fall of the first Adam, and the deficiency of his holiness; here is a better Head and Husband for you, in whom is all the fulness of divine holiness, that ye may be complete in him. In him we may see all the justice of God, and all the righteousness of God; we may see justice satisfied in him, by his mediatorial righteousness; for, the Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake; yea, he that is the righteousness of God is made unto us righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30. And O wonderful word! 2 Cor. v. 21, "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." O guilty, guilty sinner, here is a joyful sound in your ears; "He that hath ears to hear let him hear;" you may, in Christ, be more righteousness in God's sight, than ever you was guilty in his sight; yea, you may be the very righteousness of God in him; you may not only be justified, but find God to be just in justifying you; because the justice of God is in him, and it is satisfied in him, magnified in him, glorified in him. In him we may see all the mercy of God: all the infinite love, pity, and compassion of God is in him, in his heart: what is Christ, but the love of God wrapt up in the garments of flesh and blood? "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," John iv. 9, 10. And Jude, ver. 21, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." How? "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life." O poor miserable sinner, would you wish to find mercy in the moment of death, and mercy at the great day? Know there is no mercy to be expected from God out of Christ; and unless you look to his mercy as in Christ; for he will never show mercy to the prejudice of his justice: and it is only in Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and embrace each other. In him we may see all the faithfulness and truth of God: "My mercy and my faithfulness shall be with him," Psal. lxxxix. 24. I have observed (as I formerly noticed upon another discourse), between thirty and forty places of scripture, where mercy and truth, mercy and faithfulness, are joined together; and here you see they are joined together in Christ. In him the mercy and love of God vents to the honour of divine truth pledged, even in all the threatenings of the law, as well as divine truth pledged in all the promises of the gospel, because in him all the threatenings and curses of the law

have spent their force, Gal. iii. 13, "And in him are all the promises Yea and Amen, to the glory of God," 2 Cor. i. 20. He is the way and the truth; truth itself, the God of truth, the truth of God. O perfidious, faithless, unfaithful, and treacherous sinner, that hath many times lied to the God of truth, would you have your falsehood all done away, and swallowed up in the truth and veracity of God, and your salvation secured, notwithstanding of your falsehood, fickleness, and instability? Here is a pillar on which you may stand firm and fixed amidst all changes, whether in your outward lot or inward frame: "For all flesh is grass, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." The truth of God stands unalterably the same. Again, in him we may see all the authority of God; "My name is in him," Exod. xxiii. 21. O! poor lost sinner, when Christ in his gospel comes to seek and save that which was lost; say not, "By what authority doth he these things?" He is the Sent and Sealed of God; and he hath all the authority that God can give him; and if you ask, By what authority we, poor sinful mortal worms like yourselves, do offer him, and all his riches to you? Indeed, we could have no authority, if he had not said, "Go preach the gospel to every creature: and lo I am with you to the end of the world." In a word, in him we may see all the fulness of God; "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19. In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily: not only all the attributes of God, but all the fulness of all the divine attributes; not only the wisdom of God, but all the fulness of divine wisdom; not only the power of God, but all the fulness of divine power; not only the holiness of God, but all the fulness of divine holiness; not only the justice and righteousness of God, but all the fullness of divine righteousness; not only the mercy of God, but all the fulness of divine mercy; not only the truth and faithfulness of God, but all the fulness of divine faithfulness; not only the authority of God, but all the fulness of divine authority: not only is God in him, but all the fulness of the Godhead. O poor, empty sinner, here is unsearchable riches, a bottomless well of everlasting salvation and consolation for you.

2. In Christ we see God in all his saving offices. You know the Father hath anointed him to the office of Prophet, Priest, and King: O Sirs, what employment will you put in his hand? It is he, as a Prophet, who says, "They shall be all taught of God;" look to him for the promised teaching. It is he, as a Priest, who

says, upon the ground of the sacrifice he hath offered, "I, even I, am he that pardoneth thine iniquity for my own name's sake;" look to him for remission in his blood. It is he, as a king, who says, "I will subdue your iniquities; sin shall not have dominion over you." O ignorant sinner, will you find in your heart to refuse such a Prophet as Christ is? "Who teacheth like him?" O guilty sinner, will you refuse such a High-Priest as this? such a sacrifice as this is? O enslaved sinner, will you refuse the help of such a King and Conqueror as this? If there be none of these offices to be dispensed with, then take hold of him in them all.

3. In Christ we may see God as he is clothed with all relations that can contribute to the happiness of a sinner. What friend or relation do you want, O sinner! Want you a father to pity you? Behold, here you have an everlasting Father; for that is his name, Isa. ix. 6, and, "In him the fatherless find mercy." Want you a mother to be tender to you? Behold, here motherless children may have their losses made up; When father and mother forsake you, here is one to take you up, Psal. xxvii. 10. He is one that can be a thousand times better to you than father and mother, and manifests more love than the tenderest mother that ever was; "Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, she may forget: yet will I not forget thee," Isa. xlix. 15, Want you a husband! O! what would you think to be married with the heir of all things? Why, if the ear of faith be opened, you may hear him saying, "Thy maker is thy Husband," Isa. liv. 5. And again, Hos. ii. 19, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever." If you say, Oh! how will it be consistent with the justice of God, for him to marry such a black bride? Why, he says, "I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness." If you say, How will it be consistent with the wisdom, mercy, truth, and faithfulness of God, to betroth the like of me? He says, "I will betroth thee unto me in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." Thou shalt know God in Christ, who can betroth thee to himself, and yet be infinitely just and wise, and merciful, and faithful in doing so; because mercy and truth have met together in Christ, the glorious Bridegroom; they strike up a match together, and embrace each other, that there might be nothing to hinder the match between Christ and you. Want you a proper match then, O sinner, or a meet help, poor bankrupt, run in such arrears to the law and justice of God? Is not he that

hath unsearchable riches a fit match for you ? Poor, dying creature, that will be food for worms in a little, here is a living head for you, that can make you live for ever. O mortal worm, here is an immortal husband for you. Poor, changeable creature, here is an unchangeable match for you, Christ, "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Want you a lover ? Are you an outcast, that reckons yourself despised by all the world, insomuch that none cares for you, nor loves you ? Behold an infinitely loving and lovely Jesus tendering his love to you, saying, I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely," Hosea xiv. 4. And he is seeking your conjugal love, saying, "My son, give me thy heart." Want you a leader through the dark and difficult steps of your way ; a guide, a director, and counsellor, in whatsoever affair you have upon your hand, wherein you need to be directed ? O Sirs, here is the wonderful counsellor, who says, Isaiah xlii. 16, "I will lead the blind in a way they know not, and in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Want you a shepherd to feed you ? Or a captain to fight your battles for you ? Want you a physician, when in sickness, to heal you ? Want you a refiner and purifier, when you are in the furnace, to purge away your dross ? Behold a God in Christ hath all the happy relations you can desire.

4. In Christ we see God in all his graces. This is a great part of the glory of the only begotten of the Father, that he is full of grace and truth, John i. 14. And, "Out of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace," verse 16. "Grace is poured into his lips," Psalm xl. 2 ; and, I hope, he is pouring grace from his lips by his word among some of you this day. The Spirit of the Lord is upon him, for he hath anointed him ; he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows ; anointed with the Spirit of all grace. Want you grace to believe ? Behold it is in him, as he is the author of faith. Want you grace to repent ? Behold it is in him, as a Prince and Saviour, exalted to give repentance. Do you want grace to pray ? It is he that hath the Spirit of prayer to give, Zech. xii. 10. Do you want grace to communicate aright ; grace to mortify sin ; grace to bear the cross ; grace to resist temptation ; grace to do and suffer ? It is he that hath all grace to give, and who says, "My grace shall be sufficient for you." Hence, his people are called to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

5. In Christ we may see God in all his blessings which he hath

to give. He is the Lord-Dispenser of temporal blessings; for, "The earth is his, and the fullness thereof;" the Lord-Dispenser of spiritual blessings; for heaven is his, and the fullness thereof; the Lord-Dispenser of eternal blessings; for eternal life is in him, "He is the true God, and eternal life." It was promised of him, that men should be blessed in him; and accordingly he is sent to bless us, Acts iii. 26. "God having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." I might here enumerate many particular blessings.—The blessing of illumination is in him, for, "He is the light to lighten the Gentiles;" the blessing of conversation is in him, for he says, "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to me: the blessing of justification is in him; for, "We are justified freely by his grace;" the blessing of reconciliation with God is in him; for, it is he that makes peace by the blood of his cross; the blessing of sanctification is in him; for, "He is made of God to us sanctification;" the blessing of acceptance with God is in him; for, "We are accepted in the Beloved:" the blessing of access to God is him; for, "By him we have boldness and access, with confidence through faith of him;" the blessing of consolation is in him; for, "He is the consolation of Israel: the blessing of a happy death is in him; for, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;" the blessing of a happy resurrection is in him; for, "He is the resurrection and the life;" the blessing of a happy sentence at the great day is in him, and at his disposal; for, "All judgment is committed unto him;" and it is he that will say to the wicked, "Depart from me, ye cursed;" and to the righteous, "Come ye blessed of my Father;" the blessing of eternal glorification is in him; for, as he is the glory of the higher house, so he says, "Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory; and so shall they ever be with the Lord." Can you tell me any spiritual blessing that is not in him? No; Eph. i. 3. "We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places only in Christ." And now, after all, what think you of him? Have you no heart to join hand with such a well-furnished Saviour, "In whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily?" If you have no heart to such a good bargain, this is very sad; but, because it is a day of glad tidings, I will tell you, among all other things, that all hearts are in his hand, and it is his prerogative to open the locked heart. It is easy with him to create a clean heart, to melt the hard

heart, to fix the wandering heart, to cleanse the filthy heart, to elevate the drooping heart, to conquer the stubborn heart, to quicken the dead heart, to draw the backward heart, as we formerly observed, in another discourse ; and if anything draw your heart to him, it will be the revelation of his grace and fullness ; and of God's being in him, and in him a well-pleased God.*

Further, in the light of this truth, particularly that God is in Christ, we may see,

1. How little of God is in the present generation ; for, if God be in Christ, and only in Christ, then a generation that is without Christ, is without God. A Christless generation is a Godless generation ; God is not to be found where Christ is not to be found. If Christ be not in a family, God is not there ; if Christ be not in the heart, God is not there ; if Christ be not in a sermon, God is not there. Where Christ is owned, God is owned ; where Christ is dishonoured, God is dishonoured ; where Christ is away, God is away, for God is in Christ. And, Oh ! is it not too evident that God is away from our nobility, when Christ is disowned, and dishonoured, and disregarded among them ? That God is away from the commonalty and generality of people, when Christ is so little known and loved ? God is not to be found among Arians ; why ? They rob Christ of his supreme Deity and eternal Godhead. God is not to be found among Armenians ; why ? They spoil Christ of the freedom and power of his grace. You need not seek God among Papists ; why ? Because Christ is dethroned there, and the merit of works set up in his room. You need not seek God among Legalists and erroneous preachers ; why ? If Christ be not in their preaching, God is not there ; though they make mention of Christ's name, yet while they preach not the true Christ, they preach not the true God.—It is as evident as the sun-beams, that God is far away from the present generation ; because, when Christ is not there, God is not there. God is not among the ignorant and erroneous ; because Christ, as a Prophet, is not there. God is not among the self-righteous ; because Christ, as a Priest, is not there. God is not among the wicked and profane ; because Christ, as a King, is not there. God is not among these that are drowned in sensuality and worldly-mindedness ; because Christ and his Spirit is not there. God is not among these that deny there is any divine im-

* Here the Action Sermon ended, in order to give place to communicating the proper work of the day. What follows was delivered afterwards.

pulse leading a man to such and such a duty, and leading him on therein ; because it is contrary to Christ, who, as the Way and Leader by his Holy Spirit, promised to lead the blind in a way they know not ; and to make darkness light before them ; and to be a voice behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk you in it." This Spirit is promised to be with his servants and people in all generations : "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." But,

2. In the light of this truth, we may see who are false and presumptuous dealers with God ; even these that adventure to deal with a God out of Christ. Who deals with God out of Christ ? even these that live in unbelief and impenitency ; for it is a way of faith and repentance that all who deal with God in Christ do walk. These that hope all is well, and will be well with them, though yet they have never fled to Christ for refuge, nor know what it is to live upon him by faith : these that hope to atone God by their repenting and reforming, by their future pains and prayers, and never receive the atonement : these that hope in God's mercy, and yet were never afraid of his justice, nor concerned how to have an infinite satisfaction given to infinite justice, by betaking themselves under the covert of the blood of the God-man : these, and many such there are who are presumptuous dealers with God out of Christ, to whom he will be a consuming fire, if they remain there.

3. Hence we may see, who are the fair and honest dealers with God, even these that so take up God in Christ, and all things in Christ, that they dare not approach to God, but in Christ ; they dare not pray to God, but in Christ ; they dare not hope in God's mercy, but through Christ ; they dare not hope in the promise, but as it is dipped in the blood of Christ ; they dare expect nothing, but in Christ ; but in and through him and his blood, they come boldly, and hope confidently : "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," Heb. x. 19. If they joy in God, it is through Jesus Christ ; if they deal with God for pardon, it is through the blood of Christ ; if they deal with God for justification, it is through Christ as the Lord their righteousness ; if they deal with God for sanctification, it is through Christ as their strength ; if they deal with God for grace, it is through Christ as the storehouse of all grace.

4. Hence we may see what are the marks by which you may know if ever you have got a discovery of God in Christ.

(1.) What sight have you got of God out of Christ? They that have seen him in the gospel-glass, have seen him first in the glass of the law. The faith of the law ordinarily goes before the faith of the gospel. Have you got apprehension of him as an angry God, because of your sin: a threatening God, a dishonoured God, a distant God, and so apprehend yourself to be without God, and without Christ in the world? Have you got an afflicting sense hereof?

(2.) What apprehension have you got of God for relieving you from this misery? If you viewed God in Christ, then you have seen him a reconciled God, a promising God, a glorified God, and a nearly approaching God, coming towards you, flying on wings of grace and mercy, and so with healing under his wings, and with balm perfumed by Christ's righteousness, Math. iv. 2.

(3.) What of God have you seen in Christ? Have you seen the greatest glory of God, and all the glory of God in him? Have you seen all the persons of the Godhead glorified, reconciled, satisfied, and well pleased in him? Have you seen all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling and residing in him? Have you seen more of the glory of God in him, than ever you saw in the sun, moon, and stars? Have you seen the method of salvation through him to be worthy of God, as contributing to the illustration of all the divine attributes, in so much, that God, in redeeming Jacob, doth glorify himself in Israel.

(4.) What of Christ have you seen God in? Have you seen the glory of God in his face? 2 Cor. iv. 16; in his person, in his human nature, in his being God manifested in the flesh? Have you seen God and his glory in the undertaking of Christ; in the incarnation of Christ; in his doing, dying, rising, ascending, and exaltation to the right hand of God? Have you seen God and his glory in the intercession of Christ, in his offices, in his names, in his fulness, in his righteousness, in his gospel and promises?

(5.) What way do you deal with God for blessings? Is it only in him, because it is said, "Men shall be blessed in him?" What way do you deal with God for promised privileges? Is it not only in him, in whom the promises are Yea and Amen? What way do you deal with him for pardon? Is it only in Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin? What way do you deal with him for purification? Is it only in Christ, who is made of God to us sanctification, and has promised the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us? What way do you deal with God

in prayer? Is it only in the name of Christ? What way do you deal with him in praise? Is it only in Christ you offer praise as well as prayers? What way do you deal with God in believing? Is it by him you believe in God? What way deal you with God in rejoicing? Do you joy in God, through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement? What way deal you with God in approaching to him in any duty? Know you what it is to have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by this new and living way, which he hath consecrated through the vail of his flesh. What way do you deal with God in the tenor of your conversation? Is it such as becometh the gospel of Christ? Is it your desire and endeavour to spread the savour of his name, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

(6.) What hope and expectation have you in God with respect to future things? What hope have you in God with reference to days of trouble, trial, and calamity? Is it only in Christ the Refuge? What hope have you in God with reference to death? Is it only through Christ's taking away the sting of death? What hope in view of judgment? Is it in Christ, the Lord your righteousness? What hope of a happy eternity? It is only in Christ? "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Do you take up Christ himself to be the true God and eternal life, and that everlasting glory lies in the everlasting vision of the glory of God in Christ, and fruition of this God? Again,

5. Since God is in Christ, and in him well pleased, then hence we may see, and try whether he be well pleased with you in him.

(1.) If he be well pleased with you in him, then you have sometime seen and found God to be a displeased God, and displeased with you, as it is said, Psalm lx. 1. "O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again." They that have the faith of God's being well pleased, have felt his displeasure; and have been put in fear of his wrath because of sin.

(2.) You have seen there was no pleasing of God, nor pacifying of him by any sacrifice or service of yours. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Micah vi. 6,

8. Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, then said I, Lo I come : in the volume of thy book it is written of me ; I delight to do thy will, O my God," Psalm xl. 6, 7. Heb. x. 5. Nothing could satisfy you but what satisfies God ; you could find no rest but in him in whom God rests.

(3.) You will be well pleased with Christ, well pleased with the way of salvation through him and his righteousness, even as God is well pleased for his righteousness sake, because as it magnifies the law, and makes it honourable ; so grace reigns through that righteousness to eternal life. You will be well pleased to be in him, saying, " This is my rest, here will I stay, for I like it well." Well pleased to be like him, saying, O to be conform to his image ! Well pleased to be for him, and upon his side, for his cause, truth, and interest, though all the world should be against him. Well pleased to be with him ; to be with him on earth, and have fellowship and communion with him ; to be with him in heaven, and reckon it your chief happiness to be for ever with the Lord. And if you be well pleased with Christ, you will be ill pleased with yourself, with your own righteousness, your best duties and performances, &c.

(4.) You will be well pleased with God in him ; if God be well pleased with you in Christ, then you will be well pleased with God in Christ ; that is, you will be reconciled to God in him ; the good pleasure and love of God in Christ will, according to the measure of your faith of it, kill your displeasure and enmity against God ; for, " Faith worketh by love," even as unbelief worketh by enmity ; " And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked words, yet now hath he reconciled," Col. i. 21. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. " Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself, of twain, one new man, so making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby," Eph. ii. 15, 16. Not only the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, but between God and man. You will be well pleased with God's choice of him ; you will be ready to say as the queen of Sheba concerning Solomon, 2 Chron. ix. 8. Well-pleased with God's perfections, as they are in Christ ; well-pleased with God's accepting of Christ and his works, and advancing him to the throne ; well-pleased with God's anointing him, and putting all our stock in his hand.

6. Hence we may see what God is to the unbelieving Christless soul ; as God in Christ is a well-pleased God, so God out of Christ is all things that are terrible and dreadful. He is infinite wrath and anger, fire and brimstone, and vengeance ; God is the very hell of hell : “ Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ? Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ? ” Isaiah xxxiii. 14. He is a God preparing flames of indignation to burn and destroy the soul that remains in that Christless state ; “ For Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is prepared, he hath made it deep and large ; the pile thereof is fire and much wood, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it,” Isaiah xxx. 33. See the description of hell, Rev. xxi. 14, it is called the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Again,

7. Since God is in Christ, and in him a well pleased God ; then hence we may see, that Christ is the great theme that gospel ministers should preach upon. It is true, works and duties ought to be preached in their place ; but one great difference between the gospel and the legal way of preaching is not, that the one preacheth duties, and the other not ; but the legal way makes duties the foundation of gospel privileges ; whereas the gospel-way makes gospel privileges the foundation of duty, or Christ and his graces the foundation of all holy obedience ; the one is for the order of the covenant of works, Do, and then live ; the other for the order of the new covenant, Live, and then do. You must have spiritual life in Christ before you can do any duty.* When we do not preach Christ, we do not preach the true God, nor true obedience unto him. God out of Christ is not a well-pleased God but a revenging God ; therefore, obedience to God, out of Christ, is but rebellion ; faith in God, out of Christ, is but infidelity ; love to God, out of Christ is but enmity, even as the mercy of God out of Christ is but fury ; “ He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father, says Christ ; “ We are to confess that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” says the apostle. To neglect Christ, therefore, is to neglect the Father ; and what makes gospel ministers harp most upon this strain ? Even, because, if we could once get people into Christ, they could not miss holiness. Why ? because they could not miss God himself ; they would in him find the favour of God, the grace of God, the image of God, which is all in Christ, and no where else. People may preach the law, and yet miss

* The Author handles this point very copiously in another Sermon.

the law, and all true obedience to it ; but one cannot preach Christ and miss the law ; because, as God is in Christ, so the law of God is in him, who is the end of the law for righteousness, Rom. x. 4., and in whom, as our ark, the law is kept ; the law, as a covenant, is in him, as the Lord our righteousness, for justification ; the law, as a rule, is in him, as the Lord our strength, for sanctification ; therefore, if we could get people into Christ, then we would get them both justified and sanctified. If, therefore, any think, why do you not preach up works and duties more ? I will not say, if you be offended at the preaching of Christ, I fear you are ignorant of works and duties both ; yea, and ignorant of God to whom you pretend homage and obedience ; for, as God is in Christ, so he is in none of your works and duties that you perform, while you are out of Christ ; and you must be where God is, that is in Christ, before ever you can perform a duty that God will have any regard unto : “ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches ; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing, John xv. 4, 5. “ He hath made us accepted in the Beloved,” Eph. i. 6. Wo to these whom Christ is a stumbling-block : but blessed are all they that shall not be offended in him.

8. Hence we may see, where God, and all things we need, are now to be found ; “ The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.” John iii. 35. Where God goes, all things go with him : God is gone into Christ ; therefore, all things follow him : and since God is in Christ, and all things with him, then where should we go but where God goes ? Where should the fish go, but where the water goes ? God, the fountain of living waters, is gone into Christ, and let us then follow him there : where he loves to dwell, let us love to dwell : where he stays, let us stay ; where he rests, let us rest : let us take pleasure in him, in whom God is well-pleased ; “ To whom shall we go ?” says Peter, “ Thou hast the words of eternal life.” O Sirs, to whom should we go, but to him, in whom God is well-pleased ? To whom should we go, but to him, that hath the eternal God in him, eternal life in him, eternal blessings in him ; and all things that concern eternal happiness in him.

My friends, though you had never heard a word of the gospel before, there is more in this truth than a whole world is worth, namely, That God is in Christ, in him well pleased : “ This is my

beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" and, he and all things in him, is offered in this gospel unto you. And, O Sirs, if your heart were open to receive him, happy would you be to eternity. I know not what the joyful sound of the gospel is, if it be not the news of God's being in Christ, and in him well-pleased; and blessed are the people that know it, and embrace it; and cursed are the people that despise and undervalue it; and all the people of God must say AMEN: "How shall they escape who neglect so great salvation?" Happiness and misery in life, in death, and for ever, is now before you, O hearer of this gospel. If God be in Christ, and in him well-pleased; and if this be the gospel of Christ, then God is in it dealing with you, man, woman; with you and each of you, of whatever station or denomination; high or low, rich or poor, young or old. As it is said, when God appeared to Elijah at Horeb, 1 Kings xix; 11—13, there was a strong wind, then there was an earthquake, but God was not there; but after that, there was a still small voice, and God was there; so we may say at this day, there are strong winds of temptation, whereby many are made to turn with the wind; but God is not there: there are great earthquakes of confusion and commotion; but God is not there: and there are fires of division, wrath, and contention; but God is not there. O! where is God then? Why, there is a still small voice of the gospel sounding in your ears; and if the name of Christ be recorded herein, God is there; "My name is in him," Exod. xx. 24.

May he give proofs of his powerful presence, by drawing out your heart to him, of whom the Father here proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

S E R M O N L I I I .

PRESENT DUTY BEFORE APPROACHING DARKNESS.¹

JER. xiii. 16.—“Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.”

THESE words are part of a weeping prophecy, wherein the prophet is attempting to awaken this secure and stubborn people to repentance, from the consideration of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, of which we read in the preceding part of the chapter: and now he comes to give them good and seasonable counsel, verse 15. “Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken.” God has past his word, and the decree is gone forth: and then he calls them to repent, and give glory to God, before he cause darkness.

From the connexion we may observe these few things.

1. That God, in his most severe threatenings, and most awful providences, aims at men’s repentance, and returning to him.

2. These who despise the threatenings of divine wrath should stay still and hear what the Lord says to them; as you may see, Prov. i. 25, 26, 27. “But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. See also ver. 33, “They that hearken unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil;” whereas these that hearken not, he will laugh at their calamity. “Be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken.”

3. What hinders people’s hearing, when God speaks either by word or rod? What but pride? Be not proud; do not think yourself too good to be taught. Be not scornful, be not wilful, be not secure when God threatens; be not impatient when God strikes; for pride is at the bottom of both.

(1) This Sermon was preached at Cambusnethen, on Wednesday, August 3d, 1737, being a Fast day, appointed by the Associate Presbytery, at the earnest desire of the Societies in those bounds.

4. We ought to consider who speaks to us by the word and rod: "The Lord hath spoken;" he whose authority is irresistible: therefore, bow your stiff necks and stout stomachs, which proceed from hardness of heart, and a custom of sinning. Consider, might he say, it is not with Jeremiah you have to do; it is not with the minister you have to do; it is with the great God; "Be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken." When you harden yourself against the word and the rod, you harden yourself against God himself.

Another counsel is in the words of my text, "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness."

Where observe two things; first, an exhortation; and then a motive. The exhortation is, "Give glory to the Lord your God." Here is a merciful counsel God gives them, saying, "Give glory to the Lord;" opening up yet a door of hope to them: and here is a merciful compellation he takes to himself, "The Lord your God." Here we may observe, that God, amidst his threatenings, does not forget that they are his people, and he their God; see Jer. iii. 12, 13, 14. He calls himself the Lord their God, that he may shame them for forsaking him, and that he may invite them to return. "Give glory to the Lord your God; not to your idols, not to other gods." Give him glory by confession of sin, by repentance and reformation. This is a comprehensive duty, containing all other duties in the bosom of it.

We have here the motive to this duty, "before he cause darkness;" before he bring such judgments upon you, as you shall see no way of escaping. Darkness and distress will be the portion of these that repent not, to give God glory. When these who, by the fourth vial, were scorched with heat; repented not, to give glory to God, the next vial filled them with darkness, Rev. xvi. 9, 10.

The doctrinal observation we incline to prosecute from these words, is the following:—

DOCT. That it is the duty of a sinful people to give glory to God, before he cause darkness: to repent, before he bring judgments upon them.

We ought to give glory to God actively, in a way of duty, before he glorify himself, passively, upon us in a way of wrath. This is the great call of God in his word, Isa. lv. 6, 7. "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let

the wicked foresake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 1 Chron. xvi. 26, 30, Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name : bring an offering, and come before him ; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Fear before him all the earth. Mal. ii. 2. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Rev. xiv. 7. Fear God, and give him glory, for the hour of his judgments is come. Rev. xvi. 9, 10. And men were scorched with heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues ; and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain. Psal. xcvi. 7, 8, 9. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name ; bring an offering and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness : fear before him all the earth."

The method we propose for the further illustration of this subject, through divine assistance, shall be as follows :—

- I. We would speak a little of this glory that is to be given to God, and what it is to glorify him.
- II. Enquire how we are to give him glory, or by what means we are to glorify him.
- III. What is imported in the expression " Give glory unto the Lord your God."
- IV. Speak somewhat of the motive here assigned, " Before he cause darkness."
- V. Deduce some inferences for the application of the whole.

I. We would speak a little of this glory that is to be given to the Lord, and what it is to glorify him. God's glory is either essential or declarative. His essential glory is the incomprehensible majesty of his deity. This is incapable of addition or diminution ; for, our heavenly Father is perfect, and our goodness extendeth not unto him, Psalm xvi. 2. His declarative glory is, when either he himself, by his word, work, or Spirit, manifests his glory to men or angels ; or, when they endeavour to declare how glorious

he is, by knowing, loving, fearing, serving, obeying, praising, and commending him ; by worshipping him, by believing in him ; by trusting in him, and depending upon him, and advancing his glory, by their thoughts, words, and actions.

We cannot glorify God, by adding any glory to him. It is his prerogative thus to glorify us ; and thus he did in the first creation, when he crowned man with glory and honour, Ps. viii. 5 : and thus he does in the second creation and restitution of our lapsed state, when he gives the beginning of glory in regeneration ; for grace is glory in the seed, and glory is but grace in the flower ; therefore, we are said to be changed into the same image from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. And thus he does in the consummation of our holiness and happiness in heaven ; as Christ said, John xvii. 1, “ The hour is come ; Father, glorify thy Son : ” so when the believer’s hour is come, the hour of death, God will then glorify him with himself, as verse 5, “ Glorify me with thyself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” So will believers be glorified in that glory which he prepared for them before the foundation of the world. It is, I say, God’s prerogative to glorify us ; but in that sense we cannot glorify God, no more than we can create a new Godhead ; but our glorifying him is a declaring him glorious. We give him glory when we ascribe glory to him. Brute creatures glorify him passively, but rational creatures ought to do it actively. Wicked men eclipse his declarative glory by sin, which yet is the greater wrong done to themselves than to him : for, as the sun is still full of light in itself, when you see it under an eclipse, by the moon’s interposition between us and it, which, indeed, is not so properly an eclipse of the sun as of the earth ; so the glory of God is eclipsed by the sin and wickedness of men ; not by depriving God of any perfection, but they deprive themselves whose highest end and perfection is to glorify God, and to be made conformable to him. Thus to glorify God is to show forth his glory, and to ascribe glory unto him.

II. The second thing I proposed was, To show how we are to glorify God ; or, by what means to give him glory ?

In general, we are to glorify God with our whole man, soul and body ; 1 Cor. vi. 20, “ Ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body and in spirit, which are his ; ” that is, both with the inward and outward man : with the inward man, by loving him with the greatest love, studying acquaintance with him, longing after him, delighting in him, fearing his name, and following hard

after him : with the outward man, and that both with our lips, and with our lives ; with our lips we ought to pray and praise God, speaking to him, and of him, and for him ; our tongues should be pencils, to delineate and express the glory of God : many there are whose tongues are but sponges, to wipe out and deface his glory, who seldom speak of God but in an oath, or make mention of his name but when they curse or swear by it. How like are they to hell already, who have no other use of God but to blaspheme him ! and blasphemy will be their work for ever, if they repent not to give him glory. Alas ! how few speak honourably of God in the society they converse with, though he be still intimately present with them, and one of the company ? Nay, idle tales and raillery is the business of their tongues ; “ They speak vanity every one with his neighbour, Ps. xii. 2. I hearkened and heard, but they spoke not aright.”

Again, With our lives and actions we are to glorify God : Hence, Matt. v. 16, “ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. John xv. 7, Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” There may be many talkative professors, who would gladly pass for trees of righteousness ; yet bear nothing but leaves, an external show and flourishing outside ; these they wear for their own glory, but are wholly deficient in that which is most conducive to the glory of God, the fruits of the Spirit, and the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ to the praise and glory of God,” Phil. i. 11. We are to glorify the divine perfections, by seeking conformity to them, so as to be holy as he is holy. And by performing these duties which his attributes obliges us unto ; for his incommunicable perfections, such as infinity, eternity, immutability, &c., are inimitable, yet oblige us to duties towards him.

Quest. What are the special duties by which we are called, in the text, to give glory to God ?

Answ. The context clears they are faith and repentance. 1. Faith, verse 15, “ Hear and give ear, for the Lord hath spoken.” 2. Repentance, and humbling ourselves under his mighty hand ; “ Be not proud ; for the Lord hath spoken.” Thus we are called this day to give glory to God.

I shall therefore enquire, 1, What this faith is, and how it gives glory to God. 2, What this repentance is, and how it gives glory to God

1st, What this faith is, and how it gives glory to God. What this

faith is, we may guess from the context, "Hear, and give ear; for the Lord hath spoken." It is a hearing and a giving ear to what God speaks in his word. Unbelief stops our ears, like that of the deaf adder that will not hear the voice of the charmer; but faith is an opening the ear to hear God himself speaking. By unbelief we hear only what man speaks to us, but by faith we hear and give ear to God, and believe what he says in his threatenings and promises. We give no glory to God, till we hear him, and give ear to him by faith. When we hear God speaking in the law, then we have the faith of the law, and are awakened: and when we hear God speaking in the gospel, then we have the faith of the gospel, and are quickened. When we truly hear a threatening God, then we believe and fear: and when we truly hear a promising God, then we believe and hope in the mercy of God through Christ. And this is the faith we are called to this day, that we may give glory to God.

Quest. How doth faith give glory to him?

Ans. In general, because it answers God's faithfulness. It is said of Abraham, "He was strong in the faith, giving glory to God."

More particularly, saving faith gives glory to God.

1. Because it brings nothing to him but poverty, want, and emptiness. Other graces bring something to him, but faith brings nothing; love brings fire to him; repentance brings tears to him; obedience brings works: but poor faith brings nothing but a bare hand, and an empty vessel. Indeed, when we bring any thing to God, we are apt to carry away something of the glory that belongs to him; but faith brings nothing to commend the soul to God; and the poorer any come to God, the more they glorify him.

2. Faith glorifies God; because it seeks all in him, and from him. As it brings nothing to him, so it expects every thing from him, saying, "All my expectation is from thee;" I have no hope but in thee; all my wants be upon thee.

3. Faith glorifies God, by venturing all upon his word. If that word fail me, says faith, I am gone; but, "My hope is in thy word." Faith hings by the girdle of his loins; his faithfulness pledged in his word; and his word as Yea and Amen in Christ; and this brings more glory to God than all things else: "The promises are Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God," 2 Cor. i. 20.

4. Faith glorifies God, because all other acts of glorifying are

only so, in so far as there is faith in them, and as they spring from faith ; for " Without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 6. No work can please God without faith. Take away faith from your prayers, and God gets no glory, nor you any comfort by them. James i. 5, 6, 7, " If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, &c., but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering : for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For, let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Let faith be separated from your hearing, and God gets no glory by it ; yea, " Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

2dly, What is this repentance ? And how does it give glory to God ? What this repentance is, may be taught us in the context, " Be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken : " the proud soul is the impenitent soul ; the proud man slights and disdains the word of God, and will not hear nor regard what God says ; the proud man is the rebellious man, saying with Pharaoh, " Who is the Lord that I should obey him ? " This repentance, then, is the direct opposite of pride : to be truly humble under the mighty hand of God, and thereupon subject to God. So that there are two branches of this repentance ; Humiliation and Reformation, and both these we are called unto this day ; and by both these we are to give glory to God.

Quest. How doth Humiliation give glory to God ?

Answ. 1. By a humble confession of sin, we give him the glory of his holiness, owning he is a holy God, and we are unholy sinners, and that he is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity, Hab. i. 13.

2. By humiliation, we give him the glory of his dominion and sovereignty, while we testify our reverence and subjection to his laws, as holy, just, and good : acknowledging his authority. While we stand out against God, we deny his dominion, but when we stoop to him, we acknowledge his sovereignty over us, and our subjection to him.

3. By humiliation, we give him the glory of his justice and righteousness, acknowledging he is righteous in what he does against us, Dan. ix. 14 ; Neh. ix. 33 ; Psalm xxii. 3.

4. By humiliation, we give him the glory of his power, that he can punish us for our sins, that he has authority and ability so to do, Dan. iv. 34, 35. We own he has ability to crush us under his feet, and dare not harden ourselves against him.

5. By humiliation, we give him the glory of his truth and veracity in his threatening; thus did old Nineveh, Jonah iii. 5, "They believed God, and proclaimed a fast;" they believed, that, unless they humbled themselves, the word of the prophet would come to pass, that threatened their ruin; thus did Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 19.

6. By humiliation, we give him the glory of his patience and forbearance towards us. When a catalogue of our sins is presented to us, and brought forth before our eyes, then we stand astonished at God's forbearance, Lam. iii. 22. Oh! "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not!" And thus we see this part of repentance gives glory to God, and his perfections.

Quest. How doth Reformation give glory to God.

By Reformation I understand, not only that departing from evil, but that doing of good, which flows from that faith and humiliation already spoken of. It is a bringing forth fruits of holiness and righteousness, to the glory of God. And this Reformation gives him glory several ways.

1. It is an owning it our principal honour and happiness to be employed in his service, and so a proclaiming that he is a good and bountiful Master. Men are thereby induced to believe, when we are painful and diligent in his service, that there is a great pleasure in it, and a great reward for it.

2. Holiness and reformation glorifies the power of his grace, because it is the effect of his grace. Our hearts being naturally rebellious and disobedient, therefore the power of grace is making them submissive, willing, and obedient: and hence all believers will say, with Paul, "By grace I am what I am." It is through Christ's strengthening me, I can do all things.

3. By holiness and reformation we glorify and magnify the efficacy of Christ's death and intercession; the virtue of his blood, and the power of his death, who died for us, that we might not live to ourselves, but to him. We thus glorify his fulness: for, if so much grace be imparted to us, as to enable us to bring forth fruit to his glory, what must be in him who is the ocean! The continual supplies of grace tend to raise high thoughts of him.

4. By reformation and holiness we glorify the faithfulness of God, in making good his promise. God hath promised, "I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes:"

when therefore we walk therein, then the faithfulness of God, in making good his promise, is manifested.

5. By reformation and holiness of walk we glorify God, by expressing his perfections in our conversation : having the very image of God upon us, and stamped in our life ; “ Ye are a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises (or the *virtues*) of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,” 2 Pet. ii. 9.

6. By reformation and holiness of walk we glorify God, by inducing other people to glorify him ; “ Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven,” Mat. v. 16, “ 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. While others, by their evil works, draw people from God, we, by our conversation, should draw them to him.

III. The third thing proposed was, To shew the import of the expression “ Give glory to the Lord your God.” And here you may observe the import of it. 1. With relation to the act, “ giving ” God glory. 2. With relation to the object to whom it is to be given, “ to the Lord your God.”

1st, With relation to the act, “ Give glory to God.” And,

1. It is a giving, not professing or promising only, but giving glory to God. This giving glory to God, doth not lie in resolution only, for the time to come, or hereafter I will do so and so ; but in its present humiliation he calls us to : “ Now is the accepted time, before the decree break forth ;” before darkness come on, give glory to the Lord.

2. It is giving, not extorting ; for, as it should be a present humiliation, so a voluntary one. Pharaoh was at length humbled, Exod. ix. 16, saying, “ I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you ;” but it was extorted. Sparks come naturally from a fire, but not from a flint unless it be smitten : then is our humiliation right, when it is natural and voluntary : “ Give glory to God.”

3. It is giving, and not commanding others to do so, but ourselves giving glory to God ; intimating, that it is not only present and voluntary, but proper and personal humiliation, Zech. xii. 10. “ Every family apart, and their wives apart ;” every person apart, every man and woman apart. This is the call of God to us, “ Give glory to God.”

4. It is giving, and not lending for a time, importing an upright, ingenuous, and honest humiliation : not bowing down the head like a bulrush for a day, Isaiah lviii. 5 ; but it is sure work, like that mentioned, Neh. ix. 38, " Because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it ; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it."

5. It is a giving, not a selling : importing that it is a free, not a mercenary humiliation, that the Lord calls for. Some people would give some glory to God, providing they might thereby gain some glory to themselves, like that of Saul, 1 Sam. xv. 13, " I have sinned ; but now honour me before the people." But we are to give glory to God ; and take shame to ourselves, and acknowledge as it is, Dan. ix. 8, 9, that " To us belongs confusion of face, because we have sinned : but to the Lord or God belongs mercy and forgiveness : " to him belongs all the glory.

6. Hence it is giving and not parting stakes, if we may be allowed the expression, with God ; importing, it must be full and entire humiliation. Men will confess their moral and not their intellectual sins ; the evils that relate to their morals, their drinking and whoredom, and other gross evils : but as to the evils that relate to their principles, they are shy to make acknowledgment of their errors and ignorance. They will hardly own they are fools ; but they that give glory to God, and none but these, will confess their total corruption of heart, as well as way. Thus we see what is imported in these words, as it concerns the act, " Give glory to God."

2dly, We may consider the import of the words, as it relates to the object ; " Give glory to the LORD your GOD." It imports,

1. A glorifying him in his sovereignty : give glory to the Lord, as he is the Lord of heaven and earth ; the Lord of lords ; the Lord of angels ; the Lord of men and devils ; the Lord of our life ; the Lord of our breath ; the Lord of our time and talents ; the Lord of our health and wealth, and enjoyments ; the Lord of all that we have and are ; the Lord of our house, and land, and children : the Lord-disposer of all things, to whose government we ought to submit. We do not give him glory, if we do not practically acknowledge his Lordship, and own him as our Lord and Sovereign.

2. It is a glorifying him in his propriety in us, as the Lord our God. This is what we are called and commanded to do in the very first command of the law, " Thou shalt have no other gods before me ; " which requires us to " know and acknowledge God to be the

Lord our God and Redeemer, and to worship and glorify him accordingly." Never will we be truly humbled, nor give him the glory due to him, unless we come to him as the Lord our God, laying hold on his covenant, that says, "I will be thy God." The faith of this relation in Christ is presupposed to our coming; "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings," Jer. iii. 22. O the faith of this mercy of God in Christ would make us return to him as our own merciful God, saying, "Behold we come to thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Thus much for the import of the expression, "Give glory unto the Lord your God." I come now,

IV. To the fourth thing proposed—viz., To speak a little of the motive, namely, "Before he cause darkness." I shall speak to this head, 1. By considering the several significations of darkness in scripture. 2. By offering some remarks concerning the darkness here spoken of.

1st, I shall consider the several significations of darkness in scripture.

1. Sometimes darkness is put for sin in general, and for Satan's kingdom; "He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us to the kingdom of his dear Son," Col. i. 13. The gospel is designed to open men's eyes, and to bring them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. Now, when we understand it in this sense, to give glory to God before he cause darkness, may have this import—viz., before he give up to the power of sin and Satan, by leaving us altogether under the dominion of sin. It is true, God is not, and cannot be the author of sin, nor can he be properly the cause of it, no more than the sun can be the cause of darkness; but as when the sun withdraws darkness succeeds; so when God departs, sin and Satan must have the sway.

2. Sometimes darkness is put for ignorance and blindness of mind, incredulity and unbelief; John i. 5, "The light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not, Mat. iv. 16, The people that sat in darkness saw great light." Then the meaning is, in this sense, Give glory to God, before he give you up to judicial blindness of mind and to final unbelief, according to that threatening, Isa. vi. 10, "Go tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye indeed but perceive not: 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." Oh ! dreadful judgment !

3. It is put sometimes for error and impiety, in opposition to truth and holiness ; 1 John i. 5, 6, " God is light, and in him is no darkness at all ;" that is, no untruth or unholiness ; and again, " If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Now, in this sense, the meaning of it is, Give glory to God, before he give you up to the errors of the times, and to a spirit of delusion, like that threatened, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12, " Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved ; for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, to believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness."

4. Sometimes darkness is put for sorrow, grief, and heaviness : Mic. vii. 16, " Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me ;" that is when I am overwhelmed with heaviness and grief, the Lord will be my comfort ; as it is said, " Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness to the upright in heart ;" where light and gladness signify the same things, even as darkness and heaviness signify the same ; hence the meaning of the word in this verse is, Give glory to God, before he cause grief and sorrow to come upon you, as travail upon a woman.

5. Darkness is sometimes put in Scripture, for the loss of Christ and the gospel, and the blind miserable state that follows thereupon ; thus John xii. 35, " Yet a little while, says Christ, and the light is with you ; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you," ver. 36, " While ye have the light, believe in the light ;" then the meaning is, Give glory to God, by believing and walking in the light, before he cause such dreadful darkness, as that of taking away the candlestick, or removing the gospel, the means of grace and salvation. This is one of the greatest plagues and judgments ; but spiritual judgments, though heaviest, are generally least felt and understood. Therefore,

6. Darkness is, in Scripture, sometimes put for great afflictions and heavy calamities ; Ezek. xxxii. 8, 9, 10, " I will set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord, &c., Joel ii. 2. The day of the Lord cometh, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains ; a great people and a strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall

be any more after it, even to the years of many generations; a fire devoureth before them. Zeph. i. 14—17, The great day of the Lord is near: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Lam. ii. 1, 2, I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light." And it is in this sense especially, that some take the words of the text; and so the meaning is, Give glory to God, before he send more heavy dispensations, grievous afflictions, and terrible calamities; personal, congregational, and national.

7. Darkness is, in scripture, sometimes put for death and the grave; Job x. 31, "Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death." Also verse 22, "A land of darkness, as darkness itself, and the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Then, give glory to God, before he cause darkness; that is, before his messenger, Death, be sent to rend soul and body asunder; for, if you die before you give glory to God, by faith, repentance, humiliation, and renovation of heart and life, ye perish for ever. Therefore,

8. Darkness is sometimes also put for hell; Jude, verse 3, "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." Matth. xxv. 30, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matth. xxii. 13, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Why, then, "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness," or before the shadow of the everlasting evening be stretched over you, when he will get glory upon you passively through eternity, if you do not give him glory actively now in time. Here, in the text, it seems to be especially meant of the darkness of desolating judgments and calamities, not excluding any of the rest mentioned.

2ndly, The next thing I proposed, on this fourth general head of method, was, to offer some remarks upon the darkness here spoken of.

Remark 1. "That by darkness here we are especially, as I have said, to understand affliction and judgment." God was to judge and afflict Israel, and bring them under a seventy years' captivity. And judgments are several times expressed by darkness, thus in scripture, Psalm cvii. 10; Joel ii. 2.

Remark 2. "Afflictions are, on several accounts, compared to darkness:" partly, because of their dreadfulness; they are frightful, as men are afraid in the dark: and partly because of their dangerousness; there is great danger of stumbling in the dark, as in the following part of the verse, where the text lies; "Before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains; and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

Remark 3. "That there are signs of darkness before it come, or when it is a-coming; such as heaviness and drowsiness, which seize people when the dark night approaches." Alas! what a sign of darkness is the present security of our day? Men crying, Peace, peace; it says sudden destruction is at the door. Coldness seizes people in the dark night: and so coldness of affection towards God and Christ, is an evidence of the darkness of our day; the sun down, and the stars appearing. Oh! when the Sun of righteousness is hid, and only the stars appear, only ministers heard, only their gifts seen and discerned, what a darkness is this! When the wild beasts come abroad, it betokens darkness; thus, when the church is infested with foxes or wolves; see to this purpose, Acts x. 29, 30, "I know this, that after my departure, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock," &c. Song ii. 15, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines." See also 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3.

Remark 4. "That darkness of trouble and wrath come not upon a church without a cause." Give him glory before he *cause* darkness. "Affliction springs not out of the dust:" God owns himself the author; "Is there evil in the city, and I have not done it?" There is a concatenation and chain of causes, but God is at the top of the chain; he causes darkness.

Remark 5. "That sin provokes God to cause darkness." Give glory to God before he cause it; intimating, That the dishonouring of God by sin is the procuring cause of trouble and darkness, though God be the efficient cause. The darkness of sin is ours, but the darkness of judgment for sin is the Lord's; "Who gave

Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Hast not thou, O God, against whom we have sinned?" Isa. xlii. 24.

Remark 6. "That God is not willing that darkness come unawares upon a church and people, but before he cause darkness he warns them; 'Give glory to the Lord, before he cause darkness.'" He is not willing to destroy; "As I live, I have not pleasure in the death of sinners: Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

QUEST. But when darkness is determined, why doth God call sinners to turn to him, to repent, to give glory to him? What good service will that do, when to them the darkness and judgment is determined?

ANSW. If we give glory to God, then either,

1. It will prevent the darkness of judgment threatened, as in the case of Nineveh, and make the Lord to turn his hand, though he doth not turn his mind.

2. It may delay the darkness, so as there may be peace and truth in our days; or,

3. It may mitigate the darkness, and make it easy, and not so terrible; or,

4. It may shorten the dark night of judgment, as it is said, "For the elect's sake these days shall be shortened;" or,

5. It may contribute to strengthen and fortify us for the trial, when it comes, and makes us able to bear it.

6. It will turn the judgment into a mercy, and the darkness to light, for, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose," and to them that give glory to God. These are the upright ones, of whom it is said, "To the upright there arises light in darkness."

V. The fifth thing proposed was, To make application, which may be in an use of information, trial, and exhortation.

1st. We may improve this doctrine for information. And if it be so, that we are to give glory to God, particularly by faith, repentance, and humiliation, before he cause darkness, then we may hence see,

1. The excellency of CHRIST, in whom all the glory of God shines, and by whom God hath got all the glory that he requires. Hence the song of the angels before the incarnation, Isa. vi. 18. "The whole earth is full of thy glory." Heaven, the whole heaven was full of it before, but now the whole earth. And hence the song

of the angels after his incarnation, "Glory to God in the highest ! on earth peace, and good-will towards men !"

2. Hence see the excellency of the Christian religion, in that it tends to give glory to the great God, and the excellency of the gospel, that shews the way how God may get glory. On this score the Popish religion is to be rejected, that robs God of his pardoning mercy, ascribing it to the Pope, as if he had power to pardon ; it robs Christ of the glory of his righteousness, ascribing so much to the merit of works ; and of the glory of his intercession, ascribing it to angels and saints. On this head the Arminian doctrine is to be rejected, as robbing Christ of the glory of his free grace, in electing from eternity, and effectually calling in time, ascribing so much to man's free will. Socinians and Arians rob Christ of the glory of his divine nature, and of the merit and value of his blood, as a sacrifice satisfactory to divine justice.

3. Hence see the infinite evil of sin that robs God of his glory. Every sinner is a robber, and every sin a robbery committed upon God. It is a robbing him of his omniscience and omnipresence, as if he did not see, and was not present, observing ; of his justice, as if he did not regard ; of his power, as if he could not punish ; the language of the sinner is, God is altogether such an one as myself.

4. See whence it is, that the great end of the gospel is to level and bring down self—viz., because this is the great idol that stands opposite to God : "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself." Self is the greatest enemy in the world to the glory of God. We may bring the two opposite poles of heaven together, sooner than make a man serve himself, and yet aim at God's glory ; "No man can serve two masters."

5. Darkness is to be the portion of these who give not glory to God. The darkness of death and destruction will come upon such useless persons, as bring in no revenue of glory to the exchequer of heaven. The unprofitable servant that hid his talent, was to be bound hand and foot, and cast into utter darkness.

6. Hence see how reproveable these, and such like persons are,
(1.) Who bring no glory to God at all, being quite useless in the earth. It is not enough for a servant to say, I did no evil : he is an unprofitable servant that does no good. Negative holiness will do you no good ; you must not only be able to say, I was no drunkard nor swearer : you must be positively holy, otherwise God gets no glory.

(2.) These are reproveable that rob God of his glory; "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me," Mal. iii. 8. Thus hypocrites rob him of his omniscience, as if God did not search the heart; unbelief robs him of his faithfulness, as if he were a liar; epicures, gluttons, and drunkards rob him of his glory, for they make their belly their god; covetous people rob him, by making gold their god; hence covetousness is called idolatry. Oh! how he is robbed by the Arians, Socinians, and Deists of our day!

(3.) These that arrogate his glory to themselves, instead of giving glory to God, they take the glory to themselves. Thus some ascribe the honour of their success in the world to themselves, whereas, Deut. viii. 18. "It is God that giveth power to get wealth." Some ascribe to themselves the honour of their duties, when assisted; they do all to be seen of men; seeking to themselves the applause of men, and the praise of men more than the praise of God. The oil of vain-glory feeds the lamp of many professors; "Come see my zeal for the Lord of hosts." The wind of vain-glory hath blown many to hell. Thus the ambitious Hamans and Herods of the earth seek, that men should give them divine honour, and take God's glory to themselves, while they would lord it over the consciences of men and would have themselves more obeyed than God. Thus many assume to be lords of God's heritage, and to have the disposing of their spiritual rights and privileges, such as the election of ministers, which is a privilege belonging to a Christian congregation, and not to any patron whatsoever; God only is Lord of the conscience.

2ndly, The next use we shall make of the doctrine is of examination. Well then, you may try if you give God the glory by these two things. 1. There are some things will be burdensome to you. 2. There are some things you will desire and long for.

[1.] There are some things will be burdensome to you; such as these following:—

1. Sin, Because it brings dishonour to God: the sin of your nature, heart, and life; "Against thee, thee only have I sinned," Ps li. 6.

2. Self; you will be brought to abhor self, because it competes with God; Oh! to have the single eye! "Oh! wretched man that I am!"

3. That you cannot glorify God as you ought, and that you come so far short of glorifying him; this will be your burden: wo is me, that I honour him so little.

4. The dishonour done to God in the world will be your burden and grief; "I beheld transgressors, and was grieved." When you see God affronted, his name profaned, this will touch you: "The reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me."

[2.] There are some things you will desire and long for, if you be giving glory to God; such as,

1. You will long to have his kingdom established in the world: you will have some concern for Zion and for God's honour; "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right-hand forget her cunning."

2. You will long to have his kingdom within you, and his throne erected in your heart; every thought brought into captivity to his obedience.

3. You will long to have the work of holiness carried on, without resting in any degree of attainment; "Pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. The righteous holds on his way."

4. You will long to be with him, to behold his glory; "O! when shall the day break, and the shadows flee away!" O for the day when I shall be like him, and see him as he is, and glorify him to purpose!

3rdly, The third use we make of the doctrine, is for exhortation. O Sirs, be exhorted then to "Give glory to God, before he cause darkness." For motives to persuade you hereto,

1. Consider that the glory of God hath been much darkened by our sins, and the sins of this generation; darkened to such a degree, as may justly provoke him to cause darkness. How hath he been dishonoured by our forefathers and us? How is he dishonoured by the gross infidelity, error, ignorance, and irreligion of the day! by the great contempt and neglect of precious Christ, and his glorious gospel! the woful barrenness and unfruitfulness of ordinances! lukewarmness and indifferency in the matters of God! lamentable backsliding and defection from his ways and truth! hypocrisy, carnality, and earthly-mindedness! all seeking their own things, and not the things of Christ Jesus! gross immorality, cursing, swearing, whoredom, drunkenness, profanation of God's name and Sabbath! treacherous dealing with God, and contempt of our solemn covenants, national and personal; and departure from covenanted zeal, principles, and practices! How is he dishonoured by our sinning against so much, and so many mercies, and warnings!

2. Consider how the darkness of sin, in dishonouring God, is attended with the darkness of judgment, portending yet greater darkness. How many shadows of the evening are stretched over us? The shadow of spiritual judgments and plagues; such as blindness of mind, hardness of heart, stupidity, security, and deadness; and the giving up of men to the lusts of their own hearts, in the righteous judgment of God! The shadow of desertion; the Lord visibly withdrawing his gracious presence from his ordinances, and the assemblies of his servants and people! The shadow of dissensions and divisions among ministers and people: God dividing us in his anger! The shadow of heavy grievances upon his church, notwithstanding of endeavours used for her relief, when he goes not forth with our armies! The visible glory of the church, her doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, sadly corrupted with carnal policy, framing the tabernacle of God otherwise than according to the pattern seen in the mount! The invisible glory is much withdrawn, that few tokens appear of God's powerful presence in the sanctuary, and a great famine of spiritual influence! What a shadow of darkness is the reduction of the remnant! Isa. i. 9, "When the good men perish," and few faithful pastors and sound professors are left! "Help, Lord, says the psalmist, for the godly man ceaseth;" few to bear witness for God; and when candidates for the ministry are lax and latitudinarian in their principles, affecting nothing but new modes of flourishing and haranguing, without studying the life, power, and mysteries of the gospel!

3. Consider, how much it concerns us to give glory to God: glorifying of God is the great end of our creation and being: "The Lord made all things for himself:" and if all things, then man especially, the master-piece of the visible creation. It is for this end God hath given us rational souls and noble faculties, and the means of grace; and all lest this end be not obtained. The glorifying of God is the chief end of all his works, viz. creation, providence, and redemption. All the other creatures, sun, moon, and stars; yea, and brute beasts, they all glorify God according to their nature and capacities; and, what are we doing? We depend upon him absolutely for life and breath, and being, every moment: "In him we live, move, and have our being:" and is it not highly reasonable that we live to him? The glory of God is most excellent, his glory is above heaven and earth. His glory surpasseth the thoughts of men and angels. It is more worth than heaven; more worth

than the salvation of all men. His glory is dear to him. He hath given many excellent gifts to his children, but his glory will he not give to another. And, if his glory be so dear to him, should it not be dear to us? And ought we not to promote it? Our not glorifying of God will come to a sad account: for the sum of the grand account we are to be called to is this, What revenue of glory have you brought in to me? And, if God have no glory by us, he will have glory upon us. If you glorify him not actively, you shall glorify him passively: and, alas! how sad will their case be, who shall serve for no other end, but to set forth the glory of his vindictive justice to all eternity! In a word, it will be our unspeakable advantage to glorify him, for we shall be glorified by him; "They that honour me, I will honour." How sweet will it be in a dying hour, if you could say, "Father, I have glorified thee on earth; glorify thou me with thyself," and with the glory thou hast prepared for me from all eternity.

4. Consider whom it concerns to glorify God; put it not off from you. Doth it not concern magistrates to give glory to him, by enacting good laws, and executing them faithfully? See Jer. xiii. 18. Doth it not concern ministers and church-officers to give glory to God, by asserting and maintaining the true doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of God's house; to buy truth and not to sell it, though it should cost us our life, as it hath done many worthy ministers and martyrs. Doth it not concern people, in their private stations, to give glory to God, and advance the kingdom of Christ Jesus, and to contribute their mite, though they were never so poor and mean, for the building of the tabernacle? As, when it was reared in the wilderness, some that were able gave gold, silver, precious stones, scarlet, and fine linen; some that were poorer, and unable to give great things, they gave badgers' skins and goats' hair: so according to your ability, you are to give glory to God, and to pray for the coming of his kingdom, when you can do no more.

Quest. How shall I give him glory before he cause darkness?

If the question be about the means, I have already spoken of this in the doctrinal part; but if the question be about the power and ability, indeed you cannot give him glory if he do not give you grace: you cannot glorify and sanctify his name, unless he sanctify your heart; you cannot humble yourself for your sin, unless he accomplish his promise to you, see Ezekiel xxxvi. 25—31. "I will sprinkle you with clean water, &c. A new heart will I give you,

and a new spirit will I put within you, &c. I will put my Spirit within you; and then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations." O Sirs, therefore seek to have the promised blessings and graces of the new covenant, the promised Spirit poured out upon you, that you may humbly confess your sins, and give glory to God; without this, your confession and humiliation will be defective: and there are four respects wherein ordinary confessions are defective. Either we come not far enough in to make personal confession; whereas every family and person should mourn apart: or, we go not far enough down, to our heart sins, that stop in outward and general sins: or, we go not far enough back, as David, confessing the sins of his youth, yea, of his nature: or, we go not far enough on, but confess, and then run away to our sins again, without having any stamp or impress of confession upon our walk or conversation, and without continuing under a sense of sin, as David, "My sin is ever before me;" and without walking softly all our days, as Hezekiah: therefore, that our confession may be of a right stamp, O let us supplicate the Spirit of all grace, that we may be in case to give glory to God.

And, in order to our having the Spirit, and having grace to glorify God, O let us, through grace, come to Christ, who hath the Spirit above measure, and who is the store-house of all grace. By faith and believing in Christ, we give more glory to God, than we can do any otherwise. By being strong in the faith, we give glory to God in all his attributes, because, in the way of salvation, through Christ, all the perfections of God shine gloriously: and therefore, when we believe in Jesus, and close with this way of salvation, we give him the glory of them all. Why, thus we glorify the wisdom of God, in laying such a plan of our salvation, as tends to display the manifold wisdom of God, in uniting the most distant extremes, and making a God-man the centre in whom God and man meet together. We glorify his power, in executing and finishing what Wisdom did so marvellously contrive, and destroying principalities and powers, and saving us, notwithstanding all the mighty oppositions that stand in the way. Thus we glorify the holiness of God, since in Christ, God hath shewed his purity, and hatred of sin, to be so great, that he spared not his own Son, when he only knew sin by imputation. Thus we glorify the justice of God, in that a satisfaction of infinite value hath been yielded by an almighty Re-

deemer, so as thereupon God becomes just in justifying them that believe in Jesus, and declaring his righteousness in the remission of sin. Thus we glorify the truth of God, whose faithfulness is fully established, and the truth of all the law-threatenings, in that he hath exacted the punishment threatened: and thus Christ also, at the same time, hath sealed all the promises of the covenant of grace, in so much that they are all Yea and Amen in him. Thus we glorify the goodness and mercy of God. Goodness appears in its glory, in providing a Redeemer for such as have destroyed themselves; and the greatest blessings are bestowed freely upon the most unworthy. Mercy appears to the utmost, while provision is made for bringing sinners to partake of the happiness they had forfeited, and grace reigns through righteousness: and thus a way is laid out in which justice and holiness should not be injured, and yet grace and mercy eminently exalted. Here is the most rational scheme in the world, which contributes to advance, and exalts all the perfections of the great God.

O then, as we would give glory to God, let us come to Christ by faith; for, as this way is most for God's glory, so it is best for our behoof. Tell me, O sinner, have you no sins to be saved from? Since you have, O whither should you go but to him, who is the "Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world?" Have you not souls to be saved? Why then, whither should you go, but to the Saviour of souls? Is there not a life to come? O then, whither should you go but to him who hath the words of eternal life? Is there not a wrath to come? O then, where should you go but to him that can only deliver you from the wrath to come? Do you think he is unwilling to receive you? O sinner, how can that be? If he yielded himself into the hands of them that sought his life, will he withhold himself from the hearts of them that seek his mercy? Was he willing to be taken by the hands of violence? And is he not much more willing to be taken by the hand of faith? Are you destitute of faith? O Sirs, look to him as the Author of faith. Though you cannot come to him, make that errand, saying, "Lord, I cannot come; but I come to thee for grace to come: O draw me, draw me." Say not, I am unworthy; for if you would have nothing but what you are worthy of, you must have nothing but hell.

If you say you have a proud heart, a hard heart, a dead heart, a wicked heart: O put these among the rest of your sins, and come

to him to be saved from them all. None ever came to him for a cure, and went away without it. You would find something in yourself; but it is best you find nothing, but what you have reason to be ashamed of, that you may come to Christ for all so as to glory only in him. Let thy emptiness further thy coming to him for all, instead of hindering thee. Come as thou art; come poor, come needy, come naked, come empty, come wretched; it is his joy and crown to receive thee.

Oh! there is a necessity for thy coming, there is no other Saviour but he, and thou perishest; come, then, and "give glory to God before he cause darkness; give glory to God before he cause judgments to fall upon thee. Give glory to God before he take away the candlestick of the gospel. Give glory to him before he take away ministers and sermons. Give glory to him, before he lay you on a sick-bed, or a death-bed. Give glory to him before he pronounce that fearful sentence on you. "My spirit shall no more strive with man. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still: he that is unjust, let him be unjust still. Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." Give glory to him before he pronounce that final sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" "Give glory to him before he cause darkness."

5. Consider that darkness is threatened. There are signs of darkness and of judgment a-coming.

(1.) Abounding of all manner of sin. See Hos. iv. 1, 2, 3. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, 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 beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven: yea, the fishes of the sea, shall also be taken away."

(2.) These aggravated so much, being against light, love, and mercy: so that the patience of God is abused; Rom. ii. 4, 5, "Despisest thou the riches of his forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath?"

(3.) When God's patience is not only abused, but affronted, and ridiculed, and laughed at; "Knowing this first, that there shall

come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" For, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, &c. 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4, 9, 10.

(4.) When there are few to stand in the gap: "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none, Ezek. xxii. 30.

(5.) When the righteous are removed; "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come," Isa. lvii. 4.

(6.) When the gospel is despised, and Christ is rejected by the generality, it bodes darkness; "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and is wonderful in our eyes. Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, Matt. xxi. 42, 43. O then, "Give glory to God before he cause darkness."

And we would advise you to give him glory particularly in the six following respects.

1. By confession of sin; "Give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to him, Joshua vii. 19. Confess secret sins in secret, and when charged in an ecclesiastical way, do not cover sin.

2. By thanksgiving, Ps. lxxix. 30, "I will praise the name of God with a song; and will magnify him with thanksgiving, Ps. l. 23. Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me." When we pray, we act like men; when we praise, like angels.

3. By calling upon God; "Call on me in the day of trouble; I will hear thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Ps. l. 14.

4. By suffering, when he calls you to it; "Glory ye the Lord in the fires," Isa. xxiv. 15. Dishonour not God, then, by complaining: "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his iniquity?" Remember thou art man, and "Man is born to trouble." Thou art a living man, and that is a mercy; yet in the land of hope. Thou art a sinful man that deservest hell;

and a man but suffering punishment for his sin: and let these be arguments against murmuring.

5. Glorify him by living to his praise, living a fruitful life: "Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Living a holy life; studying to be holy by avoiding sin, and hating it wherever you see it, especially in yourself. You will hate a toad or serpent wherever you see it; but much more if it be crawling in your own bosom: so here, sin has its residence in the heart: "Out of the heart proceedeth evils:" therefore, abhor that abominable thing which God's holy soul hates. Glorify him by a zealous life, "Contending for the faith;" and by being conscientious in the discharge of relative duties, that the name of God be not blasphemed, but that the doctrine of God be adorned.

6. Give him glory by living by faith upon the Son of God; you cannot glorify God, if you do not glorify Christ; "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him," John v. 23. O then, Sirs, give Christ the glory of his name and offices.

[1.] Give Christ the glory of his name, by making his name your strong tower. Give him the glory of his name JESUS, by looking to him for salvation. Give him the glory of his name CHRIST, The Anointed, by looking to him for the Spirit, the anointing. Give him the glory of his name, The Sun of righteousness, by praying him to arise on you with healing in his wings. Give him the glory of his name, The Resurrection and the Life, by looking to him for life to your dead soul.

[2.] Give him the glory of all his offices. A man in his office reckons it his honour to be employed, much employed. O then, Sirs, give Christ the glory of his Prophetical office, by employing him to teach you, and to dispel the darkness of your mind. Give him glory as a Priest, by employing him to pardon you, and wash you in his blood. Give him glory as a King, by employing him to subdue all your iniquities, mortify all your corruptions, and destroy all your spiritual enemies. Give him glory as a Physician, by employing him to heal all your diseases. Give him glory as a Captain, by employing him to fight all your battles. Give him glory as a Treasurer, by employing him to supply all your wants out of his fulness. Give him glory as an Agent, by employing him to do all your works in you and for you, saying with the Psalmist, "Do thou for me, for thy name's sake:" and again, Ps. lvii. 2, "I will

cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me." If you cannot believe, nor employ him, O will you give him glory as the Author of faith, by pleading, that he may come and take employment, and work faith in you. Give him the glory of his drawing grace, saying, "Lord draw me, and I will run; turn me, and I will be turned." Remember you are called to give him glory, before he cause darkness. Darkness will come whether you will or not, the darkness of distress, the darkness of a sick-bed or a death-bed, the darkness of death itself, the darkness of a judgment-day. If you would have darkness to be light before you, O Sirs, give him glory before he cause darkness. O seek to be regenerate; for you cannot please God while you are in the flesh: "Who can gather grapes of thorns?" Seek acquaintance with Christ and union to him; you cannot glorify God but in Christ: be acquainted with the rule whereby we glorify God and enjoy him. Seek to have the word hid in your heart, and particularly to be well acquainted with the gospel covenant: plead the promises thereof: "For the promises are Yea and Amen, in Christ, to the glory of God," 2 Cor. i. 20.

SERMON LIV.

THE GREAT RUIN, AND THE GREAT RELIEF; OR, HELP FROM HEAVEN TO SELF-DESTROYERS ON EARTH.*

HOSEA xiii. 9.—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help."

HOWEVER uneasy it is for men to hear of their sin and danger, from the word of God, yet it is necessary they hear of both, as long as sin may be repented of, and danger may be prevented. Here in this chapter the children of Israel are,

1. Reproved and threatened for their idolatry, notwithstanding the provision that God made to prevent their falling into it, ver. 1—4.

* This subject was handled in two sermons. The first was preached at Braid Craigs, on Wednesday, March 22nd, 1738, being a day appointed for solemn Fasting and Humiliation, by the Associate Presbytery, at the earnest desire of the Societies for Prayer, in and about Edinburgh. The second was delivered on the Sabbath thereafter, at Linton.

2. They are reprov'd and threatened for their wantonness, pride, and luxury, and other abuses of their wealth and prosperity, ver. 5—8. And though the wrath that is threatened, as a coming upon them, for these and other sins, is very terrible, yet, "In the midst of wrath he remembers mercy;" and therefore in the midst of words of wrath, he forgets not to intermix words of mercy; "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help."

There are two springs of gospel-repentance; one is, a true sense of sin; and another, the apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ: both these we are led to in these words. That we may have a true sense of sin, we are here taught how we have destroyed ourselves by it: that we may have an apprehension of mercy in Christ, we are taught, that in him is our help.

In these words you may observe two things.

1. The persons or people to whom God speaks, and how he speaks to them, "O Israel." It is with affectionate concern, that God deals with sinners for their conviction and conversion.

2. The thing he speaks to them, "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help. Here is,

(1.) The spring of their RUIN, it is of themselves; O Israel! THOU hast destroyed thyself?" or, it hath destroyed THEE, O Israel! that is, thy sin and folly, thy own wickedness hath destroyed thee. Wilful sinners are self-destroyers. Obstinate impenitence is the grossest self-murder; thy blood is upon thine own head.

(2.) The spring of their RELIEF, "But in ME is thine help." Here is a plank thrown out after shipwreck. There is help even for self-destroyers in me the Saviour and salvation.

The words may be read, "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself, for in me is thy help:" *q.d.* Say not, that I, who thus threaten wrath against thee, have destroyed thee; thy sin hath done it. It is the rebel that destroys himself, though he fall by the sword of his provoked sovereign. Thou art the cause and author of thy own ruin; "For in me is thy help." I was always able and ready to help thee, and would have certainly saved thee, but thy sins and wickedness carried thee to other helps, which were but lies and vain confidences. I would have helped thee, and healed thee, but thou wouldst not. Thus it is a proof of their destroying themselves. Thou art thy own destroyer; for I am thy helper, that have been offering thee my help, which thou hast put away from thee, and so destroyed thyself by refusing my help, and rebelling against me,

thy help. In God alone, and not in us, is our help; and therefore, in ourselves alone, and not in God, is the cause of our ruin. In our reading, "But in me is thy help," it seems not to run argumentatively, adversatively as the opposite of the former clause of the verse: yet it hath the same import with the other reading, and magnifies not only the power of God, that can help, when things are at the worst, and help these that cannot help themselves; but also the mercy and grace of God that will help these, that have destroyed themselves, and have no will to be helped, but have long refused his help. And, indeed, our case was miserable for ever, if God were not better to us than we are to ourselves.

From the words, there are these six general observations we may make.

1. That, as sin is a ruining thing, so it brings ruin not only upon persons, but upon nations and churches that are guilty: "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself."

2. God's dealing with men for their conviction is very home and close; "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself:" and as God, when he makes conviction particular, and persons make close application, thou man, thou woman, hast done so and so, and destroyed thyself by thy sin; so he wills nations, and churches, and cities to be convinced and humbled for their particular sin and guilt; O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself."

3. God's method of grace toward self-destroying sinners, having once discovered their sin, is next to reveal his thoughts of love; his words are a proper fence against two ruining extremes, presumption, and despair. To prevent presumptions, he says, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" to prevent despair, he adds, "But in me is thy help." With the same breath he tells us of the ruin and of the remedy; and with the same hand, reaches the blow and the blessing; or, gives the wound and the cure.

4. Such is the unspeakable mercy of God, that he hath more pity and kindness for us, than we have for ourselves. Our unnatural cruelty to ourselves is as the foil to set forth the riches of God's mercy; "When no eye pitied thee;" no, not thine own eyes, "I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live," Ezek. xvi. 5, 6. When thou wast in thy blood, wallowing in thy own blood, and hadst brought thy blood upon thy own head, then I pitied thee. Men usually say, if a man will be wilful, let him be so, but God says, I will pity him.

5. Nothing ruins sinners so much as their slighting the mercy of God, their opposing his offer, and refusing his help. As God offers his help, which he hath laid upon One that is mighty, inso-much, that the cause of our destruction is not in God, but in ourselves; so the chief thing, by which we ruin and destroy ourselves, is our refusing God's help, rejecting his Christ, in seeking help and happiness elsewhere than in him; "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." And thou hast rejected me, and run away to creature-helps, and creature-supports, and creature-comforts, and forsaken me the fountain of living waters.

6. The sixth observation we make from the words is, what we shall speak to, and it is thus; that as man's ruin and destruction is only of himself, and his own sin; so his relief and deliverance is only owing to God, and his sovereign grace and mercy; "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help."

This text and doctrine is a tree which hath two branches. I shall endeavour, therefore, first, to consider the former branch, viz. That man's ruin and destruction is only of himself, and his own sinfulness; and what fruit may be gathered from this branch of truth, for our use and improvement suitable to the design of the day. Secondly, I shall go on to the other branch of the text and doctrine, namely, That our relief and deliverance is owing only to God, and his sovereign mercy: and consider what fruitful lessons may be gathered thence for our use and improvement thereof.

First then, That man's ruin and destruction is only of himself, and his own sinfulness. This is plain from scripture; Jer. ii. 17, 15. "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts. Ezek. xxxiii. 11., Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel? Again, Mat. xxiii. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate." For

further clearing of this, I offer these following propositions.

The first proposition is, "That sin is a killing and destroying thing." Death and destruction came in by this door; "The wages of sin is death, Rom. vi. 23. 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. It wounded and slew our first parents in paradise: it destroyed them, first, as to the peace of their conscience: for it made them hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden, Gen. iii. 8. It destroyed them, next, as to the state of their souls; for it made them both legally dead, under the law sentence, and so liable to eternal death; and spiritually dead, under the power of sin, Eph. ii. 1. according to that threatening, Gen. ii. 17. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And lastly, it destroyed them as to the life of their body; for presently they became mortal, subject to all outward miseries, which are a temporal death, and to the dissolution of soul and body, which is natural death: and, at last, dropped their body into the dust, according to that, Gen. iii. 19. "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." As their sin destroyed themselves, so it did their posterity; and their sinning posterity destroy themselves by their own sin. Thus every particular sinner is a self-destroyer. The slothful man is said to be his own murderer; Prov. vi. 32. "The desire of the slothful killeth him." The adulterer is his own murderer; Prov. vi. 32. "Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding; he that doth it destroyeth his own soul." The drunkard is his own murderer; Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. "Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? and who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixt wine." How sweetly soever it go down, at last, "It bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder." The extortioner is his own murderer: he heaps up treasures of vengeance for himself, Jam. v. 3, 4. The voluptuous, the wanton debauchee, is his own murderer; Jam. v. 5. "Ye have lived in pleasures on the earth, and been wanton;" then it follows, "Ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. They that make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," they but nourish themselves for the day of slaughter. The false prophet and the false teacher murders his own soul, as well as the souls of

others. Hence such are said to bring upon themselves swift destruction ; many following their pernicious ways ; their judgment, now of a long time, lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not, 2 Pet. ii 1, 2, 3. In a word, all impenitent sinners are said to treasure up wrath to themselves against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Rom. ii. 5. All this says, that sin is a killing thing, and sinners are self-murderers, and self-destroyers ; and it cannot be otherwise, because sin is a transgression of the law, and the transgressors of the law are liable to temporal judgments here, and eternal hereafter ; “ Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death,” James i. 15.

The second proposition is, “ That as sin is a hurtful and destructive thing, so the destruction it makes, is very extensive.” Sin destroys and abuses everything ; it makes an universal abuse : no wonder, for it is an abusing of God ; and, if it could, would destroy him ; therefore we call it Deicide. It would pull God out of his throne ; it abuses his authority, interposed in his law ; it abuses his justice, as if he would not punish ; and abuses his power, as if he could not ; it is an abuse of his wisdom, as if his law were not right and reasonable ; an abuse of his knowledge and omniscience, as if he did not see and observe : it is an abuse of his long-suffering, patience, and forbearance ; an abuse of his sparing mercy and kindness ; and when it abuses God, the chief good, it must abuse every thing. It is an abuse of his threatenings, as if they were not to be feared ; and an abuse of his promises, as if they were not to be regarded ; it is an abuse of his holiness ; a direct contrariety to his nature and will : it is an attempt upon his being ; “ The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God : “ he wishes there were none. Sin is an abuse of Christ ; it is a refusing and rejecting of him : an abuse of his person, natures, and offices : it is an abuse of his death, his blood, his righteousness : a neglecting of the great Saviour, and the great salvation. Sin is an abuse of the Spirit : it is a resisting of the Spirit ; a quenching of the Spirit ; a vexing of the Spirit : a doing despite unto the Spirit of God. It is such an universal abuse of GOD, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that, no wonder, they that see sin with the Psalmist, cry out with him, saying, “ Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight,” &c. Psal. li. 4.

When sin thus abuses the God of Heaven, no wonder that it abuse man upon earth. Your sin, man, woman, is an abuse of

your rational soul, which is capable of glorious enjoyment in heaven; but by sin it grovels on earth among the dust, wallows in a filthy kennel. Sin is an abuse of the body, which should be the temple of the Holy Ghost; it becomes thereby the temple of the devil. Sin destroys the very body: it is an abuse and destruction of time, that precious time that should be spent in preparing for eternity. It is an abuse and destruction of health and strength; God lends you health and strength, and you employ them against God; yea, strangers, as the prophet says, Hosea vii. 9, or strange gods have devoured their strength; it may be, strange women, strange lusts, strange lovers, devour your strength. Sin is an abuse and destruction of wealth, riches, and worldly prosperity. God, as it were, hires the wealthy to be dutiful to him; but Jeshurun-like, they kick against him, when they wax fat, Deut. xxxii. 15. Jer. v. 7, 9, "When I fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlot's houses, &c. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Thus it was an aggravation of Israel's sin; they gave all to Baal, all to their lusts: "She did not know, that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal," Hos. ii. 8. Some give all the silver and gold that God hath given them, yea, more than they can well spare, to their profane diversions, idle, vain, and wanton amusements, lewd and wicked practices. Again, sin is an abuse of warnings, afflictions, and judgments. It is an abuse of light and knowledge: it is a crossing of the light of nature and of scripture both. Men cannot sin at so cheap a rate as in the days of popish darkness, when the scriptures were locked up in an unknown tongue: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." In a word, sin is an abuse of the word, the preached word, the written word; it makes men wrest the scriptures to their own destruction: to impugn the necessity of divine revelation, and turn Deists, Arians, Atheists, and incarnate devils. It is an abuse and destruction of wit, reason, talents, sermons, Sabbaths, and every thing.

The third proposition is, "That this certain and universal destruction that sin works, is gradual." Sin destroys them like a consumption by degrees; though it brings sudden and surprising destruction at last, 1 Thess. v. 3, yet it brings the heaviest destruction by several steps! "He that being often removed, hardeneth

his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy, Prov. xxix. 1. We use to say, *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*; 'None instantly become most flagitious:' men come not to the utmost of vileness but by degrees." Jam. i. 15, "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." In nature corrupted, there remains some sparkles of divine light, some bridles to restrain black and bloody, foul and abominable sins, viz. fear and shame, the spies of the natural conscience; these must be abated by little and little, before a man grow impudent in sin, declaring it as Sodom. The person that hath got some Christian education, he first, perhaps grows out of conceit with religious duties, and neglects to perform them; then he begins to wish there were no precept or injunction to such duties; next, he falls a-questioning, whether there be such a heaven or hell, as preachers hold out to him? Then he begins to pick up all the arguments that can make for heathenism, and against Christianity, or divine revelation; then he hearkens to nothing that will make against him, and chooses to deal with them that are too weak for him; for he hates the light, and is afraid of it; after this he takes loose reins, and joins himself with the companies that practise wickedness, and agree with him in his folly; and then, finally, he laughs and scorns at all the ministers of the word; and now he comes to his *Ἀκμή*, his height in wickedness. Now, he follows his lusts with greediness, resolving, if he shall be damned, he shall be damned for something: like these, Jer. xviii. 12, saying, "There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart."

Thus there are several steps of Satan's ladder. The man comes first to walk in the counsel of the ungodly; then he stands in the way of sinners: and lastly, he sitteth in the seat of the scornful, Ps. i. 1. Satan leads men up the steps of his ladder, till they fall down and break their necks. After temptation is offered, first comes approbation in the understanding: after that, consent in the will; after that, comes practice in the affection; after that, custom in the repeated act; then follows delight in that sinful way; after this comes the defence of it, with all the rhetoric hell can invent; after that comes boldness in sinning with a whore's forehead; and, last of all, comes scorning, and a drawing iniquity with cords of vanity, Isaiah v. 18. Boasting in wickedness, and glorying in their shame.

Satan acts first like a creeping serpent, and then like a flying dragon. His first request seems mannerly and modest, as Semiramis desired of Ninus to reign, but one day, and that one day to do what she pleased; and in that day she cut off his head. Sin deceives men till they be hardened through its deceitfulness. It appears, at first, but little in the fountain, in the heart and thought; then it bubbles out into a stream in evil words; then it increases into a river in evil actions; next, it swells into a torrent, and overflows all in a long custom, till it drown men in perdition, and thus it gradually destroys them.

The fourth proposition is, "That this destroying evil is of ourselves and our own obstinate will." Men are apt to charge God foolishly, as if he were the author of their sin and ruin, though yet he solemnly clears himself, by oath, from having the least hand in it, Ezekiel xxxiii. 11, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 2 Pet. iii. 9, He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." When God's fury breaks forth like fire against impenitent sinners, it is their own hand that kindles it; "Ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever," Jer. xvii. 4. It was the cry of Sodom's sins, that brought down the Almighty in flames of fire upon them. God doth not destroy the sinner, till the sinner hath wearied God out of all patience, as it were: and hence he says, Jer. xv. 6, "I am weary with repenting; thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord; thou art gone backward; therefore will I stretch forth mine hand against thee, and destroy thee." I am weary with repenting: God bears with sinners, till he can bear no longer; "The Lord could no longer bear;" why? "because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation and astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant as at this day," Jer. xlv. 22.

And as our destruction is not of God, far less is our sin; it is wholly of ourselves, James i. 13, 14, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." When men break out into lying, stealing, killing, swearing, whoring, and the like, it proceeds from the lusts that war in their members, Jam.

iv. 1; and from the notions of sin that work there, Rom. vii. 8; it proceeds from the corrupt fountain of the heart, Matt. xv. 18, 19. Christ says, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, theft, false witness, blasphemies." Thus Isa. lix. 17, "Their feet run to evil:" why? whence is that? It follows, "Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity;" and hence, as it is said, ver. 6, "Their works are works of iniquity."

It was said of the old world what may be said of this, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth:" why? whence was this? "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. There were evil motions continually working in their minds; and hence they became so monstrously wicked.

Man's sin is of himself, by reason of inbred corruption, which gives matter, life, and being to every sin; insomuch that were it not for this, neither the ill customs of the world, nor yet the temptations of Satan, could fasten upon us. Hence you see our Lord Jesus, though he lived and conversed in the world with all sorts of people, yet no allurements thereof could provoke him to sin. Satan, also, in vain attacked him with all his temptations, but he had not tinder in him to give fire to these matches; according as he saith himself, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me," John xiv. 30. He hath no corrupt matter to work upon: he may shoot his darts, but they return to his own hurt. Were it not then for the corruption of our sinful nature, neither the devil nor the world could draw us to sin: and Satan knows this well enough; hence he suits his temptations to our natural inclinations.

Now as man's sin is of himself, and his ruin of himself, so especially it is of his obstinate will; John v. 4, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," says Christ. Nothing from without or within, is so much the cause of man's ruin as the will. As for the body, it is but a lump of dust, that cannot act without the will; the eye cannot look; the feet cannot walk; the tongue cannot speak without the consent of the will; and as for the other faculties of the soul, all of them are influenced according to the motion of the will. I find the ignorance of the mind attributed to the obstinacy of the will, 2 Pet. iii. 5, "This they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old." Men hate the light, and will not come to it, lest their deeds be reprov'd; "Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light." Again,

the affections are under the command of the will ; fear, love, joy, delight, desire are, as it were, lackies unto this commanding faculty. The memory is regulated by the will ; it remembers only these things best that the will is most delighted with ; and what the will doth not affect, the memory doth not retain. All the thoughts are under the power of the will ; all the imaginations of the soul fix themselves on this or the other object, as the will is pleased and delighted therewith or not. Thus, nothing without or within is the cause of man's ruin and destruction so much as the will. It is the will that rejects the word of God : Prov. i. 30, 31, "They would have none of my counsel ; they despised my reproof ; therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way." It is said, Prov. xi. 5, "The wicked shall fall by their own wickedness." Psalm lxxxi. 11, "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me." Mat. xxiii. 37, "I would have gathered ye, but you would not." Isa. xxx. 15, "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength ; and ye would not." Jer. vi. 16, 17, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls ; but they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet ; but they said, "We will not hearken." So perverse is the will, and so bent are men upon eternal ruin, that they will do more to escape temporal than eternal danger ; more to escape a temporal than eternal fire ; yea, they will do more to be damned than to be saved ; and choose to do anything rather than come to Christ the Saviour ; and here is the chief ruining sin, A wilful rejecting the mercy of God, the Christ of God. Hence men are said to love death ; "All that hate me, love death," Prov. viii. 36. Hence the question "Why will ye die?" Ezek. xviii. 31.

Men's unwillingness to come to Christ for salvation appears by these two things, among many others.

1st, They are naturally unwilling to come to the outward means of grace ; "Thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee," Psalm l. 17. This hatred of the outward means, saying in effect to the Almighty, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14 ; and refusing with the prodigal, to return to our Father, till compelled ; this natural

hatred, I say, even of the outward means, is evident from the choice they make of outward things ; for example, man, tell me what place do you choose ? Is it not natural to you that are ungodly, to choose to be in any place, rather than where the gospel is powerfully dispensed : You choose the tavern rather than the temple ; the place of vanity and foolery, rather than the place of ordinances and divine worship, unless it be, when you come to hear a sermon for your diversion ; and so for feeding some lust or other, not for food and edification to your soul. Tell me also, what family do you choose ? Such as have the disposing of themselves had rather be in a family where there is nothing but profaneness and wantonness, than in such where the fear of God is taught, and where God is duly worshipped, morning and evening. Again, what service do you choose ? Some had rather undergo any drudgery than be employed in spiritual worship. “ Nay, you may take the carnal man, says one, and tie him to a stake, and kill him with praying and preaching.” What delight do you choose ? Are they not rather any vain, carnal delights, than in divine and spiritual things ? What books do you choose ? Would you not, many times, rather read any wild romance, than sit down and search the Scriptures ? Any book rather than the book of God. And, in a word, what company do you choose ? Is it not any carnal company, rather than the company of the godly ? Any diverting or debauched company, rather than spiritual and edifying company ? “ He that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.” Any conversation, or communication, is chosen, rather than such as is instructive in religion. If any would attempt this in some companies, they would expose themselves to be flouted as unpolite and unfashionable, in this profane age. If conscience answer to these and the like questions, it will bear witness to this truth, that men are naturally unwilling to submit to the outward means of grace.

2ndly, It appears from this, that when men are under the means, they are unwilling to be wrought upon by these means : both unwilling to be enlightened, and unwilling to be drawn.

(1.) They are unwilling to be enlightened, and hate the light, John iii. 20. Thus doth the present generation hate the light of a testimony for truth, and against their defections, as Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, hated the plainness of Amos, saying, “ The land is not able to bear with all his words,” Amos. vii. 10.

This unwillingness to be enlightened is plain.

1. Because they shut their eyes against the light, and will think well of themselves, whatever wickedness be charged upon them, or whatever sin be shewn them.

2. If they cannot keep out the light; yet they let it in by halves, using all arts to diminish their guilt, to lessen their sin, that so they may have the more favourable opinion of themselves; they will put the blame upon some other, if it be possible, as Adam upon Eve, and she upon the serpent.

3. If the light hath so far entered, that the man sees himself a miserable creature, then he does what he can to deliver himself from the power of conviction and the sense of sin; nay, if he get his corrupt will, it shall neither stay so long with him, nor work so powerfully on him, as to oblige him to come to Christ.

4. When conviction hath so far prevailed with him as that he hath some thoughts of coming to Christ, yet then he delays, and puts it off, through the power of remaining aversion and enmity; it is not yet time; and thus some delay to their eternal ruin.

5. If light come yet a further step, to make him judge he is in danger of perishing for ever, if he come not to Christ presently; yet, if God suffer his present fear to abate, then his resolution abates also, and he returns to his folly.

6. If his fear return more strongly upon him, so that he hath no rest nor quiet, yet how unwilling is he to come to Christ wholly? If he get not a farther touch of divine power, he remains but half willing. He would have Christ for his Saviour to deliver him from hell, not for his Lord to reign over him, and deliver him from sin. Thus men are unwilling to be enlightened, and averse from letting in all the light.

(2.) Though enlightened, yet they may be unwilling to be drawn to Christ: and hence resist many strokes, and common motions of God's Spirit. Thus a man may have much and long experience of the bitterness of sin; and yet be unwilling to come to Christ, and be saved from it. He may not only know that sin hath done him much mischief, but that it will do him much more; and yet be unwilling to come to Christ. He may have in his eye the precious promises of glorious things to be obtained in a way of coming to Christ, and have some comfortable feeling of these things, even a taste of the powers of the world to come, and receive the word with joy; and yet be unwilling to come to Christ. Further, God may set before him the dreadful threatenings of eternal death

and wrath, yea, and he may have some foretaste of the wrath to come, like Cain and Judas ; and yet, if God leave him there, he remains unwilling to come to Christ, and perishes for ever.

People may be converted to some general regard for religion, and yet be heart-enemies to the power of godliness, having a direct enmity against religion, in the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of it. Enemies to the height of it, or to a high profession, especially in a time wherein it may be dangerous to confess Christ openly before the world. They reckon this were but to expose themselves. Enemies to the depth of religion, and to the mystery thereof ; they are not for wading into the depth of it, but only for stepping about the skirt, the hem, the outside of it. Enemies to the length of it. "The hypocrite will not always call upon God." What ! to be always watching, constantly praying : this is intolerable. Enemies to the breadth of it, as it extends to their thoughts, words, and actions, to all times, places, and companies : this is intolerable also. Thus men discover their hatred of religion, who yet have no will to be thought irreligious ; and so men wilfully destroy themselves.

I proposed to apply or gather some fruits from this branch of the text. Many lessons may be hence learned : I shall, therefore, from what I have said, deduce a few things for information and humiliation.

1st, For information. Hence we may learn the following six particulars.

1. What a forlorn condition the fall of Adam hath brought us unto ! We have run away from God, and will not be called back to him. Men are become so mad and distracted, as to choose death, and to be in love with sin, our mortal enemy ; "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness." None are greater enemies to sinners than themselves ; they are their own murderers, butchers, and executioners. They will be away to the devil, to their sins, to their lusts ; their own feet carry them to hell ; the Bible calls them dogs and swine, because they run as dogs to the vomit, and as swine to the puddle.

2. Hence see that it is no easy matter to convert a sinner. True converts had good reason to give God the glory of their conversation ; for, "He that hath wrought them to the self-same thing is God." No thanks to free-will. Let the Arminians try what hand they can make of it. Man had once free-will to good and evil

both, in a state of innocence ; but now, in his corrupt state, he hath no free-will but to evil. He hath a heart full of emnity against God, and against all the means of his own salvation.

3. Hence learn whom sinners have to blame for their ruin, and how vain their shifts and excuses for their sin are, since it is such a dangerous and destructive thing. Call no sin little, when the wages of the least sin is death and destruction. You may put what name you will upon sin, and call drunkenness, good fellowship; and pride, gallantry; and covetousness, good husbandry, or frugality; but so many sins, so many wounds, you give your poor soul. What pleasure or profit can be in that which will be bitterness in the end; that is honey in the mouth, and poison in the belly?

4. Hence see how inexcusable sinners are, when God arises to judgment. Since they wilfully destroy themselves, every mouth shall be stopped. God offers them salvation; they will not have it. God will be just when he judges; for sinners reap the wages of their own works; and the sinner's conscience will eternally torment him. If now they are their own murderers, is it a wonder they shall afterwards be their own tormentors? Though now they do their best to lull conscience asleep, yet it will waken upon them, and charge them for ever with their own ruin. This will be a never-dying worm in their breast. How much are they to be pitied, when, instead of pitying themselves, they are putting hands to themselves, by their own desperate wickedness.

5. See how little reason sinners have to be jocund and merry, in a course of sin. Do you see the wicked mockers of God and religion, how they are dancing towards the chambers of death? Alas! does self-murder deserve a song of triumph? Prov. xxvi. 18, 19. "As a mad man, who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceives his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?" It is a strange counsel that Solomon, after the sad experience he had of his own folly, gave to the young man, 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." Here is a comedy in the first part of the verse; but a tragedy in the last part of it. When iniquity hath played her part, vengeance leaps upon the stage; "Rejoice, O young man!" Why? this is a brave allowance. Well, but remember the judgment to come; *q. d.* take

thy pleasure, but consider thy doom ; sin on if thou darest. The comedy is short, but the tragedy is long. Put the *rejoice* and the *remember* together, and choose whether you will rejoice or remember ? Whether you will take your short heaven now, or your long hell hereafter ? Whether you will choose the pleasures of sin now, which cannot look death and judgment in the face without being damped ; or the pleasures of religion, with all the tribulation that may attend it, that can look upon death and judgment with joy ? Ah ! poor pleasures ! that cannot stand a serious thought of death and judgment. “ Remember, that for all these things ;” why ? the Judge sets down all upon the table of remembrance ; *item*, for your drunkenness ; *item*. for your whoredom ; *item*, for swearing ; *item*, for Sabbath-breaking ; *item*, for mocking, and a thousand things ; “ For all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” What a fair thread have you spun, that must answer for all ? who yet are not able to answer for one. Rejoice, *but* remember ; oh ! here is a sad *but*, that spoils all the sport. A guilty conscience cannot abide to hear of judgment ; because then the sinner hears his own condemnation.

Therefore, sinner, laugh at leisure, lest God laugh next at you and your destruction, according to Prov. i. 24, 25, 26. Some laugh at the word, which is yet fulfilling upon them ; for it says, “ There shall be in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, saying, Where is the promise of his coming ?” They esteem no more of his threatenings, denounced in the preached word, than of flashes of lightning in a theatre, or thunder in a stage-play. But death and an awful tribunal will be found no matter of sport ; and the more any fear the threatened wrath of God, the less shall they feel : “ To this man will I look, even to him that trembles at my word :” but the less you fear, the more shall you feel ; Psalm xc. 11, “ Who knoweth the power of thine anger ? even according to his fear, so is his wrath.”

6. Hence we may learn what it is that ruins famous churches ; “ O Israel ! thou hast destroyed thyself.” What brought desolation upon them, but their own sin ? And particularly, their wilful departure from God, and refusing help, his offered salvation. Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12, “ My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would none of me : So I gave them up unto their own hearts lust ; and they walked in their own counsels. Mat. xxiii. 37, 38, “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest

them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Behold, your house is left unto you desolate! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have done it? but ye would not: Behold, your house is left to you desolate!" It is left empty, empty of all its multitude, that use to come to solemn feasts, Lam. i. 4; empty of pure ordinances, though once the city of our solemnities; empty of powerful influences of my Spirit, and woe to you, when I depart; empty of diligent labourers and faithful preachers, having, instead of ministers, seducers; instead of pastors, imposters; instead of labourers, loiterers: "Behold, your house is left to you desolate:" it is left to you, being left of God, it is yielded up to you. Churches and cities left and deserted of God, are yielded up to the worst of sinners; and what will they do with holy things, or holy places, and holy ordinances, and holy Sabbaths, when left to them, and God himself is gone? How will they profane his Sabbaths, pollute his ordinances, destroy the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of his house, break down the carved work; and turn the house of prayer to a den of thieves? "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

2dly, This subject may be improven for conviction and humiliation. Ought we not this day to be humbled before God, and convinced, that this is the case with us. And that God is saying to us, as he did to Israel, O Scotland, thou hast destroyed thyself! O Edinburgh, thou hast destroyed thyself! O sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself! O! let ministers and people! take with the charge, "Thou hast destroyed thyself:" here, let us lament, and be humbled before God.

How many ways might we mention, hath Scotland been destroying itself, since our glorious Reformation from Popery! Particularly, by breaking our National Covenant with God: we give our hands solemnly to God, and then departed from him; and gave our hands to the men of the world, by public Resolutions, to join with them: yea, we dishonoured him by burning our Covenant with the King of kings, and giving sacrilegious homage to the kings of the earth, as if they had been supreme over all persons, and in all causes, civil or ecclesiastic; by defiling ourselves with many oaths, contrary to the oath of God, and accepting indulgences, founded upon that wicked supremacy, assumed over the house of

God : by involving ourselves in the guilt of their blood, that suffered for the testimony of Jesus, in witnessing for him as King of Zion, in opposition to such as robbed him of his crown ; by neglecting, at the merciful Revolution, the fairest opportunity of reviving a Covenanted Reformation, and rebuilding his house upon the right foundation : but, instead of that, we may say, " We and our forefathers have sinned ; we understood not his wonders, nor remembered the multitude of his mercies ; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea," Psalm cvi. 6, 7 ; at the very time and place of deliverance from tyranny, and arbitrary power.

But, in later times, how have we destroyed ourselves more and more ? I shall mention some sins that ruin and destroy churches and nations ; and we may consider, whether or not we have been and are destroying ourselves therewith.

1. Lukewarmness and indifference in religion is a desolating and destroying sin ; " Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth," Rev. iii. 15. This made God cast off that church of Laodicea ; and is not this the sin of this generation ? Interpendent, as it were, and hanging between heaven and hell, between God and Baal ; zeal for the kingdom, and cause, and honour of Christ, wearing gradually out.

2. Apostacy from God is a desolating and destroying sin to churches and nations : " Thou hast left thy first love : Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place," Rev. iii. 4, 5. The candlestick is the church ; the sin that removes the candlestick is apostacy. And are we not chargeable in this land with apostacy in judgment, leaving the ancient truth of God for new errors ; new gods, but old devils, Deut. xxxii. 17, 18 ; new lights, but damnable errors, and doctrines of devils ; many of these tolerated, untouched and uncensured by the judicatories of the church ;¹ chargeable with apostacy in affection, having left our first love, Jer. ii. 2. " The love of our espousals," when our land was married to God by solemn covenant ? With apostacy in practice and conversation, as many of Christ's disciples left him, when he was apprehended ; yea, many who seem to run well for a time, they sit up ; they begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh.

(1) Some of these errors, which our Author probably here alludes to, are descended upon in another volume.

3. "Barrenness under the means of grace, that God hath been some time giving a plentiful allowance of, is another sin that brings desolation and destruction; that is represented by the curse denounced upon the barren fig-tree, Luke xiii. 7, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground. The axe is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire," Matt. iii. 10. If under Zion's blessings we bring forth Sodom's blossoms, see what God will do; I will break up the hedge, and dress it no more, the clouds shall rain no more rain upon it," &c. Isa. v. 5, 6.

4. Union and communion with a wicked world is church-destroying and soul-destroying; for the companion of fools shall be stroyed. There are sinful unions and associations, whereby churches and nations may be destroyed; such was our incorporating union with England, upon terms opposite to our Covenant-union formerly with them: to which may be applied, Psal. cvi. 28, 35, 40, "They joined themselves unto Baalpeor; they were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works." Many a sad lesson have we learned from our neighbours, and many dismal consequences have followed this incorporation. I designedly enlarge not upon any of these things that are more fully represented in a published Testimony among your hands, adopted by you, that have invited us to this day's work here.¹

5. Pride of privileges and confidence in the church and temple, like the Jews that cried "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these," Jer. vii. 4. As if an established church could be their security; but, what is the name of the church, when the glory is departed? Is it not their confidence, that the Lord is with them, because they are a church, that will secure them: see Mic. iii. 10, 11, 12. "They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for rewards, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house, as the high places of the forest." Therefore saith the Lord, Zeph. iii. 11, "Thou shalt no more be haughty, because of my holy mountain."

(1) The direful consequences that have attended the union of the two kingdoms, are laid open in the Act and Testimony, p. (mihi) 46—49.

6. Gross and cursed hypocrisy is another destructive and desolating sin ; we see Matth. xxiii 13—29, no less than eight woes are denounced against hypocrites. Hypocrites mock God, and destroy themselves : they profess one thing, and are really something else ; like the blasphemy of those who said they were Jews, and were not, but were the synagogue of Satan, Rev. ii. 9. They professed to be a true church, and yet they were but a church malignant ; as if some should profess to be a true Presbyterian church, and yet be really Antichristian, or Erastian : “ O Israel ! thou hast destroyed thyself,” &c.

7. Stubbornness and incorrigibleness is a desolating and destructive sin : when neither word nor rod prevail with a people to leave their sin, and return to him, this brings temple-desolation, and presages still heavier and heavier judgment : “ If, by these things, ye will not be reformed, then will I punish you seven times more ; and yet seven times more ; and I will walk contrary to you,” Lev. xxvi. 23. I have so and so punished you, and ye have not returned unto me ; “ Therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel !” Amos vi. 12.

8. Covenant-breaking with God is another desolating and destructive sin : in that same chap. Lev. xxvi. 25. “ I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant.” Such an avenging sword is yet hanging over Britain and Ireland, for breaking, burning, and burying out of mind the covenant made between God and our fathers ; though many say, What have we to do with what our fathers did this time hundred year ? Well, but see what God hath a mind to do, Deut. xxix. 24, 25, after an account of God’s covenant with them, 2 Kings xvii. 13, 14, 15, 18.

9. Ignorance of God and profanity of life, which go together, is a desolating and destructive sin, Hos. iv. 1, 2, 3, 6. “ Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel ; 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 touches blood.” See what a catalogue of profane courses accompanies ignorance of God : and what follows, “ Therefore shall the land mourn ; and my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Here we see, that profane people, though they should be never such great wits, and have never so much head-knowledge, yet they are ignorant of God, and their ignorance destroys them.

10. Another desolating, church-ruining, and destroying sin is, the rejecting of Christ from being their Lord and King. Christ will be a sole King, and will have none upon his throne but himself; and when a church rejects him as a King, then he rejects them as a church. This was fearfully exemplified in the Jews, where they said, "We will not have this man to reign over us; and we have no king but Cæsar:" thus, out of their own mouth, they verified Jacob's old prophecy, "That the sceptre was departed from Judah, and the law-giver from between his feet; and therefore Shiloh was now come, the true Messiah was come;" and him they rejected from being king, and therefore he rejected them from being his church. What for a body is that which wants the head? and what for a church is that, of which the apostle speaks, Col. ii. 19. "Not holding the head?" Christ is the head of the body, the church; but will Christ hold that church as his body, that does not hold him, nor hold only as a church of him as their head and king.

Here it will be expected, I should speak of some late practices by the generality of ministers in Scotland, that were, whatever the profession to the contrary be, a practical disclaiming of the sole headship and supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ over his church. I shall only say, That the general course of falling in with this Erastian act¹ is such an affront done to our glorious King Jesus, that though judicatories should conspire to bury it in the grave of oblivion, and cover it with the fair mask of mutual forbearance and brotherly love; yet, I doubt not, but as it will be remarked to posterity, as a crowning piece to Scotland's defection at this day, so the Lord will resent it among other injuries done to him, when he comes to plead his controversy.

The judicatories have been of late refusing to adopt a testimony

(1) Our author here undoubtedly alludes to the affair of one John Porteous, captain of the town-guard of Edinburgh, who had been legally condemned to die, for several murders committed by him on the populace, at a public execution, where he had the command, but who afterwards, by the influence of some great men, obtained a reprieve; which so incensed the people, that they rose up notwithstanding, and executed him at Edinburgh, September 7th, 1736. The king and parliament resented this affront very highly; and accordingly framed a most strange and extraordinary act to discover the actors and ordered all the ministers of Scotland to read the said act, in the time of divine service in their churches, every first Sabbath of the month, for a whole year, under certain penalties. Though this was a gross and public profanation of the Lord's day, a prostituting the pulpit, and a practically giving up with the alone headship and sovereignty of Christ over his church! yet the most part of the ministers read this act, to the no small grief of many of the godly.

offered to them, and now published for God and his truth; and therefore, little wonder, that God hath left them to fall in with these open indignities done to the crown-royal of King Jesus. And this hath contributed to confirm some in the course they were led to of testifying, in a way of secession from them, who had, so long time, and by so many acts, been suppressing the truths of God, and oppressing the people of God, obtruding HIRELINGS upon reclaiming congregations, and so scattering the flock of Christ, as sheep without a shepherd; and assuming a power and authority, contrary to the warrant of the word. If these and the like are the circumstances of the judicatories, none need think strange that some have taken the method of testifying against the defections of the day that now they are upon: nor ought any to reckon on it a schismatical course. Though none can justify themselves from being guilty of dishonour done to their glorious Lord, yet let them bear most the charge of schism and division, that divide most from the head Jesus Christ, and from the truth as it is in him. Let none think these are the dividers, who are but the smallest number, taking a different course from the rest. When the whole church turned Arian, departed from Christ the head except Athanasius, I have no difficulty in saying they were all Schismatics but himself. Let the true nature of schism be considered, and we may then either defy reproach; or, as long as the Lord is with us, we may easily bear it. We are not good soldiers of Christ, nor followers of him, if we cannot endure a hiss for Christ, who endured the cross, and despised the shame for us; and now is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, as the glorious King of Zion.

These are some of the sins that destroy nations and churches; I might mention many more: but if we reflect upon these, and the deep share we have in them all; may we not receive the conviction offered here, "O Israel!" O Scotland! "thou hast destroyed thyself?" Magistrates, ministers, and people, have destroyed themselves: such a charge you read of in many places of scripture, such as Micah iii. 1, 2, 5, 6, Ezek. xxii. 25—31.

But since, I suppose, the most here present are from the adjacent city, we have occasion also to say more particularly, O Edinburgh! "thou hast destroyed thyself;" are not all the desolating and destroying sins, that I have mentioned already, to be found in THEE, by which thou hast been and art destroying thyself? And to these may be added some other sins, which I judge they are chargeable with, and ought to be humbled for this day.

Is not pride, idleness, and fulness of bread, that was the iniquity of her sister Sodom, also to be found with her? Ezek. xvi. 49. Cities are destroyed by luxury and wantonness, when God is calling for mourning, Isa. xxii. 12, 13, 14. Enquire before the Lord, if this be not the sin of the city? Cities are destroyed by their oppression of the poor, their racking of rents, their injustice, and fraudulent dealings between man and man; "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see if ye can find a man, if there be any, that executes judgment, that seeks the truth," Jer. v. 1. Intimating how hard it was to find a truly honest and righteous man, and how exposed the city therefore was unto wrath. Cities are destroyed by neglect of family worship, in reading the word of God, singing the praises of God, and calling on the name of God. If this neglect be the sin of the city, it will be the ruin of it; "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and the families that call not on thy name," Jer. x. 25. Cities are destroyed by the sin of slighting the warnings of the word, despising faithful messengers they have had among them, that gave them fair and faithful warning. Edinburgh hath been privileged with some such from time to time; but the more plain and faithful some of them have been, perhaps, they were the more despised and disparaged. Jonah preached but one sermon to Nineveh, and they repented; but many a faithful sermon hath Edinburgh heard, and never repented; and, perhaps, they who have dealt with them most faithfully, have been treated most contemptuously, even as Paul was called a pestilent fellow. The town of Northampton, in New England, hath not had a long tack of the gospel; yet, as we hear, the gospel there hath done wonders, through the outpouring of the spirit of God with it. But, what shall we say? We have had the Bible in our own language, and the doctrines of the gospel dispensed for near two hundred years; but with how little effect? How gross our ignorance! how depraved our manners! how little of Christianity in a Christian nation. And what if God be now saying, "My spirit shall no more strive with man;" it shall no more strive with Edinburgh; it shall no more strive with Scotland? "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof."

Again, cities have been destroyed by murder and bloodshed; for, "Blood hath a strong cry to heaven for vengeance," Gen. iv. 10. No doubt, the city hath reason to mourn on this account, for much bloodshed committed therein, and never mourned over; I

mean, not only the blood of infants, murdered in secret; nor do I mean only the blood of innocents, not long ago suddenly slaughtered at the execution of Wilson,¹ for which the Lord may plead a controversy with the city, if it had not been duly purged by public justice; far less need I here proclaim, what hath been too much proclaimed already to the prostituting of the pulpit, and the profaning of many a Sabbath day; but I mean especially, the yet unpurged blood of martyrs shed at the cross, and in the Grass-market, in the late times of tyranny. This blood hath never yet been duly mourned over by public humiliation on that account; and therefore it cries against the city for vengeance, and against the land. And, what if God hath ordered, that the pulpits of Scotland should ring so many days with the noise of the blood of a murderer, as a righteous judgment upon them, for neglecting to mention and mourn over the guilt of the blood of the martyrs, that was shed about the same place. But,

Again, cities have destroyed themselves with monstrous whoredom and adultery, of which the Lord says, Jer. v. 8, 9, "Shall I not visit for these things? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" If people, at this day, are declaring their sin as Sodom; if stews are tolerated, and works of darkness covered; and if church-censures and discipline be bought away with money,² how provoking to God must it be, and how like the popish practice in their book of rates? So much for whoredom, so much for adultery, so much for murder; and declaring, that no such acts of favour can be granted to the poor; enough to invite men to sin, that know the price before-hand, at which they may be absolved, or free of all church censure; if any thing like this hath, at any time, taken place among us, "Shall not the Lord visit for these things?"

Again, cities have destroyed themselves by Sabbath-breaking; as you may see, Amos viii. 5, 7, 8. "When shall the Sabbath be gone, say they, that we may sell corn, and set out wheat, &c. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwells therein?" These that take their own pleasures on the Lord's day, kindle his displeasure against themselves, who ordered the man that gathered sticks to be stoned to death.

(1) The person's name who was executed between Leith and Edinburgh, where Captain Porteous ordered the soldiers to fire upon the populace, and killed several of them.

(2) It was alleged that these heinous evils and corrupt practices were prevailing too much in the metropolis.

In a word, cities have destroyed themselves by their abuse of plenty, as here in the context; Hos. xiii. 6, 7. "They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore they have forgotten me: therefore I will be to them as a lion," &c., like Jeshurum, that waxed fat and kicked. When the body was stuffed up with plenty, the soul was puffed up with pride, forgetting God, and abusing his goodness to lasciviousness and wantonness, consuming their time and substance with vain shows, idle assemblies, plays, balls, and I know not what a multitude of mad amusements to gratify the flesh; till their plenty be turned into poverty, their wantonness into woe and misery, and their time swallowed up in eternity. "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself."

Again, let every one take home the charge; O sinner! "thou hast destroyed thyself;" as by these sins I have mentioned, so particularly by thy wilful rejecting of Christ, and unwillingness to come to him, which may be proven against you, partly by your unwillingness to submit to the outward means, and partly by your unwillingness to be wrought upon by them, as I have showed already: so strong is your natural enmity, that if left to yourself, you are undone.

Again, let the godly, themselves, take home the charge, and be humbled before God; because, as you are as great self-murderers by nature as the rest of the world, so even, since grace took a dealing with you, such are the remains of that self-disposition, in innumerable instances, that it may be said, even to you that are the true Israel of God, "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself." And though God had no other controversy against Scotland, than even the iniquities of sons and daughters, it is enough; their unwatchfulness, their untenderness, their neglect of a gospel conversation, neglect of relative duties; their detestable neutrality in the matters of God; their grievous insensibility of the dishonours done to Christ; their little love to, and sympathy with one another; their bitterness and prejudice against one another; their self-seeking and self-pleasing and preparing their own houses, building to themselves ceiled houses, while the house of the Lord lies waste; their carnal ease, when they should be fighting the Lord's battles, and following him without the camp. When David would persuade Uriah, 2 Sam. xi. 11, to go to his house, and enjoy the lawful pleasures of his bed, he refused it, saying, "The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents, and my lord Joab, and the servants of my Lord, encamp in the

open fields, and shall I go home, and eat and drink, and lie in my bed of ease and pleasure? As the Lord liveth, I will do no such thing." This looked like a man truly concerned for the ark and Israel of God. Many of us do not so much as forbear our unlawful pleasures of pride and wantonness. Though the ark of the Lord abide in tents, and though the church be going to the wilderness, or encamp in the open fields, yet many remain loitering in their beds of ease, and pleasure, and sloth; but God loves not jollity when he calls for mourning; nor sloth when he calls for watching, and appearing for him.

Again, the godly sometimes have destroyed themselves by their divisions among themselves. May I not say with the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 18, "I hear that there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it;" and we know some evident effects of it. But, O my dear friends, what a reproach is it to your Christian profession, to hear of praying societies divided against praying societies? It was observed by enemies themselves, to the commendation of the primitive Christians, "Behold! how they love one another." Alas! how reproachful is it, if the contrary be said of you, Behold, how they hate one another; how they bite and devour one another. What a miserable thing is it, if in matters that either might be accommodated or borne with, Christians should destroy themselves, and destroy one another? How is our God thus dishonoured, the gospel discredited, religion wounded, and the hands of witnesses for reformation weakened!

In a word, the children of God themselves have, at this day, destroyed themselves, by leaving their first love, by their carnality in their work and walk, and their evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: by these things they destroy themselves, destroy their peace, destroy their comfort, destroy their assurance, destroy their freedom in coming to God, destroy their name and credit. They destroy their beauty and liveliness, and provoke God to write bitter things against them. Yea, the children of grace may, by their uncircumspect walk, provoke their heavenly Father to break them with breach upon breach, and to bring heavy strokes, both temporal and spiritual, upon them, Deut. xxviii. 58, 59. Let none of God's people therefore say, such and such instruments have destroyed us, ministers and judicatories have destroyed our church-privileges and liberties, and robbed us of our spiritual rights. Whatever truth be in this, that way of speaking looks not like due humiliation before

God, for these are but the fruits of God's anger against us for our sin: "Behold thou art wroth, for we have sinned," Isa. lxiv. 5. It is an angry God that leaves a generation of sinners that are self-destroyers, to be also destroyers of one another; and therefore let us blame ourselves, because we have sinned, and brought on all this destruction upon ourselves. It would look like kindly humiliation, if every one were saying, I am the Achan that hath troubled the camp of Israel; I am the Jonah that hath raised this storm of wrath; I am the sinner that hath provoked God to leave ministers and judicatories to themselves; and to leave his house desolate; it is I that have provoked him to send the loose, lax, and corrupt ministry here and there through the land: it is I that have provoked him to leave some good ministers to make sad defection; for it is possible Israel's sins may provoke God to leave a minister, as good as Aaron the saint of God, to set up a golden calf in Horeb. Let every one of us not only bear the charge, "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself;" but let us take with the charge, saying, I am the person that hath destroyed myself, and destroyed the generation, and my sin may justly provoke him to send more heavy destruction yet, and terrible desolation; for, if every sin deserves God's heavy wrath, what may my aggravated sins provoke him to? We never lie open to mercy, or to gospel-grace, so much as when we take with the law-charge, and answer to the voice of God, "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself;" Truth, Lord, I have destroyed myself. And if brought to this, then hear and consider

The second branch of the text, "In me is thy help:" importing, that our relief and deliverance is only owing to God, and his sovereign mercy; "To the Lord our God belongs mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him," Dan. ix. 9. And since all have destroyed themselves, none can be saved but in a way of free mercy, as God says to Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 19, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy." He might justly suffer all to go on in ruining themselves eternally; but as he proclaims mercy in the gospel, so to whomsoever he extends mercy, he must do it by an act of sovereign grace, delivering them out of their own murdering and destroying hands.

Now, Sirs, here is another root of true repentance and humiliation; the former is a true sense of sin, as a destroyer; the next is an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, as a Saviour, and

the only help? "In me is thy help." The root of true religion lies in a right view of ourselves, and our own sinfulness; and, next, in a right view of God and his grace: for clearing this matter, I offer a few remarks.

First, I remark, from the scope of God's work here, "That he takes occasion from our sins, to set out his grace." Man is unmerciful to himself; but God is merciful to him. So cruel is man, that he destroys himself; so kind is God, that he offers his help, and hath laid help upon One that is mighty, upon his eternal Son, whom he hath given to be the Helper and Saviour, to shew his mercy. And by this instance, we may see that God will do a thousand times more to shew his mercy towards sinners, than to shew his wrath against them. He hath set forth Christ to be the propitiation, to make his shewing mercy consistent with the honour of justice, Rom. iii. 25, 26. It is true, some may think, how comes it then, that there are more damned than saved: for Christ says, "Strait is the gate of life, and few there are that find it:" but here, concerning the paucity of the saved, it is to be considered, that, as it is not improbable there shall be more glory among the few that shall be saved, than wrath among the many that shall be damned; so there is more mercy shewed, in saving a few, when he might have condemned all, than there is justice shewed, in condemning many when he might have damned all.

Again, mercy is absolute, having respect to nothing in us; but justice hath a respect to the demerit of sin, the wages whereof is death. God, in shewing mercy, is himself at the whole cost: but we make way for his justice, by provoking him. Damnation is an act of justice, that our sin obliges him to do; but salvation is an act of mercy, which he is under no obligation to pass: yet, notwithstanding all our sinfulness, he proclaims his willingness and readiness to save and help. Hence, I think, it is remarkable, that, after the greatest sins that ever were committed, there have been instantly the greatest displays of mercy: thus the first sin, by which all mankind were ruined, was soon followed with the promise, wherein mercy was proclaimed. Here was the greatest sin, the root of all sin among men; and yet the greatest display of mercy.

Again, that sin of the Jews, in crucifying the Lord of glory, will be owned to be the greatest sin; and yet it is followed with the greatest display and proclamation of mercy: therefore Christ enjoins his disciples to go and preach repentance and remission of sins

in his name, to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 27. Why, begin at Jerusalem, who had just now imbrued their hands in his blood! Why, they have most need of mercy; and the offer of it to them will manifest the sovereignty of it. O who would not then put in for a share of mercy in the blood of Christ? Why should we refuse our own mercy? Here is water, what hinders but we are baptized? Here is blood, what hinders but we are washed? Nothing hinders but our own wilful refusing, and continuing to destroy ourselves. Men will not welcome this offer of grace; they continue obstinate till God create a will, and make them willing in the day of his power: and hence all that are helped, and saved out of their own murdering hands, must be saved by an act of sovereign mercy; "In me is thy help." Again,

The second remark I offer is, "That the nature of God requires, that in helping and saving of sinners, his mercy be free and sovereign:" because he is a sovereign God, infinitely happy in himself without us; and it is at his option to manifest mercy or not, to save or not, as much as it was his option to make men or not. He does what he will among the armies of heaven. Hence he exercises sovereignty in the cause why he shews mercy, even because he will shew mercy; sovereignty in the person whom he saves; in the time when he saves them, in the instruments by whom, and the means by which he saves them. I might show, at large, how he does all this according to his own will and pleasure; "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth," James i. 18.

Thirdly, I remark, "That the nature of man requires this, that if he be saved, it be by the free, sovereign grace and mercy of God." What is man? He is a despicable creature—a worm; "Fear not, worm Jacob." If Israel, that were such a vast multitude, like the stars of heaven, the numerous offspring of Jacob, be but a worm in God's sight, then what is one man? Yea, before God all the nations of the earth are as nothing, yea, less than nothing and vanity, Isa. xlv. 15. What a little piece of that nothing are we, that God should pity us? Man is a deformed creature, overrun with the loathsome leprosy of sin; if there be any hope for such, it must be of the free grace of God. Yea, man is a rebellious creature, as I have formerly showed; he is neither able nor willing to help himself, but active and wilful in destroying himself. He despises and opposes all the loving arguments and invitations to be reconciled with God, 2 Cor. v. 20. And because we cannot win at God him-

self, we crucify the Son of God, as the Jews did, when he came upon the errand of salvation. Here is the temper of the sons of Adam, till grace subdue their enmity. Is there any thing here to move God to save? O! if free grace did not move itself, we would persist forever in our enmity. The salvation that he brings to us, is neither deserved nor desired by us. Deserved it cannot be, where there is such a desert of hell and wrath; desired it is not, unless God create that desire of salvation, through Christ, in these who by nature wilfully reject him. Hence,

Fourthly, I remark, "That the nature of the help that he gives and offers, is such, as declares it to be only in himself that our help lies." I shall instance in the powerful help we need, both as to justifying and sanctifying mercy. There are two great attributes of sin, guilt, and power.

1. Who can help the guilt of sin, but a God of infinite power? It requires greater power to pardon sin, than to work a miracle upon the body: "Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know, that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," &c., Mat. ix. 5. The Pharisees made the objection, "Who can forgive sins but God?" Christ takes their own argument, and uses it against themselves, shewing that he was God, because he could forgive sin. Why, can God only help from the guilt of sin? Why, the guilt of sin hath the whole strength of God's law to back it, and take part with it; and God's law hath the whole strength of infinite justice to maintain it; therefore there must be an infinite power to take away the guilt of sin, even that same power that can satisfy infinite justice.

2. Who can help away with the power of sin? Sin is not only an enemy but enmity; and to kill enmity and resistance against God, is more than to create a world out of nothing, where there is nothing to resist. To take away sin, and bring in grace, that are such direct opposites, requires infinite power to effect it. There is in the understanding an incapacity to understand the things of God; for, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him." Hence the weapons of the gospel warfare are powerful, through God, to pull down strongholds, and cast down vain imaginations, that exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ, and raise millions of objections against him; and when God helps the soul, he has all these moun-

tains to level. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Hence also the same power that raised Christ from the dead, is requisite for raising a sinner out of the grave of sin. Let men talk of the power of nature as they will; let me see any of them that can raise themselves, Ephes. i. 19, 20. The change that God works when he takes away the power of sin, is from darkness to light, from death to life; and, as it were, from being beasts to be men; "The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons, and the owls," Isa. xliii. 20. These beasts are men, who elsewhere are compared to the wild ass's colt: "This people have I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my praise," verse 21. To make a sinner a saint, is as much as to make a beast a saint, or to turn a stone to a child of Abraham. Therefore in God only is our help.

And now to apply this branch of the text. Hence,

1. We may see where the help of a ruined church lies. Scotland hath destroyed herself, but where lies her help? "Vain is the help of man;" vain is the help of princes and parliaments; vain is the help of church-judicatories. The poor scattered flocks of Scotland, oppressed with the violent obtrusion of hirelings upon them, have been crying to judicatories for help, but in vain; their tender mercies have been cruelties. Yea, vain is the help of all creatures, even of these to whom some are now looking for help; I mean, a handful of ministers associated together for the relief of the poor oppressed people of God, and for testifying against the corruptions and defections of the day; vain, I say, is their help, unless the Lord put to his hand; for, if the Lord do not build the city, the builders build in vain." It is the man whose name is the branch, that must build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory; your help lies in the name of the Lord, that made heaven and earth. And hence see,

2. That it is the Lord only that can raise up helpers and Saviours in Mount Zion; and therefore to him alone ought we to look, that he would put a blessing on any means and endeavours towards Reformation. Our help being only in the Lord does not exclude the use of means, but obliges us thereunto, with an eye to his helping hand. And surely, the Lord is calling us to some other thing, than the present judicatories are doing. Is it not duty at this day to go out, and do some things that the judicatories in Scotland will not do? Is it not duty before God, at this day, to assert and vindicate openly, these truths of God that judicatories have

been burying ; and to attempt, in his strength, to lift up that crown of our royal King Jesus, which is profaned on the ground ? Is it not duty from the word of God to confess that we and our fathers have sinned, and to discover and lay open these sins and defections for which the wrath of God is coming on such a generation as we are ; and which yet the judicatories will not do, but rather cover and hide, declaring, that they will not return to God this way, by confessing all their particular defections ? And because judicatories will not do it, shall it be done by none ? When God says, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their iniquity, and seek my face ;" ought we not to go away when God goes away, and leave them whom God leaves ? At least till God's term-day "Till they acknowledge their sin, and seek his face ;" and, at least, so far as to take a contrary course, namely, of fasting, humiliation, and solemn acknowledgment of sin. When judicatories are saying they will not appoint any fasts ; they see no occasion for it : is it not duty from the word of God to feed Christ's lambs, which the judicatories are starving ; or to gather his flock, whom they are scattering and oppressing, by their violent measures, in obtruding hirelings upon them, and opening the door to grievous wolves to enter in ? And is it not duty, not only to pray the lord of the harvest to send forth faithful labourers to it, but also to join hand with these that are willing to be active in this matter ; and to give help in this work, wherein the glory of God, and the good of souls is much concerned ? Is it not your duty to testify for Christ, as solemnly and judicially as providence gives occasion, when judicatories are unwilling to bear witness for Christ ; yea, and have thrown faithful testimonies, offered to them over the bar ; besides their refusing instructions, petitions, and a multitude of remonstrances these many years bygone ? Is it not duty from the word of God, for these that bear a good-will to the cause of Christ, be they never so few in number, to do their duty, and to obey the command of their highest Lord, when the greater part are combining to disobey him ? Is it not evident, as with a sun-beam, that it is warrantable from the word, from the lesser part of the church, were it but two or three to whom the promise is made (yea, were it but two or three in the whole catholic church) to do the work of God which the rest will not do, be the consequence what it will ; and let men call their practice separation, or what they please ?

3. Here is a door of hope cast open for poor, perishing, self-

destroying sinners, even for the greatest of sinners, for publicans, and persecuting Sauls, for Manassehs, and Mary Magdalenes. God can make use of knotty timber for building his temple: he can take brands out of the fire, that have the smoke of hell about them: "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." Here is no room left either for despair or presumption.

(1.) Beware of presumption. Some presumptuously may say, If our help lies only in God, then we need do nothing in the use of means; as if one should say, the wind only can make the ship to sail, therefore we need not lie at the shore and wait for it. Say not, If my works cannot save me, I may go on in my sin; for though good works cannot save you, yet your ill works can damn you: though you cannot save yourself, yet you can destroy yourself more and more: therefore beware of presumption. And likewise,

(2.) Beware of despair, when such a door of hope is cast open. Though you be nothing but dead and dry bones, yet God can make these dry bones live. Yea, not only, notwithstanding your sin, can God save and help you, but because of the greatness of your sin, he can shew the greatness of his grace. Hence said the Psalmist, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." God waits to be gracious, Isa. xxx. 18. He can take occasion from your sinfulness, to magnify his mercy, saying, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." He can make your sin, though it be a good reason why he should damn you, yet he can make it a reason why he will save you, and pity you, Hosea ii. 13, 14. Therefore,

O sinner! that hast destroyed thyself, come and accept of the offer of mercy, the offer of God's help; for in him only lies your help. Accept of the offer of Christ the mighty helper, on whom God hath laid all your help; all discouragements are out of the way; all hinderances on God's part are actually removed; the law is fulfilled, justice satisfied, everlasting righteousness is brought in: all bars and impediments on your part are virtually removed, in the purchase made by the blood of Christ. It will aggravate your misery for ever, if you refuse mercy; yea, this is a treating God worse than the worst of men will treat the vilest of men: they will do good to those that do good to them: but will you spit in the face of mercy, and do ill to God, because he does good to you?

God commands you to come to his Christ, and accept of his mercy, and take his help; "This is his commandment that ye believe in his Son," and his command is powerful to effect it; faith

comes by hearing his word, his command. Thus it shall be to some whom he hath a mind to help. Nor does he deceive others, by commanding and calling of them, because thus he touches their conscience, and discovers their enmity, while by the word they are convinced, and yet not conquered ; which shews the more, that their ruin is of themselves.

O sinner ! “ thou hast destroyed thyself ! ” yea, thy unbelief is the sin that would destroy God, if it could. It destroys his truth, and makes him a liar ; it destroys his mercy, and says he is cruel, notwithstanding all his offers of grace. By unbelief refusing God’s help, you, in an eminent manner, darken and oppose the glory of God ; his glorious perfections, that shine only most bright in the face of Jesus, on whom your help is laid ; and oppose his highest design for glorifying these perfections, Ephes. i. 11—14. Your unbelief is direct murder, by which, more than all your other sins, you destroy yourself. Why, it is a sin that rejects the only remedy. There is no balm in Gilead, no physician there, but Christ, Acts iv. 12, and him you undervalue. It is a sin that binds all your other sins upon you. Though all sin be damning and killing, yet no sin shall damn you, if you add not thereto the sin of neglecting and refusing God’s help and mercy, that he offers in Christ. Why are not these condemned that believe in Christ ? Is it because they have no sin to condemn them ? No ; but because believing in Jesus, all their sins are done away ; but “ He that believeth not is condemned already.” Why ? Is it because he is a sinner in general ? Or because his sins are many and great ? No ; but because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. Hence see, that the immediate cause of damnation is not this or that sin, but the refusing of Christ by unbelief. The man refuses a whole eternity of glorious and unspeakable happiness, and chooses rather sin and death. Unbelief leaves you without all excuse, or the least shadow and colour of excuse, John xv. 22. You must be speechless in the great day. You cannot say pardon and salvation was not offered to you ; you cannot say the offer was not full and free ; you cannot say you had to do with a hard master. And as it will leave you without excuse, so without appeal. Here we may say, as in 1 Sam. ii. 25, “ If a man sin against another, the judge shall judge him ; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him ? If a man sin against the law, he may appeal to the gospel, and the grace of God in Christ ; but if he reject Christ, and

the grace of the gospel, where then shall he appeal? Truly there is no relief to be found for him. A sinner may appeal from justice to the mercy-seat; but if he slight the offer of mercy, he hath nothing to appeal to that may administer relief to him. Nay, thus he, in effect, pulls down the mercy-seat.

Let me exhort you, then, to come to Jesus for help and salvation. O self-destroying sinner, that you may not be eternally destroyed. Is it like a reasonable soul, to live in that miserable case, to stand tottering upon the brink of Tophet, and dancing merrily away to everlasting destruction? To be living at the mercy of death, or of every disease tending thereto, which, if it will but fall upon thee, will send thee into the burning pit? Suppose you saw a condemned wretch, hanging over Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, by nothing but a twined thread, ready to break every moment, would not your heart tremble for such an one? Why, but thou art the man, infinitely more miserable, man or woman: this is thy very case, thou wast never yet drawn to Christ, by all the preaching ever you heard. What if the thread of thy life should break? You know not but it may, the next night, the next day, the next moment; and where wouldst thou then be? Whither wouldst thou then drop? Behold, upon the crack of this thread of life, thou fallest into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, where thou shalt live, and die, and roar for ever, even as long as God hath a being, if thou diest in thy present case; and yet does not thy soul tremble nor begin to smite upon thy breast, and bethink thyself, what need thou hast of this Jesus that is offered to thee, and who requires thee to come to him? Oh! what is thy heart made of, that thou hast not only lost all regard to God, but all love and pity to thyself? Alas! if you knew your misery, you would cry out for Christ more than ever a wounded man did for a chirurgeon, or a drowning man for a boat. If there be any point of wisdom or reason in the world, it is that you return to God, and come into Jesus, for life and salvation from sin and wrath. If there can be any thing that can be called madness and folly in the world, anything brutish, absurd, and unreasonable, it is that you live in your sin, and remain in a Christless state.

But if harsh arguments will not do, and indeed nothing but a day of power will do the business; tell me, is there no power and virtue in a day of grace and mercy, or an offer of grace? I tell you, therefore, you are welcome to come to Jesus, whatever you have done, or whatever you have been hitherto: "Whosoever will,

let him come; and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." The day of wrath is not yet come; the day of grace is yet continued, notwithstanding all the offers of grace you have slighted heretofore. Sometimes God makes them very gracious who have been very graceless, such as Paul, Manasseh, and Mary Magdalene; whatever, therefore, be your sinfulness and filthiness, there is a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. Though you had crucified the Son of God, here is his blood that cleanses from all sin. Though your heart be made of flint and stone, yet God can of stones raise up children to Abraham.

O young sinner come to Jesus. He welcomes young seekers of him, saying, "They that seek me early shall find me." Old sinner, that hast long been dead in sin, and rotting in the grave of corruption, and buried among the stuff of this world, Oh! wilt thou arise and come out of thy grave? The Master calls upon you. Come, come, and seek to him, that he may glorify his name in your salvation. What think you is his reason in calling such wretched sinners as you are? It is just upon a design of glorifying himself in your salvation. It is, 1, To magnify the grace of God, that where sin hath abounded, grace may much more abound. 2. It is to magnify the blood of Christ, that can wash away such scarlet-coloured sins as yours are. 3. It is to magnify the power of the Spirit, that can convert and draw to himself such a stubborn sinner as thou art. O then wilt thou fall in with this design of God, praying, that God may glorify himself; that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, may be magnified in your salvation. Alas! wretched sinner! wilt thou neither let God have the honour he craves, nor your soul the happiness it wants?

Let none object, saying, O this help is far off, when God says, It is in me; "In me is thy help." God speaks here in the present time; and God is a present help. Christ the helper is not at a distance. He is IMMANUEL, God with us; and you need not say, "Who will ascend to bring him down? and descend to bring him up?" He is near, in this word, and you are called to take him at his word, and to take his help offered in this word: "In me is thy help."

Neither let any object, saying, "O this help is not for me; may be it is not designed for me: perhaps he hath not a mind to give help to me. Why, man, woman, how shall you know God's mind

but by his word? And will you contradict the truth of God flatly, saying, It is not for me, when he is saying, "In me is thy help;" thy help, man, thy help, woman, thy help, O self-destroying sinner? Do not, through unbelief, make God a liar, saying, In him is not my help, when he is saying so expressly, "In me is thy help." How will this aggravate thy condemnation, if thou neglectest this great salvation, when to thee is the word of this salvation sent. To thee is this help sent: O poor soul, put it not away from thee.

Let none say, How is it possible that I can be saved? when you see it is God that undertakes this work, saying, "In me is thy help. Look to me and be ye saved: for I am God, and there is none else." Is there any thing too hard for me to do? And let none say, Alas! I am without strength, I can do nothing but ruin myself. It is true; and therefore God says not in *thee* is thy help, but in *me*. Never look for a ground of faith or hope in thyself; for thou shalt never find it any where, but in me: in my name, in my blood, in my promise, in my power, in my free mercy and sovereign grace, reigning through justice-satisfying righteousness to eternal life; "In me is thy help." Come and take what belongs to thee through my sovereign grant in this word of grace; and take it by believing upon my divine testimony, and believing with particular application to thyself, that "In me is thy help:" he that thus believeth shall be saved.

May the Lord himself persuade you to come to him for help, who says, "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."

SERMON LV. LVI.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF ALL SAVING BLESSINGS.¹

"From this day will I bless thee."—HAG. ii. 9.

As in the beginning of the preceding chapter, we have the Lord reproving this people for their slothfulness in building the temple,

(1) This subject was discoursed in two sermons, viz. on the Sabbath evening and Monday, immediately after the celebration of the Lord's supper at Kinclaven, June, 1738.

which provoked God to contend with them; and exhorting them to reform and prosecute that good work; so, in the close of it, we find the people applying themselves to that work, and the Lord himself animating them therein. Now, in this chapter, the prophet, is, in the Lord's name, giving them further encouragement to this work. And,

1. He encourages them, by assuring the builders that the glory of this house they were now building should exceed that of Solomon's temple; though not in outward glory, yet in spiritual splendour, particularly by the coming of Christ, the desire of all nations, who would fill it with glory, by his coming to it, from ver. 1—9.

2. He encourages them, by assuring them, that though their sin, in delaying to build the temple, had hindered their prosperity, yet now that this work was happily begun, he would bless and prosper them. God had smitten them with blasting and mildew, ver. 17; and they had been a long time incorrigible, and might easily observe, that, as long as they continued in neglect of temple-work, all their other affairs went backward; but when they began to lay the foundation, or to raise the structure upon the foundations that had been laid sometime before, they might observe from that time, yea, from that very day, a remarkable turn for the better, to all their affairs: "Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you," ver. 19. Nothing appears, might he say, to promise a good harvest and vintage next year; nature doth not promise it: but now that the foundation of the temple is laid, and you apply yourselves in earnest to this temple work, the God of nature promises it, and that with a blessing. "From this day will I bless you."

In which words you may observe these five things. 1. A great privilege under the name of blessing. 2. The author of this blessing in the pronoun *I*. 3. The objects thereof in the pronoun *you*. 4. The certainty of it, "I WILL bless you." 5. The term of its commencement, "From THIS DAY will I bless you."

1. The great privilege here mentioned under the name of blessing. What blessing is here spoken of? It is not, indeed, temporal prosperity and outward plenty only; but when these come with a blessing, and are promised as such, they come in among the number of spiritual blessings, and include also spiritual prosperity, as well as temporal. A man may have outward prosperity, and yet

he cursed in his basket and store ; but when he hath it with God's favour, so as to be blessed in his basket and in his store, then it comes in among the rank of saving blessings. The privilege then here is such as includes all saving blessings.

2. The author of this blessing is God : " I will bless you." The blessing here spoken of, is God's blessing ; than which nothing can be desired more to make a creature happy ; for, " The blessing of the Lord maketh rich ;" and those whom he blesses, are blessed indeed. God's blessing is much worth. Men may bless, and yet at the same time God's curse may make them miserable : but when God blesses, men's curses can do them no harm ; for, God's blessing takes away the curse both from crosses and comforts.

3. The certainty of it, " I will bless you." It is fixed by God's unchangeable will ; and his will is determined in his unchangeable word of promise : when God says, " I WILL bless you," it is impossible but the blessing must take place ; and when God's *I will* is heard by faith, it brings in full assurance, and strong consolation. As when God says, " I *will* take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh : I *will* put my Spirit within you ; I *will* sprinkle you with clean water ; I *will* be your God ;" faith's echo is, ' Amen, Lord, thy will be done.' And when God's *I will* and our *Amen* meet together, then our will goes in to God's will, and the thing willed is certain and sure ; yea, firmer than mountains of brass : for God's will is unalterable, his promise unchangeable ; he has faithfulness for the girdle of his loins.

4. You have the objects of this blessing, in the pronoun *you*. It is true, this *you* is not in the original ; but is fitly enough supplied by our translators ; for it is plainly understood, though the words run, " From this day will I bless : " As if he had said, Hitherto curses and miseries have taken place among you ; but henceforth blessings and happiness shall take place ; " In blessing I will bless." But whom will he thus bless ? Why, the persons understood here, are these, who, through grace, are determined to apply themselves to temple-work, and temple-reformation. And so,

4. You have the term or time, from which the blessing commences, " From THIS DAY will I bless you : that is, from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid. And here lies the principal emphasis of the text ; and therefore, we have this *from* four times repeated ; " Consider now *from* this day and upward ; *from* the four and twentieth day of the ninth month ; even *from* the

day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid ; consider it, *from this day will I bless you.*" It is the best day's work that ever was done ; and it is the best day that ever you had in your life ; for, from hence you may date your happiness, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid.

Now, you are to remember that the temple was typical of Christ : not only of Christ personal, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ; as God dwelt in the temple of old symbolically, towards which sacred temple, Christ Jesus, we are always to look for acceptance with God ; and, like Jonah, to look again towards his holy temple ; but also Christ mystical was typified by the temple ; that is, the church, which is the house of God, whereof Christ is the living stone, the sure foundation ; and all believers, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house in him ; as you have it explained, 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5, Heb. iii. 6, Eph. ii. 20, 1 Cor. iii. 17, 2 Cor. vi. 16. Thus their building of the temple did signify the reformation of the church, having laid the foundation, which represents the securing of the ground-work of religion.

Now, let us gather some spiritual lesson from this, that they were blessed from the very day in which the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid in a literal sense. The spiritual mystery here represented is the following doctrine, which I take from the words, considered with their connection.

OBSERV. That all saving blessings do actually commence from the day the foundation of the spiritual temple is actually laid. "*From this day will I bless you ;*" that is, from the day that the foundations of the Lord's temple were laid.

I use the word actually in both branches of the doctrine, because I speak not of what was done decretively, in the purpose of God, from eternity ; nor of what was done virtually, in the council of peace, and covenant of redemption ; nor of what was done fundamentally and meritoriously, when Christ died at Jerusalem ; but rather of the actual fruits and produce of these, when they actually take place in a day of power : and therefore, I say, my doctrine is, That all saving blessings do actually commence, from the day that the foundation of the spiritual temple is actually laid. See Eph. i. 3, and ii. 21, compared ; where you see all spiritual saving blessings do actually take place, from the time that the soul is united to Christ, the sure foundation ; which is the day wherein the foundation of the spiritual temple is laid.

But for the further clearing and confirming of this doctrine, I propose the following method, namely,

- I. I would shew what this spiritual temple is.
- II. What is the foundation thereof.
- III. How this foundation is laid.
- IV. I would speak a little of the day in which the foundation is laid, and from which blessings take their date.
- V. Shew what blessings do commence from this day.
- VI. Prove, by some particular arguments and reasons, that saving blessings do actually commence from that day.
- VII. Make application of the whole subject.

I. The first thing we are to do then, is, To shew what this spiritual temple is. We told you, that the temple was a type of Christ mystical, and Christ personal; and I design to exclude none of them in the progress of my discourse.

Now, the temple was a type of Christ mystical; that is, of the church of God, and of particular believers, in many respects; who, therefore, are frequently called the temple of God, and the temple of the Holy Ghost; and the type and antitype agree in these, and the like following particulars.

1. The temple was a very stately building; without, very sumptuous; and within, very glorious: built of many stones, many materials; yet all making up but one temple, upon one foundation; and having three principal partitions, namely, the outward court, for the people; the sanctuary, for the priests; and the holy of holies, into which the High-priest only entered once a-year, with the blood of the sacrifice. Well, so it is here with the spiritual temple, the church. It is a stately building, a building of God; her visible glory without is very splendid, when rightly constitute with respect to doctrine, discipline, worship, and government; and her invisible glory much more; for "The King's daughter is all glorious within." Christ mystical, being made up of many materials taken out from among Jews and Gentiles; many lively stones, built upon Christ himself, who is the chief-corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, grows up into a holy temple in the Lord. In which spiritual temple there are, as it were, these three particulars, viz., the outer court of the visible church, including all professors; the sanctuary of the invisible church, peculiar to the holy priest-

hood, namely, all true believers, who are made kings and priests unto God ; and the holy of holies, heaven itself, wherein the spirits of just men made perfect are triumphant in the presence of God and of the Lamb, that glorious High-priest, that went into the holiest of all with the blood of the sacrifice, which he had offered of himself.

2. The temple was the settled place of God's public worship, and solemn sacrificings : there all the sacrifices, oblations, and incense were to be offered to God ; there God was solemnly prayed unto, and praised, and his ordinances administered. So the church of God is the spiritual temple, wherein all spiritual sacrifices are offered to God, by his royal priesthood ; and all the ordinances of Christ managed for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; and all believers are the receptacles of God's spiritual inward worship, in heart and soul.

3. The temple of the Lord was holy, and not to be defiled with legal impurity. So this spiritual temple of God is holy, and not to be defiled with sinful impurities : " If any man defile the temple of God, says the apostle, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are," 1 Cor. iii. 17. The church invisible is holy not only by separation from the unholy corrupt mass of the world, 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17, and by dedication to God, and his holy service ; but also by justification, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, their Head, in whom they have a perfect holiness, or righteousness ; being perfect through his comeliness put upon them, Ezek. xvi. 14 ; and by sanctification, and implanted holiness ; having the Spirit of Christ in them as the principle of sanctification ; and therefore,

4. The temple was a place of God's spiritual presence and residence among his people : there were the symbols of his presence ; there he dwelt between the cherubims ; there he met with his people and communed with them. So the church of Christ, and all the true members thereof, are the habitation of God through the Spirit ; they are the temples of the living God. God dwells in them, walks in them, manifests himself to them, and affords them communion with himself.

In a word, the temple was God's house : and so are all believers, 1 Pet. ii. 5, they are built up a spiritual house, which God possesses five ways. They are his dwelling-house, his pleasure-house, his treasure-house, his vessel-house, his magazine-house, and his banqueting-house.

(1) They are his dwelling-house. God dwells there in a special manner; "In Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion," Psalm lxxvi. 2. It is a sweet promise, 2 Cor. vi. 16, "I will dwell in them." But, "Will God, in very deed, dwell with man upon earth?" Yes; "This honour have all the saints," God dwells in them by his holy Spirit, which he hath given them, and he dwells with them, so as never, totally, to desert his mansion: when he takes up his residence in the soul, he says, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

2. They are his pleasure-house: as he dwells there, so he walks there; "I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them." He takes pleasure to walk in them: "This is the hill where God desires to dwell, Ps. xlviii. 16, This is my rest, here will I stay, for I like it well, Ps. cxxxii. 14. The Lord takes pleasure in his people," Ps. cxlix. 4. O wonderful! that God should take pleasure in any of the sinful seed of Adam; yet, as a man takes pleasure in his house, his garden, his orchard, and planting, so doth the Lord in believers, who are frequently called his garden, Song v. 1; his vineyard, Isa. v. 1; his planting, Isa. lxi. 3; "The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." Thus they are his pleasure-house.

3. They are his treasure-house. As God is the believer's treasure, so believers are God's treasure: "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance," Deut. xxxii. 9. If you look upon them as they are in themselves, abstractly from the corner-stone, he hath but a poor treasure of them. God cannot be enriched with this treasure; but yet, in Christ, he looks upon them as a treasure of jewels; "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I make up my jewels," Mal. iii. 17.

(4.) They are his magazine-house: this spiritual house and temple is built for an armoury, Song iv. 4, there the church is compared to "The tower of David, built for an armoury, wherein hung a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men." God lays up his stores of military provision in this house, insomuch that every believer is so well armed with the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, that he can encounter the strongest Goliath; yea, and do all things through Christ strengthening him. God's church is his castle; and "Salvation hath God appointed for walls and for bulwarks."

(5.) They are his vessel-house. The church is God's house, wherein all the vessels of mercy are hung up, for ornament, as well

as for use ; and Christ is the nail fastened in a sure place, on which all the vessels do hang : " I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place ; and they shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups to the vessels of flaggons," Isa. xxii. 23, 24. Believers, weak and strong, vessels of all sorts and sizes. Neither are believers empty vessels, whatever they be in themselves, for

(6.) They are his banquetting-house ; " He brought me into the banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love," Song ii. 4. The church of God, I mean, the assemblies of his saints in ordinances, are his parlour, where he feeds ; " He feedeth among the lilies, till the day break, and the shadows fly away." He keeps a banquet among his people ; and both he and they feed and sup together. It is a wonderful text, though ordinarily cited, 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 will sup with him, and he with me. He shall sup with me ;" that is, he shall partake of my Spirit and graces, that shall be as comfortable to the soul as meat to the body ; and " I will sup with him ;" that is, I will solace and comfort myself in these their graces which I give them, as much as any man is comforted with his food. I will delight to see my own graces exercised, as much as a man, disposed for meat delights therein. Hence Song v. 1, " I am come unto my garden," says Christ to his church : " I have gathered my myrrh, with my spices ; I have eaten my honey-comb, with my honey ; I have drunk my wine with my milk." Thus it is his banquetting-house. This spiritual temple, then, is God's house, his dwelling-house, his pleasure-house, his treasure-house, his magazine-house, his vessel-house, his banquetting-house.

II. The second thing proposed, in the general method, was What is the foundation of this spiritual temple

To this we answer, with the apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 11, " Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." Christ is the alone foundation of the spiritual temple, and that if we consider these four things. 1. What a foundation implies. 2. How Christ is the foundation. 3. Wherein he is the foundation. 2 Whereof he is the foundation to the church.

1. Christ is the foundation of this spiritual temple, if we consider what a foundation implies. It implies primacy, potency, and confirmation. I say, a foundation imports primacy and priority. A

foundation is ordinarily taken for the first stone that is laid in a building, or the first range of stones. Now, Christ is thus the foundation; for he is the first stone, that is laid in the church; and every stone is laid upon him, in whom believers are rooted and built up, Cbl. ii. 7. Also, a foundation implies potency, power, and strength to bear the whole of the building, and to support the whole fabric. Now, Christ is thus a powerful and mighty foundation; "I have laid help upon one that is mighty. He is able to save to the uttermost;" able to bear the whole weight of the superstructure. Again, a foundation implies confirmation, as it fastens cements, and unites the building, and brings it to a harmonious proportion. Well, thus Christ is the foundation or corner-stone; "We are built up upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord," Eph. ii. 20. The corner-stone fastens all the rest: and so does Christ confirm and conjoin all the members of his mystical body in himself. But then,

2. Consider how he is the foundation. And here, in short, you may see he is the foundation personally, doctrinally, and practically. He is the foundation personally; he, even the God-man Christ Jesus himself, is the foundation laid in Zion, for souls to be built upon; "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." Believers are not joined to the purchase of Christ only, but to the person of Christ: they close with his person as the foundation. Also, he is the foundation doctrinally; Christ is the sum of all gospel-doctrine; the scriptures testify of him: the apostles and prophets are indeed called the foundation; but Christ is the corner-stone of it. He is the foundation of that foundation; and therefore, I think, it would be an odd text that a gospel-minister could not find Christ in. Again, he is the foundation practically: he is the copy after which every soul that comes to him, will write; his practice is the rule and foundation of our practice: "He hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps." But more particularly,

3. Consider wherein he is the foundation. Why, he is the foundation in his doing; for he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; and to fulfil all righteousness; and so to bring in everlasting righteousness, which is the very ground of our salvation; therefore the gospel is called the power of God to salvation. Why?

Because "therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith," Rom. i. 7. This is the righteousness we must be found in, if ever we be found happy to eternity. And again he is the foundation in his suffering; for, our iniquity was laid upon him, and he was made sin for us, and so was wounded for our sins, and bruised for our transgressions; "He gave his life a ransom for many:" and God himself, having found this ransom for them, he says as it were to justice, "Deliver their souls from going down to the pit; for I have found a ransom." Hence, also, he is the foundation in his merit and purchase: he hath purchased heaven, and all the means of getting to it. He hath purchased all blessings, and all the graces of the Spirit, viz., faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, assurance; all the graces are his purchase: and what he hath purchased, he is ready to give; yea, readier than you are to receive; he is ready, by his Father's allowance and appointment, who hath anointed him with the Spirit above measure: he is full of grace and truth, that out of his fulness we might receive, and grace for grace. But then he is the foundation in his resurrection; for, as he was delivered for our offences, so he was raised again for our justification. His resurrection, or coming forth out of the prison of the grave, being an evidence that the judge who had cast him into prison, was pleased; and that the debt was all paid; both the debt of obedience to the law, and satisfaction to justice; and so a way made for the justification of sinners; and a sure ground laid for his people's resurrection to glory. Moreover, he is the foundation in his ascension and exaltation; for, "Having ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell with them: and accordingly, now, him hath God exalted, with his right hand, to be a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sin." I do not cite all the scriptures that I repeat for gaining of time. He is also the foundation in his intercession; being able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God through him, because he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And so finally, he is the foundation in respect of the application of his whole purchased redemption; being a Saviour by power as well as by price, he powerfully applies, by his Spirit, what he hath dearly purchased with his blood. O! all you that would, by faith, look and lean to this foundation, hear his own word, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

4. Consider whereof he is the foundation of the church. Why, in general, he is the foundation of all the promises, and the blessings therein contained; for, "In him are all the promises, Yea and Amen." In him are given to us exceeding great and precious promises. These that are strangers to Christ, are strangers to the covenants of promise: for Christ is the foundation of them all. Hath God promised, "I will be thy God, and thou shalt be my people?" Hath he said, "I will take away the heart of stone, and I will give you a heart of flesh?" Hath he said "I will put my spirit within you?" O take hold of Christ, and you have all the promises in him. You will say, "O what right have I to the promise, that know not if I be in Christ." You would know there is a right of access, and a right of possession. Now, I would say of the promise, as I may say of Christ: What right have you to Christ? such right have you to the promises. All you that are out of Christ, and yet hear this gospel; you have a right of access to him; being called, upon your peril, to come to him for salvation: "Whosoever will, let him come, and take the waters of life freely." And all you that come to Christ, by faith, you have a right possession of him, you may say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Well, thus it is with the promise; all that hear me have a right of access to the promise. I say to you as Peter said, in his preaching to a company of the greatest sinners that ever were, even to the murderers of the Son of God; Acts ii. 39, "The promise is to you, and to your children; and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The call of the gospel gives you a right of access, and warrant to plead the promise; and cry, that God would make out that to you, for the sake of Christ, who is the foundation of them: and this is such a right, as that you cannot have a better right thereto, till you get faith. The promise is so to you, as that it cannot be more to you, until you believe; and then you have a right of possession of it; for, then you are, as Isaac was, children of the promise, Gal. iv. 28. If this be a new scheme, I own it, because it is the New Testament scheme.

But I proceed. As Christ is the foundation of all the promises, so he is the foundation of all the blessings contained in the covenant of promise; more particularly, to give a short sum of these. Christ is the foundation of our pardon and remission; for "In him we have redemption through his blood, even the remission of sins," Eph. i. 7. He is the foundation of our deliverance from the curse, for he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a

curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. He is the foundation of our reconciliation with God ; for, " While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son," Rom v. 10. He is the foundation of our justification ; " In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory," Isa. xlv. 25, and so the foundation of our title to eternal life, Tit. iii. 7, " That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." He is the foundation of life itself ; " This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life ; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life," 1 John v. 11, 12. He is the foundation of our sanctification, and of our progress in it ; for, " He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification ;" and he that abideth in him, bringeth forth much fruit ; for, " Out of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace." He is the foundation of our faith, as being not only the object thereof, but the Author and Finisher of faith. He is the foundation of repentance, being exalted of God to give repentance, and all other graces that we need. He is the foundation, of our access to God ; for, " Through him we have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father." He is the foundation of our acceptance with God, in our persons and duties ; for, " We are accepted in the Beloved." Accepted in him, you will say ; that is, for his sake : there is more than that in it ; he being our head, and believers the members of his body, and he having performed perfect obedience, and given complete satisfaction, the Head having done it, the whole body is accepted as having done it ; and so we are accepted in him ; his doing it is ours. He is the foundation of our bold approaches to the throne of grace, with holy confidence : " We have boldness to enter in to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way that is consecrated through the veil of his flesh." He is the foundation of our victory over all enemies, over all adversaries and adversities ; for, " We are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." He is the foundation of our whole salvation, and of all our happiness and holiness ; for, " We are complete in him, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead." He is the foundation of our resurrection to glory ; for, it is he that shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like to his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." He is the foundation of the eternal happiness of soul and body in the beatific vision ; for, " When he shall appear, we shall be like him ;

for we shall see him as he is : and so shall we ever be with the Lord." In a word, he is the foundation of our union to himself, being the efficient cause thereof ; for, " I if I be lifted up," says Christ, " will draw all men after me." And thus he is the foundation of our ALL ; for, says the apostle, " Christ is all in all."

III. The third thing was, To show how the foundation was laid. How is the foundation of this spiritual temple laid ? Or, how comes the people to be built upon this foundation I have been speaking of ? How comes a man to be joined to the Lord, as a lively stone to this living foundation ? It takes no little work to hew a man out of the old quarry of the covenant of works, and bring them off all sandy foundations : and it is to be feared that the foundation of the temple is not yet laid, as to the most part that hear the gospel ; but when it is laid, how is it done, say you ? We answer from Zech. iv. 6, " Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit." Here I will tell you these four things that the Spirit of the Lord uses to do when he razes the foundation of the old house, where Satan's seat is ; and lays the foundation of the spiritual temple, where God dwells.

1. He awakens the conscience in a work of conviction, whereby he convinces the man that he hath been, all his days, but erecting a habitation for the devil, instead of building a temple for God : " The Spirit, when he is come, he reproveth the world of sin, of unbelief, and enmity against God. If ever then God hath begun the good work towards laying the foundation, he hath discovered to you the rubbish of a natural state, and awakened your consciences with, a sight and sense of sin. Indeed, the conscience is naturally seared as with a hot iron ; like these that have a part of their flesh burnt with an iron, though it be touched, yet they do not feel : this hard skin must be pinched ; and therefore God makes the knife of conviction go to the quick ; makes the man see that he is a rebel against God, a Babel builder ; and that therefore there is a standing quarrel between God and him, and that this must be removed before he can be a temple for God ; because he finds that the old building, the old state of nature that he is into, is but a Babel of confusion and enmity against God.

2. The Spirit of the Lord, in order to the laying the foundation of the spiritual temple, wounds the heart in a work of compunction ; he fills the soul with grief and sorrow for sin, whereby he hath been pleasing the devil, dishonouring God, and building a

temple for his idols, and lusts, saying, "Wo is me, that my heart hath been a temple for Satan, a cage of unclean birds, a nest of abominations. Indeed, men may grieve at sin at first, as it brings on afflictions here, or damnation hereafter. But in this work afterwards, the Lord creates another kind of sorrow; for, he discovers to the man the fulness of sin, that it is a transgression of the law of God: an opposition to the nature of God; a spitting in the face of God. O but this looks well in David, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned." What! did he not sin against others, when he committed murder and adultery? Yea, true indeed: Oh! says David, I see my sin to be against thee, and against thee only. The affront lands upon God; he is dishonoured, and the heart that should be his temple is defiled.

3. The spirit of the Lord, in order to laying the foundation of the spiritual temple, abases the soul in a work of humiliation. He humbles the soul of the sinner under God's almighty hand, because he had been so long building and repairing the devil's temple, while the Lord's temple lay waste in the soul. A holy God stares the man in the face; and the unholy soul sees the holy God, and makes the unholy soul to be ashamed. Then the soul comes to be so far humbled as to take with the whole charge of God and his law against him. God and the law charges the man as being a defiler of God's temple; and therefore deserving to be destroyed: the man takes with the charge and owns it. When ministers charge people with sins, they will either deny them, or cast a cloak over them, and give excuses about them; and perhaps say, they were mistaken, or, in a passion, or under such and such a temptation; but that is a plain evidence that your souls were never humbled before God; for, if ever God had humbled your souls, you would be more ready to condemn yourselves than any minister can be capable to do. For, when God humbles the soul, he takes with the whole charge of God; and says, as David to Nathan, "I am the man; I am the monster; I am the devil that hath thus defiled the temple of God, by serving divers lusts." He humbles him to see his want of faith; that he is undone if he wants faith, and yet that he can no more believe, than he can make a world. And then he humbles the soul to a renouncing of his own righteousness, so as he has no expectation from the law; no expectation of acceptance with God upon the account of any duty, righteousness, or goodness of his own. No, no; he sees that nothing but the blood and righteousness of Christ can save him

from that damnation, which the best of his duties and righteousness do deserve. And so, further, the soul comes to be humbled, so far as to clear and justify God, though he should condemn him. Some will say, "We cannot think God will be so cruel, as to damn the most part of the world for their sins." Alas! man, if you think so, that is an evidence that your soul was never humbled under a sense of sin. But, "Oh!" says the humbled soul, "death and damnation is the due wages of sin; and if God should send me to hell he is just, I might preach his righteousness there, and declare that he never wronged me; yea, it is my wonder that I have been so long out of the bottomless pit." In a word, the soul comes to be so far humbled, as to see that if ever he be brought into God's favour, and if ever God condescend to make his filthy heart to be a temple for such a holy God, it will be in a way of sovereign and pure grace; and that nothing but infinite almighty power can lay the foundation of the spiritual temple: and so he brings the soul to say, "Oh! if God do not pity and save me, he is just and righteous; but if he do pity me, I will magnify his name for ever; and so, perhaps, he will pity for his name's sake." Thus he humbles; and then,

4. The Spirit of the Lord lays the foundation of the spiritual temple in a work of saving illumination; and, indeed, the foundation is never thoroughly laid till now, that the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. The soul being, as I said, awakened, wounded, and humbled, and brought to despair of relief, in himself, finding all his former refuges of lies failing him, and all his former hopes giving up the ghost; then the Lord pities him, in his low estate, and reveals his Son in him, Gal. i. 16; discovers the glory of Christ's person and righteousness, who is the foundation, whereupon the whole soul is made powerfully, and sweetly, and irresistibly to close with the foundation. The Spirit of the Lord reveals the foundation, and makes the glory of it to be seen in the light of God; and, at the same moment, works that faith, whereby the soul, being well-pleased with this noble invention of infinite wisdom, and captivated thereby, is united to the foundation; for then the soul is made to give a believing assent and consent to the truths concerning Christ, upon the authority of God, that he hath given concerning his Son; and to set to his seal that God is true; taking hold of Christ, for his own

particular benefit, with particular application : and thus the foundation of the spiritual temple is laid. The hand of our exalted Zerubbabel doth lay the foundation of this house, whose hand must also finish it, Zec. iv. 9 ; having paved his own way by levelling the mountains, removing the rubbish in a work of conviction, contrition, and humiliation, saying, " Who art thou, O great mountain ? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." He comes himself, and shews his own glory, as the sure foundation that God hath laid in Zion, in a work of saving illumination ; he comes into the heart, and makes the soul to welcome him with a thousand hosannas, saying, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," to be the Head-stone of the corner ; " This is the Lord's doing, and wondrous in our eyes." And, " This is the day which the Lord hath made ;" and this is the day of which he hath said, " From this day will I bless you." And so I come,

IV. To the fourth thing proposed, viz. To speak a little of the *day* on which the foundation of the spiritual temple is laid, and from which blessings take their date ; " From this *day* will I bless you." Now, in speaking of this, I shall offer you these four remarks, or propositions, concerning this *day*.

The first remark that I offer, is this, " That this day comes under several names in Scripture." Sometimes it is called a day of espousals, and the day of the gladness of Christ's heart ; Song iii. 17. " Go forth, O 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." The day wherein the foundation of the spiritual temple is laid, is the day of espousals. Sometimes it is called a day of power, Psalm cx. 3. " Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power : " so called, because in that day, the power of God is created, even its almighty efficacy in hewing the stones of the temple out of the quarry of a natural state ; bowing their wills, and breaking their hard hearts of stone, and moulding them for a spiritual temple.—Sometimes it is called the day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. " Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. This may be applied to the gospel-day, but more especially, it may be said of the building-day, when the foundation of the temple is laid ; for then it may be said, as Christ to Zaccheus, " This day is salvation come to thy house."—Sometimes it is called a day of vengeance, Isa. lxiii. 4. The day wherein the foundation of the temple is laid, is the day wherein God

destroys the old building, and takes vengeance on all spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, and strong corruptions; and whatsoever opposed the spiritual building, the vengeance of God, and the vengeance of the temple pursued them in that day.—Sometimes it is called a day of small things, Zech. iv. 10; because when the foundation of the temple is a-laying, the beginning may be very small, even like a grain of mustard seed; and yet, in the issue, it shall be a great and magnificent fabric; because, “He that begun the good work will perfect it;” for, “The Lord is a rock, and his work is perfect.” And so, finally, it is called a day of the Lord’s making, Ps. cxviii. 24. “This is the day that the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.” Where the psalmist is speaking of the day wherein the stone which the builders reject, shall become the head of the corner, and that is eminently the day wherein the foundation of the temple is laid “From this day I will bless you.” But, a second remark concerning this day is, “That there is a very great difference between the day wherein the foundation of the temple is laid, and the day wherein the building is perfected, between the foundation-day on earth, and the consummation-day in heaven.” For the foundation-day is ushered in with a very dark morning, or rather an evening, as it was said, “The evening and the morning were the first-day;” so when the foundation is laid, the evening ushers in the morning, a dark evening of wrath and legal terror, conviction and humiliation, as I told you already. Many a dark cloud may cover the sky on that day; but the day of consummation will be a glorious day, and a clear day, surrounded with all gladening circumstances; for then shall the head-stone be brought forth with shoutings, crying, “Grace, grace unto it.” The day wherein the foundation is laid is a day indeed wherein corruption gets a dead stroke, and may seem, for a little while, to be almost slain; yet afterwards it gets up its head again, casts fire into the sanctuary, and many times defiles the temple; but the day wherein the building is consummated will put an end to sin and corruption; there shall be no more unbelief and enmity; no more sins, mistakes, jealousies, or fears; no more danger from spiritual enemies from without or from within. Again, the day wherein the foundation is laid is a day of secresy; perhaps the person is sitting at your side, and you do not see nor know when the Lord is laying the foundation of the spiritual temple within him, or may be upon his knees at home; there is a secret transaction in which the soul is laid as a

stone upon the sure foundation ; but the consummation is open, before millions of saints and angels. In a word, after the foundation is laid, the believer may many times, through ignorance, and unbelief, and doubts, and fears, be at the razing of the foundation ; but when the temple is perfected, no such thing shall take place : for then he shall have occasion to sing and say, " Farewell darkness, and welcome light ; farewell death, and welcome life ; farewell sorrow, and welcome joy ; yea, farewell faith, and welcome vision ; farewell hope, and welcome fruition and the everlasting uninterrupted enjoyment of God." So that there a great difference between the day wherein the foundation is laid, and the day wherein the building is consummate.

The third remark concerning this day is, " That the precise time, the particular day wherein the foundation of the spiritual temple is laid, and the soul is united to Christ, is agreed upon, between the Father and the Son in the covenant of grace and redemption from eternity." That moment wherein the first stone of the building is laid is determined by the Father, who hath put the times and seasons in his own power, to know and order them according to the counsel of his will, Acts i. 7. And to lisp with reverence in the Scripture language, God, the great Architect, doth wait, with patience for that day wherein he hath resolved to lay the foundation of the temple, according to that sweet and remarkable Scripture, which may be comfortable to them that cannot get that at duties, communions, and ordinances, which they have been long looking for, and waiting for, Isa. xxx. 18. " 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, and blessed are all they that wait for him." Are you waiting for a day of power ? Why, God is waiting for this day himself. The poor humbled soul may be ready to think, " Oh ! Christ is not willing ; I have set days apart ; I have gone to my knees, I have sought him in this and the other ordinance ; and yet I could not get closed with him : I have been almost dipt in hell with affliction, and yet my heart was never melted ; surely Christ is not willing." Ah ! Sirs, beware of that blasphemy. The Lord Jesus is willing ; but the fulness of time is not yet come. There is a set day, a fixed moment of his coming ; and for this day, he waits ; and for this day you are to wait : he knows the proper season ; the crane, the swallow, and the stork know their season, by a natural instinct

God hath given them; and will he not know his own season? Yea, "He waits to be gracious; and blessed are they that wait for him," and wait for this day of power: for, when it comes, then there will be an auspicious conjunction of all circumstances to conclude the work: the word is made lively; the Spirit acts powerfully; the soul is drawn sweetly and irresistibly: and all things work together harmoniously for laying the foundation, and carrying up the temple-work.

The Fourth Remark concerning this day is, "That there are several signs and characters whereby this day may be known, when it comes." I shall not say that every convert knows the day of his first conversion; but with respect to all adult persons, I am sure it may be known; for none are converted sleeping, or in a dream. There are many signs of it that are not at all to be confined to a natural day; but run through the several stages of a believer's life, ever since the foundation of the spiritual temple was laid. The signs of this day, then, whereby it may be known, are, in short, to this purpose.

1. It is a day of light; light breaks in into the window of the soul, that puts a man in case to say, "Once I was blind, now I see:" the man has now another sight of sin, of God, of Christ, and of religion than the rest of the world; yea, another view than even he himself had; before, he had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but now his eyes see him. He hath an ocular demonstration of spiritual things, by the light of the word and Spirit, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

2. It is also a day of life, of life from the dead: "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." It is true, many think they have a spiritual life, and are not dead in sin, because they live in the practice of many good duties; that is very well done: but, O man, woman! know you what a new life, a new obedience is? a life of new and gospel obedience? the meaning of that word, "I am also dead to the law, that I might live unto God?" Gal. ii. 19. Though you should live like an angel of light, till you know somewhat of this in your experience, you are strangers to this day of life. For, you know some things naturally of the first covenant, *Do* and *live*; but nothing spiritually of the new covenant way of *living to God*. Again,

3. This day is a day of love: O how is the love of God shed abroad upon the heart on this day, whereby the soul is in case to

say, "Whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none in all the earth, whom I desire besides thee." God's mighty love is so discovered in Christ, as that it kills the mighty enmity in the soul against God, and creates love to him.

4. It is a day of joy: when the poor soul gets a view of the misery it is freed from, the many good things that it is entitled to, and the eternal happiness that is secured for it, how will it rejoice in God its Saviour, be glad in the Rock of its salvation, and so hold on its way rejoicing!

5. This day is a day of liberty, wherein bonds are loosed, and the prisoners of hope go forth at the call of Christ, who proclaims liberty to the captives on that day, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; at whose mighty word of power, the massy chains of sin, unbelief, darkness, atheism, and ignorance, are loosed, and the soul made to walk at liberty, and to run the way of God's commandments with an enlarged heart.

6. This day is a day of wonder; when the man looks to the rock whence he was hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence he was digged, O he wonders that ever such a lump of hell should be made a spiritual temple for the God of heaven! "O wonder! says weak faith, if "ever the Lord will pity the like of me. And, O wonder! says strong faith, that ever God should have loved the like of me with an everlasting love, and drawn me with loving-kindness." What an ecstasy of wonder and amazement is raised in the man's heart! Why, "I was dead, now I live; I was weak, now am I strong; this morning, perhaps, I was under affliction, and under the terrors of God, and now he hath ravished me with the consolations of the Spirit. I was afraid of hell, and now I have the hope of eternal life." O what a day of wonder is it!

7. This day is a day of victory. O do you mind the day when you thought there was a legion of devils, a regiment of lusts, and armies of corruptions within you? But, behold, in surprising mercy, you got grace to believe and lay hold upon Christ, and so by faith, to turn to flight the armies of the aliens, and overcame by the blood of the Lamb; and thus got victory over Satan, over sin, over the world, over an ill heart, and an ill frame; and victory over all your doubts and fears.

8. This day is a day of praise, and voice of gratitude. The soul will be ready to break forth in such a day, crying, "O what shall I speak for Christ? What shall I do for him? What shall I suffer for him? It is true, it must be given me both to do and

to suffer ; for I will never hold out a moment, if he leave me : I will never have a day to do well, if he leave me : but, O ! if he would support me by his grace, and comfort me with his glory, I think I could go through fire and flames for him."

9. In a word, this day is a day of discovery, especially of the glory of God in the face of Christ. The man sees the King in his beauty. O ! hath ever Christ got in upon your heart, with a beam of his beauty and glory ? Have you seen him in the beauty of his person and offices ? In the beauty of his merit and Spirit ? In the beauty of his righteousness and fullness ? " Why, some may think, the man is talking of a sight of Christ's glory, that must be but wild fancies and enthusiastical notions ; is not Christ in heaven ? For our part, we never saw any glory beyond that of sun, moon, and stars." O poor soul ! you are an utter stranger to this day that I am speaking of, if you never saw any brighter glory than that. There is an infinitely brighter beauty to be seen than can be seen by your bodily eyes, in these visible heavens. Is not that word in your Bible, " The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ ?" Is not that word in your Bible, " All we, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord ?" It is by faith we see a God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself ; we see his grace, his glory, his beauty, and we cannot express what we see ; we cannot explain to the world what we see ; words cannot represent the beauty and glory that is seen in him, or the sweetness and comfort that is felt in him, when discovered. They that see him can say no more, but that they see him, all grace, all glory, all beauty, altogether lovely ; infinitely lovely ; and it is no fancy or imagination, but according to the word of God, the scriptures of truth, wherein he is said to give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. So you see some signs how this duty may be known.

V. The fifth thing proposed, was, to shew what saving blessings do commence from this day ; " From this day will I bless you."

1st, What blessings do commence from this day wherein the foundation of the temple is laid ? Why, from this day they are blessed with all temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings.

1. From this day they are blessed with all temporal blessings ; having a title to all things. By our fall, in the first Adam, we forfeited our title to all things ; and so, whatever good things in the world wicked men may enjoy, they have no right thereto, but stand answerable to God for invading his property ; and, therefore, the wicked are called robbers. Job xii. 6, "The tabernacles of robbers prosper." But whenever the foundation of the spiritual temple is laid, the forfeited right to all things is recovered, because the man is united to Christ, who is the heir of all things : "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all ; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?" All things else are but like paper and pack-thread cast in to the bargain. From this day they are blessed, not only with a title to, but with a possession of as much of these temporal things as God sees for their advantage : they are blessed in their basket and in their store ; and, if it were for their good, they should be all kings and queens in the earth ; for, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof ; and the cattle on a thousand hills are his. The young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall lack no good thing." And though they must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God ; yet, from this day, they are blessed in all circumstances of life. From this day, they are blessed in adversity, and in prosperity both ; for, as their prosperity is void of the fatal curse that comes upon the wicked, who are cursed in their basket and in their store ; while the believer's prosperity is conveyed through the channel of covenant-love and kindness ; being, not the effect of common providence, but of covenant-love and promise ; "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth ;" Matt. v. 5. As their adversity is still under the conduct and management of a reconciled God and Father, who, though he visit their iniquities with rods, yet his loving kindness will he not take away from them. And, therefore, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither should fruit be found in the vine, though the labour of the olive should fall, and the herd be cut off from the stall, and the fields should yield no meat, yet may they rejoice in the Lord, and be joyful in the God of their salvation. And, though their house be not so with God, as they would desire ; yea, though their hearts be not so with God, as they would wish, yet here is matter of everlasting comfort to them in every adversity, that he hath made with them an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure. In a word, they are

so blessed in prosperity or adversity, that all things shall work together for their good.

2. From this day they are blessed with all spiritual blessings; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus," Eph. i. 3. This is so plain from what I have said already, upon the second head, that I shall not insist upon it; for, Christ being the foundation of all blessings, and they being united to this foundation; from this day and forward they have all spiritual blessings in him. From this day they are blessed with all the spiritual blessings that accompany the spiritual life; they live upon free cost all their days. Their blessed Joseph has laid up for them a treasure of provision, not for seven years, but for time and eternity both. The hypocrite lives upon himself, and his duties; but the believer lives, in the way of duty, upon Christ and his righteousness, for justification; upon Christ and his spirit, for sanctification. From this day they are blessed with a guard of angels to encamp round about them; "They are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation:" yea, with a guard of divine attributes round about them; for, as the mountains are about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about them that fear him." They need not fear the armed squadrons of hell, when environed with such a heavenly host. Who then can harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? From this day they are blessed with all spiritual experiences; such as, manifestations of divine love, now and then; support and comfort under trouble, hearing an audience of their prayers; pity after their falls; recovery after their backslidings; surprising relief out of foul depths and distress; ravishing intimations of pardon; astonishing communications of strength: sweet empowerings of words of grace into their heart; and pleasant outmakings of the word of promise, on which he hath caused them to hope; and many more such-like experiences, which I cannot insist upon. From this day they are blessed with a title to God, and all his attributes; to Christ, and all his fulness; to the spirit, and all his saving graces, influences, and operations: and here, I am sure, there is more to speak of than the tongues of men or angels can tell. When a poor beggar is married to a royal prince, she may view his palace, survey his garden, and please herself with a delightful prospect of all his greatness and glory, and may say, "These are all mine, because the prince himself is mine;" so may

the poor soul, that is united to Christ, and laid upon this sure foundation, say of all the blessings of the covenant, and of all the plenitude of the Deity, "All is mine, because Christ himself is mine:"—"Ye are complete in him, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

3. From this day they are blessed with all eternal blessings; "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life," John iii. 36. He not only shall have it, ere long, in full possession; but he hath it already; he had it by faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; he hath it in hope, and some may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; he hath it in the promise: he hath it in the beginnings, first-fruits and earnest thereof; and, above all, he hath it in his Head, in that blessed foundation to which he is joined. He that can say, Christ is mine, can well say, Everlasting life is mine. A happy death belongs to him; for, being in the Lord, he shall be amongst the blessed that die in the Lord. A happy resurrection belongs to him; for, his glorious head will open the gates of the grave, and gather the scattered atoms of his rotten dust, and raise it up in glory. A happy eternity belongs to him; for, as sure as God is in heaven, the man that is in Christ, shall be there for ever: "Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." But who can tell what a blessed eternity awaits them, from this day that the foundation of the spiritual temple is laid? Paul wrapt up to the third heavens to behold the glories of the upper paradise, tells us that he heard *α ῥ ῥῆτα ρ ῆματα*, *unspeakable words*, 2 Cor. xii. 4. They will be blessed in their place, the throne of God and of the Lamb, whereof we have a magnificent description, Rev. xxi. 20. They will be blessed in their company: "The innumerable company of angels; the general assembly and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven; the spirits of just men made perfect; God the Judge of all; and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." They will be blessed in their state; for, it will be a state of rest: "There remains a rest for the people of God. They will rest from their labours, and their works follow them." They will rest from all sin, troubles, trials, temptations, and afflictions; from all doubts and fears; no unbelieving thought shall enter into their hearts to all eternity; and they will rest in the enjoyment of their God in Christ

for ever and ever. They will be blessed in their work, which will be to contemplate his glory : for then they shall see him face to face, and make his glorious praise resound through his eternal temple ; their blessed work will be to sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, saying, " Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty : just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Salvation to our God, that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." For then the mystery of God will be finished, and the spiritual temple work will be completed, and the head-stone brought forth with shoutings, saying, " Grace, grace unto it ;" yea, with Hallelujahs, saying, Glory, glory unto it. Christ is the foundation, and Christ is the head-stone ; and all the joyful harps of Immanuel's land shall be turned to his everlasting praise. Thus I have given a short glance at what blessings shall commence from this day.

VI. The sixth general head of the method was, To prove, by some scriptural arguments and reasons, that saving blessings do actually commence from that day. Well then, How and by what reason doth it appear, that blessings do all commence from this day ? " From this day will I bless you." Now, it is plain enough, that all saving blessings do actually commence from the day wherein the foundation of the spiritual temple is actually laid. For,

1. Before this day they are children of wrath ; and, therefore, saving blessings do not actually take place till this day ; they were by nature children of wrath, even as others, Eph. ii. 3. And while they were in their natural state, they had no actual possession of any saving blessings, till the day on which the foundation of the temple was laid.

2. On this day they are actually unite to the Son of God ; and therefore, from this day, the blessing doth actually commence ; from this day, they are in Christ, and Christ in them ; their motto is, " Christ in you the hope of glory." And they are blessed in him with the possession of all spiritual blessings, and with freedom from all miseries ; " There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." As they are freed from spiritual death, and eternal death ; so they are freed from all that is hurtful in natural death : " He that believeth in me shall never die," John xi. 26. Why so ? because they are members of that body whereof Christ is the living Head ; they are stones of that building whereof he is the living foundation.

3. From this day they are the children of God ; and, therefore, from this day, the blessing doth actually commence : “ To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God.” And, being the children of God, they have a right to all the privileges of the children of God ; to all blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal ; for they are all connected with sonship : “ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God. Now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,” 1 John iii. 1, 2.

4. From this day they are the children of promise ; and, therefore, all the promised blessings do actually commence. From this day, when the foundation is laid, they are in him, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen. On this day the decree breaks forth concerning them, and the womb of the promise is impregnated with the almighty efficacy of the Spirit ; so that they are brought forth thereby ; and, of his own will begotten by the word of truth ; and being thus actually the children of promise, they are also like children of a tender mother, nursed, suckled, and brought up upon the breasts of these great and precious promises, whereby they are made partakers of the divine nature ; seeking all grace and comfort out of these breasts by faith. And so,

5. From this day they are the children of grace, having all the gracious qualities of the blessed ; and, therefore, the blessing doth actually commence from this day. From this day they are poor in spirit ; and, “ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” From this day they are spiritual mourners ; and, “ Blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted.” From this day, they have a constant appetite after Christ, and his righteousness ; and, “ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled.” From this day their heart-impurities are their burden, and heart purity is, through grace, their desire and endeavour ; insomuch, that it gives them many errands to the blood of Christ, to the fountain opened to the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness. Now, “ Blessed are the poor in heart ; for they shall see God.” I say, from this day they are the children of grace, having, in some measure, all the gracious qualities of the blessed : I say not the terms or conditions of the blessed ; but the qualities of the blessed ;

for, many do dreadfully confound the condition of the covenant with the qualities of the covenanted. But not to digress: I say, from this day they have the qualities and characters of the blessed, and with which blessings are inseparably connected; and so from this day they are blessed.

In a word, from this day, the curse is removed. The old covenant of works curses all that are under it; for, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them. But Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" and therefore, from the day that you are laid upon this blessed foundation, God says, "From this day will I bless you."

VII. The seventh thing proposed was the application of the subject. And this we shall essay in an use of information, examination, and exhortation.

1st, We shall improve this subject in an use of information. Well then, Is it so, that all saving blessings do actually commence from the day that the foundation of the spiritual temple is actually laid? Then hence see,

1. What a fearfully cursed state and condition we are all into, by nature; lying under the cursed rubbish, the old building, the covenant of works. When our great-grand-father, Adam, eat the forbidden fruit, the fabric of the old covenant fell down, and the foundation thereof was overturned; and so great was the fall thereof, that he and all his posterity are buried under the ruins thereof; that is, under a heap of sins, miseries, pleagues, deaths, and damnation: for, on that day that the covenant of works was broken, curses did commence; and cursed is every one that is yet in a natural state, and under the covenant of works, as all are, that are out of Christ; for no saving blessing commences, till the new foundation be laid. Oh! the cursed state of unbelievers, and all that are out of Christ! As the blessings commence from the day of union with the second Adam, Christ Jesus; so, the curse continues as long as you are unite to the first Adam, and upon an old-covenant bottom. Alas! how great is the folly of multitudes, besides the openly profane, that flatter themselves as if they were blessed! And why? They think they are good, honest folk, and good liver, as they call them; they perform many good duties, and so they doubt not but God will thereupon bless them. But, I must tell you, in the name of the great God, that you are under the great curse of this almighty God,

as long as the foundation of the spiritual temple is not laid ; and as long as you know not, what it is to be brought off from the old-covenant foundation : you may, indeed, deceive yourselves and the world, by thinking that you are Christians good enough, like neighbour and other ; but God knows the blasphemy of these that say they are Jews, and are not ; that say they are Christians, and are not ; but are the synagogue of Satan, the temple of the devil, and not of God. And as you blaspheme God, by thinking your religion is good enough, while God's word declares the contrary ; so God curses you, and all his attributes are against you ; for, out of Christ, he is a consuming fire ; in him only he is well pleased : and therefore, while you are out of him, he is neither pleased with your persons nor duties. If your work be only the repairing the fabric of the old covenant of works, thinking to please and satisfy God's justice, and fulfil God's law by your duties, that you may live thereby : I must tell you, that unless your person was innocent as Adam's before the fall, and your obedience so perfect as never to have sinned in thought, word, or deed, all your days, but lived up to the law, in its most and full and spiritual extent ; I say, unless it be thus with you, which is simply impossible, of any of Adam's sinful race, I must tell you, that you are so far from being God's people, or in God's favour, by your best duties, that 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 the law, to do them : and all the people shall say, Amen." Deut. xxvii. 26. If you could give perfect obedience to it yourself, then you should be justified by it ; but, whereas you cannot do it, and you are still attempting it, without building upon the foundation of Christ's obedience to the death ; if you will take the old way of doing, that you may live, then you must take it with a vengeance, unless you can do to purpose ; " Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them, Gal. iii. 10. And all the people shall say, Amen ;" all true believers can say Amen to it, in the words of Paul, " Let him that loves not our Lord Jesus Christ [who is the sure foundation of the spiritual temple] be Anathema, Maran-atha." Oh ! the cursed state of all that are out of Christ, and are yet upon the old foundation ! If the foundation of the temple be not laid, no blessings do yet belong to you, but all divine curses : and, if you have adventured to a com-

munion-table this day, in that case, you are so far from being blessed from this day, that you have been eating and drinking your own damnation, and getting a seal and confirmation of all the curses that you are under. Ah! dreadful! man, woman, what if God be saying, "From this day will I *curse* you; from this day will I *plague* you?" Consider this, all ye that are in a secure, Christless, natural state.

2. Hence see on the other hand, the blessed state of all believers in Christ, ever since they came to Christ; they are blessed; for, they are lively stones built up a spiritual house, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5. There is the *live* and *do*, in the covenant of grace, instead of *do* and *live*, in the covenant of works. Under the law of works, the man doth, that he may live; but, under the law of grace, he lives that he may do; he gets a spiritual life in Christ; being, as a lively stone built up a spiritual house; and then he is put in case to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Christ. Let men build never such a high tower of duty and devotion, without coming to Christ, as unto a living stone, and so getting life in him, they build without a foundation; and so their Babel-building will be overthrown, as being neither spiritual nor acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ. But, O blessed is the believer in whom the foundation of the spiritual temple is laid, by his being unite to Christ; for now he lives and builds upon a good foundation; "Serving the Lord, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit." Because Christ the foundation lives, he lives also; he lives a life of justification, through the merit of Christ; and a life of sanctification, by the Spirit of Christ; saying, "Surely in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength." There is the foundation on which he leans all his weight, to the greater credit and honour of God's holy law, than the greatest merit-mongers and legalists in the world are capable to give it; for, if he looks to the law as a covenant of works, then he leans upon this foundation for righteousness; and there he finds perfect obedience to all the commands, and complete satisfaction to all the curses of it, as much as the covenant of works can seek: and then, if he looks to the law as a rule of duty and of obedience, then he leans to his foundation for strength, that his grace may be sufficient for him, and his strength perfected in his weakness. O happy believer, which hath learned this mystery, which God hath hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto

babes ; and whereby you can answer the law as a covenant, by saying, "In the Lord have I righteousness ;" and answer it as a rule, by saying, "In the Lord have I strength," Isa. xlv. 24. To say this in reality, and in the experience of faith, is more than thousands of learned Rabbies in the world could ever say or understand ; "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but your Father which is in heaven." O blessed day, that ever the foundation of this spiritual temple was laid ? He that hath laid the foundation will carry on the work, till it be finished : "He that hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it ; for He is a Rock, and his work is perfect." He hath been at some expense already in laying the foundation ; and he will never leave the work incomplete ; he hath been at the expense of blood in buying the stones of the old quarry out of the hand of justice ; for "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ : " and he hath been at the expense of power and pains, in laying the stones upon the foundation ; for, without a day of power, none would be willing to cleave to this foundation. But for you, believer, he hath made you willing in a day of his power ; and from this day doth he bless you ; and blessed shall you be for ever in him. And all God's ministers and people on earth, and all his saints and angels in heaven, will say Amen.

3. Hence we may see, that God hath his term days, his building days, his blessing days. Every day is not a temple-foundation day ; every day is not a temple-building day ; but, O for such days of the Son of man amongst us ! for they are very rare, in this dark and heavy day wherein we live ; O for that happy hour in which the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live ! When the minister is brought to a good and warm frame in preaching, he is ready to think, O now that happy day is come, when power shall accompany the word for destroying the old building, and laying the foundation of the spiritual temple : but he may be all mistaken ; for "It is not for us to know the times and the seasons." But, notwithstanding of the great restraint of the Spirit at this day, yet I would fain hope that God's term-day is coming with respect to some in this country-side : O cry for a day of power. I hope of others, that they have met with this day already : and, though the work goes slowly on, while the Lord is so much withdrawn, because the first generation have sinned him away ; yet, ever since the first stone of the temple was laid, the

foundation hath never altogether been razed, but they have enjoyed now and then some remarkable days ; some days for digging and discovering the foundation ; and some days for sealing and giving confirmation. O Sirs, “ Despise not the day of small things ; ” but put a remark upon God’s days ; his days of coming, and his days of going ; his days of absence, and his days of presence ; that so his day of absence may be a day of prayer to you, and his day of presence a day of praise.

4. Hence we may see what makes it go ill with the church of Christ, in general, at this day, especially in these lands : why, the Lord’s temple is not built ; few or none put to their hand to lay the foundation of the temple, or to begin and advance a work of reformation : and, therefore, the Lord is not blessing us at this day ; but we lie under many cursed fruits and effects of his anger ; cursed divisions and animosities ; cursed jealousies of one another ; and differences of judgment and principles ; cursed dissensions even about truth and error ; cursed bondage with respect to the discipline and government of the church : many, many curses we lie under at this day, instead of blessings ; and none of them all more dreadful than that the word and ordinances of Christ are so much blasted to the generality, that few are getting any saving or converting good of the word ; and the most part are rather hardened or stupified under it. Alas ! whence is all this curse upon us, and little blessing discerned ? Why, surely temple-work and temple-reformation is laid aside : this is what the Lord complains of, by this same prophet Haggai, chap. i. 2, 3, 4, “ People say, The time is not come, the time to build the Lord’s house.” Why, says God, “ Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste ? ” Thus many think, O it is not time to think of a public covenanted work of reformation ; to ply the state for the redress of church-grievances and the like ; but, ah ! is it time for us to dwell in our ceiled house, while the house of the Lord lies waste ? Is it time for us to be consulting nothing but our own worldly ease, profit, and security, while God’s temple is wasted ? Oh ! what will the world be to you, when your eye-strings are breaking ? What will the world be to you, when you see Christ coming in flaming fire ? Is it time for us to be indulging ourselves in the enjoyment of outward conveniences, lands, and houses, and yet no time to be concerned about temple-work, when the foundations are like to be destroyed ? But, with faith the prophet here ? “ Consider your ways : have you not been

blasted and broken since temple-work was neglected?" So may it be said of us, Have we not been blasted and cursed many ways; broken, divided, and rent into a thousand pieces, because of our little zeal for temple-reformation? Is it any wonder then God set our house on fire about our ears, when we are become so coldrife in the zeal of his house, which should eat us up? I speak of all sorts; both high and low, magistrates, ministers, and people, without distinction, as being all in our several stations defective with respect to temple-reformation, according to our call, in the distinct spheres of our activity. But, alas! our defection is gone to such a degree, that we can hardly speak of the defections of the day, without being misconstrued. But I speak of such defections, whereof I desire to accuse myself among the first. However, I say, we need not think strange, that it goes so ill with the church, and that the Lord is not blessing us as a church, when temple-reformation is so much neglected.

Use 2. Our next use shall be for trial and examination, if we are blessed or cursed of God according as the foundation is laid or not: surely it is our duty to try whether or not we have built our souls and our salvation upon the right foundation or not; "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Many lay a wrong foundation, and yet think the foundation is laid well enough: for example, some build upon the sandy foundation of a name and profession: "They have a name to live, and are dead." Some build upon the shoulders of their progenitors, especially, if religious: the grandmother Lois, and the mother Eunice. Many follow their forefathers' religion, be what it will. Some build upon the foundation of a negative goodness; "O God be thanked, say some, I am no swearer, drunkard, whoremonger; "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men;" though I may have my faults, yet there are worse folk in the world than I am; for I have always a good heart towards God." Woe is me, for you, poor deluded wretch! if you knew yourself, you would see yourself the chief of sinners; yea worse than a devil. Some again build upon the foundation of graceless graces, if I may so call them. Thus many say they have hope, but it is a false hope; they hope in the mercy of God, but yet it is a damning hope, an ignorant hope, a delusive hope; for they were never begotten again to a new and lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; and they were never brought to despair in themselves. Many say they have faith,

but it is cradle faith ; “ O ! God forbid, say they, but we believe in Christ, and trust in God. Blessed be God, I have trusted in God all my days ; and I have always believed.” And yet never saw their want of faith ; were never convinced of their unbelief ; never saw the need of God’s power to work faith in them ; and far less ever felt this power. I tell you that cradle faith will lead you to hell, and not to heaven ; for it is a faith of the devil’s making, and not of God’s operation. Some again build upon the foundation of their great attainments : they do not want knowledge, perhaps ; and, may be, they have sometimes floods of tears, at sermons, common motions, and meltings in duty ; enlargements of natural affections in prayer ; and ravishments of joy now and then : but what a sandy foundation this is our Lord Jesus witnesses, while he tells us of the stony-ground hearers, that hear the word with joy ; yea with a temporary faith ; they receive it with joy ; but they have no root in them, and so all fails them in the issue. Some again build upon the foundation of a legal righteousness and religious performances, while unacquaint with the foundation : this is not God’s righteousness ; “ They being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going absent to establish a righteousness of their own, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God,” Rom. x. 13 : the righteousness of God is the righteousness of Christ ; for, “ Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” Man, woman, do you know nothing of what it is to be divorced from the law as a covenant of life and works, and shaken off from confidence in the flesh, or expectations of God’s favour by your duties or obedience to the law as a covenant ? Let none mistake me, as if I were speaking against the rule as a rule of life and holiness : I speak of a divorce from the law as a covenant of works and condition of life ; and am saying no more than what the apostle says, Rom. vii. 4, “ Ye, brethren, are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that you should be married to another, even to him that was raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” And Gal. ii. 19, “ I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God ;” intimating that as none can perform a gospel-obedience to the law, as a rule, until they be divorced from the law as a covenant, and married to Christ, in whom they are in case of bringing forth fruit to God, so that all who are built upon the foundation of a legal righteousness of their own, they are a stranger to true godliness, and upon a wrong foundation ; and I insist most

upon this, because it is the most dangerous foundation that a man can be built upon ; because, being built upon the righteousness of the law, he thinks that he has the law of God upon his side, and so it is harder to convince him of the evil of his righteousness, than it is to convince a hundred profane wretches of the evil of their sins : and, therefore, the greatest of sinners stand fairer for heaven than self-righteous persons, Mat. xxi. 31, " Verily, I say unto you," says Christ, speaking of the self-righteous Pharisees, " that publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you." This might be strange doctrine, indeed, to all legalists, if it were not Christ's doctrine. I must tell you, that you are all by nature married and wedded to the law, and to a legal righteousness built upon that foundation ; and nothing can divorce you from that first husband, but the almighty power of God's grace, revealing his Son in you. And, therefore, you little need any doctrine that tends to foster up that natural conceit that you have of your own doing, as if God would be appeased thereby. It is true, a sermon of good works is a noble subject, providing it be evangelically treated : and presupposing, that the foundation of all good works is laid by union to Christ, in whom all our good fruit is found. But, if I should preach a sermon of works and obedience to the law ; and, perhaps, should only, at the conclusion of the sermon, give a short caution, saying, " Good people, mind, there is no merit ; and " that all your strength to do right, is from Christ. Alas ! the most common professor and ignorant gospel-hearer will own that is true, they may learn many orthodox sentences of that sort, but they are words of course, that they have learned by custom and constant hearing ; while yet their hope of pleasing God is still founded upon something done in them, or by them ; being naturally glued to the law ; and so they may profess that there is no justification by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ, or by the works of Christ received by faith ; yet they continue as great enemies to the cross of Christ, as the most profane persons that ever lived ; and, if they continue in that state, shall as surely perish with their righteousness, as others with their sins ; for, " If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." And yet some cannot endure to hear any thing spoken against self-righteousness ; as if no person were in danger of being ruined thereby : whereas this is a great part of the strong man's armour, whereby he keeps possession of souls, and as if they were all new schemers and Antinomians that preach up the righteousness

of Christ, as the alone sure foundation of the spiritual temple, in opposition to that natural and damnable self-righteousness. The apostle of the Gentiles was charged thus in his day ; but what is his vindication ? Why, says he, "Do we make void the law, through faith ? Nay, we establish the law." We lead to a righteousness whereby God can save us to the credit of his law ; to the honour of his holiness ; to the satisfaction of his justice ; and to the glory of all his perfections. And therefore, if I have obtained any favour and grace from the Lord, to be faithful to the souls of people in my ministerial station, I must testify and declare to you all that hear me, in the awful name and authority of the great and eternal God, who will call you and me to answer for what we do, before his dreadful tribunal, that whoever think to stand in judgment upon the rotten foundation of any legal righteousness, good works, duties, or performances of their own, they shall as surely perish in their righteousness, as ever any of the damned in hell perished in their sins ; because this righteousness of yours is but a sinful righteousness, and there is no salvation but by a perfect righteousness. I speak not only to the grossly ignorant, but even to all these, who, though they may have sound heads and sound opinions, professing that there is no justification by the works of the law ; yet, are so far from having a sound heart, and a sound faith, that they are seeking salvation, as it were, by the works of the law, as did Israel, Rom. ix. 31, 32 ; but they perished in the cause ; "For, they stumbled at that stumbling-stone," that sure and only foundation that I am speaking of. I must say, then, of all other foundations, besides this, that men are ready to build upon ; I must say of them, as Christ said to his disciples, when they shewed him the fabric of the material temple, "There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The apostle cuts off all other foundations besides Christ, 1 Cor. iii. 11, saying, "Another foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ ;" and he did not speak ignorantly, for he saw, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that he was a wise master-builder, ver. 10. And therefore, we would be but mad builders, if we should teach you to build upon any other foundation ; yea, or to build, as it were, upon any other foundation, by mixing any of our own rubbish with it, as if this were not a sufficient foundation. To daub with untempered mortar in this case, were enough to bring a curse upon any angel in heaven, let be any minister upon earth :

therefore, the apostle, speaking on this very subject, says, "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." Cursed be the man or angel that dare build a temple for God upon any other ground than this blessed foundation.

Quest. How shall we know then if the foundation of the spiritual temple be laid in us? That is, in short, if Christ be formed in you, or not; and if you be built upon Christ as your foundation.

I offer you these scriptural marks for your trial.

1. If this foundation be laid, you have been humbled under a sense of your sin and folly, in building your hope upon any other foundation, and thereby slighting this foundation. This is imported in the promise of the Spirit to convince of sin, especially of unbelief, John xvi. 8, "He shall reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not in me:" that is, because they have not built upon me as the foundation. Now, has the Spirit of God ever convinced and humbled you, for your sin of unbelief in slighting the Son of God, and seeking to build on other foundations? If you know nothing of this, it is to be feared the foundation is not yet laid; but if you do, it is an evidence that God either hath begun, or is beginning the good work.

2. If this foundation be laid, then you have been made to quit your hold of all other foundations, and to give up with them; yea, to despise them as dung, in comparison of this foundation: "What things were gain to me," says Paul, "these I counted loss for Christ," Phil. iii. 8. What things doth he speak of? Why, it is even his best things, his best righteousness; for he was, concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; and concerning the righteousness which is of the law, a blameless person: yet all this he counts loss for Christ. You will say, "That was the righteousness he had before his conversion; but doth he not esteem better of his righteousness after his conversion?" Nay, he puts that among the despicable dung too; "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss and dung [*or dogs' meat*, as it is in the original] for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, that I may win him, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith, unto all, and upon all them that believe." Have you thus been made to quit the hold of all other foundations, and to despise them as dung in comparison of this foundation? This says much for you.

3. Have you cordially and resolutely been made to lay the whole weight of your souls and bodies, and all that concern them for time and eternity, and the whole weight of your salvation upon this foundation, and upon it only? This is the soul's echo to that call, Ps. lv. 22, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." And to that, 1 Pet. v. 7, "Cast all your cares upon him, for he careth for you." This is the soul's motion to Christ for rest, Matt. xi. 28. "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now, have you thus come, and found rest to your heart and conscience, by casting all the burdens of your sin and guilt, all the cares of your salvation and eternal happiness upon this blessed foundation? Why, then, your portion is provided, your everlasting felicity is secured for ever; you may say, truly, what the fool said vainly, "Soul, take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up not for many years only, but for all the ages of eternity." If all your burdens and cares be laid upon the foundation, what have you to care for? Why, say you, should a soul that is come to Christ, have no more care about salvation? I answer, "There is a sinful care of anxiety, doubts, and fears; this he ought no more to have: but there is a holy care of activity and diligence, to testify his gratitude to the God of his salvation; this he ought to have; both these you see, Phil. iv. 6, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Therefore,

4. If this foundation be laid, then you will live upon the foundation, and have a real and constant communion with the foundation, by cleaving to it, and abiding in it; just as the stone of a building cleaves to, abides with, and, in a manner, lives upon the foundation. Now, do you live upon this living foundation, so as you cannot live without him? As Christ himself says, "Without me ye can do nothing;" or, "Separate from me, the foundation, ye can do nothing." Hypocrites and legalists, and all that are not built upon this foundation, they can do all things themselves; they can read, and pray, and hear, and communicate, and what not: they think it is very easily done, and what should hinder them. Alas! they know not what it is to live upon the foundation; to lean upon and draw virtue from the foundation; but the believer finds it otherwise, even that he cannot live, he cannot move, he cannot act spiritually in any duty whatsoever, without spiritual communications of life, light, and strength: his life is hid with Christ in God; and so he

lives, yet not he, but Christ liveth in him, and the life he lives is by the faith of the Son of God. Thus he lives in a constant dependence upon the foundation.

5. If this foundation be laid, then you will not only live upon, but live to this foundation. Christ is said to die for us, "That they which live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again," 2 Cor. v. 15. Before a man be united to this foundation, he lives to himself; self is at the top and bottom of all his best duties and performances; but whatever remainders of self is with the believer, yet the power and dominion of self is so far broken in him, that his self-love, self-aims, and self-ends are his burden; and to live to the honour and glory of a God in Christ, is the chief end he desires always to set before him. In a word,

6. If the foundation of the spiritual temple be laid, then the Spirit of the foundation will be in you: for, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; but he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit:" and this Spirit within the man is sometimes a witnessing, and sealing, and comforting Spirit; and also a cleansing, purifying, and sanctifying Spirit, leading forth the believer habitually to spiritual thoughts and meditations, and to a spiritual walk and conversation. Now, these marks, I am sure, will stand the trial of the word of God; and, therefore, search and try yourselves thereby, whether the foundation of the spiritual temple be laid or not.

Use 3. The next use shall be for exhortation. Omitting all that might be said by way of terror, to all these in whom the foundation is not laid; being under the curse from the day that they were conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity; yea, from the day that you fell in Adam; from that day you are cursed of God: omitting also, what might be said by way of comfort to believers in whom the foundation is laid, they being actually blessed from the moment of their union to the Son of God, from this day and for ever they are blessed: omitting these, I shall close with a word of exhortation to those two sorts,—viz., unbelievers and believers. And,

1st, To all unbelievers, as the most part are, that are strangers to this laying of the foundation of the temple. My exhortation is, O be restless till the foundation of the temple be laid, as you would not be laid under the heavy curse of God to all eternity, and for ever

deprived of his blessing. And in order to the laying of this foundation of the temple, know, that the work is God's ; for, " Not by power, nor by might, but by his Spirit," is the foundation laid ; and therefore cry for the Spirit of God, to be poured out upon you, and under his influence, follow these four means, which I shall direct you to.

1. Count the cost of the whole building, before you begin to lay the foundation : " Which of you, intending to build a tower, says Christ, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest, haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish it," Luke xiv. 28—30. Some believe too soon, by a temporary faith, without ever counting the cost. This work must be done with deliberation ; not that you need to deliberate whether it should be done or not ; but there needs mature deliberation that it be right done. Many do rashly take up a profession of religion, and so comes of them ; for, in an evil day, they make defection, give up with all religion, and overturn the foundations that seemed to be laid ; and no wonder, for the true foundation was never rightly laid. The Lord determines all his own so to count the cost, that they must have Christ, cost what it will ; and resolve to cleave to him, though it should cost them the loss of their friends, and means, and lives to the bargain.

2. Look to this same Spirit, to help you to dig deep, till you come to the rock. All that lay the foundation right are acquaint with digging deep. There are these four things you should dig deep into.

(1.) Dig deep to see your natural condition : Oh ! was you never afraid for yourself, man, as being under the curse of God ? Was you never afraid for the wrath of God, and the threatenings of the law ? Was you never afraid for the conversion you was born with, and for the faith and hope you have had all your days, as if you had been born a convert ? That conversion will carry you to hell if you get no more ; for you were born an enemy to God, a slave of Satan, and an heir of hell. Oh ! dig to see your state of sin and misery by nature, otherwise you will build upon a sandy foundation.

(2.) Also, dig deep to see your heart-plagues : and sure I am, you will find it to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. If you saw yourself, you would never say, I hope I have

a good heart to God ; as I have heard some poor, ignorant, brutish people say. Dig deep into your heart-plagues, and heart-wickedness, like Ezekiel's digging through the wall, to see greater abominations than these, and still greater and greater. You that dig in any measure into your hearts, you will find much wickedness therein ; but if you dig deeper, you will find more.

(3.) Again, dig deep to see your soul-wants and necessities : he will never build upon the foundation that doth not see his need of Christ. They lay the foundation best that dig deepest. Some are full and rich, and think they have enough, and stand in need of nothing ; but the poor soul that is sensible of his emptiness and poverty, destitute of life, strength, liberty, and of all spiritual good whatsoever, it is that soul that is most ready to hold by the foundation.

(4.) And then dig deep to see your danger and hazard coming on. Can any of you promise yourself twenty-four hours' health in the world ? Can any of you promise yourself twenty-four hours' quietness and peace, without trouble and vexation, in the world ? Can any of you promise yourself a tack of life for ten days to come, or freedom from death for two days ? No, by no means ; you are in constant danger : and if you dig but a little here, you will see that man in his best estate is altogether vanity : dig deeper, and you will find more and more of it ; for, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

3. In order to the laying the foundation, take the help and advice of the most skilful builders. Ministers of the gospel are under-builders, and workers together with God ; and you are to take their help and advice, Mal. ii. 7, "The priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." And because you should take their advice, both in public ordinances and in private conference ; therefore you have need to pray, that they be wise, faithful builders, not daubing with untempered mortar, or laying a wrong foundation ; for they must answer for every wrong pin of the building, if it come through their default. Their help is much worth, who are called of God himself to be builders, and who are built upon the foundation themselves ; for such will be earnest to have others founded there. We need to be all more skilful in the choice of materials for building, especially we that are ministers ; for, the apostle speaks of some that build wood, hay, and stubble upon the foundation, instead of gold, silver, and precious stones, 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13. But the fire

will try every man's work, what sort it is. If the old house, the old foundation, be not cast down and overthrown, the fire of God will burn and destroy it. Not only the old foundation of sin and lust must be thrown down, according to that word, which should always sound in our ears, Psalm xxxvii. 27, "Depart from evil, and do good, and live for evermore:" but also the old foundation of Self and self-righteousness; these filthy rags will not make a good foundation: they are not proof against the flames of hell; such rags will easily burn: I say, the fire will try every man's work, and burn up all rotten foundations. Therefore, plead of God, that we that are ministers, may be all wise builders, and put in case to give you good help in laying the foundation. And then,

4. Above all things, come to the foundation himself; this foundation is laid in Zion, that you may come to it: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth in him shall never be confounded," Isa. xxviii. 16. Though this foundation be not yet laid subjectively and efficaciously in you; yet, I can assure you, it is laid objectively and doctrinally for you, in this gospel, that you may come to it by faith; for, "To you is the word of this salvation sent." I can declare to you, in Jehovah's name, that this foundation is able to bear the weight of your soul, and all the burdens that lie upon you, though they be mountains of sin and guilt; for, "He is able to save to the uttermost." And I can assure you, in the same name, that "There is no other foundation, no other name given under heaven, whereby you can be saved;" and that you have all access to this foundation: "Whosoever will, let him come." Let him be never so black and ugly; yea, though he has been a drunkard, whoremonger, Sabbath-breaker, or even a scorner and mocker of God and godliness; yet Wisdom cries in the streets just now, saying, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and ye scornors delight in scorning? Turn ye at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit unto you." His complaint against you is, that you will not come to him, that you might have life. Though you were in compact with the devil, like Manasseh, and had a legion of devils, like Mary Magdalene; and though there was never the like of you for a sinner, yet come, come, there was never the like of him for a Saviour. Are you a wonderful sinner? Here is a wonderful Saviour, and a wonderful foundation. I must tell you, too, that as the disadvantage will be great, if you do not come to this founda-

tion, for the curse of God will pursue you for ever, because there remains no more sacrifice for sin, no other foundation, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary: so the advantage will be great by your coming to this foundation; for you shall be as happy as God's blessing can make you: for, "From this day will he bless you:" from this day will he love you, from this day will he honour you; because, by coming to this foundation, you would put honour upon God and his law. Oh! have you not dishonoured God hitherto? Have you not broken his law? Well, would you put honour upon all God's perfections, for all the dishonour ever you have done to him? And, would you put honour upon God's holy law, for all your breaches thereof? The way to do it is by coming to and building on this foundation, Christ, who has magnified the law and made it honourable. Would you have God to be pleased with you from this day and for ever? Then come, and lay your souls upon the foundation of his perfect righteousness, and obedience to the death; for, "The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness-sake." Now, is any saying, "Alas! I think, I would come, but I cannot come, though you should use all the rhetoric in the world." Well, God knows you cannot come; and so far are you from being able of yourself to come, that if a good thought would win heaven, you cannot, of yourself, bring it forth: "No man can come except the Father draw him." But though you cannot come to this foundation, yet know it is a living foundation, it can come to you. Are you willing that the foundation come to you? That Christ come to you, and put his Spirit within you, and put your lusts out of you! That he raze the old foundation, and lay you on him himself as the sure foundation? If you can say, in the sight of a heart-searching God, that this day hath been such a day of power, as that the Lord hath so far broken your natural enmity, as to make you willing to cleave to this foundation, and to be put in like a pin of this blessed building, whereof Christ is the corner-stone; and willing that this living foundation come and put life in you, and do all your works in you, and for you, because you can do nothing of yourself, then, I may say, that this day the temple-work is begun; and from this day will he bless you. Therefore,

2dly, I proceed to drop a word to you who are believers, and either now or formerly have the foundation of the temple laid within you. And my exhortation is, that you would, through grace, carry

up the building upon this foundation ; building up yourselves in the most holy faith ; and so working out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do. You will say, True, I dare not altogether deny but the foundation is laid ; but, how shall I carry up the building of the spiritual temple on the foundation ? Why, his grace, that hath begun the good work, must be sufficient for you ; and his strength made perfect in your weakness : and therefore, renounce your own strength, and go on to the work in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, and of his only. And that those who have come to the foundation may carry on the building-work more successfully, I shall close with a direction or two to them.

1. In order to the right building, seek of the Lord that he would give you the *mason's word*, if I may so call it : as builders and masons have a word, whereby they know another ; so the spiritual builders have a secret word, a sacred instinct, whereby they know Christ's voice whenever they hear it : " My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me." There is a peculiar word which he gives them, John xvii. 14, " I have given them thy word ; and the world hateth them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I have given them thy word ;" what is that word ? Indeed, it is a secret ; and though I should tell it, none here will understand it but these that have gotten it. It is a word that none in the world but builders and believers have ; and it is a word which they cannot build. And I think the word there meant is Christ himself ; that Word that was made flesh. " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." I called him the foundation, and I call him the Word too : for, though you have come to the foundation, yet if Christ the foundation do not give you the word, or give you himself again, by giving you a new hold of him by faith, you will never be in case to build : " I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up," Acts xx. 32. Where, by the *word of his grace*, some of the best divines understand Christ himself. And what word but this is able to build you up, or to fit for building the pillars of the temple, Jachin and Boaz, *stability and strength*.

2. In order to the right building, bring all your stones out of God's quarry, and all your materials for building out of Christ's fulness. What are the materials for the building ? They are the graces of the Spirit, viz., faith, love, repentance, knowledge, and all

other graces: you cannot build the spiritual temple without these. Faith is the closing with and joining to the foundation; love is the cement that binds and knits it together; knowledge is like the window of the temple, at which the believer looks out. But what is the quarry out of which we must take these and the like materials? Why, Christ himself, who is the foundation, is also the quarry; and out of his fulness we must receive grace for grace. Where will you get faith if you go not to him for it? For he is the Author and finisher of faith. Where will you get knowledge if you go not to him for it in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Where will you get repentance, if you go not to him for it? For, "He is a Prince and a Saviour, by the right hand of God, to give repentance to Israel." God hath made him the great Treasurer; "It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell, that we might be complete in him." But in case you think this quarry is far off, you need not say, "Who will go up to heaven, and bring down Christ? Or, who will descend into the deep, and bring him up? He is near in the word;" you may dig in this quarry, and yet go no farther than the Bible that is in your hand. The promises of the covenant themselves are excellent materials for the building. You may find Christ himself in them; and therefore I would have you, in order to the building, lay up these promises in your heart. Lay up the promise of pardon, the promise of a new heart, the promise of grace and glory. Lay up a promise for every change that may befall you. Lay up a promise of strength; as when he says, "My strength shall be perfected in thy weakness." Lay up a promise of presence; as when he says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Lay up a promise of protection, as when he says, "The place of your defence shall be the munition of rocks;—a man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of waters in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Lay up a promise of provision; as when he says, "Bread shall be given thee, and your water shall be sure." Lay up a promise of direction and conduct; as when he says, "I will lead the blind in a way they know not, and in paths which they have not known." Lay up a promise for supply; as when he says, "My God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Lay up a promise for death itself; as when he says, "Death shall be swallowed up in victory." O it would be surest to travel through the valley of the shadow of death

with the promise in your hand. Lay up a promise for every state ; see Isa. xli. 17–20. I say, lay up these, and the like materials for the building, and bring them all out of God's quarry.

3. In order to the right building, make use of God's square and plumb-line : see Isa. xxviii. 17. I mean, his law ; you, believers, are delivered from the law as a covenant ; and, therefore, there is none in the world so much obliged as you are, to make use of the law as a rule ; “ They that walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and on all the Israel of God.” Let that word sound still in your ears, Psa. xxxvii. 37, “ Depart from evil, and dwell for evermore ;” and surely, if you be in your element, you will be saying, “ O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes ! O let me not wander from thy commandments. O enlarge my heart, that I may run the way of thy commandments.” But, beside the precept of the law, in the hand of a Mediator, there are the examples of the saints in scripture that belong to this square and line for the building, especially the example of the King of saints, Christ Jesus, “ Who hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps.” Set Christ before you in your building ; and learn of him, for he is meek and lowly.

4. In order to the right and successful building, seek more and more displays of the glory of God in the face of Christ ; for, says the Psalmist, “ When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory.” As the foundation is laid by saving discoveries of his glory ; so the building is still advanced by this same means : according as you are made to behold his glory as in a glass, so shall you be changed into the same image, from glory to glory ; and thus the building shall go up.

5. In a word, call in always the assistance of the great Architect and Master-builder ; for, “ Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” Be always coming to him, 1 Pet. ii. 4. Be much about his hand, in the use of means ; praying in secret, searching the scriptures, and the like ; but still remember, whatever is incumbent on you, in point of means and duty, the whole work is his, in point of power and efficiency. Saints may weep for Zion, but the Lord must build her. It is he that lays the foundation ; for, “ The Lord hath founded Zion.” It is he that raises the superstructure ; by working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. And it is he that must finish the work, and lay on the cope-stone, with shouting, crying, “ Grace, grace, unto

it." Therefore, O give him employment ; and let him have all the work, who will have all the glory. Employ him to remove all the mountains of difficulty, that stand in the way of this building ; for, it is he that must say, " Who art thou, O great mountain ? before our Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain."

Now, I have done, and if any be going away without Christ, or without having this foundation laid, you are going away with God's curse upon you ; and though you do not see it now, yet it will meet with you fearfully at death and judgment ; and lie upon you heavily to all eternity. You will never do a good turn as long as you are of this foundation ; whatever you may do, that is naturally good, you are incapable of doing anything spiritually good, and acceptably good ; for " They that are in the flesh," and out of Christ, " they cannot please God." And so, as long as the foundation is not laid, you will never have a day to do well. But I hope, some are going away, rejoicing and glorying in this foundation ; and if there be any here that are brought to glory in Christ as the foundation of their hope ; the foundation of their peace with God ; the foundation of their holiness and comfort ; the foundation of their light and life, strength and liberty ; the foundation of their grace, and glory, and eternal salvation : O blessed are you now ! and blessed shall you be for ever : whatever spiritual damp or temporal difficulties you may come under after this, yet you shall be blessed in prosperity and adversity ; though God should visit your iniquities with rods, yet the rod is in a friend's hand ; " His loving-kindness will he not take away." Yea, if this hath been a believing day to you, a foundation-laying day, or a temple-building-day, then I must tell you, in the name of the great God, that from this day will he bless you.

SERMON LVII.

GOSPEL-HEARERS HAVE A FIRM GROUND FOR FAITH AND HOPE
IN THE WORST OF TIMES.¹

“Who against hope, believed in hope.”—Rom. iv. 18.

THERE is always need of faith, and of a strong faith, and especially in days of trials and troubles. Such was the faith of the patriarch Abraham, as you see in this chapter, particularly in the context. Here his faith is commended. We are told particularly in whom he believed, and how he believed.

1. In whom he believed, you see, in the preceding verse, that it was God, even the God that quickeneth the dead, and that calleth the things that be not, as though they were, ver. 17.

There was difficulty in Abraham's way with reference to believing what God had promised him, namely, in giving an Isaac, a son to him, and to Sarah, in her old decayed years. Now, his faith looks to a God that promised, as a God that quickens the dead, and calls the things that be not as though they were; and really his faith needed such an object and foundation as this. And, indeed, such is the art and policy of faith, that it gripes to that in God which suits the particular difficulties of the soul. But as we are told in whom he believed, so we are told how he believed, particularly in the text, and the following verses also. O! how did he believe? why, “against hope, he believed in hope;” as it follows, ver. 20. “He staggered not at the promise of God,” but was strong in the faith, as being fully persuaded that God was able to raise himself from the dead.

Here in the words that I have read, we have a sum of the ways how he believed: “he against hope, believed in hope;” and so became the father of many nations; the father of the faithful, as he is called, even as some think Eve is called the mother of all the faithful, the mother of all living; being the mother of all that believe on Jesus Christ.

But, I go on to consider the text. I need not divide it; it is

(1) This subject was opened up in two discourses, at a sacramental occasion at Orwell, on the Saturday and Sabbath, the 5th and 6th August, 1738.

divided to my hand: I may say it is divided against itself. Here is hope against hope: here is natural hope against spiritual hope: "who against hope, believed in hope." Abraham, in his present case, had nothing from sense, or carnal reason, to support his hope of having a son, or that the promise should be accomplished; all things from sense and reason seemed to speak against it. Well, but "against hope, he believed in hope." There is a nick in religion, Sirs, that we need to know and understand; here is hope, and it seems to be, as it were, upon the gulph of despair, when there is nothing without, but ground of despair against hope believing in hope.

For understanding of the words further, we may remark these two or three things concerning the patriarch Abraham.

1. I remark, that Abraham had heard the gospel; the gospel was preached to him: Gal. iii. 8. "The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed." Of thee shall come an Isaac, and of him shall come the Messiah; so in thee shall all nations be blessed.

2. I remark, that as Abraham heard the gospel, so he believed the gospel: Rom. iv. 4. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." He was a believer, and a strong believer.

3. I remark, that between the time of the promise made to Abraham, and the accomplishment of it, there was a considerable time, and many difficulties intervened. Hence we read in the following verses here, of the deadness of Abraham's body, and barrenness of Sarah's womb.

4. I remark, that those great difficulties, lying in the way, gave occasion to discover the strength of Abraham's faith: so we are told here, that he staggered not at the promise; but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God. And we will find, after the having of the promise of an Isaac accomplished to him, in that instance repeated to us, Heb. ii. 17, 18, 19, where we have a short account of Abraham's offering up Isaac by faith: "Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that received the promises, offered up his only begotten son; of whom it is said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." How did Abraham receive him from the dead in a figure! He did

it, in regard he received him as the promise of God: he received him from the dead, in as much as he received him by means of Abraham's dead body, and Sarah's dead womb, out of the hands of that God that quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not, as though they were; and so, "Against hope, he believed in hope."

The Doctrine natively arising from the words, is the following,

That unto those that hear the gospel of a promising God in Christ, there is a firm ground for faith and hope, in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases.

In speaking to this proposition, I would, through divine aid, essay the four following things.

I. I would illustrate the doctrine in a few remarks.

II. I would enquire into the nature of this faith and hope, that is here spoken of.

III. I would notice some of the hopeless and desperate-like cases that may take place, and yet a firm ground for faith and hope remain.

IV. I would enquire what ground there is for faith and hope in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases. And then,

V. Deduce some inferences for application.

I. I would clear and illustrate the doctrine in a few remarks.

And,

1. I remark, that although all these are true believers, who against hope believe in hope; yet there is a foundation for faith and hope to all the Lord's people; yea, there is a foundation for faith and hope in the everlasting gospel: the gospel opens a door of hope; it publishes and presents Christ to us, who is the sum of all the promises of the covenant, and of the blessings thereof; and sinners are called to come to this Jesus, and believe in him; it is the command of God that we do so. But again,

2. I remark, that although the dispensation of the gospel contains many calls, invitations, and promises; yet I look upon the promises to be the ornament of that dispensation. Hence we have the gospel called a promise, in the text formerly read, Gal. iii. 8. "He preached the gospel to Abraham;" what is the gospel? "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." The promises, and the revelation of grace, are the proper object of faith: and as faith believes the promise, so hope expects the first fruits thereof.

3. I remark, that the promises of the covenant are calculated

for the various cases and conditions of sinners that hear the gospel. Hence we have promises of conversion, promises of the new heart and spirit, Ezek. xxxvi. 23, yea, there are promises of salvation, and of the means as well as the end; "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and will not turn away from doing of them good. I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." The promises are absolutely and indefinitely dispensed, in the everlasting gospel, to poor sinners. Some of them indeed run in a conditional form, as if persons were to expect such and such blessings, upon such and such conditions. But, as many divines express it, all conditional promises are radically absolute. Because what is expressed, in one part of the gospel, as conditional, is absolutely promised in another part thereof.

Now, these absolute promises answer the pinches of the awakened sinner, when he finds all he needs is promised, and is in the hands of the promiser, even God. And these promises are absolutely dispensed in the gospel, that sinners may see their salvation is of grace; and that they may see the promise is of grace; and that it is of grace to take the promise, and to see that all things relating to the great salvation, are of grace. But,

4. I remark, that it is not the providence of God, but the promise of God that is the rule of faith. Many stagger at the promise, through unbelief, because they mistake in this matter, and regulate their faith and unbelief, by the providence of God, and the aspect thereof. If providence be favourable, they think they may believe; but under frowning providences, when providence seems to contradict the promise, then they cry out, O! who can believe them? But, Sirs, we are to look on the providences of God as in the hand of Christ, and we are to look on the promises of God as in the heart of Christ: I say, the reins of providence are in his hand, and he draws these reins up and down, as in infinite wisdom he pleases. O! but the promises are in his heart; they are the expression of his heart-love, and good-will to poor sinners: and therefore we ought to believe, that he will never suffer his providences to give the lie to his promises, whatever way we may reckon through our unbelieving hearts. O! Sirs, we cannot read the providences of God, or see the mysterious steps thereof; but, if we would conceive aright of God, we are to look into his heart. Where will we see his heart? Why, whatever way he turn his hand, his promise is in his heart, and his heart is in the promise; and he will never let his hand rule

against his heart : no ; he will bring all providences to work together in the promise in the issue : “ All things shall work together for good to them that love God.” We are to trust in the promise of God, whatever be the aspect of providence ; and so believe in a promising God, and rest in his word : and this is the way to find all his providences answering our purpose in the issue. For the Lord often sees fit, Sirs, by cross-like providences, to bring about his counsels : he takes these sovereign steps, and shews the majesty of his grace, in stepping over mountains of difficulty, and mountains of impossibilities, to shew that it is like himself that he works. But we are to leave the bringing about of his promise to himself, and rest in his word ; and against hope to believe in hope. Again,

5. I remark that this way of believing against hope, believing in hope is exemplified by many others in Scripture besides the example of Abraham. We have the example of Job, saying, Though he be actually slaying me by his providences, yet will I trust in him, Job. xiii. 8. We have also the example of David, saying “ At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee ;” and the parallel case you have of David, 2 Sam. ii. 5. “ Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure.” Thus we find it exemplified in Habakkuk, chap. iii. 17. “ Although the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit grow on the vines ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” And also this may be seen in the notable woman of Canaan, Matt. xv. 22—28, who, over the belly of all discouragements laid in her way, yet, against hope, she believed in hope. But I proceed to the

II. Thing proposed, namely, to speak of this faith and hope. And here I shall, 1. Enquire what faith is ; 2. What hope is ; 3. How these two graces agree ; and 4. How they differ. A short word to each of these.

1. To the first, what faith is. I shall speak a short word of it, as it relates to the promises, the subject. It is a cordial assent to the divine promises ; it is a divine cordial assent to the divine testimony of God, saying in effect, as the apostle did, 1 Tim. i. 15, “ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am the chief. This cordial assent includes in it, an approbation of the way and method of salvation, through Jesus Christ, as a way that redounds to the honour and glory of all the divine attributes, as well as a way to secure our

eternal life and happiness. And not only does it include in it an approbation of it ; but a particular appropriation of the promise to ourselves. Faith, Sirs, as it is described in our Shorter Catechism, is just the soul saying, I receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation to me : he is offered to me in the gospel, and I receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered to me, and promised to me. Whence, Sirs, I would have you to remark, though the last clause is the last mentioned, yet it takes first place ; the assent of the soul in a day of power : that Christ in the gospel is offered to many in the promise, here is a promise to me, says the poor soul ; here is a Saviour for me ; here is wisdom for foolish me ; here is a righteousness for me ; here is sanctification for polluted me ; here is redemption for miserable me : O ! here is an help meet for me ; here is a promise for me ; in it I see Christ offered to me, and hereupon I take him. It is just like a marriage bond : before the bride take the man's hand, she is persuaded he has made love over to her, and is joining himself to her : and thereupon she takes him : so it is here ; call it as you will, assurance or persuasion ; the soul says, here is a Christ offering himself to me ; to be a head to me ; to be a husband to me ; to be all for me ; to be wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption to me I see him offering himself to me ; so I take him, and rest upon him alone as he is offered to me, and for me. There is a cordial assent that goes before the consent, or receiving of Christ.

2. I come to enquire what hope is. Hope, Sirs, is another grace of the Spirit of God, whereby the soul has a believing expectation of the good things contained in the promise. I call it a believing expectation, because there is no hope without faith. Many say, they hope in God ; but it is false, if they never believed in God ; they that never had true faith, never had true hope. Hope is a believing expectation ; the believer is an expectant of some good thing, as no evil thing can be the object of hope. So it is the good things contained in the covenant of promise, which is the object of hope. Sirs, there was a promise of life made to Adam ; and upon his performing perfect obedience, he might have obtained that life promised. Well, but he failed in the condition, and so there was no life nor hope by that covenant. But there is another covenant of promise in Christ Jesus ; and we may hope for all things thereby, because the condition is performed, by the obedience and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, he having payed the debt

we owed ; not only so, but the penalty that we incurred being satisfied, so we have a new hope coming, running in this channel to us ; and we cannot have the hope of eternal life, upon any other ground. This is the hope here spoken of : It is not an old, but a new covenant hope. Many have nothing but an old covenant hope, hoping if we do the best we can, God will do his best to us. O man ! what for a hope is this ! it is just an old covenant hope. But this hope, Sirs, that is the hope of the gospel, it is a new covenant hope. The hope that we speak of is a hope grounded upon the obedience and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, and upon the promise of Jesus Christ. It is a new hope, and a holy hope. The old covenant hope, Sirs, persons may have it, and yet remain dead in their sins. The old hope never quickens them. Well, but this new and lively hope quickens the soul to run in the way of God's commandments, in hope of that rest that remains for the people of God. O Sirs, this hope quickens him of being ever with the Lord, and being like him, and seeing him as he is. It quickens their desire to be purified : " He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as he is pure." O ! it quickens his desire of being more and more like unto the Lord. This hope is a firm, fixing hope : it is the anchor of the soul. The man that has the old hope is never fixed at all ; he wavers like a wave of the sea, that hath no foundation at all. The true child of God may be said to waver, but not like a wave of the sea, but like a ship at anchor : the wind may toss him hither and thither ; yea, but his anchor is fixed within the vail.

3. The third thing proposed was to point out how faith and hope agree. (1.) Faith and hope agree as sister graces ; they are twins born together, and bred together, and nourished together. (2.) They agree in their instrumental cause ; the word is the cause of both : as faith comes by hearing, so hope comes by hearing ; by hearing of the resurrection of Christ, we are begotten into a new and lively hope, 1 Pet. i. 3. (3.) As they agree in their instrumental, so they agree in their efficient cause : as God is the anchor of faith, Heb. xii. 2 ; so he is the author of hope : and therefore he is called the God of hope, Rom. xv. 13. (4.) Faith and hope agree in their usefulness : as the believer lives by faith, so he lives by hope : as there is a confidence of faith ; so there is a confidence of hope. But,

4. The main question is, how faith and hope differ : (1.) Faith and hope differ in their order : faith is first in order before hope ;

we first believe the promise, before hope ; we first believe the promise, before we can hope for the accomplishment of the promise to us. (2.) They differ in their office ; the office of faith is to believe ; but the office of hope is to expect what we believe. The office of faith is to direct, by making known the way ; but the office of hope is to excite and encourage the person in the way. (3.) They differ in their subject : the subject where faith dwells is the understanding properly ; but the subject of hope is the will : though the will goes along in believing, yet the proper subject of faith is in the understanding. If this were considered, we would see more how faith differs from works : how it is opposite to works ; and that we are not justified by works, but by what God has done, and what God will do through Jesus Christ. (4.) Faith and hope differ in their object : the object of faith is properly the promise ; but the object of hope is the good thing promised ; the object of faith is the truth of the promise ; but the object of hope is the good of the promise ; it is that which faith expects the truth of : or, the promise is like a messenger from a king to a favoured person, telling him he is a-coming. The man receives the messenger ; and then he goes out to meet the prince : so the promise is the messenger, telling the King of glory is coming ; and faith is receiving the messenger ; and hope goes out to meet the prince, waiting patiently for the accomplishment of the promise. What the man believes, he is said patiently to wait for. In a word, as to the difference in their object : the object of faith is not only things that are future, but the things that are past, present, and to come : but the object of hope is only things that are future. In a word, faith looks to the promise as the egg ; but hope looks for virtue to be hatched out of that egg. Here we may see some differences between faith and hope. But I go on,

III. To the third general head, which was to enquire a little into some of the hopeless and desperate-like cases that may take place ; and yet a firm ground remain for faith and hope. It is not possible to mention them all : I shall only name a few.

1. One thing that unbelief makes a handle of, and makes the case hopeless and desperate-like, is, that as the object of faith cannot be seen ; so we are called to believe what we cannot see. It is very true, when outward providences favour not the man's faith, then he thinks he should not hope : but, Sirs, if ye make sight or sense the ground of your faith, you will never believe nor hope either. The

foundation of faith and hope are things that are invisible : we can only endure as seeing him that is invisible, 1 Cor. iv. 18, " We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

2. Another hopeless and desperate case is, with reference unto the contrariety that lies in the way of believing the promise : not only are there no outward providences to favour the man's belief ; but there are many things contrary to the promise. So it was in Abraham's case here. As there was no appearance of Abraham and Sarah to have a son ; so there was appearance to the contrary : there was nothing to be viewed, by sense and reason, but the deadness of their bodies : his faith had that to look through. Well, but he looked to God, as a God that quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were. Many a time this is the case with the poor soul, in believing the promises. O ! how hard is it to believe the promises ! I think, says the poor soul, they are against me, I have essayed to believe the promises ; but I find the quite contrary of what I believed. I believed there was a promise of purity, and instead of that, I find impurity taking place in my heart, and nothing but impurity. There was a promise of liberty that I believed ; and I find bondage instead of liberty. There was a promise of beauty ; but I find blackness instead of beauty. There was a promise of life made to me ; but I find deadness instead of life. Why then, what must you do ? Indeed, there is no way of doing, but against hope : believing in hope against things that contradict the promise, and seem quite contrary to it.

3. Another thing that is an handle to unbelief, and makes the case hopeless and desperate-like, is, the time that intervenes between the promise and the accomplishment of the promise. May be some soul has laid hold on the promise ; but the promise is not like to be accomplished : and may be there are many here, that have gotten a promise, long since, and have been caused to hope upon it, for twenty or thirty years ; yes, but the accomplishment is delayed ; and some may reckon they are never accomplished to this day : O, says the poor soul, I do not find the thing accomplished that I expected : I do not find that communion with God, or conformity to Christ, I expected ; and that is a handle that unbelief makes use of. O the time is long ! O when will he come ! But, O Sirs, beware of limiting the holy One of Israel. At the last reason will speak ;

therefore against all these believe ; against hope believing in hope. But again,

4. Another thing that makes the case hopeless and desperate-like, is with reference to the way and manner of the accomplishment of the promises. O says unbelief, I do not see how it can be accomplished ; how such a thing can take place. O Sirs, that is another way of limiting the holy One of Israel ; as to the time, so as to the manner ; you say on the matter, " Can the Lord give us flesh in the wilderness ? " We find the Lord's people challenged for this. " 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 ? 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," Isa. xl. 27, 28.

5. Another thing, that makes a case hopeless, and desperate-like, is the present aspect of providence : and particularly providences crossing the promises. As in the case of David, he got a promise of being brought to the kingdom ; but, instead of it being accomplished, we find nothing but a track of cross providences in the way. He is hunted like a partridge in the wilderness ; and says, " One day or other, I shall fall by the hand of Saul." So it may be with a spiritual case, Psalm lxxvii. 8, 9, " Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious ? Will his promise fail for evermore ? "

6. Another case, that seems to be hopeless and desperate-like, is, when not only the promise and the providence of God, seem to clash together ; but when the promise and the precept seem to clash together ; when we are called to perform a duty that seems cross to the promise of God. We have an instance of this in Abraham ; he is called to sacrifice Isaac ; there is a command that is cross to a command ; not only cross to that command, " Thou shalt not kill ; " but cross to the promise, " In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The church's saviour was to come of Isaac ; so to cut the throat of Isaac, was like a cutting the throat of the whole church of God at once. Here is a difficulty indeed, that nothing could do but this, faith against hope, believed in hope. Another instance is of Gideon, Judg. viii. when he is ordered to fight against the Midianites, which were like grasshoppers upon the face of the earth, innumerable. Gideon has an army of thirty-two thousand men ; well, Gideon is commanded to reduce this army to a far lesser number, to

thirty, and then he is ordered to fight the battle with these Midianites: might not Gideon say, O! how shall I justify this conduct before the world? It seems quite contrary to the rules of reason and prudence, as well as religion. Has not the Lord ordered his battles to be fought by usual means? Faith has sometimes the like of these things to grapple with, that cannot be answered but by believing the word of God, and against hope believing in hope. What! shall David, a stripling, go out against Goliath? or, shall the walls of Jericho be thrown down with the sound of rams horns? or shall a small handful of men stand up against a whole nation, in a way of national reformation? Indeed, there is no way of believing this, but against hope, believing in hope.

7. Another hopeless-like case is, when any fair beginning meets with a sudden stop; fair beginnings, whether of the conviction of the heart, or the reformation of the kirk, when they meet with a sudden stop, O! how trying is this to faith? We find the building of the house of God begun, and then a stop put to it, as you read in the books of Esther and Nehemiah. Many a time the Lord has begun a good work in a person's heart, and considerable opposition casten up. Is that to hinder faith? no; but to make us learn, against hope, to believe in hope. And to believe that God, when he comes to build up Zion, he will appear in his glory. Why does he not appear in his glory, when there is so much rubbish to be taken out of the way; so many mountains to be taken out of the way, that must be removed by the hand of our Zerubbabel? his hand laid the foundation of the house, and his hand must also carry it on, and finish it. But again,

8. Another hopeless-like case that seems to say, O where can faith or hope have a footing, when the person's case hath nothing but the image of death upon it? Why, Sirs, this is the case of the most of all them that hear the gospel, as all are dead in trespasses and sins, therefore they ought to believe that he is a God that quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were. And those that are quickened by grace, they are persons for the most part that find their deadness most, and find more and more need of quickening grace: this is the case of the most part of the Lord's people, that there is nothing but the image of death on their case; and how then can there be hope? Why, against hope, we are to believe in hope: to look to that God who says, Ezek. xxxvii. 3—12. "Can these dry bones live?" Can the house of Israel live,

who are saying, "We are cut off for our part?" Therefore the promise is to them; "Thus saith the Lord, O my people I will cause you come up out of your graves." Sometimes the case of the church, and her relief, is represented by a resurrection; thereby faith and hope, Sirs. We may expect strange things, Sirs, of this world at the last day. The raising of the soul from spiritual death is remarkable; but the raising of the dead will be more remarkable. An instance of this you have, Mark v. 35, there comes a man to Jesus, to come and lay his hand on his daughter: in the meantime the maid dies, and his servant cries, "Trouble not the Master, the child is dead." It is as if it should be said, the case is now hopeless. Here was, Sirs, a rushing flood of temptations on the man. But the Lord Jesus lifts up the standard against the enemy; he says to the man, "Be not afraid, only believe." What though thy child be dead; yet the case is not hopeless; the case is not past his cure, who is a God that quickeneth the dead. And though this be the case of multitudes here, though they are dead, quite dead, yet, O the case is not past his cure who is the resurrection and the life.

I should now come to the fourth thing proposed, which was to speak of the grounds of faith, namely, what ground there is for faith and hope, in the most hopeless and desperate cases. But I cannot insist. I shall come to the application.

This doctrine would admit of a large application; but I must pass it all at present with a word of trial.

O Sirs, will you try if you have that faith, that can against hope, believe in hope. Sirs, these that can believe this way, have indeed strong faith. Every believer has not strong faith; but we should all seek after a strong faith. Who are these that against hope believe in hope?

1. They who can trust in the dark; or who can trust to the promises, when they want inward comforts. These are among the persons who against hope, believe in hope. This is what we are called to in the dark. "Let them who have no light trust in the Lord, and stay themselves on their God," Isa. l. 10.

2. Those who against hope, believe in hope, they not only trust in a promising God, without comforts, but against comfort: instead of comforts they have nothing but crosses at the hand of God. "Though he should slay me, yet I will trust in him." Sirs, this faith, that against hope, believes in hope, is a faith that takes hold of God; it will not let him alone till he bless him. It is a strange

word my friends, that you have in Isa. lxii. 6. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence." Sirs, true faith, as it were, will give God no rest, till it get the blessing; no rest till he return to his soul; and till he come back to his house, and revive his work.

In a word, true faith, that against hope, believeth in hope, can stand its ground, when sense and reason seem to be against believing. It answers them with the truth of God, and the faith of the promises of God. O try your faith, if it be a faith that believeth in a promising God, and that gives him the credit and glory of his truth, by depending on his word against all outward appearances.

Sirs, let us be persuaded to look to a God in Christ, and by faith to believe against unbelief, and by hope to believe against hope. Time will not allow to pursue an use of exhortation. I shall only say, O Sirs, endeavour to drop the anchor of faith, in this day of darkness, upon the word of a promising God. Upon his word you will need to have the anchor fixed. Sirs, these are sinning days wherein we live, erring days, days of dreadful defection from God and his truths: and what do we know but there may be dreadful days, days of terrible calamities. Sirs, who knows but this may be the last peaceable communion that we may have? and now when God is threatening to send a sword to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, O to be established, and to have our faith fixed within the vail.—I'll tell you a promise to drop your faith and hope upon, Psal. xcix. 3. "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." O Sirs, there are some strange providences taking place. Many threaten the people of God; statesmen may threaten; the church-men may threaten, and judicatories may threaten. Why, these are sometimes like the waves of the sea: the waves may lift up their voice; but this is ground of hope, that the Lord not only sits on the floods, but he reigns in Jacob, and to the ends of the earth. Another word that you may drop your anchor of faith and hope on, be the trouble what it will, is in Psal. xci. 8. "He shall call upon me, I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him." O seek to have the Lord to be with you in trouble. Sirs, whatever should fall out in providence, the presence of God will make a prison to be a palace. O! it can make a fiery furnace a place of safety. O! it makes a den of lions a place of miracles and wonders. O! seek his gracious presence: He has promised that where his people are met together to bless them, saying, "Lo, I am with

you to the end of the world." O! drop the anchor of faith on him, that he may be with us on this occasion. But I pass all other uses that I designed. May the Lord bless what hath been said, Amen.

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

GOSPEL-HEARERS HAVE A FIRM GROUND FOR FAITH AND HOPE
IN THE WORST OF TIMES.

"Who against hope, believed in hope."—ROM. iv. 18.

[The second Sermon on this Text.]

MY friends, faith and hope are precious and excellent graces; but many only make a boast of them. They that can speak lightly of faith, and swear by their faith; sure they declare they are strangers unto faith; and they that can speak lightly of hope, saying (as the common bye-word is), I hope in his mercy; they surely seem to be very great strangers to this faith and hope of Abraham's. There is a mystery of faith and a mystery in hope; and indeed, sirs, we never begin to hope till we be hopeless. We never begin to hope till we begin to despair; to despair of help from ourselves, and from all creatures, and all things in the world. Here is a strange battle between hope and hope: Here is a hope against hope: here is, as it were, the fixing of the anchor of faith and hope upon the very gulph of despair. He against hope believed in hope.

The doctrine I noticed yesterday was, That unto sinners who have the gospel, of a promising God in Christ, sounding in their ears, there is ground of faith and hope in the most desperate and hopeless-like cases.

The method laid down was, 1, To prove and confirm the doctrine by a few remarks. 2, To enquire into the nature of faith and hope. 3, To mention some of these hopeless and desperate-like cases, and yet a firm ground for faith and hope remain. 4, To enquire what ground of hope there is in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases. 5, Apply the subject.

What remains to be spoken to, is the fourth head, namely, Enquire what ground there is for faith and hope in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases.

Sirs, it is the great business of the preachers of the gospel to open a door of hope, and to call persons to believe and hope in the Son of God, and to hope in the mercy of God through him. I would touch at some of these grounds—1, More generally; 2, More particularly. And,

1st, More generally, there is ground for faith and hope to all sinners, if you consider these six things.

1. Is it not ground of hope, in the first place, that an all-sufficient Saviour is offered to you? that his blood is able to cleanse from all sin? O Sirs, is not this a door opened for you, sinners?

2. It is ground of hope, not only that this Saviour is all-sufficient, and his blood able to wash away all your sin and guilt; but you have a right to plead upon this blood. It is true, indeed, the former ground of hope, viz., the all-sufficiency of the blood and righteousness of Jesus, we can say his blood is able to cleanse a thousand worlds; yea, it has intrinsic excellency to save all the devils in hell, were it not hedged in by the decree of election: they have no right to it; no, by no means; it is to you, O man, woman, that the word of salvation is sent: "To you, O men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." You have ground to plead on this blood. "Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham:" therefore you may plead for pardon and salvation upon this blood of Jesus.

3. It is ground of hope to all sinners, who hear the gospel, that the mercy of God vents through this blood of Jesus; and that the grace of God reigns through this righteousness unto eternal life. O Sirs, is there no ground of faith and hope here, that the mercy of God vents through this blood, and vents to the honour of justice? Justice is satisfied by the blood of Jesus: his wrath is appeased, so that God can be merciful to you, and yet be just; "He is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Why, "He hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood."

4. There is another door of hope opened to you, sinners, in this gospel, that the Lord Jesus Christ is both able and willing to save sinners. He is not only able, being the mighty God; but he is willing, being the Prince of peace. And he is declaring his willingness by his calls, by his invitations, and by his commands to you that believe: "This is his command, that you believe." O then, Sirs, why do you doubt of the love and good pleasure of God? Here is the command of God, that you believe; that you believe on

him, and come to him for life and salvation. O! do not declare your enmity against him who is, in the gospel, declaring his goodwill to you. But again,

5. There is ground of hope to all sinners who hear this gospel, that God hath sealed Christ to be a Saviour for sinners; "Him hath God the Father sealed." Christ has not only ability to save; but he has authority to save: he has his Father's authority to save. It is in the name and authority of his Father that he is coming and courting you to him: "Him hath God the Father sealed. He hath sealed him to be a Prophet, to teach ignorant souls; he hath sealed him to be a Priest, to deliver enslaved souls; he hath sealed him to be a King, to deliver souls from sin and Satan. God hath sealed him to be a Saviour; why, then, it cannot be against God, that you come to him for salvation; no, you cannot do God so much honour as to come to a Saviour. He hath sealed him with a super-eminent unction of the Holy Ghost, and anointed him to those offices of saving sinners. Is there no ground of hope here?

6. Here is ground of hope, that the Lord Jesus, who sealed the covenant with his blood, hath made an assignation of all the benefits of the new covenant unto sinners in the visible church: "To them belongs the covenants and the promises." They have a sealed right thereunto; a right that God hath given to sinners in the visible church, as such: therefore he has allowed all the members of the visible church to be baptized. They could not have a right to any of the seals of the covenant of promise, if they had not some right to the covenant itself. I say, God has made an assignation to the visible church, of all the benefits of the new covenant: they are among your hands; O Sirs, take what belongs to you. My friends, has not salvation come near you, when it is in your hands? Is there no ground of hope here? You may take hold of any promise in all the Bible, because it is sealed by the blood of Christ; it comes freely to you, because it was dearly bought by the blood of him who is God. Therefore all the promises come freely to you. Here then is ground of hope to all sinners, who hear this gospel, in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases. But I come,

Secondly, To lay before you some more particular grounds and reasons, why all persons ought against hope to believe in hope.

1. Everything in God, as he manifests himself in Jesus Christ, is ground of hope. The Christ of God is ground of hope: he is the hope of Israel. He is the hope of the church of God: he is the

hope of all his people, and poor sinners may build upon him ; for every thing in him is ground of hope. His incarnation is ground of hope ; " To you is born, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." O his doing and dying is ground of hope ; he died to bring us to God. His resurrection is ground of hope ; for, " He rose again for our justification : " and by his resurrection he declared himself to be the Son of God with power ; by which he declared his righteousness to be a sufficient righteousness. Again, Christ's ascending is a glorious ground of hope : " By him," says Peter, " we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, that our faith and hope might be in God." The very reason why God raised him from the dead, and ascended gloriously, was that our faith and hope might be in him. Here is a Saviour that was dead, but is now alive, and liveth for evermore ; and has the keys of hell and death. O Sirs, the Christ of God is ground of hope ; a door of hope is opened, if you look to the offices of Christ. Oh ! his prophetic office says there is ground of hope for poor ignorant sinners. Oh ! his priestly office says there is ground of hope for poor guilty sinners. Oh ! his kingly office is ground of hope, for slaves to sin and Satan, because he is a King that bruises the head of the serpent. Again,

2. In the second place, as in the Christ of God, so all the promises are ground of hope : they are calculate for the cases and necessities of poor sinners. They are a ground of faith and hope, they being all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. O Sirs, observe as I said before, the covenant consists of promises : what does God, think you, by those promises ? He puts himself, and all the blessings of the covenant, in these promises, that we may lay hold upon him. There the infinite invisible God comes as near as it is possible for him to come. Since we cannot see an invisible God, he comes, as it were, to our hand in the promises, that we may take him up there. He puts himself in a promise, saying, " I will be thy God." I will put my Spirit in a promise : " I will put my Spirit in you." He puts his justifying grace in a promise : " I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own name's sake." He puts sanctification in the promises : " I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." He puts all the blessings in the promises, that we may believe and hope in him, as a promising God. What want you, that is not in the promises ? " If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men after me."

There is power to believe the promise promised. Faith is not of yourselves, but the gift of God promised : If you want repentance, he puts it in the promise : " They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn. He is exalted as a prince, to give repentance, and the remission of sins." He puts all the graces in the promise : " I will circumcise their hearts to love me." He puts grace and glory in the promise. But, again,

3. Another ground of hope is the presence of God, his promised presence. He is not far off, or at a distance ; he is near in the word of grace and promise. We need not say, " Who will go up to heaven to bring him down ? He is near in the word that we preach." His name is the great Immanuel, God with us. O Sirs, say not he is far off. There are many promises of his presence, that faith and hope have to rely on : " There is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God. He hath said, " I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

4. The providence of God is another ground of hope ; therefore we ought to cast our care upon him, who careth for us. We ought to consider his special providences towards his church and people, in all ages, that so they may be a prop and pillar to faith and hope. When Adam fell from a state of innocency, into a horrible pit, and brought himself and all his posterity to misery ; O then, how did the promise come ? " The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." And when Israel was in the greatest thralldom, how did providence appear in their delivery ? And when the Jews were like to be destroyed by Haman, how did providence appear for them ? And when Christ, the glorious head of the church, was laid in the grave, then the church's hope seemed to be gone : Yes, but in this case was the greatest appearance of providence. As it was with the head, so shall it be with the members.

5. The blood and righteousness of Jesus is another ground of hope. The blood of Jesus is the blood of God ; and the righteousness of Jesus is the righteousness of God. O here is the foundation for faith and hope. It is an everlasting righteousness, and a law-magnifying righteousness ; it is a justice-satisfying righteousness ; it is strength-furnishing righteousness : it is like the money that answers all things ; because it is the righteousness of God. O Sirs, here is a strong foundation for faith and hope ; so strong a foundation, that we may not only build on it, but were there ten

thousand worlds, here they might build upon this foundation. Here is a door of hope.

6. The oath of God is another ground of hope; the oath, by which his word of promise is confirmed: so that all that venture to it, may have sufficient ground of hope: "He hath sworn by two immutable things, whereby it is impossible for God to lie." O! is not this security to the faith of the church of God? When God says the word, and gives his promise, that is good enough; but, O Sirs, is it not still more, when he confirms his word by his oath; when he has sworn by his holiness? "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David." It is the oath of God, not only to us, but to a better hand; it is the oath of God to Christ: "I have sworn by myself." When God swears by himself, he can swear by no greater; for then he swears by all his glorious attributes and perfections, that the covenant shall stand fast, to all that flee by faith to him. O Sirs, this is sure ground of hope.

7. The name of God is ground of hope. Why, Sirs, he is pleased in his word to make his name the greatest argument for which sinners may plead with him: accordingly we find many saints, saying, "O pardon us, for thy name's sake. For thy name's sake blot out iniquity." O Sirs, if we build our faith and hope upon the honour of his name, he will surely do for his name's sake.

8. The glory of God is ground of faith; not only his name, but the glory of his name: "For thy name's glory help us." You may build your faith and hope upon the glory of his name, because his name cannot be glorified greater than in the way of saving sinners through Jesus Christ; therefore we are to build our faith and hope upon the glory of his name; if we build our faith and hope here, Sirs, to be sure he will not let his glory fall. O! he will glorify himself. O happy they who get their salvation thus secured, by building on the glory of his name.

9. The mercy of God is ground of hope, as it vents itself through Christ Jesus: "Mercy shall be built up for ever."

10. The truth and faithfulness of God is ground of hope. This truth and faithfulness is called a shield and buckler to us.

11. Not only are the attributes ground of hope, but the spirituality of God is ground of hope; for his words are spirit and life. And, indeed, the more spiritually we view any promise, the more sweetly do we view it.

12. The infinity of God is ground of hope; being infinite in

wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. We may soon be non-plussed, but nothing can non-plus infinite Wisdom : therefore we may, against hope, believe in hope

13. I may add, the eternity of God is ground of hope ; that he is the eternal God, he puts that in the promise : " The eternal God is thy refuge. God endures for ever." All the world is waxing old as a garment, as it were out of fashion ; but his children and servants shall continue for ever. The eternity of God is ground of hope, for there is eternal happiness in him.

Again, the unchangeableness of God is ground of hope ; " Because he is God, and changes not, the sons of Jacob are not consumed."

I may add, the personality of God is ground of hope, whether we consider him jointly or separately. If we consider the personality of God jointly, as three persons speaking in the plural number, there we find them speaking so in the work of creation : " Come, let us make man after our own image." I'll tell you a text, wherein they speak so in the work of redemption, in carrying on the work of salvation, Song i. 11, " We will make the borders of gold with studs of silver." We, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; we will begin the work, and we will carry it on ; we will do so and so ; or, if we consider them separately, it is ground of hope for communion with God. We have the Father's love discovered in contriving ; and we have the love of the Holy Ghost set before us, as the great applier of redemption work. In this light we have the order of communion set before us, as you see it expressed, Eph. ii. 18, " For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Here is the order of communion with God : we have communion with the Father, in the Son, and by the Holy Ghost. So communion with God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is a door of hope opened to all of us.

Again, The matchlessness of God is ground of hope : his being a non-such God in Christ. O sirs, are you saying, there is no sinner like me, my case is a matchless case ? But, O ! is there any God like him ? He is a matchless God. O sirs, here is ground of hope ; the very being of a God, as a God that quickeneth the dead, is ground of hope ; yea, faith and hope can centre no where but in a living God, and in the life of God.

These are some of the grounds of faith and hope ; and I shall reckon it a sore matter, if none in this great assembly can see a door

of faith and hope opened to them. Since there is a door of faith and hope opened, O then go in by this door.

V. I go on to the application. O that the Lord would make application of it. Is it so, sirs, that in this gospel there is a firm ground of hope, even in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases. Then, for information,

1. Hence we may see, sirs, what is the reason that God does, in his holy providence, bring his church and people, many times, into hopeless and desperate-like cases. O sirs, the reason is, that we may despair of help and hope anywhere else, that they may hope only in God; therefore he orders matters so, in his providence, or in some circumstances about his people, that you may place your hope only in him that can help in desperate-like cases, 1 Cor. i. 8, "For we have the sentence of death, that we may not trust in ourselves, but in him who raised Christ from the dead." O sirs, some are brought to very dismal straits, very great difficulties; they are ready to say, O! what is it that God designs to do with me? They think God is about to slay them, or destroy them; or that the Lord has some ill design against them. No, man; but his design is, that when you see your case hopeless and desperate, you go to God, and trust in him. "We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may not trust to ourselves, but to God."

2. Hence we may see, that the people of God ought not to murmur against God, when he brings them to straits and difficulties; to such cases as seem hopeless end desperate. O! do not murmur against God. O! sirs, do not object he hath an ill design against you; his design is to drive you to himself; to make you cast the anchor of faith upon a sure foundation, even God himself. In the 20th chapter of Judges, the children of Israel are allowed to go out against the tribe of Benjamin to battle, and God is consulted in the matter; and God bids them go, and yet they are smitten before the Benjaminites. O! then they go to God weeping, and cry, "Shall we go and fight against our brethren?" Yes, says God; well, they go a second time, and they are worsted by them, and the battle goes against them. What was the design of this providence? One would think the design was to destroy them. O no, no; it was that he might avenge himself more remarkably in the third battle; they go forth the third time, and they are destroyed before them.

A second use may be by way of trial and examination. And

seeing, sirs, it is so, as I have been saying, that even in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases, we have a sure ground for faith and hope, in a God in Christ, as it was with Abraham, who against hope, believed in hope, let us try whether we have any faith like Abraham's. Every believer has not the same trials and difficulties, and so does not need the same strong faith; yet true faith is still acted in the same way, in the same parallel cases, that may have some reference to Abraham's faith; try it therefore by these few things.

1. Then, if we have any faith like Abraham's faith, then, sirs, you will only be satisfied with Christ. Will you tell me, are you satisfied with Christ only? Do all things else fail you? Do you think Christ a heaven upon earth? Can you think Christ righteousness and strength to you? O sirs, can you think yourselves right enough with Christ, though you should want all things in the world, like Habakkuk? "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine, &c. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Enquire then, if you can be satisfied with Christ alone. There are few, sirs, can be so; there is something in the world gives them satisfaction; take away that, and Christ cannot satisfy them. O try it, if you be satisfied with Christ alone. Can you say, "O whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee."

2. If your faith have any thing like Abraham's in the nature of it, try it by this, Can you live upon an absent God? Can you live upon a God in Christ, even in desertion? Can you believe in an angry God, a God whom you have sinned against, whom you have offended and provoked? Can you believe in an angry God, even when he may be expressing his displeasure in his providences against you? Can you go to this God, and put your confidence in him? Can you believe in him, when you are not able to claim your relation to him? are you then claiming your relation to the Son of God, though he may be hiding himself? Why, Sirs, this is something like the faith Christ expressed on the cross; "My God, my God; why hast thou forsaken me?" *Forsaken me!* and yet *my God*. Sirs, the relation to God may be maintained by the soul, ever when it finds he is away. O can you claim a relation to a forsaken God? That is something like the faith of Abraham, "Who, against hope, believed in hope."

3. Enquire if you can stop your ears to the voice of sense and

reason. This Abraham did, when he was called to consider the ground and object of his faith, viz., the power of God. We are told, "He considered not the deadness of his own body, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb:" he stopt his ears at carnal sense and reason. Are you then able to stop your ears at carnal sense and reason, and open your ears to what God says, as a promising God? This faith is some way like the faith of Abraham.

4. Can you set the arguments of faith against all the arguments of sense and reason, viz., the power of God? "Once, yea twice, have I heard, that power belongs to the Lord." Set the argument of faith against all the tossings of unbelief.

I come now to close with a word of exhortation; and it shall be but a short word.

Is it so, Sirs, that sinners that hear the gospel, have a sure foundation for faith and hope, even in the most hopeless and desperate-like cases? Then the call to all sinners who hear this gospel is Imitate Abraham, "Who, against hope, believed in hope." Let sinners do it; and let believers do it more and more, by following the footsteps of the father of the faithful more and more, "Who, against hope, believed in hope." Sirs, this is the call of God, that we ought to glorify, by a strong faith. Employ the omnipotence of God against unbelief; for, indeed, Sirs, true faith has no power at all, but the power of God: it has nothing to live upon, but the fulness and righteousness of Christ, and God in a promise, a God in covenant.

Object. 1. O, but why do you essay to persuade me to believe, and hope in Jesus; for my case is not only a hopeless and desperate-like case, but I seem to be given up to the power of sin. I think God has given me up to the power of my lusts; iniquity prevails against me: Sin not only dwells in me but, I think, it reigns in me.

Answ. O man! thinkest thou this is a hopeless case? Well, but is there not hope in Israel, as long as God calls you? Your very complaint is ground of hope: "Iniquity prevails against me, says David; but as for our transgressions, thou wilt purge them away." Why, there is ground, against hope, to believe in hope; for though iniquity prevails against you, yet God has promised to purge away iniquity. There we are called to believe in this promising God.

Object. 2. But, O my case is hopeless, in respect I think God does not hear my prayers.

Answ. You may find your case paralleled, Lam. iii. 8, the church cries there, "When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer." But yet you will find her saying, "It is good for me to hope, and wait for the salvation of God," ver. 26.

Object. 3. But, O is not my case a desperate-like case, for God is against me in his providences, and my corruption is irritated by the cross? And is there any hope in this case?

Answ. Even in this case, you are called against hope to believe in hope. There is a parallel case in Isaiah lvii. 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; yet he went on frowardly, in the way of his own heart." There is corruption irritated by the cross; God smote him in his providences; and yet he went on frowardly. Well, was the case hopeless? No: See what follows, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." O! see what wonderful condescension! "I have seen his ways and will heal him. O! let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy."

Object. 4. But, O is not my case hopeless, when I find no manner of probability of my being saved and pardoned?

Answ. This is a limiting of the holy One of Israel, Isaiah xl. 27, "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? 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?"

Object. 5. But, O say you, my case is yet more hopeless; why, I essay to use means, and yet all means prove unsuccessful; and I am worse: and is not that a hopeless case? These means that are useful to others; these means, instead of being helpful to me, are hurtful to me. The ordinances that are full to others, are dry breasts to me.

Answ. O, Sirs, this would indeed be a hopeless and desperate case, were it not for the grounds of hope we have been speaking of. But you have a parallel case in Exod. ii., God calls Moses to deliver Israel; but instead of their being delivered, their bondage is increased, things made against them. Do you find nothing by the means of grace? Wait on God, who is the hope of Israel, when you are going to a communion table.

Object. 6. But, O is not my case a hopeless-like case? I have gone to a communion table sometimes; I have found myself worse

when I have been there. O then, would you encourage such an one to believe and hope? I have sinned against him; and sinned fearfully against him. I have been worsted by the enemy; I am just a trophy of the victory of the devil: and do you call me to believe and hope?

Ans. Yes; though thou art a backslider, the call of God is to you to return; "Return, O backsliding children; for I am married to you." O poor soul, return to him. Will you tell me, will you be the better of standing away at a distance from Christ? is it not better to perish in Christ's hand, than in the hands of the devil?

Object. 7. O! says one, is not my case a hopeless case? I am now in the very belly of hell, as it were; and is there any hope in this case?

Ans. Yes: Jonah says, chap. ii. 2, "Out of the belly of hell I cried to the Lord; and he heard me out of his holy temple," ver. 4. O then, look again to God's holy temple.

Object. 8. O! is not this a hopeless case? I see there is no favour from sense and reason to me; all arguments from the common sense of the world contradicts my hope.

Ans. Why, man, is that your case? Then it is just equal to Abraham's in the text, "who against hope, believed in hope." O Sirs, look to God to answer all objections raised by unbelief, that you may glorify God by them all; and so against hope, believe in hope.

SERMON LIX.

GLAD TIDINGS IN SAD TIMES; OR, THE CITY OF GOD, IN THE TIMES OF TROUBLE AND CONFUSION, WATERED WITH THE RIVER OF CONSOLATION.¹

"There is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the City of God."—PSALM xli. 4.

THE tide of joy and consolation hath never come to a greater height in the people of God, than in the time of affliction, persecution, and tribulation; then they are readily most zealous Christians who are

(1) This Sermon was preached in Anandale, on Sabbath, August 27th, 1738.

Christians indeed ; and when zeal abounds, then joy and peace in believing abound also. I remember Moulin, speaking of the French Protestants, says, " When Papists hurt us, and afflict us for reading the Scriptures, we then burn in zeal to be reading them ; but when persecution is over, our Bibles are like old Almanacks." When the people of God are passing through the fire of affliction, then he uses to let out the streams of the river of life to their hearts, to allay the burning heat of the fire, and to give them the oil of joy for mourning.

The Psalmist here, in the church's name, most triumphantly expresses her confidence in God, and that in despite of all imaginable dangers, in the second and third verses, " We will not fear, though the earth be removed ; and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." By these expressions we are to understand the reelings and commotions that are in the world, with the violence and rage of the enemies of the church. And, in the words of our reading, he subjoins the matter of the church's consolation, amidst all the reeling and confusions in the world, " There is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God." Where you have these four things :—

1. The name given to the church ; it is a " city."
2. The owner and proprietor thereof ; it is God ; " the city of God."
3. The sad circumstances of the city here supposed, while all is in confusion and commotion.
4. The gladdening provision made for the city, amidst all saddening circumstances of the inhabitants ; " There is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God."

DOCT. " That the church, which is the city of God, hath the sweetest grounds of encouragement, even in the saddest times."

Thus, amidst all the confusions that encompassed the church here, we are informed, that " There is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God."

The method we would lay down, for the prosecution of this subject, through divine assistance, shall be the following :

I. To speak of the city of God.

II. Shew what these sad times are that puts the city of God into confusion.

III. Speak of these sweet grounds of encouragement that the church, or city of God, hath in these sad times, imported in this "river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God."

IV. Deduce inferences for the application.

I. To speak of the city of God. Many a great and famous city hath been in the world. Tyrus was a magnificent city; this was turned desolate by Alexander. Nineveh was a great and populous city; but now it would puzzle a traveller to point out the place where it was. Babylon was a great city: but now, where is it? It is called Babylon the great; but, with the same breath, the angel cries, It is fallen. But this city of God hath trampled upon the graves of many great and remarkable cities, that had their beginnings several thousand years after it. "Glorious things have been spoken of thee, O city of God," Psa. lxxxvii. 3. And whence this glory is derived, you see in the latter clause of the verse, where my text lies, "The holy things of the tabernacle of the Most High."

Here two things may be enquired, 1. Why the church of God is compared to a city. 2. Why it is called the city of God.

1st, Why is the church of God compared to a city?

1. A city is a place of security. This was the end why men built cities, to secure themselves from the enemies that might attack them; so this city of God is of such security and defence, that there is no shelter to be had elsewhere, no place free from the incursions of the devil, but this city, wherein his works are destroyed, and his fiery darts quenched. Cities use to have their walls, and then watchmen upon their walls; even so, this city of God is a strong city; "Salvation doth God appoint for walls and bulwarks," Isa. xxvi. 1. And there are watchmen upon these walls, that shall never hold their peace, nor keep silence, Isa. lxii. 6. God himself is the force that defends it; and this makes it impregnable: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," Psa. xli. 1.

2. A city is a place of society, inasmuch, that what one wants, another supplies; they have mutual fellowship one with another; so in the church of Christ, there is a sweet society and communion they have together. The saints pray for one another, comfort one another, when they meet together, as the apostle commands, 1 Pet. iv. 8, 9. "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves:

for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another, without grudging ; as every man hath received the gift, even so minister one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Yea ;

3. A city is a place of unity, that people may therein live together in peace and concord : so, in the church of God, there is a holy fraternity and agreement in the truth, that should take place, otherwise it is a conspiracy against heaven. A city is a society of men that live and dwell together, united by one common interest : even so is the church of God, namely, a society of men united in one undivided interest. Eph. iv. 4, 5—"There is one body (whereof Christ is the head), one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one advocate, one God and Father of all. Jerusalem is a city built compactly together." A city is a society of men that live together under the same common laws, subject to one and the same government and sovereign power ; so it is with the church of God ; it is a lovely society, having a rule and governor, even Christ himself, the eternal Son of God, on whose shoulders the government lies. No creature can, without the most palpable blasphemy, assume to himself this power over the church of God : "The Lord is our Judge ; the Lord is our Lawgiver ; the Lord is our King ; he will save us. Rev. xv. 3. Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Christ doth enact laws, and appoint governors in his house : "Obey them that rule over you ; for they watch as they that must give an account."

4. A city is a place of trade and traffic, where there is buying and selling ; so the city of God is a place of merchandise. Here is the market of free grace : "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." Here is the Pearl of great price exposed to sale ; for the procuring of which, the wise merchant doth sell all that he hath. Here all things necessary for poor sinners : Rev. iii. 18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and eye-salve, that thou mayest see." And all is to be had freely : "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely." Here then is a place of trade and traffic ; and if you trade the right way, sirs, in a short time you may make a great purchase, and grow prodigiously rich.

5. The church is compared to a city, because it is a place of

freedom and liberty ; such as, freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law ; from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin ; from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave and everlasting damnation ; as also freedom of access to God, and yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love and willing mind.

6. A city is a place of order and regularity ; it hath its constitutions and ordinances : and such is the city of God ; the constitutions whereof, we think, are the articles of the gracious covenant of redemption or grace ; such as, “ I will take away the heart of stone, and give an heart of flesh ; I will write my law in their hearts ; I will be their God, and they shall be my people ; I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from my statutes.” The city of God is not a lawless city ; for whereas the law of God to Adam had the impression thereof defaced by corruption, it is here restored again by the tenor of the second covenant. Again, it hath its institutions and ordinances : the King of the city tells us every day, almost, from his word, what service he will have, and likewise the manner thereof ; how the affairs of this city shall be administered, and by whom ; and we are not to be wise above what is written, nor to be subject to the ordinances, traditions, inventions, and doctrines of men, Col. ii. 20-23. A city is a society of persons, into which we enter in a regular way. You know it is the custom of all cities, that strangers are admitted to the privileges and immunities of the city by their burgess act ; so there is a regular way by which we enter into the city of God. There is a door ; and see what the door is, John x. 9, “ I am the door, says Christ ; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved ; and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” Whoever enters into the visible church, if they come not in by this door, they are not of the true citizens, or invisible church ; and therefore shall not partake of the saving privileges thereof.

7. A city is a place of rest, and commodious to live in ; and thus it is opposed to a wilderness, Psalm cvii. 4, “ They wandered in a wilderness, in a solitary way ; they found no city to dwell in ;” even so, this city of God is the only place where solid rest is to be found. These that are without the city, without the church, they are in a wilderness, in a solitary way : there is no rest nor solid peace to any but these who are made denizens of the city of God.

8. A city is a place of privileges, a privileged place; so the privileges even of the visible church are many and great, much more the invisible.

(1.) There are privileges of the church visible; they have the fountain opened to them for sin and uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. Grace proclaimed to them, which Turks and Pagans have not: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters; he that hath no money, let him come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." They have a right and title to God's covenant, by virtue of a general adoption, so as they may plead the same, and lay hold on eternal life, as given to them in the gospel, Rom. ix. 4; 1 John v. 11. They have this right to God's covenant sealed, ratified, and confirmed in baptism; therein God gives them the sure mercies of David, Acts xiii. 34, "The promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call," Acts ii. 39. To whom the covenant belongs, and the promise; to them belongs the seal of the covenant of promise. Hence also the door of access to God, through Christ, is open to them, and they may come with freedom and boldness for mercy and grace to help in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. Again, they have, by virtue of their general adoption, an interest in many fatherly acts of pity towards them, as children of the family, though in an outward sense, such as instruction, correction, and reproof. God instructs them by his word, corrects them by his rod, reproves them by his servants for their security, carnality, formality, unbelief, and whatever other faults. God deals not so kindly with the rest. Again, when they go to the right or left hand, they hear a voice behind them saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" they have the way of life and salvation pointed out to them. In a word, they have ministers, word, sacraments, ordinances; many privileges that others want. They have officers in this society; and, as all cities have a right to choose its own officers and magistrates; so, surely, the city of God hath a right to choose its own officers and ministers. If they be robbed of this, they are spoiled of their freedom, as burghesses in the city of God.

(2.) The church invisible hath many great privileges that belong to all the citizens of the city of God, and that none have a right unto, till they become fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Many spiritual privileges they have such as these: peace with the king, pardon and reconciliation in the blood of

Christ; the Prince of peace is the Lord of the city: they are like their King that dwells in the midst of the city, changed into the same image. They are all kings, "Kings and priests unto their God." Rev. i 7, "The Lamb is the light of the place, and they are light in the Lord." It resembles the city of the new Jerusalem, no temple there but Christ, no light there but Christ; "The Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." They have peace of conscience, sanctification, eternal life. They have access to the king's table; yea, they have the ear of their Prince without a tedious attendance at court, as it is in this world; in Christ we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him. In a word, they have the privileges of an undoubted title to the city of the New Jerusalem above. Every true citizen here hath letters of conduct from his prince, and death and hell cannot stop the way; they have their King's pass, and therefore shall go forward; they are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, Eph. i. 3.

9. A city is a place of pomp and splendour, especially a metropolis, or capital city: there is a king, the court, the throne: so in the church, here is the King of kings, his dwelling-place: here is the court, all believers that attend upon him: here is the throne of grace, and they that dwell in this city, have continual occasion of seeing the King in his beauty.

10. A city is a place of pleasure and beauty, beyond all villages and country-cottages: see what is said of this city, the church of God, Psal. xlviii. 2. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion." Here also are to be heard the songs of Zion; the joyful sound, through the silver trumpet of the gospel.

2ndly, Why is the church called the "city of God?" I answer,

1. It may be called the city of God, because he dwells in it; "God is in the midst of her," says the verse following my text. The place where a man or woman dwells, is called their city; so the town of Bethany is called, "The city, or town of Mary and Martha:" so this is the city of God, because he hath fixed his residence there; "The Lord hath chosen Zion; this is my rest, here will I stay:" it is here the King of glory keeps his court; it is the city of the great King, Psalm xlviii. 2.

2. It is called the city of God, because he founded it, and built it. This is the answer that is given to the messengers of the nations, "The Lord hath founded Zion, Isa. xiv. 32. He hath

founded it in his eternal decree, laid the foundation of it in the covenant of redemption or grace, and he hath built it on the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone ; and so it may be called the city of God.

3. It may be called the city of God, because it derives all privileges and immunities from him. This city hath its *magnalia* or *great things*, from him : all that it does enjoy was purchased by the blood of Christ, and came to the church by promise through him, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen. Grace here, and glory hereafter, all are derived from God, as the fruits and effects of his free grace : therefore it may well be called the city of God.

4. It may be called his city because he is the chief ruler and governor in the city. He is the supreme sovereign, that hath the chief command of it. He is the legislator here. Here he publishes his commands and royal orders ; and he will call all the citizens to an account of their obedience, for he will judge every man according to his works.

5. It is his city, because it is his property. He not only possesses it, founded it, privileges it, and governs it, but it is his own property : it belongs to him, and none other : he hath a manifold claim to it. He gave a being to all citizens of the city ; “ He made them, and not they themselves : he made them as men, and he made them as believers : he redeemed them by his blood.” And,

6. He draws the rent of it. There is a revenue of praise that he doth draw from them, more than all the rest of the world ; “ This people have I formed for myself, and they shall show forth all my praise.” Upon all these accounts the church may well be called the city of God.

II. The next general head proposed was to shew what are these sad times that put the city of God into confusion. There are sad times with reference to the church in general, and with reference to the people of God in particular.

1st, There are some sad times with reference to the church in general. As,

1. It is a sad time when God’s dispensations towards his church and people seem to contradict his promise, to contradict their prayers, and to contradict their hope and expectation ; to contradict their desires and wrestlings : when the knife of providence is, as it were, at the throat of Isaac, at the throat of the promise and hope of his people.

2. It is a sad time when the church is oppressed by the wicked, persecuted for the sake of truth, and when the bush is burning, and all in a flame; when he shews his people hard things, and makes them drink the wine of astonishment, Psalm lx. 3. When the enemy breaks in pieces his people, and afflicts his heritage, Psalm xciv. 3. And when these afflictions are continued, and enemies make long their furrows, while, like ploughers, they plough upon their back, Psalm cxxix. 3.

It is a sad time when the Lord seems to disregard the prayer and cry of his people, and rather to be angry at them, Psalm lxxx. 4, "O Lord of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry at the prayer of thy people! Lam. iii. 8. When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer." Sometimes he seems inexorable, and will not grant the suit of his special favourites, when interceding in behalf of the church, even the suit of a Noah, Daniel, and Job, the suit of a Moses and Samuel, &c.

4. It is a sad time in the city, when the Lord suffers enemies, within or without doors, to over-run all his own work, to pluck up the vine which his own right-hand hath planted, Psalm lxxx. 8—16. To cast fire into the sanctuary, to pull down his carved work, as with axes and hammers, Psalm lxxxiv. 4, 5, 6, 7. He that runs may read, that this is the sad case of the church in our day.

5. It is a sad time, when sin and error overflow all their banks, and run in upon the city, and when Satan's seat is in the midst of the city, Rev. ii. 13, "I know thee where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou hast them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate." When in the church of Christ there are that hold the doctrine of Arians, Atheists, Deists; the doctrine of Arminians, Socinians, Pelagians, and the like. Oh! but a sinning time, wherein profanity abounds, and a time of error in doctrine is a sad time.

6. It is a sad time when faithful citizens and officers are removed, and few or none left to fill their room; when woful apostacy takes place; when the courts of the city are corrupted; when seminaries of learning are defiled; and pulpits and Sabbaths profaned; when reformation is hated, instead of being revived; and when the Spirit is restrained, and nothing but barrenness of the churches appear; few or no real converts to be seen. When there is both a scarcity of faithful pastors, and paucity of sound professors; when ministers are tinctured with loose principles, and

study flourishing harangues, instead of powerful, evangelical, applicatory preaching : when saints are become rare, Psalm xii. 1 ; Isa. lvii. 1 ; Jer. v. 1 ; Micah vii. 2.

2dly, There are sad times with reference to the people of God in particular.

1. It is a sad time with them, when the Lord hides his face from them ; “Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,” *Psa. xxx. 7.* When they are made to cry out, “How long wilt thou forget me ! how long wilt thou hide thy face !” *Psalm xiii. 1.*

2. It is a sad time, when the Lord contends with them, and yet doth not tell them wherefore, as it was with Job, when he said, “Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.”

3. It is a sad time with them, when God is a terror to them, and they are put to say, “Lord, be not a terror unto me, *Jer. xvii. 17.*—While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.”

4. It is a sad time with them, when they are in darkness, when they walk in darkness, and have no light, *Isa. l. 10.* When encompassed with the darkness of fears and doubts, and sad apprehensions.

5. It is a sad time with them, when grace comes under a lamentable decay in their soul, and they are left to pine away in their iniquity : when instead of tenderness of heart, hardness of heart seizes them ; *Isa. lxiii. 17,* “O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways ? and hardened our heart from thy fear ?”

6. It is a sad time with them, when corruption prevails, and when the slaves and servants come to ride upon horses in their soul ; and nothing to be heard but “O wretched man that I am ; who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” When temptations are throng, and inward hellish injections, tending to atheism, infidelity, blasphemy, and profanity, and many thorns in the flesh buffet them. When nothing is left but complaints of hardness, blindness, weakness, impotency, treachery, failings, short-comings, and the power of corruptions and temptations.

III. The third general head proposed was, To speak of these sweet grounds of encouragement, that the church or city of God hath amidst these sad times, imported in the *RIVER*, “the streams whereof do make glad the city of God.” Here I shall shew what is the river ; why God is compared to a river ; and touch at the nature of this gladness.

1st, What is the River that makes glad the city of God ?

I answer, God himself is the river, as in the following verse, "God is in the midst of her."

1. God the Father is the river; Jer. ii. 13, "For my people have committed two great evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

2. God the Son is the river, the fountain of salvation; Zech. xiii. 1, "In that day, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."

3. God the Spirit is the river: John vii. 38, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. John iv. 14, Whosoever drinketh the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well springing up into everlasting life."

2dly, What are the streams of this river?

Ans. The perfections of God, the fulness of Christ, the operations of the Spirit; and these running in the channel of the covenant of promise.

1. The perfections of God. O! what an ocean of gladness and joy is here? Here is wisdom, to direct; power, to protect; holiness, to sanctify; justice, to justify; goodness, to pity; and faithfulness, to make out all that he hath said. There is more ground of comfort in that one word, *I will be thy God*, than there is in thousands of worlds. What can they want that have a God to go to? Can they want water that have the ocean, or want light that have the sun? Besides this, God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in all these perfections. Here then is spirituality, to make the gladness and happiness suited to the nature of the soul: the more spiritual the gladness is, the more pure and pleasant. Here is infinity, to make it boundless: here is eternity, to make it endless: here is unchangeableness and immutability, to make it steady and immoveable.

2. The fulness of Christ is another stream of the river: his fulness of purchase; fulness of wisdom, as a Prophet; righteousness, as a Priest; and power, as a King; fulness of grace, as a surety, to pay all our debts; fulness of skill, as a physician, to heal all diseases; and fulness of store, as a treasury, for supplying all wants: "Out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 16, Col. i. 19, and ii. 9, 10.

3. The operations, graces, and influences of the Spirit. Here is another source of pleasure and comfort: he is the Comforter; and he gives sometimes strong consolation. In all his various operations, there are manifold consolations; and hence the Spirit's working is compared to wind, for fanning and stirring up the dormant graces, Song iv. 16: sometimes to water, for cleansing the foul heart, John iii. 5; sometimes to fire, for warming the cold heart, Mat. iii. 11; and sometimes to oil, for softening the hard heart, Psal. xlv. 7, 1 John ii. 27. This is the wind that fills their sails, and forwards their voyage to the heavenly harbour: this is the well of water that springs up in them to everlasting life: this the fire that makes their hearts burn within them: and this is the oil of joy that anoints the wheels of their souls for running their Christian race; the joy of the Lord is their strength. And all running in the channel of the covenant of promise; for we receive the Spirit, not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: this is all my salvation, and all my desire. This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me." One scripture-promise is a cordial beyond all riches, pleasures, and honours of a world; these vanish, but "The word of the Lord endureth for ever." What comfort can we find without a promise? And what can give sorrow when God gives a promise? Sickness, with a promise, is better than health; poverty, with a promise, is better than riches; a prison, with a promise, is better than a palace; bonds and confinement, with a promise, is better than liberty; yea, death, with a promise, is better than life. All that you have, without a promise, you may lose this night, and your souls and hopes with it; but all that you have, with a promise, you may be sure of it; yea, believer you may be vastly more sure of that which you have in a promise, than of that which you have in possession: the comfort you have in possession, is but the stream-comfort, that may be cut off; but the comfort you have in promise, is the fountain comfort, that cannot be cut off: hence you are called to live by faith, and not by sense. We may go through death rejoicing, with a promise of life in our hand, while infidels lie down in the dust with desperation.

3dly, Why is God in Christ, by the Spirit, running in the channel of the new covenant, compared to a river?

Ans. It may be upon account of these qualities of a river,

the openness, plenty, powerfulness, purity, and perpetuity of a river.

1. The openness and patency of a river. It is open, patent, and common to all that pass by ; so is God in Christ, by the Spirit, exhibiting himself in the gospel dispensation. No sinner is excluded among mankind : " Go preach the gospel to every creature."

2. Rivers are profitable to some cities, both for navigation and fortification. Some rivers are profitable for commerce, traffic, and conveyance of rich commodities of one kingdom to another : even so the Spirit of God, that crystal river of the waters of life, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, is that by which we have commerce with heaven : therefore Christ says, " He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." There is no trading to heaven, but by sailing in this river. The ship of faith cannot sail but as supported by these waters of the sanctuary. Some rivers are profitable to cities for fortification and strength ; this river is the strength of the city of God ; " Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, Zech. iv. 2. When the enemy comes in like a flood, it is the Spirit of the Lord that lifts up a standard." Some rivers are the safety of the town that they environ : so the Lord is a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein goeth no galley with oars, nor gallant ship passeth thereby, Isa. xxxiii. 21. They that are thus environed need not fear the stormings of men and devils. And as some rivers bear up ships of a great burden, so this river bears up the weight of the whole church and people of God, while sailing, like a ship, along these waters.

3. Rivers have plenty of water. Oh ! the infinite fulness of God, of God in Christ ! Oh ! the plenitude of the Spirit, that is in Christ, for the behalf of the city of God ! " Out of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace." Here is all the fulness of the Godhead. A vessel may soon be emptied and drunk out ; but this river is inexhaustible : here is enough for men and angels to eternity.

4. Rivers are powerful, and run irresistibly ; they cannot be driven back by the force of men : even so are the influences of the Spirit of God, when the promise is accomplished, Isa. xlv. 3, " I will pour water on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." This mighty flood makes its way through all oppositions, and forces them all down before it. What but this stopt Paul in his persecuting career, and made him cry out, " Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Oh ! a plentiful effusion of the Spirit would throw down unbelief, atheism, enmity, carnality, and all carnal reasonings.

5. Rivers are pure and purifying. A swift stream washes away all filth. They are more clear and savoury than pools and standing water. Wherever this river of the water of life runs, it carries away all pollution, washes away all corruption: in Rev. xxii. 1, it is called "a pure river, clear as crystal." What need of this river to run through this generation, to purge it from the pollution and corruption thereof?

6. Rivers are perpetually running, never stand still, but are always in motion. Thus God hath promised to water his church invisible, and to water it every moment, Isa. xxxii. 3. And Christ says, "He that believeth in me shall never thirst," never be in total want. He says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14. In a word, all earthly elementary water hath a beginning; but this river is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning and without end. Other rivers are fed by springs and fountains; but the river, as I said, is God himself, and his gracious emanations: therefore, though God hath provided a channel of gospel-ordinances, to convey some of the water of this river to us; yet this immense river cannot be limited or circumscribed. This river will run through the city of God for ever.

Fourthly, What is the nature of this gladness, that the streams of this river afford to the city of God?

Ans. It is such as transcends all worldly pleasures.

For, 1, It is real, solid, and substantial. Hence it is called, *Joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8; whereas sensual delights are slight, fleeting, full of wind and vanity; "Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools." They are like Jonah's gourd, God hath prepared a worm to destroy them. Creature-comforts, when a person promises most in them, then a worm eats them up, root and all. They are such comforts, as that the wind can wither them, the water can drown them, the fire can burn them, the moth can consume them, or the thief can steal them, sickness can sink them, or death can destroy them; some worm or other can eat them up: but the gladness and joy that this river brings is so solid and substantial, that it can defy fire and water, Isa. xliii. 1, 2. It can defy trouble and distress, famine, nakedness, peril and sword; it can defy death, and life, and angels, principalities, powers, &c., Rom. viii. 38, 39.

2. This gladness is rational and well-grounded, not founded

upon mistake or fancy, but warranted by the promise and oath of God, the two immutable things, by which it is impossible for God to lie. None but a lying devil, and an unbelieving heart, will call in question the foundation of their faith, hope, and comfort : but the wicked rejoice in their own delusions ; it is only ignorance and error they are beholden to for their mirth. I have read of a certain weed which makes these that eat it to give up their lives laughing ; such a weed do the wicked of the world eat ; it makes them go laughing to hell, to which their carnal mirth hastens them.

3. This gladness is spiritual, pure, and holy. It is a piece of commanded duty, *Rejoice evermore.* The pleasure of Wisdom's ways are sure, and accompanied with the holy fear of God ; they walked in the fear of God, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, Acts xix. 31. They are warranted by his command, and promoted by his promise ; whereas the pleasures of the ungodly are impure, sinful, and forbidden pleasures ; " There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked : " he calleth them to weeping and mourning and rent of heart, Joel ii. 12, 13 ; James v. 1—5. This gladness gives spiritual and holy rest in the midst of trouble : " In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul : " it gives relief from present fear of danger and distress, and from future fear of death and judgment ; whereas these fears will soon mar all worldly mirth. This gladness is a purifying gladness. No man hateth sin so much as he that tasteth of this joy ; and he that rejoiceth most doth also work righteousness most ; " The joy of the Lord is his strength ; " whereas fleshly pleasures are putrifying instead of purifying. Oh ! how little of God is in the midst of men's hunting and hawking, dicing and carding, drinking, dancing, ranting, and revelling ? How little of heaven is in their mind ? The heart is thereby not only putrified, but petrified, and hardened against the word and warnings of God ; then it is that they are foolish, disobedient, deceived, when they are serving divers lusts and pleasures, Tit. iii. 3. Such are unwilling soberly to consider the things that concern their everlasting peace ; and hence so frequently grow up to be slights and scorn of the means of salvation. This gladness is fed and maintained by spiritual, heavenly, and lofty things. The carnal man's pleasures are fed with trifles, like that of children playing with toys and trifles ; but, O ! this spiritual pleasure is maintained by the love of God, and the hope of the glory of God.

4. This gladness is lasting, yea, everlasting. Indeed, the believer's joy in this world is often interrupted by the neighbourhood of the flesh, the prevalence of sin, and the hidings of God's face: yet still he keeps their comforts alive, at least in the root, and will make them spring up as we need them, and are meet for them; and they are joys that no man can take from them, John xvi. 22. Death cannot kill the believer's joys; the grave cannot bury them; millions of ages cannot end them; "God hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace," 2 Thess. ii. 16. It is not a mutable good that the believer rejoices in, but in an immutable good, an immutable God, in the immutable love of God, the immutable promise of the covenant, and in the hope of the kingdom that cannot be moved; these are pleasures for evermore, Psal. xvi. 11. But carnal joy and gladness is of a short duration; it cannot stand before a serious thought of death. How foolish are they that choose the pleasures of sin, that are but for a season! Heb, xi. 25; the joy that will be quickly crowned in everlasting sorrow! If folly and stupidity were not predominant, it would be a wonder that ungodly men can be merry, when their conscience tells them that they are not sure if they shall stay one hour out of hell, and that they are sowing the seed of everlasting sorrow; whereas the gladness watered with the streams of this river is the seed of everlasting joy. The bones of thousands lie in the churchyard that have had many a merry, wanton day; but now what better are they of it? Yea, how much worse, that they have lived in sinful pleasures, that are now turned to everlasting flames? Whereas these spiritual consolations, that are bred by the streams of this river, they carry all the dead in Christ into the ocean of everlasting joy: "At his right hand are rivers of pleasure for evermore."

IV. The fourth head proposed was, to make application of the subject: and this we shall essay in an use of information, examination, and exhortation.

The first use may be for information; and what I say here shall be according to the three heads I have been insisting upon.

1st, Is it so, that the church of God is a city? Then we may infer,

1. That the church is an orderly society, and that there is a form of government therein. There is a settled form of church government, and Jesus Christ is the head and Lord of it: neither dare any presume to alter it upon the highest peril. Christ is the

foundation of the city ; and other foundation can no man lay than which is laid.

2. If the church be a city, then it is the duty of all the citizens to advance the common interest of the whole. There is one common interest, which they should jointly promote, namely, the glory of the founder of the city, and their own eternal happiness. Let us join together, Sirs, in opposing, by our prayers and endeavours, any thing that may tend to the prejudice of the welfare of the city.

3. If it be a city, then all the citizens should love one another. Let us live, Sirs, in unity and peace, unanimity and concord. Why, "A city divided against itself cannot stand. O how pleasant a thing is it for brethren to dwell together in unity !"

4. If it be a city, then these that go about to disturb the comely order of this city are to be looked upon as fire-brands and incendiaries therein ; "Mark these that cause divisions, says the apostle, for they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; who with good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple."

Quest. Who are these that cause division, and disturb the peace of the city ? It is Elijah that is the troubler of Israel ? No ; though he be called so. Is it Micaiah, who would not run with the current of the times, nor join with the four hundred prophets that flattered the king and court, but behaved to be singular ? No surely. Nor is it Christ and his apostles, who were called the men that turn the world upside down ? No. Who then are these that cause divisions ? I love not to speak in the clouds. I think,

(1.) These who come not in by the gate of the city, but climb up some other way, whom the scripture calleth thieves and robbers, look like the disturbers of the peace of the city.

(2.) These who assume offices in the city, from selfish ends, for a piece of bread, not for the good of the city ; not for feeding of the flock, but feeding themselves ; who seek the fleece and not the flock.

(3.) These who break down the walls of the city, and lift up hammers and axes upon the carved work, to demolish the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof.

(4.) These who wound the citizens : and, indeed, many of the people of God, at this day, have occasion to say of the watchmen, "They smote me, they wounded me, they took away my veil from me."

(5.) These who are like Gallio, indifferent and easy whether

the walls be broken down or not. We need to be zealous in the cause of Christ and his church; what would have become of us, if Christ had not been zealous in our cause? When, in the counsel of peace, it came to the vote, Save them or damn them? if Christ had not voted, or if he had been a *non liquet*, damnation would have carried it: we should therefore see how we do with his cause.

(6.) These who are wholly silent, when the city is in danger; "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence." What! shall all be hushed, even when the city is in extreme danger? This looks not like our reformation days, wherein there were acts of assembly for suspending and deposing ministers who spoke not to the situation of the times.¹ We may allude to Esther, to whom Mordecai said, "If thou altogether hold thy peace at this time, then shall their enlargement and deliverance arise from another way, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed; and who knoweth, whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this." Esther iv. 14.

2dly, Is the church the city of God? Then hence see,

1. That God hath the absolute ordering and disposal of all the concerns of this city. He is the Head and Governor of it himself, it being his own property. It is the height of arrogance for any mortal to take upon them to be supreme head of it. He needs no colleague for the vastness of his dominions, no regent in his minority, nor viceroy in his absence.

2. If it be the city of God, then none have any power, without his warrant, to make laws in his city, and appoint things without

(1) See Act of the General Assembly, 1596, revived by the Assembly at Glasgow, 1638, and the Act of the Assembly, 1646, Sess. 10. And particularly the Act of the Assembly at Edinburgh, August 3d, 1648, Sess. 26, wherein, *INTER ALIA*, "They appoint and ordain, that every minister do, by the word of wisdom, apply his doctrine faithfully against the public sins and corruptions of these times;—that such persons as shall be found not applying their doctrine to corruptions, which is the pastoral gift, but cold and wanting of spiritual zeal, flatterers, and dissembling of public sins, and especially of great personages, shall be censured according to the degree of their faults; that silence or ambiguous speaking be timely censured; that if any be found too sparing, general, or ambiguous in the foresaid applications and reproofs, that they be sharply rebuked, dealt with, and warned to amend, under the pain of suspension from their ministry by the Presbytery or Synod: but if there be any who neglect or omit such applications or reproofs, and continue in such negligence, after admonition and dealing with them, they are to be cited; and, after due trial of the offence, to be deposed, for being pleasers of men, rather than the servants of Christ; for giving themselves to a detestable indifferency or neutrality in the cause of God; and for defrauding the souls of people; yea, for being guilty of the blood of souls, in not giving them warning."

him. The civil laws of men, and the laws of the city of God, do stand upon separate foundations; and when the laws of men do clash with the privileges and immunities of the church, it is a manifest encroachment upon, and contempt of the royal prerogative of the founder of the city. The church is the city of the living God.

3. If the church be the city of God, hence we infer, That the church is a very honourable society: "Beautiful for situation, the joy and glory of the whole earth is mount Zion, the city of the great King." Indeed, they are contemned by the most part of the world; but yet they are the excellent ones of the earth, all glorious within, and shall be more glorious one day, when every one of them shall shine as the stars in the firmament of glory. They have an honourable governor, honourable privileges; "Why do ye leap, ye high high mountains? This is the hill where God desires to dwell."

4. If it be the city of God, then it is the safest city. Why, "God is known in her palaces for a refuge." It is the *city of God*. It is fenced with the wisdom, power, and other attributes of God. It is a strong city; for, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth, even for ever." It cannot be straitened without, for weakness and want of security; nor within, for fear of want of food; "The place of thy defence shall be the munition of rocks: bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure."

5. Is the church the city of God? Then we may infer the perpetuity thereof. If it be the city of God, it shall never be totally ruined. The greatest cities have been brought to ruin and desolation; *Jam seges ubi Troja fuit*. But this is firmly established, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved."

6. If it be the city of God, then we see what should be the temper of all the citizens; surely we ought to imitate him whose city it is, to be holy as he is holy. We should seek to be like the Governor of the city; "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Thirdly, Hath the city of God, the Church of God, sweet grounds of encouragement amidst all the confusions in the world? Then hence we may infer,

1. That it is not the ruin of the church to undergo external confusion and affliction. When human fences are gone, we are not to let our confidence and hope go; for the church hath no depend-

ence on the creature. There is still ground of encouragement in God, on whom it depends. It falls out that the state of the invisible church is best, when the state of the visible church is worst. Lacedæmon was always a gainer by its wars. It is said of the tribe of Levi, that they got no inheritance, with their brethren; for the Lord was their inheritance. Really it was no loss to them; for, if they had another inheritance, perhaps they would have had no share in God.

2. Hence see, what is the duty of the people of God, under the confusions and commotions of our day. Be not discouraged; "Ye are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God:" and, "There is a river the streams whereof do make glad the city of God." O what encouragement and comfort have some martyrs had, in embracing the very flames! Vincentius spoke in these terms, "Rage," says he, "and do the worst that the spirit of malignity can set thee on work to do; thou shalt see God's Spirit strengthen the tormented, more than the devil can do the tormentor." I remember another joyful martyr had these triumphant dying words, "It is but a small matter," says he, "to die once for Christ; but, if it might possibly be, I could wish to die a thousand deaths for him." O what gladness and triumph hath filled the hearts of the people of God, not only in the prospect of danger, but in the prospect of death! And all the matter is, "There is a river that makes glad the city of God."

3. If there be a river that makes glad the city of God, then let the citizens be afraid of doing that which may divert the streams of this river from their souls. Beware of sin, which may provoke God to turn away, and alter the channel of the streams; and then you shall have sorrow instead of gladness. Do not tempt him to withdraw the sense of his favour.

The second use of the doctrine may be for examination. If you be a true citizen, you will not only have the burgess ticket, baptism (many are like honorary burgesses, that get a burgess-ticket, and perhaps never see the city again, nor are concerned about the welfare thereof); but try what you know,

1. Of the avenue of the city, the avenue that leads to it; I mean, conviction and humiliation, John xvi. 8. The Spirit convinces, partly by opening the law, both in its spirituality, as reaching the heart, Matt. v. 28; and in its severity, as pronouncing a curse against sin, Gal. iii. 10; partly by opening our sin, as a transgression of the law, and an exposing to the curse and wrath threat-

ened. The Spirit humbles as a Spirit of bondage, which imports partly an apprehension of our present evil, sinful condition, as a base condition, a depraved, enslaved, dangerous, weary condition; and partly an expectation of future evil. The man is troubled for what he hath done against God, and for what God may justly do against him.

2. What do you know of the gate or door of the city; I mean, conversion? Here the Spirit opens the door, partly by opening the gospel, and the strong grounds of faith and hope in gospel-offers, answering doubts and fears from former iniquity, or present unworthiness and unfitness; these the Spirit inwardly answers, partly by opening the heart and overcoming it, and drawing it out towards Christ, so as it is united to him by faith, love, desire, delight. Thus the dead soul is raised to life, and now the man is converted.

(1.) From his own righteousness to reliance upon the Lord our righteousness. Men naturally depend upon a righteousness of their own; something wrought by them, or in them, is the ground of their hope and confidence. Some trust to this, that they are good Christians; some to this, that they are good Protestants; some that they have a good honest mind and meaning; some that they do this and the other good duty; some that they are good neighbours, and wrong nobody; some that they are zealous for a good cause, and are always on the best side; some that they have good affections and enlargements at times; they get a tear shed in hearing, and joy in hearing, &c. Every one lays stress upon one thing or another. But evangelical conversion brings a man off from these bottoms, and from all confidence in the flesh.

(2.) This conversion frees men from all their sins and idols, reckoning all nothing to the pearl of great price. The man not only confesses sin, but forsakes it; not only forsakes it, but is grieved for it; not only grieves for it, but hates it; not only hates it, but pursues it to death, and seeks the utter ruin of it, saying, O to have sin crucified! O to be avenged on these Philistines! not only for my two eyes that they have put out, not only for the hurt they have done to me, but for the dishonour and indignities they do unto God.

3. Have you any acquaintance with the streets of the city? particularly these two great streets wherein the citizens walk, viz., obedience to the commanding will of God, and submission to his disposing will.

(1.) A man, by obedience to the commanding will of God, disputes not any of his commands, but approves of his whole will; disapproves of himself for want of conformity to him. He is displeased with himself, saying, "Oh! wretched man that I am!" He hath a secret approbation and satisfaction with himself, when he finds conformity thereunto wrought: he is pleased with this, as evidential of his interest in Christ's righteousness. When he finds himself brought under the power of holiness, and delivered from the power of sin, then he is best pleased with himself, who is walking along the street of obedience to the commanding will of God.

(2.) The other street of the city is submission to God's disposing will: and they that know what it is to walk along this, are brought to a submission to the providence of God. The man that cannot walk here, he is displeased with every providence, saying "Why doth God suffer these confusions in the world? Why doth he suffer sin to be in me and in the world? Why doth not a holy God take course with his enemies on a sudden? Why am not I redressed instantly of my grievances? Why are not my prayers instantly heard?" The man cannot wait God's leisure, nor God's time, but limits the holy One of Israel, and repines at every dispensation: but now, when he is brought to be a true citizen, and acquaint with the streets of the city, he is ready to say, Alas! I am ashamed of myself, and my unbelief, and my hellish pride, and all my heart-risings against the divine will. Now, he desires to say, "Lord, what will thou have me to do? What wilt thou have me to suffer? Let me do what thou pleasest, providest thou helpst me; let me suffer what thou pleasest, provided thou upholdest me; I will put a blank in the Lord's hand. Let me be reproached, if he see that good for me; let me be poor, let me trampled under foot; yea, if he see it meet sometimes to hide his face, to keep me empty, and deny me these sweet influences that I would gladly have at all times; if it be for his glory and my good, that these be denied, let him even take the government, and rule the reins as he pleaseth; let me not affect the dominion; let him take his own way of dieting me, and keeping me from hand to mouth. I know he will not starve me, but designs my good in all things; "He is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him." How unpleasant were his providences, of this sort once a-day to me! But now he hath brought me to know the streets of the city."

4. Are you acquainted with the temple of the city? "I saw

no temple there, but the Lord God almighty, and the Lamb are in the midst of it." What acquaintance have you with the temple? and with looking again and again to his holy temple in all your straits? "They looked to him, and were enlightened, and their faces were not ashamed." Are you acquaint with the trade of the city; trading with heaven, living upon Christ and his fulness? Do you endeavour to support the walls of the city, the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of God's house? Are you seeking the good of the city and citizens? "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."

5. If you be a true citizen, then you will have somewhat of the disposition of, and conformity to the heavenly Jerusalem; for, "Ye are come to mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven," Heb. xii. 22. The church militant and triumphant are but one house; the one the lower, the other the upper room. In that city there is perfect vision; they see him as he is. Now, what begun conformity have you to that? What views have you got of Christ? In that city there is full fruition. Now, what conformity have you to that? What fellowship with the Father and Son? In that city there is perfect likeness to Christ. What have you of this? Beholding his glory, are you changed? What holiness have you? or what lamentation over your unholiness, and longings after it! In that city there is perfect joy. What have you of the beginnings hereof, by your sharing of the river that makes glad the city of God? What drops of divine joy strengthen you at times? Though frequently you have sorrow, yet Christ says, "I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice." Do you find his visiting you again and again, giving some joy! I speak not of the measure, but of the reality of the thing.

6. Try if you be a citizen of this city, by the love which you bear to fellow citizens. This is a clear consequence from the union that is between the members of his compacted body; and though some coin is less than other coin, yet, if it bear the image of Cæsar, it should pass. If we see the image of Christ, we should love it, though there be some small differences. Some have a greater, and some a less degree. "By this we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."

7. If you be among the inhabitants of the city of God, then you are distinguished from the rest of the world, in your garb, your

language, your zeal. You are distinguished in your garb; you are, in some respects all glorious within, clothed with the imputed and implanted righteousness of Christ. You will be distinguished in your language; you will love to speak of Zion's King, and the privileges of the city; and have forgotten the language of Ashdod; the cursed swearer, and the person that loves not to speak, or hear concerning the city of God, he does not look like an inhabitant of it. You will be distinguished also as to your zeal, if you be a citizen; the concerns of the city will lie near your heart; and the zeal you have thereto, will even be like to eat you up.

The last use we shall make of the doctrine shall be for exhortation; and this shall be tendered to three sorts of persons. 1. To these that are not citizens of this city of God. 2. To these that are citizens. And 3. To all in general.

1st. To these that are not citizens of this city of God. It will not make you a citizen that you dwell in the city, profess to be a citizen, or be taken for a citizen. O study to be citizens of this city of God! And to enforce this exhortation, consider,

1. The great confusions and commotions that are in our day: the earth is like to be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea; the waters are roaring and the mountains shaking; the heathen raging, and the people imagining a vain thing: there are many secret and open plots against the Lord and his Anointed.

2. Consider that, notwithstanding of all the confusions and disorders in the world, there is appearance of greater, if the Lord do not prevent, because of our fruitlessness under the gospel; dreadful security, and many other tokens of the Lord's anger, portending great confusion; and what will you do, if you have not interest in this city, where alone there is safety and peace?

3. Consider the misery of these who are without the city: the suburbs is a dangerous post in time of war; for they are sure to be consumed, either by the citizens or enemies. Though you be beside the ark in a profession of religion, yet you may perish as certainly as these that are an hundred miles from it. And if you shall *not* escape who neglect this great salvation, by refusing to go into the city, what will become of these who pull down the walls of this city, as many are doing at this day? "God will render vengeance to his enemies."

4. Consider the happiness of these that are true citizens of this city; they are freed from sin, freed from Satan, freed from the law, freed from death, freed from hell; freed from trouble, or blessed

with rest in the midst of it; for, in the greatest commotions in the world, "there is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God."

Now, if you ask, What you shall do to be citizens? We answer, That there are none born free of this city. All these that are born under the external privileges of it, have not a right to the special privileges that belong to the citizens thereof; but if you would become citizens,

(1.) You must be born again; it is not your natural generation, but spiritual regeneration that will make you free in this city; "Of Zion it shall be said, This man and that man was born in her."

(2.) You must leave all other cities; you must leave the world and the pollutions thereof; you must come out of Sodom, Tyre, Babylon, Jerusalem, which are in bondage, and come to Mount Zion; we must leave all and come to the city of God, to the Lord Jesus Christ; break off your society with sin and Satan; your covenant with hell must be broken, your agreement with death must be disannulled, and you must go to the society of the godly, however meanly you think of them now: "Depart from the tents of wicked men: Come out from among them, my people, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."

(3.) Study to get your burgess ticket secured; "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure:" and if you have this in your hand, you may go through the wilderness with gladness, whatever difficulties may be in the way, saying, with Habakkuk, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

(4.) Acquaint yourselves with the laws of the city; I mean the scriptures of truth; "He hath given his statutes to Jacob, and his testimonies to Israel:" therefore, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have everlasting life, and these are they which testify of me."

(5.) You must accept of the grant of freedom and liberty that Christ offers to you: he offers to make you all free men in this city; and, "If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." Accept of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all his fulness, freely; say, Even so, I take him as he is offered in the gospel.

(6.) You must take the oath of the city. Here is an oath, Sirs, that you may freely take. Some insnaring oaths in our day

are unsuitable to, and inconsistent with the corporation of this holy city ; but I can freely offer and tender you the oath of this city of God ; enter into a covenant with him under the influences of grace, “ An everlasting covenant never to be forgotten : ” swear in the name of the Lord, swear by the help of his grace, and swear in the strength of Jehovah, that you will be for him, and not for another : take an oath of abjuration against all your enemies, sin, Satan, and the world that pretend a right to the throne of your heart : take an oath of allegiance to the Son of God, to give him the kingdom, and yield him the obedience. His right to the crown is unquestionable.

The main exhortation and advice I offer to you is, to come to the King of the city, the mighty King, take on with him ; Look to him as able to save to the uttermost, whatever powerful objections lie in the way. Are you under the power of death ? Behold he is the resurrection and the life ; the God that quickens the dead, and calls things that are not as though they were. Are you under the power of darkness ? Behold, he is the light of the world ; and enlighteneth every one that cometh into the world. Are you under the power of unbelief ? Look to him as the Author of Faith. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, as the way and as the Leader. Are you under the power of heart-hardness ? Yet, O Sirs, despair not ; help is nigh at hand : he can, of these stones, raise up children to Abraham. Put work in his hand, that hath said, “ I will take away the heart of stone.” Whatever is the plague, here is the cure. O stout-hearted Atheist ! this mighty grace can conquer you. 2dly, We next tender our exhortation to these who are citizens : and my advice to you is,

1. That you wear the livery of this city, and that is holiness. Let it appear to the world, that ye are citizens by your holy walk.

2. See that ye speak of the language of the city, not the language of Ashdod ; let your conversation discover your being citizens of Zion.

3. See that ye bear burdens in the city. Be content to bear the common burden, the cross of Christ ; “ If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” Endeavour to bear down errors and heresies by your prayers and endeavours.

4. See that ye love the corporation, and be ready to put forth yourself for the good of the city : “ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem ; they shall prosper that love her.”

5. See that ye be subject to the government of the city, the statutes of the church, so far, and no further than they are agreeable to, and set down in the scriptures of truth; "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:" peace, grounded upon truth and holiness, is the chief statute of the city: Buy the truth at any rate, and sell it not, even for peace itself.

6. See that ye be diligent in following the trade and calling of this city. Activity in our spiritual trade will witness, that you are true citizens of this city; and it is the daily trade thereof to be waiting at the door of the city, waiting at Wisdom's door-posts, and coming boldly to the throne of grace, and living by faith on the Son of God. Think much of this, that ye are free men in the city, and reckon much upon the privileges that you enjoy, particularly that God should write upon you the name of the city of your God, which is the New Jerusalem which, cometh down out of heaven from your God, and write upon you his new name, Rev. iii. 12. Likewise reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, and reckon yourselves righteous in Christ. It is true humility, not only to acknowledge your natural misery and sinfulness, but also to acknowledge your spiritual privileges and mercies that you enjoy in Christ. Again,

7. Are you citizens? Then make daily use of the river that makes glad the city of God. Be glad and rejoice in the Lord, whatever sad case or circumstance you are in. "O! say you, is there any ground of joy and gladness for me, when I find myself scorched with the wrath of God, ready to burn me up?" Yea, let faith run to the river, and you will find that the streams thereof have a cooling and quenching virtue. We joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement, and are saved from wrath through him. "O! is there any ground of gladness when I find nothing but pollution and filthiness taking place in me?" Yea, let faith run to the river, and you will find it hath a cleansing virtue, to take away all pollution; "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. 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." "O! is there any ground of gladness, when I am all wounds and bruises, all over-run with diseases and maladies." Yea, let faith run to the river, and you will find the streams thereof have a healing virtue. Here are the healing waters of the sanctuary; *I am the Lord that healeth thee.* "O! is there any ground of joy and

gladness, when I find myself dead in sin, having a dead heart, a dead frame, nothing but the image of death about me?" Yea, let faith run to the river, and you will find the streams thereof have a quickening virtue; Ezek. xlvii. 9, "Every thing shall live whither the river cometh: it is the water of life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "O! what ground of gladness, when my heart is so hard and stupid like a rock, harder than an adamant?" Yea, let faith run to the river, and you will find the water hath a softening virtue; "God can, out of stones, raise up children to Abraham," and take away the heart of stone, melt the adamant. "O what ground of gladness, when I find no fruit, nothing but the curse of barrenness upon me?" Why, let faith run to the river; the streams are of a fructifying virtue, and you shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth her fruit in its season. "O! is there any ground of joy when I find my strength gone, and that I have no power for any duty? I am not able to move, nor to look up." Yea, let faith run to the river; you will find the streams thereof have a strengthening virtue: you shall be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, and when you are weak, you shall then be strong; Ps. lxxxiv. 5, 6, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; while the rain filleth the pools, they go from strength to strength, till they appear before the Lord in Zion." "O! is there any ground of joy or gladness for me, when I find I cannot receive any consolation, when I am just in the pit of trouble, and in the depth of despondency?" Yea, let faith run to the river, and you will find the streams thereof have a refreshing virtue, a restoring virtue to restore your soul. The streams are of a gladdening quality: whatever be the ground of sadness, here is everlasting ground of gladness: "There is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God."

3dly, I would drop a few words to all in general. Let me exhort you to come and drink at the streams of this river, running in the channel of the covenant of promise. Here is a stream of grace for every one of you; a stream of quickening grace, for the dead sinner; pardoning grace, for the guilty sinner; purifying grace for the filthy; healing grace, for the diseased; and drawing grace, for the backward. As rivers lie open to all passengers, so this river lies open to all poor sinners. It is not a fountain sealed, but the fountain opened that we proclaim among you; "Whosoever will, let him come." As all may drink at a river, and drink their

fill, and it never be missed, so it is here ; come with your empty vessels, ye that have nothing, no wit, no grace, no strength, no righteousness, Christ hath enough for himself, and enough for you ; “ Let him that is athirst come :—Ho, every one that thirsteth ;” that is, every one that needs a drink ; ho, every one that is ignorant, you need a drink of teaching and enlightening grace ; Christ is a prophet to give that to you : ho, every one that is guilty, you need a drink of pardoning grace, and Christ is a Priest to give that to you : ho, every one that is under the power and dominion of sin and Satan, Christ is a King to give liberating grace to you.

It is the first invitation to come to Jesus that you have got by our hand, and in all probability it will be the last ; and it may be now or never ; shall this offer then be slighted ? Say not you will not be welcome ; O ! try it ; yea, he will be glad of you, and rejoice in you, whatever you have hitherto been : and what is Christ saying ? O come without delay : come to me, whatever you have been : you that have been a drunkard, you that have been a swearer, you that have been a whoremonger or adulterer, you that have been a Sabbath-breaker, you that have been an incarnate devil, here is a Saviour come to save you from your sins, an incarnate God come to save incarnate devils. O ! here is a mystery of love, that he is content to take a sinner at the close of his days, and even what he hath been giving the flower of his time to his idols, and the strength of his heart unto vanity. O ! the mystery of the love of Christ, that he is content to take you at the last, and at the worst ; to take you when your idols have forsaken you, and when you can do no better. O ! come to the river ; “ Whosoever will, let him come.” Why come you here, if you come not to Christ ? May I say, “ What came ye out to the wilderness to see, or to hear ?” Many have come to satisfy their curiosity, to see and hear two strangers ;¹ is that all ? Wo is me ; you have seen nothing, if you have not got a sight of Christ in this gospel : you have heard nothing, if you have not heard the voice of Christ. Some will go away, perhaps, pleased with the sermons they have heard ; but O Sirs, what a matter of moon-shine is that ? Are we come this length only to please your ears ? I think we have lost our errand, if we

(1) The Reverend Mr Fisher, late minister at Glasgow, accompanied our author in this embassy to the south, and preached on these words, “ Their rock is not as our rock, enemies themselves being judges.” It was the first time they had been in these bounds preaching.

have win no heart to Christ here : we think we have lost all our pains, if we have not win a soul to Christ here, nor made the savour of his name more known ; but if henceforth some stranger to Christ be set a seeking of him, some enemies be made friends, some mockers be turned to mourners, some graceless persons, and families among you, were turned to praying ones, and praying persons were turned to wrestling ones ; if these that have only a form of prayer, and a form of godliness, were turned to the power of godliness ; if despisers of Christ, and of the gospel, were turned to believers in Christ, and followers of the Lamb, we should think our pains well bestowed, and our travel well recompensed, though it had been a hundred miles further.

May these that are strangers and aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, become true citizens of the city of God ; and may all the citizens take home this text with them, and rejoice in this firm word of God, that though the world should run into confusion and disorder ; though matters should appear never so dismal and desperate, though the enemies of the church, the people, the city of God, whether it be within, or without the walls, should roar like the ocean, and go to the utmost bounds of fury, yet " There is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God."

S E R M O N L X.

THE GIVING LOVE OF CHRIST, AND THE RECEIVING PROPERTY OF FAITH.¹

" I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."—GAL. ii. 20.

THIS text is like a stately tree, with so many branches. We may call it a tree of life, and a tree of love. You will find life is the heart of the tree, and love is the root of it. The life of Christ is

(1) This subject was handled in four sermons, preached on sacramental occasions. The first was preached at Stirling, on the preparation-day, before the sacrament there, July 14th, 1739. The second was preached immediately before the action, July 15th. The third was delivered at Kinclaven, July 30th. The fourth at Burntisland, August 13th, all in the foresaid year.

the heart, and the love of Christ is the root of the tree. There is a wonderful fence about this tree; it seems to be fenced about, as it were, with death, the death of Christ, which we are about to commemorate. The text begins and ends with it, as that which insures to the believer both this life and this love. How is the believer insured of this life of Christ? Why, says he, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." And how is he insured and assured of this love of Christ? Why, He "loved me, and gave himself for me."

O! if we could by faith ascend up all the branches of this tree! The higher we climb, we will find it always the better and the sweeter.

The first branch of the text is, "I am crucified with Christ." Why, may one say, the evangelists tells us but of two malefactors that were crucified with Christ and Paul was none of them; nay, by this time he was at the feet of Gamaliel, and not at the foot of the cross on Mount Calvary; and, had he been there, he would rather have helped to crucify him, than yielded to have been crucified with him; for sometime after this, we find him helping to stone the first martyr, Stephen, by consenting to his death; and helping to crucify Christ in his members, and persecuting them; which made Christ say to him, as he was riding furiously against them to Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" How then could Paul be said to be crucified with Christ? This I spoke to formerly¹; and therefore shall now only add these two considerations,

1. That Christ, on the cross, was not a private, but a public person, representing all his people: so that, when he died and suffered, we died and suffered in him. As the first Adam did not sin only for himself, but for all his natural seed, that should come of him by ordinary generation; so the second Adam did not die for himself at all, but for all his seed.

2. There is a real, spiritual, and indissolvable union between Christ and all his people that believe in him; insomuch that his being crucified is the same as if they had been crucified in their person.

The second branch of the text is, "Nevertheless I live." It is not an annihilation of being, but a renovation and reformation of my

(1) What the author delivered on this, and some of the following clauses of this verse was never published.

formation of my former being. Though I be crucified and dead, yet I live a new life. I am not what I was, nor whose I was, nor where I was. I am not what I was; I am not Saul the persecutor, but Paul the believer, the professor, the preacher. I am not whose I was; I was Satan's, but now I am Christ's. I am not where I was: I am living in another world, breathing in another air: *I live*.

The *third* branch is, "Yet not I." Not *I*! Who then? Why, what solemn contradictions are here? *I am crucified* and dead; then there is an end; for death is the end of all. Nay, but hear him again. *Nevertheless I live*. Why, this is a short death that is so soon restored to life: or, is he at once and the same time both dead and alive? Yes, Paul is dead, and Paul lives: *I live*. It is not, *I was crucified and dead*, but *I AM crucified with Christ*; *I am* dead, and yet *I am* living; and *yet not I*; here is another contradiction, or paradox, not of *myself*, but by the life of *another*. No soul can animate this body but my own; yet neither soul nor body can live but by God. Thus doth he annihilate himself that he may magnify his master, and that Christ may be *all in all*: and so the

Fourth branch of the text is, "Christ liveth in me." Christ is the root and fountain of all spiritual life, having it so superabundant in himself, that he conveys it to all his members. Christ is said to live in the believer by virtue of the spiritual union, whereby he and they are one Spirit. The soul doth not more properly live in the body, than he doth quicken both soul and body. Christ is the *Sun of righteousness* to the soul; his absence leaves us dead; his presence revives us; and happy he that can say, *Christ liveth in me*.

The *fifth* branch is, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." *I live*, and *live in the flesh*. By *flesh* he means not the *corruption of nature*; for to that he was dead, when crucified with Christ, but the *moral body*. It is one thing to live *in* the flesh, another to live *to* the flesh, or *after* the flesh. Paul did not lead such a life as he did before; for that was *to* the flesh; his life now is but *in* the flesh. In the former state he was dead while he lived; but now, *I am alive*, says he. What a mercy were it, if all here could say, *They live*, before they go hence, and cease living? It is never too soon to begin to live. But what sort of a life is it? *I live*, says he, *by the faith of the Son of God*. Here is life, *I live*; he was very sure of it; for he had

said it before, *I live* ; yet not *I*, but *Christ liveth in me*, and here again, *I live*. Well, here is the means of this life, *I live by faith, by the faith of the Son of God*. We live primarily and properly by Christ, as the body by the soul ; but mediately and instrumentally by faith, as by the spirits which are the bonds of soul and body ; *He that hath the Son hath life* ; he that hath faith hath the Son.

Here further is the designation given to this faith. It is called *The faith of the Son of God*. It is so denominated, because, 1. He is the revealer of it. Neither nature nor the law could open the door of faith. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, John i. 17, 18 ; No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." 2. He is the approver and favourer of faith. There is nothing more acceptable to him. When he finds it strong in any man or woman, he is ready to say, O man, "O woman, great is thy faith ; be it to thee even as thou wilt." 3. He is the Author of faith ; he is both the seeker and the giver of it ; *Faith is the gift of God* : and he that calls us to believe, he only works it in us. 4. He is the increaser of it ; therefore the disciples pray, *Lord, increase our faith*. He that gives it, gives the increase of it. 5. He is the Finisher of faith ; both the founder and finisher, Heb. xii. 2. He that begins this good work, he perfects the work of faith with power. 6. He is the object of faith. Faith desires to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. On these accounts it may be called *the faith of the Son of God* : where again you have the object of faith described from his glorious person : he is the Son of God, a person of quality, and of such quality as to be equal with God the Father ; "Higher than the highest ; without beginning and without end ; the faithful Witness ; the Prince of the kings of the earth ; the Alpha and Omega ; the beginning and the end ; which was, and which is, and which is to come ; the Almighty ; he who hath on his vesture and on his thigh this name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." And then the object of faith is described from his works ; "He loved me, and gave himself for me ;" which is

The *sixth* branch of the text. The apostle had, in the preceding words, challenged Christ for his own ; *I am crucified with Christ and I live* ; yet not *I*, but *Christ liveth in me* ; IN ME. He ingrosses him to himself, as if he were his own, and no man's else. And *the life I live is by the faith of the Son of God*, who is likewise mine ; for, *He loved me, and gave himself for me*. It is the noble art of

faith to challenge Christ for its own, and that with an *I* and a *me*, as if none else were concerned by itself. And hence this whole verse is made up of so many *I's* and *me's*; I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live: yet not I but Christ; Christ lives in ME: and the life I live is by faith of the Son of God, who loved ME, and gave himself for ME;" a short sentence: but the whole scripture, and all evangelical comfort is conceived in it, as if the apostle had studied to wrap up all the words in one word; in which two inestimable jewels are to be found, viz., Christ's love and Christ's gift; *He loved me and gave himself for me*. Glorious Lover! the son of God! Gracious act! He loved! And, strange object, whom he loved! ME, unlovely me! but how did he evidence his love? Even by the gift he gave. What did he give? Himself. For me, unworthy me! Every word hath weight, and every act of faith hath a Me in the bosom of it; *Christ liveth in ME; he loved ME; and gave himself for ME*.

It is this last branch at present, I intend to speak upon, having formerly spoke to these preceding ones. What I propose, at the time, is only, first, some explication; and then some application of the words.

I. For explication of the words, we may observe these two things: first, Christ's love, *He loved me*; and then the proof of it, *He gave himself for me*.

1st, In the words observe his LOVE. *He loved me*. Where you may consider these three things, viz., the lover, the act, and the object.

1. The Lover, or the person loving, in the pronoun *He*; O glorious Lover! The Son of God! *He loved me*. A person of no mean quality. Love is grateful to us from any person; but the greater and worthier the person is, the dearer and more grateful must his love be to us. But who so great as He, who is the Son of God higher than the highest: of equal dignity and greatness with his eternal Father; the King eternal and immortal; without beginning and without end; the first begotten from the dead; the Prince of the kings of the earth; he who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty: he that hath upon his vesture and his thigh this name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," Rev. xix. 16. This is the Lover, and his love must, of necessity, be greater than other love; for he himself is the greatest of all. The quality of the

person doth commend his exceeding great love. O! who is he! Who is this lover, that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? Who is this King of glory? who but God manifested in the flesh, and whose going forth was of old, from everlasting, who is this true God and eternal life? He is the omnipresent God, who hath promised his gracious powerful presence in these ordinances, saying, "Lo, I am with you." He is the omniscient God, saying, "I am he that searcheth the heart and trieth the reins." He is the omnipotent God, "That created the heavens and the earth," and who is able to save and to damn to the uttermost. O! who is he that Arians dare blaspheme him, and deny his necessary existence, who is the same God with the Father; "I and my father are one?" O! "Who can declare his generation," who is the only begotten of the Father, and whose name is Jehovah our righteousness; whose name is, I am that I am; whose name is, Immanuel God with us? Here is the person loving.

2. Here is the act, *He LOVED*; and he *loved because he loved*. There is no other reason of his love, but his love: *Jacob have I loved*: this is all the reason. Love in God, is God himself loving; and therefore it must have all the qualities that belong to the nature of God; God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable: therefore his love must be a pure and spiritual love, an infinite and boundless love, eternal and unchangeable love. *He loved*: O! this act is glorious like himself. His love must be an infinitely wise love; for, he is wisdom; a powerful love, able to bring about all his lovely designs, that infinite wisdom contrives. It must be an infinitely holy love; love accompanied with holiness, love accompanied with justice, love accompanied with goodness and truth. He is an infinitely true and faithful Lover, and hence *Whom he loves, he loves to the end*. As his love is accompanied with all divine perfections, so with all loving offices: as a Prophet, his love is teaching love, instructing love, enlightening, directing, counselling, and conducting love. As a Priest, his love is justifying and pardoning love; reconciling, peace-making, and accepting love. As a King, his love is soul-conquering, sin-subduing love. As a Shepherd his love is leading and feeding love. As a surety, his love is debt paying love. As a storehouse, his love is supplying love. As he is a doer, his love is active love. As a sufferer, it is passive love. His love is accompanied with all loving

relations : as a father, it is pitying love : as a husband, it is cherishing love. As a physician, it is healing love. As a friend, it is helping love. As an advocate, it is pleading and interceding love. As a mediator between God and man, it is interposing love. His love is also suited to his nature, as he is God-man : as God, there is divinity in it ; it is divine love : and as MAN, there is humanity in it ; it is a humane and a natural love. And as God-man in one person, his love must be a divinely-humane, and humanely divine love. The act is in the præterit tense, *He loved* ; when did his love commence and begin ? Indeed, it is as ancient as from eternity, and as lasting as to eternity. He loved in the counsel of peace, and it may be called a consulting love about our salvation, before the world began. He loved in the transaction between the father and him, and then it was an undertaking love. He loved in the publication of this merciful design immediately after the fall ; and there we see it a promising love. He loved in the manifestation of himself in our nature, to accomplish the promise, and there we see it a performing love. O ! but this act, *he loved*, hath many wonders in it ! But this will the better appear, if we consider the object of his love, or the person, whom he loved. This is the

*Third word in the text, "He loved ME ;" Me, that am so wicked, so wretched, so unworthy ! O ! that every one here were, by faith, putting in their Me ; he loved me ; Me ; says Paul, that was a blasphemer ; me, that was a persecutor ; me, that was injurious ; me that was a vile, miscreant ! O ! that he should love such miserable me's as we are ; so unworthy of his love, so unlike to his love ; and in whom he found greater reason to hate than to love ! That God should love the glorious angels is no wonder ; for they are messengers and ministers executing his pleasure, Psalm cxii. 20. That he should love good men or saints, is not strange, because they love him, and can say to him, "O thou, whom my soul loveth," Song i. 6. Yea, that he should love the senseless, inanimate creatures, whether in the heaven above us, or in the earth about us, is not strange ; for the sun, moon, and stars, run their course ; they stand still, or go forward, as he commands them ; yea, "The fire, hail, snow, and vapour, and stormy wind, fulfil his word," Psalm cxlviii. 8. But to love us, that were enemies, traitors, rebels, and run-away prodigals, and profligate sinners ; *He loved me, guilty me, filthy me, weak me, wicked me : O ! How does God commend his love ? and commend it to the highest degree of mercy, when it is extended to these that**

are in the lowest pit of sin and misery, Rom. v. 8, "God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" while we were yet enemies and outcasts, lying in our blood: a rare commendation indeed, ver. 10, "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." To love such was an unexpected and unparalleled, but a most merciful love. He that wanted nothing, loved us that had nothing, and worse than nothing. O the wonders of his love! that the king of heaven should love wretched earth; that eternity should love death; and that immortality should love dust and ashes; yea, that infinite holiness should love such as were a mass of sin! *He first loved us*, 1 John iv. 19, not only when we could not love him, but also afterwards, when we would not love him. If a man had the tongues of men and angels, he could not express this love, wherewith this great majesty, the Son of God, loved such misery, the sons of men; and wherewith he loved me, says Paul; and wherewith he loved me, may you say.

But, Oh! there is the difficulty, say you, I cannot win to put in that ME, and say, *He loved me*. Indeed it is no wonder, if many here cannot say it, if they have not learned the language by which it is said: I must tell you it is not the language of earth, but the language of heaven, Rev. i. 5, "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood;" and so here is the language of heaven upon earth, *He loved me, and gave himself for me*. But, why can you not speak this language? Why, because it cannot be spoken right, but by the mouth of faith. It is not the language of sense, nor of unbelief, but the language of faith; *The life I now live*, says the apostle here, *is by the faith of the Son of God who loved me*. The faith by which he lived was the faith by which he spoke this language: now, if the Spirit of faith mix in with the hearing and the grace of faith be given in any lively act of it this day, it will cost faith but a word to say, *He loved me*.

QUEST. But what ground hath faith for this language?

ANSW. The ground is in the general word of grace, from which faith draws the particular inference. The word says, He came to save sinners; he loved sinners; he loved enemies; he loved rebels, and gave himself for them. Unbelief, indeed, will put in its objection, saying, "Well, but did he love them all? Did he die for them all? Did he elect them all? Perhaps you was never designed to share of his love." "Away, says faith, away with these need-

less disputes of the devil and of unbelief ; my life and salvation is at the stake ; I have no time to loose. Let those that have no need of a Saviour, stay and debate these matters with the devil and their unbelieving hearts. I have present use for this Saviour, for my present and future salvation ; and I see he is come to save sinners, and that is my name. He loved enemies ; that is my name. He loved rebels, and received gifts for the rebellious ; that is my name ; Free, the master calls me ; he invites me by my name ; and therefore, in spite of unbelief, in spite of the devil, in spite of my sin and guilt, I will venture to say, upon the credit of his word, *He loved me* ; even guilty me, filthy me." Here is the language of faith. *He loved me*, and that when I was in the worst circumstances. The case stands with us, as with Ezekiel's wretched infant, Ezek. xvi. 2. We have an Amorite for our father, and a Hittite for our mother. We are born and conceived in sin, all foul, and full of corruption ; and there is nothing in us to allure him to love us, but rather to provoke him to loathe us. What moved him to love us ? "Thousands of angels stand about him ; and ten thousand times ten thousand minister unto him." Though we had been good and upright, he needed us not ; but, being bad and vile, whence arises this love ? Our wages is death, his gift is life. We had misery from our parents, and have been parents for our own great misery : a fit object for so great a God to look upon. *He loved me* ; I was miserable in thralldom to sin and Satan : but he hath ransomed me. I was a captive to the power of hell, and justice was enraged against me : but he hath satisfied his own justice for me. And this brings to the proof of this love, which is contained in the second part of the text.

SERMON LX.

"The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."—GAL. ii. 20.

[*The second Sermon on this Text.*]

THE second thing in the text is, "He gave himself for me." And indeed, what comfort is it to hear, that he loved us, and not to understand, wherein? Why, here it is, "He gave himself for me:" where again every word amplifies his exceeding love: here is a marvellous act, it is a giving, intimating, the freeness of the undertaking; a marvellous Giver, the Son of God; a marvellous gift, he gave HIMSELF; he could give no greater, no better thing: a marvellous object! for whom? for *me*.

1. We may observe the Giver, or the glorious person giving. As, I said, the quality of the Lover magnifies the love, so the quality of the giver magnifies the gift. And the worthiness and excellency of the person will appear, if you consider him, as a man; "He took on our nature," and here even in its lowest degree. It is a wonder, that man should give himself for man; "for, scarcely for a righteous man will one die," Rom. v. 7. But this man gave himself for the unrighteous. Consider him again as a good man, an innocent man. Pilate was obliged to own what his wife said, that he was a just man, and God the Father owns him to be his righteous Servant. It was this righteous One that gave himself. Consider him again, as a great man, royally descended from the ancient patriarchs, and kings of Judah, the true born King of the Jews, as Pilate styles him, and could not, would not alter it. The least part of his disgrace had been too much for one of meaner descent: yet this man, this good man, this great man, gave himself to the greatest calumnies and cruelties for us. Yea but further, consider him as more than a man; not only the greatest of men, but greater than the greatest, fairer than the fairest; "Fairer than the children of men;" for he was the Son of God, as the centurion acknowledges him, even when hanging upon the cross; "Truly this was the Son of God;" this man was the great God our Saviour, Tit. ii. 13; the great God who gave himself for us, &c. It is true, it is said, the Father gave him, John iii. 16; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, &c.; and he spared him not, but deli-

vered him up for us all," Rom. viii. 32. But we see what Christ says, John v. 18, "Whatsoever the Father doth, the same things doth the Son." The love, then, of the Father, in giving his Son, doth not extenuate, but amplify the riches of Christ's mercy, who also gave himself for us, Gal. i. 4, and, according to the Father's will, "Became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Here then is a depth beyond sounding, that such a great one gave himself. Here all tongues may be dumb, and admiration may seal up our lips.

2. Observe the action of giving; He *gave*, he was not compelled to die; but "He gave himself; I lay down my life for my sheep," John x. 18. He that alone gives life to us, gave up his life for us. This giving imports the voluntariness and freeness of the action; He gave himself freely; for, what is freer than a gift? He did not sell himself, nor set himself, nor let himself, nor lend himself, but *gave* himself: it shews his kind disposition. He gave himself willingly, not constrainedly, but voluntarily. No hand could cut that stone from the quarry of heaven: no violence could pull him from the bosom of the Father; nay, "But he came leaping upon the mountains," Song ii. 8. He came singing and saying, "Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God," Ps. xl. 8, Heb. x. 5, 6, 7. There was no necessity lying upon him, but the necessity of love; and of a loving paction with his Father: and when it came to the push, "Peter," says he, "put up thy sword; I will let none fight for me, otherwise I could command legions of angels to appear this moment on my side; but I came to give my life a ransom for many, and I am resolved to go on with my work; therefore, I will not suffer an angel from heaven to move from his post on my behalf; nor shall any man on earth hinder me from this work." Oh, what a free giver was here! But a single word from him foundered the forces that were sent against him; when he but said, *I am he*, they retired and fell backward; and by a single word he could have shot them dead, as with an arrow of omnipotency, but O he was a free agent.

3. What gave he? or, whom gave he? even himself. What did he give? not corruptible things, such as silver and gold: no; all the treasures of the world cannot deliver one soul: *Not the blood of bulls and of goats*, Heb. ix. 12. All these legal sacrifices were but dumb signs of this tragedy; the mere figure of this donation. Not the merit or mediation of men or saints: no; saints on earth

are sinners, and have no more oil than will serve their own lamps ; but none to spare. Saints in heaven receive a palm in their hand for themselves, but they have none to give again. What gave he ? Not any glorious angel : behold he puts no trust in these servants of his ; he charges them with comparative and possible folly : " The heavens are not clear in his sight." The blessed angels are not fit to mediate between finite offenders and an infinite Judge, nor can they be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, as he that assumed our nature, and was in all points tempted, as we are, yet without sin, Heb. iv. 15. Well, when no gift in earth or heaven could be available, He gave himself ; and that in respect of his person and his passion.

(1.) He gave himself, in respect of his person. He gave himself wholly his whole person, while, as God, he satisfied, and, as man, he suffered ; and as God-man he saved : and hence, God is said to redeem his church by his own blood, Acts xx. 28. And men are said to have crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8. He gave himself alone, without a partner or coadjutor ; for, " Of the people there was none with him," Isa. lxiii. 3. " He trode the wine-press alone." None bore any part of the burden with him.

(2.) He gave himself in respect of his passion and suffering. " He gave himself as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, Eph. v. 2. He gave himself a ransom, 1 Tim. ii. 6. And a ransom for many, Mat. xx. 28. He gave himself an offering ; his soul an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10, 1 Pet. iii. 10, Heb. ix. 15. He gave himself a propitiation," Rom. iii. 25, not only that justice might be satisfied in punishment, but glorified in pardoning sin. He gave himself an atonement, that he might joy in God through Christ, by whom we receive the atonement, Rom. v. 11. All these are different expressions of his sufferings, pointing out the main end and design of his death, to be sin, to be a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him. And he that thus gives himself *for* us, he in due time gives himself *to* us, with all his purchase, all his riches, all his fulness of grace and glory ; and for this end he gave himself : O wonderful gift ! He gave himself ! Greater is the work of redemption, than that of creation : there he was a giver ; but here he is the Gift.

4. For whom did he give himself ? *For* ME, says Paul, in his own name ; and for us, says Paul, in our name, Gal. i. 4 ; and for us, Tit. ii. 14. " Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us

from all iniquity. He gave himself to the death;" for whom? not for himself, Dan. ix. 36. "The Messiah was cut off, but not for himself." And as it was not for himself, so not for angels, Heb. ii. 16, "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels:" For whom then? Even for *me*, says faith; and for *us* mankind sinners, says the gospel; Isa. ix. 6. "To *us* a child is born, to *us* a Son is given, &c. He was made sin for us, 2 Cor. v. 21. He was made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13.

Now, this being a matter of great concern to us, there is a threefold view we are to take of this part of the text; For me; or, as it is in other texts, For us.

(1.) We may view it with reference to the divine ordination from eternity: and thus for me, and for us, respects all the elect, of whom Christ says, "I lay down my life for my sheep, John x. 15. These are chosen in him before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 4.

(2.) You may view it with reference to the saving application of this redemption in time. Where this application is already made, then the persons that are the subjects thereof are believers, and their faith is the fruit of that electing and redeeming love; for, says Christ, "All that the Father bath given shall come to me, John vi. 37. And as many as were ordained to eternal life shall believe," Acts xiii. 48. In this sense, for me, respects all actual believers.

(3.) Another view of it is with reference to the general indefinite dispensation of the gospel, wherein it is said, He gave himself for us; and so it respects sinners of all sorts, to whom the gospel comes. This is the medium between the two former, and the mean whereby God brings about his eternal purpose of love toward his elect, and makes them believe in him, namely, by this general dispensation of his grace unto all: by which means he catches his elect, and leaves the rest inexcusable in their wilful enmity.

The general dispensation of the gospel concerning Christ giving himself for us, respects all sinners that hear the gospel. Hence the gospel you hear, is, 1 Cor. xv. 1—3. "That Christ died for our sins, according to the scripture." Rom. v. 16, that he died for the ungodly. 1 Pet. iii. 18, that he suffered, the just for the unjust. Mat. xvii. 11, and Luke xix. 10, that he came to seek and save that which was lost. 1 Tim. i. 15, that he came to save sinners; yea, and rebels and enemies, Psal. lxviii. 18. And hence in the

gospel, he brings near his righteousness to them that are stout-hearted, and far from righteousness, Isa. xlv. 13. And this is the gospel we are commanded to preach to every creature, Mark xvi. 15.

The first view of the words, "He gave himself for me," shews who they are that will certainly claim the benefit of Christ's death, and shall have the possession of it, namely, the elect. The second shews who they are that do actually claim it, and so have the possession, namely, believers. The third shews who they are that may warrantably take possession, namely, all sinners of mankind that see their need of Christ, and hear that he gave himself for us sinners. Upon the warrant of the gospel-offer, saying, "Whosoever will, let him come," every one may come by faith, and put in with the apostle here, saying, "He loved me, and gave himself for me."

QUEST. In which of these views is Christ the object of a sinner's faith, so as he may say for me; "He gave himself for me."

ANSW. In the first view of it, as it respects the divine pre-ordination, and concerns the elect, this doctrine of Christ's giving himself for us, is not the first object of any man's faith; for who are elect is a secret, and secret things belong to God and not to us. The second view of this doctrine of Christ's giving himself for me, or for us, as it respects the powerful application of Christ's death, and concerns believers; neither is this the object or ground of every man's faith, nay, nor of any man's faith, but rather the object of the believer's sense and feeling, after he hath believed. But the third view of this doctrine of Christ's giving himself for us, as it respects the general dispensation of the gospel, that Christ gave himself for, and came to save sinners, this is the ground and object of their faith; for, "Faith comes by hearing this gospel doctrine, as it is generally proposed."

Faith comes not by hearing that Christ came to save the elect; for, particular election cannot be the ground of a general invitation. There is here no visible ground for the sinner to fix upon: nor does the sinner's faith come by hearing that Christ came to save believers, to complete their begun salvation; for, as he came not to find them believers, but to make them believers; so this limited particular doctrine cannot be the foundation of an unlimited general call: but faith comes by hearing this gospel doctrine, that Christ came to save sinners, and gave himself for them. This encourages them to venture their salvation upon him, that he speaks to them as guilty sinners.

Let no sinner here then exclude himself from the benefit of this

gospel, and from making that particular application here, "He loved ME, and gave himself for ME," by saying either, I know not if I be an elect; or, I know not if I be a believer; and so, I know not if Christ died for me, and gave himself for me in particular: this is to mistake the ground and object of faith: for, as salvation, in God's purpose, to the elect, is not the ground of faith: and salvation in possession, by the believer, is not the ground of faith, but salvation in the word of grace and gospel offer; so, Christ's DEATH, as designed in God's purpose, is not the first object of any man's faith; nor his death, as applied to believers in particular; but his death, as declared in the word, in its relation to sinners in general, is the gospel-revelation, and the glad news that comes to the ears of sinners; and this, joined with the particular command to every one to believe in this Jesus, as dead and crucified for him, to build his faith and hope of salvation upon.

The question then here is not, Are you an elect, or not? Nor is it, Are you a believer or not? But the question is, Are you a sinner that needs a Saviour? And is he manifesting his love and grace, and giving himself in the gospel-offer to you? Then, upon the warrant of this word of salvation sent to you, you may say, with particular application to yourself, "He loved ME, and gave himself for ME."

It is not Christ in the decree that you are to look to, while you know that you are elected; this is to go too far back: nor is it Christ in the heart, or in possession, you are to look to, while you know not that you are a believer; this is to go too far forward: but it is Christ in the word, because you know you are a sinner, and Christ a Saviour held forth to you there, saying, "Look to me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and besides me there is none else." This is the way between the two former; yea, and the way to secure them both; the only safe way.

Having thus explained the text, I come to make application. And we may improve it first by way of information.

1. Hence we may see the marvellous love of Christ, and of God in Christ towards sinners, and his marvellous kindness in discovering this love so effectually to some, as to make them see and say, *He loved me*. When God would manifest his power, he makes a world; when he would manifest his justice, he makes a hell: but when he would manifest his love, he makes the Son of his love appear in our flesh, that the Word being made flesh, we may behold

his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, full of love and mercy to miserable sinners.

2. Hence see the marvellous proof and demonstration that Christ hath given of his love, *He gave himself for me*. Here is love indeed, in his giving himself into the hands of justice to suffer for us, as I might shew, in his body, in his soul, in his natures, names, states and offices, and from all hands; from the unkindly hand of disciples, while one betrayed, and another denied, and all forsook him; from the wicked hands of Jews and Romans, that slew him: from the malicious hand of the devil, the old serpent, that bruised and bit at his heel; but especially from the just hand of God the lawgiver, exacting the debt he engaged to pay in the eternal transaction; "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." And thus he suffered all the hell that a finite being, supported by the infinite Godhead could bear, and all to fulfil scripture types and prophecies, to satisfy justice, to endure the threatening, to secure the promise, to destroy death, and to take away sin. O! the glorious design, and the vast dimension of Christ's sufferings how the vast dimensions of his love, how he loved and how he continues still to love; for, though his sufferings be at an end, yet his sympathy continues: his passion lasts but for a while, but his compassion is everlasting.

3. Hence see the infinite evil of sin, which nothing could expiate but Christ's giving himself a sacrifice for us. We may see the greatness of the sore by the greatness of the plaister. Alas! the evil of sin is not seen. We are ready to think it no worse than as a knife to cut our fingers; but see it as the sword all over red with the blood of Christ. To think light of sin, is to think light of Christ and his blood.

4. See the infinite justice of God, and his severity against sin; for Christ gave himself for our sins, and justice would accept of no less sacrifice. Christ prays the cup might pass from him, if possible; but justice was inexorable: (and what a mercy was it, that Christ also was unalterable in his love?) yet he was in such a situation, that it was not possible he could be spared; though he was the eternal Son of God, his blood must go; but Christ was voluntary. Though the cup was bitter, and made him tremble to look at it; yet, says he, "If I drink it not, they must; and oh! it will poison and kill them for ever: but though it kill me, I can quicken myself again: therefore come with it, Father."

5. Hence see the dreadful state of unbelieving, impenitent sin-

ners, that live and die trampling under foot this blood of Christ, and neglecting this great salvation. Wo will be to them who have not the blood of Christ pleading for them ; but, wo upon wo will be to them who have this blood of Christ pleading against them. If God would not hearken to the prayer of his Son, when he said, " If it be possible, let this cup pass," how will he hearken to the voice of Christ rejecting sinners ? Is it possible that the cup of wrath can pass from them ? No ; they must drink of it for ever themselves.

6. Hence see the excellency and appropriating quality of faith. It takes hold of Christ in his love, and the proof of this love, as manifested in the word, and says " O ! here is a love-letter from heaven, the gospel of Christ, bearing an account of his love, and the greatest proof of his love ; and I see the letter is backed, and indorsed for me a guilty sinner, ME the chief of sinners : and the letter bears a command to me to receive this lover to myself, and that I believe his love and the proof of his love with application to myself : and therefore, even so I take him, and trust upon his word, that he loved me, and gave himself for me." This faith is the gift of God, and the work of God, by the power of the eternal Spirit, mixing with the hearing of his word of grace and love. This faith comes not by feeling of his love, that may be the fruit of faith ; but it comes by the hearing of his love. The Spirit, in the day of power, makes impressions on the heart by the word : but the ground of faith is not these impressions on the heart ; for, the object of faith is not Christ working on the heart, but Christ speaking in the word : therefore, hear what he is saying of his love to you, O sinner, and thence draw the conclusion, He loved you, and gave himself for you.

The Second Use is for Examination. Try then, whether you be true believers of this LOVE, and so have a right to the love feast. Try if you have believed this gospel with application. The gospel-declaration is, He loved us SINNERS, and gave himself for us ; faith's application is here, " He loved ME, and gave himself for ME." I shall not say, that every true believer is privileged to say this expressly, and that they are not true believers that cannot say it confidently and expressly ; but I am sure every true believer can say it upon the matter, when faith is in exercise ; and faith hath something of this language in the bosom of it. And for trying if ever you believed this, with particular application, you may examine by these following questions.

1. Have you got a view of your lost state and condition by nature, and so of your absolute need of Christ, because of this sad state you were in? Have you seen that it was a destitute state, being without God, without Christ, without hope, without righteousness, without pardon, peace, and life? A guilty state, wherein you lay open to God's everlasting wrath; a filthy, polluted state, wherein you found your heart a sink of sin and wickedness; a wretched state, wherein you was out of all capacity to help yourself, and had no ability to come to Christ for help? Have you got a particular afflictive view of this? If not, then you have not yet believed this gospel with application, That Christ loved you, and gave himself for you: but, if you have, then the way is so far paved.

2. Have you got a view and apprehension of the Saviour, and of his love and grace in doing and dying? For, it is he who sees the Son, that believeth on him. Have you got a clear view of him, as it were, with open face? 2 Cor. iii. 18, in the reality and glory of his person, natures, and offices, and commission to save sinners; and of his readiness and ability to save you! Have you got a particular view of him to your own soul? Hath he been revealed not only to you, as a Saviour for sinners, but in you as a Saviour for you? Gal. i. 16. I speak now, not properly of the grounds of faith, but of the marks and evidences of faith. Have you got a powerful view of him, such as hath drawn your heart to him? This is the true teaching of God, that causes the soul come to Christ, John vi. 44.

3. Have you, under the influence of this divine teaching and drawing, been made to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, as held forth in the gospel, so as to lay your own particular salvation from sin and wrath over upon him? Have you been made to do this upon the warrant of the general declaration, that he gave himself for, and came to save sinners; together with the particular invitation, "Come to me whosoever will?" Have you, upon this warrant, been determined powerfully and pleasantly to cast yourself over upon him, as a blind sinner, for wisdom to thee; as a guilty sinner, for righteousness to thee; as a filthy sinner, for sanctification to thee; as a miserable sinner, for redemption to thee? Then thou hast, in effect, believed that he loved thee, and gave himself for thee; for this is imported in your applying him thus to yourself.

4. If you have truly believed that he loved you, and gave himself for you, then the faith of this love will work love, and purify the heart, Acts xv. 9. Hence, this faith melts down the heart

sometimes into godly sorrow for sin ; “ They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn,” Zech. xii. 10. And it influences the mortification of sin, Gal. v. 24. Hence, the soul reckons itself wretched, on account of the remains of sin ; “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” Rom. vii. 24. Does this faith constrain you to a holy gospel-obedience, insomuch, that having received him, you walk in him, Col. ii. 6 : and live daily by the faith of the Son of God, and in the faith of his love ; as in the text ? Does this faith make you desire and endeavour to live to him that died for you ? 2 Cor. v. 15.

These four put together, are infallible marks of faith, and of this faith particularly, that he loved you, and gave himself for you. Where these are wholly wanting, there is no true faith.

The third use shall be for exhortation. Did Christ love, and give himself for the like of us ?

1. Then, O ! let us love him, and give ourselves to him : can we bestow ourselves better than upon him ? We have but two mites to give, our soul and body ; and shall we withhold them from him, that infinitely great and glorious him, that gave himself for us ? It was sweetly said of one, “ I owe to God all that I am, for my creation ; what shall I give further for my redemption ? In my creation, he gave me to myself, and in my redemption, he gave himself to me, and restored me to myself.” We are bought with a price ; therefore we ought to glorify him in our souls and bodies, which are his. O may we give him our hearts that loved us, and gave himself for us, and may we give him all our heart-lusts to be killed by him, and revenge the blood of our dearest Lord upon our dearest lusts, by killing them for killing the Lord of glory.

2. Did Christ love and give himself for us ? Then let us willingly give ourselves for him, as well as to him : to lay down our life for him, if he calls us to it. Do you believe that he gave himself for you. Here is a hard question : Are you willing to die for him that died for you ? We ought to be martyrs in purpose ; and if called, to seal his truth with our blood, to be martyrs in deed, as well as in resolution. We have not yet resisted unto blood ; but bloody days may be a-coming, wherein Christ will call for our blood, and our life for him ; and ought we not to be willing to suffer for him, that loved us, and gave himself for us ? O ! how will we venture our life, when we will hardly venture a living, for him and his cause ? How will we venture our blood, when we will

hardly venture a word for him? How will we face a scaffold, to confess with our death, if we dare not face a court or a council, to confess him with our mouth?

3. Did he love us, and give himself for us? Then may we not be encouraged to expect much at the hand of this glorious Lover, this glorious Giver? May not faith and hope look that he will in love and mercy, give us all that we need? Since he gives himself, what will he not give? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. So may we say, He that spared not himself, but freely gave himself up for us all: how will he not, with himself freely give us all things. We need not fear the putting him to too much trouble in anything we want; what will he deny, that denied not himself? Nay, he is exalted to give us what grace and blessings we need, Acts v. 31. We may be hopeful seekers of great things from him, who is such a hearty giver of great things; "He loved me, and gave himself for me." You may seek great things, believer, especially at his table; for you ought surely to go there, and commemorate this love of his to you in giving himself for you; and there feed upon his love, and feed upon his gift; that is, upon himself, who is both the gift and giver. "Do this in remembrance of him;" and there let your faith and hope be more and more encouraged and strengthened. But these advices, say you, belong to such as can say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me:" but, I cannot win to speak this language of faith. Therefore,

4. Did Christ love and give himself for sinners? Then, sinners, put in for a share of this grace, and of the benefits of Christ's death; and, by faith, accept of this loving and dying Jesus, as held forth to you in this word.

Quest. Where shall I see this love of his to me? Where shall I see the love of God in Christ to me in particular?

Indeed, sinner, I need not speak to you of the love of God, if you have no conviction of sin, or apprehension of the wrath of God as your due; to speak of his grace and love to you, will be lost labour; to speak of reconciliation to them that never thought they were enemies; of healing, to them that are not sick; of liberty, to them that are not prisoners, is but lost labour; or to speak of salvation, to them that are not lost, or were never brought to that question, "What shall I do to be saved?" And, therefore, before I call you to believe the love of God manifested in the gospel, I

would call you to believe the wrath of God manifested in the law. This wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And, O that the Spirit of God would convince you of sin ; and let you see, that you are lying at the very mouth of hell, ready to tumble into the pit of eternal torment ; for, “ Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.”

But, if you be convinced of this cursed state you are in by the sentence of God’s law, and be inquiring, O ! where is the love and mercy of God to be seen ? Why, let me ask you, Where do you see the wrath of God, but in the law, which is a word of wrath, and of wrath to you in particular, saying, “ Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them ? ” Even so, Where may you see the love and mercy of God, but in the gospel, which is a word of grace and love to you, and to you in particular, saying, “ Jesus Christ came to save sinners ; Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ? ” Now, as the word of a threatening God in the law warrants your believing his wrath against you, and you in particular ; even so, the word of a promising God in the gospel, accompanied with a particular command to believe in Jesus, warrants your believing his grace, love, and mercy to you, and to you in particular ; and upon this ground, you may say with Paul, “ He loved me, and gave himself for me.”

The object of the sinner’s faith, as was already said, is not Christ in the decree, giving himself for the elect ; nor Christ in possession, given already to believers ; but Christ in the word and gospel dispensation, giving himself for sinners ; and sinners are to seek after him in this word. You need not say, Who will ascend to heaven, and bring Christ down, and tell me whether I be elected or not ? Or, Who will descend to the deep, to bring Christ up out of my heart and tell me, whether I be a believer, already or not ? The marks of faith that I have offered, may tell you whether you be a believer or not ; but confound not the marks and evidences of faith with the grounds of faith ; thinking, because you want the marks, you have no ground to believe. Nay, though you were destitute of all the marks of faith, and had all the marks of unbelief ; yea, all the evidences of reprobation to your view, about you yet you have a standing ground of faith to build upon ; the evidences of faith a believer may find within him ; but the grounds are to

be found without you in the word ; and the best believer in the world cannot find a ground of faith within him, but he is forced to go out of himself to the word for them. You may try and seek the marks of faith within you, if they be to be had ; such as repentance, love, humility, holiness, &c. But if you were to ground your faith upon these, your faith would soon want a bottom and foundation ; you are to seek the ground and warrant for faith in the word only ; or, Christ as held out in the word.

Now, as a great gift does not enrich a beggar, unless he receive it into his hand ; so this general declaration, That Christ gave himself for sinners, will not enrich you, but by a particular application ; all that is needful is that through grace, you receive in your heart what is revealed in the word. O Sirs, look for the Spirit to concur with the call and offer of the word ; for, as "Faith comes by hearing," so, "The Spirit works by faith," by opening up the ground and warrant of faith ; therefore, as Christ applies himself to you by his word ; so seek he may apply himself to you by his Spirit, that you may be quickened and revived, as Elisha revived the Shunamite's child ; 2 Kings iv. 34. "He lay upon him, put his mouth to his mouth, his eyes to his eyes, his hands to his hands, and stretched himself upon him, till the flesh of the child waxed warm, and he revived:" so you are dead in sins and trespasses ; dead spiritually and lifeless : but that you may recover, O intreat the Lord of life, the true Elias, who only can raise from death to life, to apply his person and passion to you, even his body stretched on a cross to your body, his head to your head, his eyes to your eyes, his hands to your hands, his heart to your heart, that you may receive warmth from his blood, health from his wounds, and spirit from his Spirit, and grace from his grace, that you may live before him ; receiving out of his fulness grace for grace, and life for life.

What shall I say ? O ! if the Spirit of Christ would speak into your heart. Here is a glorious Lover, courting your love, O vile sinner ! declaring in his word, that though you hated him, yet he loved you, and urging you to love him, because he first loved you. Here is a glorious Giver, declaring in his word, that he died for your sins according to the scripture, and gave himself for you on the cross, and evidencing this love by giving himself to you in this gospel-offer, as the great gift of God, and the great giver of it himself : oh ! is there no heart here to embrace such a glorious Lover ? Is there no hand here, to receive such a glorious and gracious

Giver? It is the person of Christ, as presented in this gospel, that now you are called to receive and embrace; and it is pardoning love and mercy in his blood, that you, guilty sinner, are called here to believe and accept of from him, that justifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5.

“But, say you, believers are godly, they are holy, but I am black like hell.” Well, but were they not as black as you before they believed? Yea, when they were in their blood, the Lord made up the match, and said to them, Live; and then afterwards he washed them: even so, you must marry Christ first, believing that he makes love to you, and then he will do that for you. Take no thought, how such an Ethiopian shall be made clean, how such a naked soul shall be adorned; only welcome this glorious Lover into your heart, and he will take all the thought of that himself; for, he is not come here to find you beautiful, but to make you so; not to find you holy and godly, but to make you so. Alas! is there any filthy bride here, ready to receive him on these terms.

“Alas! say you, but I cannot win to think, that he is thus making love to me, to *me* in particular?” Why, is not this general equivalent, “Go, preach the gospel to every creature?” Surely, you are in that number: and this word was confirmed with a miracle; though it was wrought long ago, yet the word and the miracle went together: therefore, it is the same for confirming faith, as if it were wrought before your eyes. And when, together with the word, you have the call, “Whosoever will, let him come;” and together with the call, the promise, “Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out.”

Say not, your sins are great and numerous; you cannot believe his love and pardoning mercy toward you: for, as God’s great mercies are greater than your great sins, and his multitude of mercies greater than your multitude of sins; so this sin of putting away his mercy, grace, and love from you, through unbelief, and rejecting his love-offers, and the blessings of his blood, is a greater sin than all the rest; for thus you will bring not only your own blood, but the guilt of the blood of God upon your head.

As the danger is great, if you refuse this glorious match offered to you, so necessity hath no law: you must come to him, or perish, There is a necessity of love on his part toward these whom he courts, and will not want: he hath said, “These I must bring; and they

shall hear my voice :” and now he is come here, saying, Man, woman, I must have your heart ; I must have your consent ; though you should not be a suitor to me, yet behold I am in suit of you, and I must have you. There is a necessity of want and absolute need on your part. You need wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ; and I am made of God all these for you ; and without me, you have none to teach you, none to justify you, none to sanctify you, none to redeem you. And there is no time to lose ; yet a little while, and time is gone, and you change the place of your dwelling for ever. But, how will you go any where without him ? How will you go to a communion-table without him ? How will you go to death without him ? How will you go to the judgment-seat without him ? How will you face infinite justice and holiness without him ? No, no ; there is a necessity ; you must have him : and, if any heart here be saying, Oh ! I must have him ; I will tell you good tidings, it is a sign, he is saying, I must have you, for I loved you, and gave myself for you. And, O ! if his love be so kind, that it points you out with a *you, you* ; I loved *YOU*, and gave myself for *YOU* ; then your faith may be so bold, as to come out with a *me, me* ; “ He loved me, and gave himself for me.”

S E R M O N L X I.¹

“ The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”—GAL. ii. 20.

[The third Sermon on this text.]

HAVING in some former discourses, explained the words at considerable length, and made some application of them, we now proceed to prosecute the following observation from them.

DOCT. “ That the love of Christ, manifested in the word to sinners, is a giving love.”

Christ’s love is manifested by gifts, even as his covenant is a giving covenant, giving all the sure mercies of David, Isa. lv. 3 ; Acts xiii. 34.

(1) This sermon was delivered on a sacramental occasion at Kinclaven, Sabbath, July 30th, 1739. And in the first edition of it, we are told, that it contains the substance of more discourses than one, though written only in short heads by the author, through want of time.

We shall endeavour here the illustration, the confirmation, and the application of this doctrine.

1. We are to essay the illustration of the doctrine. As God's love is a giving love, John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son," &c. ; so Christ's love is a giving love ; "He loved me, and *GAVE* himself for me." On the cross, he gave himself *FOR* us ; and in the gospel, he gives himself *TO* us ; even to these that refuse the gift, he gives himself to be received, John vi. 32. He gives himself to be light to the dark : "I am the light of the world, a light to lighten the Gentiles," &c. He gives himself to be sight to the blind, eye-salve ; he gives himself to be raiment to the naked ; to be riches to the poor, and tried gold. He gives himself to be life to the dead ; "I am the way, the truth, and the life ; the resurrection and the life ; the God that quickens the dead." He gives himself to be a covenant of the people : the old covenant being broken, he gives himself to be the Mediator, the Testator, Surety, Messenger, and all of the covenant ; to be a covenant of grace, of justifying grace, to the guilty ; sanctifying grace, saving grace, drawing grace : to be a covenant of peace, a covenant of mercy, a covenant of salt, an everlasting covenant, a well-ordered covenant, a sure covenant ; or, as it may be read, a *KEPT* covenant. He gives himself to be a witness, Isa. lv. 4 ; the true and faithful witness ; a witness to the truth, particularly of his kingly office and authority : for this end was he born : O Sirs, it is a great honour to be an honest witness, for so was Christ. Happy these, whom he honours to be faithful to the death in witnessing for him ! But it must be given. He gives himself to be a Leader ; a Leader of the blind, Isa. xlii. 16. He gives himself to be a Commander, a Captain-general, to command the field against the enemy ; to command the blessing to his people ; to command the devil to come out : "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee to come out ; thou unclean spirit, I charge thee to come out : " to command peace. He gives himself to be a Laver, an open fountain for sin and for uncleanness. He gives himself to be a Ladder, by which we may ascend up to heaven ; all the rounds are complete. He gives himself to be "a hiding place ; and a covert from the tempest ; to be as rivers of water in a dry place ; to be a shadow of a great rock, a shadow from the heat," Isa. xxxii. 2. He gives himself to be wisdom, to be righteousness, to be sanctification, to be complete redemption. He gives himself to be meat indeed and drink indeed. He

gives himself to be a propitiation, whom God hath set forth to be so ; a ransom, a sacrifice, an atonement. He gives himself to be a pattern ; " He hath given us an example that we should follow his steps : " but this is not all, as Socinians allege ; for, besides this, he gave himself to be a curse for us, and to be sin for us ; a sacrifice for sin. He gave himself to be the strength of the poor weak creature ; to be the consolation of the disconsolate ; for he is the consolation of Israel : to be not only the Saviour, but the salvation of Israel : to be the rest of the weary : " Come to me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest : " to be the blessing of the cursed sinner ; he comes to bless, according to the promise, " Men shall be blessed in him. " He gives himself to be the builder of the temple, and the bearer of the glory : to be the glory of his house, " A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel ; and in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory. " He gives himself to be a refuge for the oppressed and cast down ; " The eternal God is thy refuge : " O fly to him to be a sun and shield. He gives himself to be a succourer of the tempted ; " For he suffered, being tempted, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted : " to be a Prophet, Priest, and King : to be a Father to the fatherless, " In whom the fatherless findeth mercy : to be a husband to the widow, The stranger's shield, the widow's stay, the orphan's help is he : " to be a restorer ; " Then I restored that which I took not away. " He restores the image of God, the favour of God. O ! his love is a giving love. He gives himself to be an advocate, " If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : " to be the author of faith, and finisher thereof : the author of repentance ; he is exalted a prince and a saviour to give it : the author of true knowledge ; " Who teacheth like him ? " the author of love, " I will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love me. " He gave himself to be a bearer of burdens, that you may cast all yours upon him ; to be a counsellor, a wonderful counsellor ; to be a day's-man ; a door of hope ; " The desire of all nations ; " to be the end of the law for righteousness ; to be a friend, a physician of sinners, a sure foundation ; to be God with us ; to be head over all things to the church ; to be Jesus, and to be the Christ ; to be King in Zion ; to be Lord of all ; to be a doer for us ; to be a sufferer and a satisfier ; to be an open fountain ; Alpha and Omega, a saviour ; a seeker of the lost. He gives himself to be all our hope ; " Thou art my hope in the day of evil ; " the

hope of Israel; the surety, the shepherd, Isa. xl. 11, a physician and healer. JEHOVAH-ROPHI: to be an undertaker; "I am oppressed, undertake for me:" to be ALL IN ALL.

II. We come now to the confirmation of the doctrine. O Sirs, every thing about Christ, this glorious lover, points him out as a glorious giver.

His covenant is a giving covenant; a covenant of free gifts; "I will give thee the sure mercies of David," Acts xiii. 34, compared with Isa. lv. 3, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

His blood is a giving blood; it speaks better things than the blood of Abel, and it gives better things; for it gives peace with God; "He made peace by the blood of his cross."

His heart is a giving heart: the very thoughts of his heart are thoughts of giving; "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end," Jer. xxix. 11. Your unbelief, O poor sensible sinner, is always saying, Oh! he hath some ill thoughts, some ill design against you: but behold he is now telling you what are his very thoughts, even thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. You are to measure his thoughts and designs, by his words of grace.

His words are giving words; his word is a life-giving word; "The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." His word is a health-giving word; "He sent his word, and healed them." His word is a light-giving word; "The entrance of thy word gives light." His word is a joy-giving word; "Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it, and it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

His hand is a giving hand; "The eyes of all things wait on thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing," Psalm cxlv. 15, 16. His hand gives with his heart.

His life both in earth and heaven is a giving life. His life on earth was to give himself *for* us, and to give himself to be a sacrifice and atonement for our sin; and his life in heaven is to give himself *to* us, and to give out the blessings of his atoning blood; "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins," Acts v. 31. He was humbled on earth to give, and he is exalted to heaven to give.

His glory, to which he is exalted, is a giving glory. And, indeed, the higher he is exalted, the lower does he still stoop to give; "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand, he girds himself with a towel, and rises from supper, and washes his disciples' feet," John xiii. 3 4.

Again, his supereminent unction, wherewith he is anointed, is a giving unction: he is anointed that he may anoint; "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows, Psalm xlv. 5. I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles," Isa. xlii. 1. And hence, as his errand to the earth was a giving errand; so his errand to heaven again was a giving errand: "If I go away, says he, I will send the comforter."

His fulness is a giving fulness; "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily: and ye are complete in him, which is head of all principality and power, Col. ii. 10. Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 16.

His Father is a giving Father; "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. And so he loved, and he loves the world, as to give himself to be the Saviour of a lost world. O! how do the Father and the Son harmonise in this matter? In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John iv. 9, 10. And he says, "Lo, I come!" upon this giving errand, Psalm xl. 7.

His Spirit is a giving Spirit. These blessed three who bear witness in heaven, we may say, as they are one, so they agree in one: as it is said of the Three that bear witness on earth, they agree in one: so they agree in giving. The Father is a giving Father; he gives the Son; Christ is a giving Christ; he gives himself; and both the Father and the Son give the Spirit, John xv. 26, where Christ speaking of the Comforter says, "Whom I will send unto you from the father, even the spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father." And the Spirit is a glorious giver of all things, that belong either to the Father or the Son; yea, the giver of all things that belong both to the Father and the Son, John xvi. 14, 15. The Spirit gives conviction and illumination. He makes the application of redemption. He is the immediate Giver of

faith, and repentance, and love, and other graces that are all the fruits of the Spirit ; the Spirit gives : as a Spirit of adoption, he gives to cry, *Abba, Father* ; as a Spirit of liberty, he gives a loosing to our bands ; as a Spirit of grace, he gives all grace ; and as a Spirit of Glory, he gives the faith of glory, the hope of glory, the view of glory, the first fruits and beginnings of glory. Again,

As the Father is a giving Father, and his Spirit a giving Spirit, so his servants in the ministry are giving servants ; for he says to them, “ Freely ye have received, freely give ; Go preach the gospel to every creature.” We are earthen vessels, for no other use but as cups, or vessels, for giving out to you what he gives to us for you.

Wherefore was Christ humbled ? Even to give himself for us. And wherefore is he exalted ? He is even exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give himself to us, by giving repentance and remission of sins. He was humbled to give himself, and exalted to give his Spirit.

All his offices are giving offices. He is a Prophet, to give instruction, and advice, and wisdom ; a Priest, to give righteousness ; and a King, to give power and victory.

All his names are giving names. He is Jesus, to give salvation from sin and wrath ; he is Christ, to give the Spirit, the anointing ; and he is Lord, to give the crown and the kingdom.

All his appearances are giving appearances. His doing is for giving us a title to heaven ; his dying is for giving us security from hell and death ; his resurrection is for giving us a new life, and raising us to a new and lively hope ; his ascending up to heaven, leading captivity captive, was for receiving gifts for men, even for the rebellious ; his sitting at the right hand of God, and making continual intercession there, is for giving out the blessings of his purchase, and for making the powerful application thereof.

All his ordinances are giving ordinances. Ministers are earthen vessels, into which he puts the treasure that he gives out for you : “ We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” What is the word preached, and the sacraments dispensed, but like so many vessels and cups, and means for conveying his gifts and bounties to sinners ?

All his promises are giving promises. There is the new heart to be given : “ A new heart also will I give you,” there is the new Spirit to be given : “ I will put my Spirit within you.”

I may say all his commands are giving commands ; for the sum of his commands is this, that ye believe in him ; and what is that but that ye receive him ? It is just God stretching forth his hand, and commanding you to take all from him, and to be obliged to him for all : for “ He gives grace, and glory, and every good thing,” and his command is, that you take what he gives.

QUEST. How does he give ?

ANSW. He gives freely and fully ; when he gives himself, he gives all : He gives irreversibly ; “ The gifts and callings of God are without repentance :” He gives lovingly ; “ He loved me, and gave himself for me.”

QUEST. What of himself did he give for them ?

ANSW. He gave his body a sacrifice ; his back to the smiters, and to the whole burden of wrath ; his cheeks to them that pulled off the hair ; his name to be a reproach ; his hands, and feet, and side, to be pierced ; his head, to be crowned with thorns ; his blood, to be poured out ; his soul, to be an offering for sin.

QUEST. Why is his love a giving love ?

ANSW. Thus he gets glory to his name, to his Father, and to himself. This is suitable to his people’s need and necessity : he hath bought and paid the price of all ; and therefore we have nothing to pay ; all is given freely ; and it is suitable to the state of a king to give gifts and presents.

III. I come now, in the last place, to the application. If he be such a Giver, as we have been representing him, then we ought to be receivers. We should meet his giving hand with our receiving hand. O Sirs, are you for great gifts to-day. You may be made up with free gifts, if you be not fools ; and, if hitherto you have been such fools, and lack wisdom, you may now seek and get enough : “ If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth none ; and let him ask in faith of getting, nothing doubting.” Doubt not of his readiness to give ; for giving is his trade, it is his office, which he executes both in his state of humiliation and exaltation. O ! you have come to a good market this day ; and if you go away without making a bargain, whom can you blame ?

O Sirs, what came you hear for ? If you come for any good, here is all, and you may be supplied. If you come for no good, yet here you may be pitied and prevented, and get the good you was not seeking : as Saul went out to seek his father’s asses, and found

a kingdom ; so, though you had some poor trifling errand, yet here you may get a kingdom for the taking.

What want you for yourself, for your family, for your children, for the land, for posterity ? Want you knowledge, faith, pardon, healing ! O ! his love is a giving love ! “ Whosoever will, let him come, and take. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters.” Ho, every one that needs a drink ; ho, every one that is guilty, come and take remission : ho, every one that is filthy, come and be washed. O poor, mortal, dying sinner, here is life and immortality brought to light by this gospel, and brought to your door, as a love gift to you in Christ Jesus, who gives himself to you in this word ; take him, and God’s blessing with him, if you will take him wholly ; for he will not be divided. He gives himself for sanctification as well as for justification ; for salvation from sin now, as well as salvation from hell afterwards. Will you close with this bargain ? You have nothing to object, for all is given. If you say you have no power, he hath power to give ; “ He giveth power to the faint.” If you say you have no will, he hath the will to give ; “ Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” Are you content ? Is it a bargain ? An everlasting bargain be it, never to be forgotten.

Come not ye to give, but to get : for you must be humbled to be receivers, he exalted as a Giver.

QUEST. How shall I know whether he be giving all these things to me, and whether I have a warrant to take and accept ?

ANSW. You may be sure of this, if these two things concur, namely, if he be offering, and you be needing these things ; if you want, and he have, and be saying by this gospel, Come and share ; if you be needy and destitute of all these things, so as there is none of them with you, nor to be had any where else, then you may look for them here, and expect them, according to the promise, 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 high places, and fountains in the midst of valleys ; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.” By the water here, you may understand the water of life, comprehending all the blessings of the covenant. Now, are you poor and needy, seeking life, and there is none to be had among creatures ; seeking righteousness, strength, grace, and there is none ? “ The Lord will hear ; the God of Israel will not forsake.”

S E R M O N L X I I .¹

The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.—Gal. ii. 20.

[The fourth Sermon on this Text.]

WE have already elsewhere insisted on these words at considerable length, in an exegetical, doctrinal, and applicatory manner: there is however, one observation farther, that we have not yet touched at, that we intend, at this time, to illustrate from them, viz.,

DOCT. “It is the property of true faith to entertain the giving love of Christ, revealed in the gospel, with a *me*, *me*, by particular application.”

This *me* was very familiar with Paul; “He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. Gal. i. 16. “He revealed his Son in *me*. 2 Tim. iv. 8. He hath laid up a crown of righteousness for *me*. 1 Cor. xv. 10. His grace was bestowed upon *me*.” Thus it was with David, Psal. iii. 3. “Thou, O Lord, art a shield for *me*. Psal. lvi. 9. This I know, God is for *me*. Psal. lvii. 2. It is God that performs all things for *me*. Psal. lxi. 3. Thou hast been a shelter for *me*. Psal. cix. 22. Do thou for *me*,—deliver thou *me*. Psal. xl. 17. I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon *me*. Psal. xliii. 6. He hath dealt bountifully with *me*. Psal. xxiii. 6. I will fear no evil, for thou art with *me*, &c. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. He hath made *with me* an everlasting covenant,” [or, given to *me*.] Many of faith’s *me*’s you may read in scripture; and how can tell how many *my*’s of faith are there? “MY Lord and MY God: I know that my Redeemer liveth.” See a cluster of them, Psal. xviii. 1, 2. “I will love thee O Lord, *my* strength. The Lord is *my* rock, *my* fortress, and *my* deliverer; *my* God, *my* rock, in whom I will trust; *my* buckler, and the horn of *my* salvation; and *my* high tower. Psal. cxliv. 1, 2. Blessed be the Lord *my* strength, which teacheth *my* hands to war, and *my* fingers to fight; *my* goodness, *my* fortress, *my* high tower, &c. *My* Beloved is mine, and I am his,” &c.

(1) This sermon was preached at a sacramental solemnity at Burntisland, August 13th, 1739.

For the prosecuting of this subject, we shall endeavour to do these things following.

- I. Enquire what is imported in this particularising property of faith entertaining Christ's giving love with a *me, me*.
- II. How, and upon what grounds faith makes this particular application, and ventures to say, *Me, me*.
- III. Name the reasons why faith hath, and must have, this appropriating property.
- IV. Deduce some inferences for the application.

I. What is imported in this particularising property of faith, in entertaining this giving love of Christ, with a *Me, me*? It may suppose and import these following things.

1st, It supposes, that while unbelief reigns and rules, the soul speaks in a quite other strain; unbelief puts away the love of Christ from itself, saying, If he hath a loving heart, it is not to me; if he hath a giving hand, it is not to me: unbelief says with Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man:" surely it is not to me thou art making love. Yea, the language of unbelief is like that of the devil, "What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to torment us before the time? What have we to do with thee? Thou art not come to save us. Indeed, he came not to save sinning angels, but he came to save sinning men; and the devils would have men to think and speak, as they did, "What have we to do with thee?" And Satan gains his point, so long as he can tempt men to continue in unbelief, and to say, there is an offer of Christ; but, what have I to do with it; it is not to me: there is love; but it is not to me: there is Christ giving himself, but not for me; I cannot take it to me; I cannot believe it is for me: what have I to do with it. Thus the devilish unbelieving heart makes God a liar, by putting away the giving love of Christ, that he manifests to mankind sinners by the everlasting gospel.

2^{dly}, It supposes, that so far as unbelief is broken, in its reign and rule, so far does the soul bring home to itself this giving love of Christ. There are various degrees (when unbelief gets a dash) whereby the sinner is brought to this particular application. Conviction of unbelief, is, I think, the first degree, namely, when the soul is convinced of the sin of not believing the love of Christ, saying, "Wo is me, that I, who am convinced of sin and wrath by the law, cannot be

convinced of the love, and grace, and good-will of God manifested in Christ by the gospel! Oh! that I could get this love believed and applied to myself." Conviction of righteousness is another degree; when the glory of Christ's righteousness, as full and all-sufficient, is discovered to the soul, and the soul enabled to take hold of it for its own justification, pardon, and reconciliation with God. Conviction of judgment is a third degree; or of Christ's being a king to subdue sin and Satan in the soul, as he hath done in his own person: and so the soul is made to say in effect, "I receive and rest upon Christ, as a Prophet, Priest, and King, for complete salvation, as he is offered to me in the word, presented to me in the promise, or given to me in the gospel." This is the substance of the thing relating to faith's *me*, though sometimes it is uttered more, and sometimes less confidently: sometimes it is said with a sigh, a *wo's me*, that I cannot say, "He loved me:" sometimes with a struggle and a battle with unbelief; I believe thy love to me; "Lord, help my unbelief:" and sometimes with a bold asseveration, as here, without any fear or doubt, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Thus, so far as unbelief is brought down, so far faith raises up to a full assurance.

But more particularly, I think it implies these four things following.

1. A view of the particular offer. The call of the gospel is to every one that hears it; "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come." When faith comes by hearing, it takes up these good news, so particularly as to say, Here is good news for me; here is mercy offered to me; here is grace offered to me; here is Christ offered to me; here is the call given to me by name; here is love made to me.

2. It implies a holy selfishness in faith, appropriating all the offered mercy so to itself, as if there were none else concerned. This loving Lord speaks to me, and tells me, "He hath loved ME, and gave himself for ME;" and therefore, what he says in his word, I will say to myself, "He loved ME;" what he gives to me in his word, I will take to myself, "He gave himself for me." Faith, like the busy bee, what it gathers abroad, it takes home to its own hive for its own use. What the soul gathers abroad in the field of the gospel, and among the flowers of the promise, it takes home to its own heart: it no sooner finds suitable meat for it in the word, but it falls to the eating of it; "Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it; and it was the joy and rejoicing of my soul."

3. It imports a holy pleasure that the soul takes in this giving love of Christ ; and hence, the ingemination, or doubling of the *me* ; so sweet it is to the soul, that after one taste, it must have another. True faith is not soon satisfied ; after one sight of Christ it must have another ; after one kiss of the Son of God, it must have another : “ Let him kiss with the kisses of his mouth, for thy loves are better than wine,” Song i. 2. It is not *love* in the singular, but *loves* in the plural number : let him give me one love-token after another ! ME, ME !

4. It imports a cordial assent unto, and persuasion of the kindness and love of God in Christ, manifested in the word, so as to give both the heart and hand to the Son of God, with a my Lord, and my God ; a Lord for me, a God for me ; Me, Me ; It is like a laying hold of him with both hands, and embracing him with both arms, resolving never to part with him, but still to hold by this glorious Lover and Giver ; He loved me, and gave himself for me.”

II. The second general head was, To show how and upon what grounds faith makes this particular application, and entertains this giving love with a *me, me*. I offer the following remarks for clearing this head.

Remark 1. “ That we speak not now of the assurance of sense ; for that comes by spiritual reflection, or a reflex act upon the word of God, and not a direct act of faith upon the word of God.” That reflex assurance comes also ^{from} the Spirit, witnessing and sealing the soul after believing, and “ at either mediately, shining upon graces and experiences, &c., or, immediately, upon the soul, by some special direct intimation. We speak of that assurance, which is properly in faith, of which the apostle here speaks, when he says, “ I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Remark 2. “ That the particular application of faith “ is grounded upon the word ; for faith relates to a testimony, believing on a word to be believed.” So it is said, “ Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” Rom. x. 17. Faith in a hearer relates to faithfulness in a speaker, and credits the word spoken.

Remark 3. “ That it is not every word of God that is the ground of this particular application of faith.” It is not the word of God in the law, but the word of God in the gospel : for the law serves to convince of sin, and discover wrath due for sin ; but makes

no discovery of the love and mercy of God. The light of the law discovers death, damnation, and misery, for evermore to the sinner; but the light of the gospel discovers life and salvation through Jesus Christ, who hath brought life and immortality to light.

Remark 4. "That it is not every word or every doctrine of the gospel, that is the ground of faith's particular application of the love of Christ with a *me, me.*" For example, it is not every legal precept or threatening this is taken into the gospel dispensation, that is the ground or foundation of this particular application, but the gospel itself, revealing the love and grace of God in Christ. As many things are in a house that yet cannot be called the house itself: so, many things are in the gospel-dispensation, that are not properly the gospel itself. Law-precepts and threatenings are brought in as a fence to the gospel, to guard it against being abused; For instance, John iii. 17, "God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world by him might be saved;" there is the gospel; but when it is added, verse 18, "He that believeth not, is condemned already" this is brought into the dispensation of the gospel, but is not properly the gospel itself, but is subservient thereunto, to defend it from abuse. Now, the former, not the latter, may be the foundation of faith's particular application of the love of God. Thus, "He that believeth not, shall be damned," is a fence for the gospel, but not properly the gospel itself; the gospel is the thing proposed to be believed, namely, the dispensation of the love and grace of God in Christ.

Remark 5. "That is not every doctrine, even of the "love of God in the gospel, that is the first ground of faith's applying this love to itself." For example, there is a two-fold love of God in Christ, that cannot be the ground of faith's applying it to itself, viz., his love of destination, and his love of approbation; his love of destination and purpose, whereby he is said to have chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, having predestinated us to the adoption of children, Eph. i. 4, 5. Again, his love of approbation and friendship, or complacency, such as that spoken of, John xiv. 23, "If any love me, and keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. Now, the object of the former love, viz., that of destination, is every elect soul, and that from all eternity, as well as in time, even before their conversion and union to Christ; the object of the latter, namely, the love of approbation, is every believer

united to Christ, every saint. Now, these are precious doctrines of the gospel, and the sweetness of this divine love, both of destination from eternity, before faith, and of approbation in time, after faith, may come to be felt in due time, when the soul after believing, comes to be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise ; but yet none of the , I say, are the first ground upon which any sinner can build this particular application of Christ's giving love, saying, "He loved me." For that love, whereof the elect are the objects, who can apply till they know they are elected ? And that love, whereof believers and saints are the objects who can apply, that know themselves to be, as yet, neither believers nor saints ? And, therefore, the love of God in the gospel, that is the first ground of faith's particular application, must be a love manifested to sinners as such, and, consequently, such a love as sinners, under the notion of sinners, may rely upon as exhibited in the gospel. Therefore,

Remark 6. "That the doctrine of the love and grace of God in the gospel, that lays a foundation for the particular faith I speak of is the doctrine of his love of benevolence and good will in Christ Jesus, manifested to sinners of mankind, accompanied with a particular call to every one to believe this love, and take hold of this Lover for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to himself in particular."

The general word of grace and love is to sinners—that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15. The particular call and command to every sinner that hears the gospel, is that he believe on the Son of God, 1 John iii. 25 ; or, in other words, that he believe that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be saved, Acts xv. 11 ; or, which is all one, that he receive and rest upon Christ for salvation, as offered to him in particular in the gospel. Now, the general indefinite declaration, that he came to save sinners, and died for the ungodly ; this points out our general name, ungodly sinners ; but then, the particular call and invitation to come to this Jesus by faith, believing his love and grace manifested in this gospel, this points it out to every one, saying, "Thou, in particular, art the ungodly sinner, thus called to apply his love and grace declared in the gospel ; and upon this ground thou mayest, by faith, make this particular application, and venture out with a ME, ME. "He loved ME, and gave himself for ME."

Object 1. "May not one fear presumption in the present case, if it be no more than is needful as a ground for this appropriating faith?"

Answer. Men presume, when they are either encouraged by their own goodness to believe Christ's love, or discouraged by their own badness from believing it; for this says it is either some goodness they have, or some goodness they want in themselves, that they are making the rule and standard of their faith, and not the Word of God, nor the gospel of the grace of God; this is indeed presumption; for it says they are cleaving to the old covenant way of life by works, or goodness of their own, and not trusting to the goodness, grace, and love of God in Christ revealed in the gospel; but if the sinner were taking with the charge, that he is a sinner indeed, and accepting of these good news, That Christ came to save sinners, as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, and apprehending the gospel call particularly to him, saying, "To thee is the word of this salvation sent;" and was thereupon rolling himself over upon the grace and love of Christ, saying, Even so I take it to me, as offered to me in the word; and thereupon conclude, "He loved me, and gave himself for me:" this is no presumption, but faith building upon the proper ground of it, the word of God.

Object. 2. "But may not one fear delusion in this case, if he build this particular application only upon the word, without feeling the operation of the Spirit, since it is the spirit that works faith in us?"

Answer. We are to make a difference between how faith is warranted, and how faith is wrought. The Spirit is the worker of faith; but the word is the warrant of faith, and the ground of it; and the Spirit works faith by shewing to the soul what is the warrant of faith; and hence faith comes by hearing what the Spirit saith in the word, and not by feeling what the Spirit works in the heart: therefore, if you build your faith on any feelings or influences within you, then you are in danger of delusion and enthusiasm; but not if you build your faith upon the word as your warrant.

OBJECT. 3. But if the word without me be the warrant of faith, and the Spirit within me be the worker of faith, what if I take hold of the warrant of the word, without the Spirit taking hold of me, as the worker of faith within me?

ANSW. That is impossible: for, where a soul takes hold of Christ, and his love and grace revealed in the word, and upon the warrant of God's word itself in particular, it necessarily presupposes the Spirit present in that word, opening up to the soul the particu-

lar warrant, and discovering the love of Christ in that word, and secretly and powerfully drawing the soul to apply it ; and yet so insensibly may that power be exerted, that the soul feels nothing till afterwards : “ After ye believed, ye were sealed.” There may, indeed, be joy and peace in believing ; but faith, though it may be attended with joy, and peace, and feeling, yet is not grounded upon any thing but the word, or the love and grace of Christ revealed in the word ; even as a house may be built with lime, and sand, and clay, but is not founded upon it.

OBJECT. 4. But, must not Christ be revealed into the heart ? And is there not a seeing of the Son, in order to believing in him ? And therefore some sensible work in the heart to found this particular application of faith ?

ANSW. There is a sight of spiritual knowledge and illumination that is necessary to faith, and goes indeed before it ; but there is a sight of spiritual experience and sensation, that is not necessary to faith, but follows after it. The former is that revelation of Christ into the heart that Paul speaks of, “ He revealed his son in me ;” and that seeing of the Son that is necessary, in order to believing in him. Faith comes by hearing, not by feeling ; and so believing in Christ comes by seeing him in the heart. Christ is not formed in the heart by the Spirit, till once he be revealed in the heart by the word. And so it is not the Spirit’s sealing work, giving an internal feeling of Christ ; but the Spirit’s teaching work, giving the internal revelation of Christ, that is necessary to faith.

OBJECT. 5. But if I want this internal revelation of Christ, and have Christ only revealed to me, and not revealed in me : Have I, in that case, any warrant to believe ?

ANSW. 1. Though Christ revealed in you, is necessary to the working of faith ; yet Christ revealed to you, in the word, is all that is necessary to the warranting of faith ; and therefore,

2. Since it is not Christ speaking in the heart, but Christ speaking in the word, that is the ground and warrant of faith ; if you build your faith and hope upon the love and grace of Christ revealed to you in particular, you have no ground to doubt Christ is revealed in you ; therefore, in seeking for a foundation and ground of faith, never pore upon yourself, or what you feel, or what the Spirit works in you ; but rather hear what the Spirit says to you : “ He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.” If you hear what the Spirit says to you of the love of Christ, and

believe it with application as revealed to you, then you may be sure he is revealed in you ; and upon the warrant of his word, thus revealing his love to you ; you, through grace, may apply it to yourself with a *me, me* ; “ He loved ME, and gave himself for ME.”

· III. The third general head I proposed was, To name the reasons why faith hath this appropriating property. And here I shall shew, 1. Why it is so, that faith hath this applying property ; and, 2. Why it must be so, or the necessity of it.

1st, As to the former of these, faith hath this applying property.

1. Because faith is an uniting grace, that unites the soul to Christ ; “ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,” Eph. iii. 17. As it comes from him, so it leads the soul to him, and cannot stay away from him, nor rest till it makes close application to him. God, the giver of faith, hath given it this office of joining the soul to Jesus ; and therefore, in the day of believing, sinners are brought to say, “ Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord ; the everlasting covenant shall not be forgotten,” as the words may be read, Jer. l. 5. Some drawing virtue is let out from that covenant between God and Christ, that draws out the soul’s consent to that bargain, and so take on with Jesus as the glorious Lover, that proposes such a blessed bargain as himself to it. O ! it is a good bargain.

2. Because faith takes up the warrant and ground it hath to build upon : it reads the gospel as a love-letter, saying, There is a letter from heaven, and it is backed for me, indorsed for me : it says, TO THEE ; “ To thee is the word of this salvation sent :” and therefore I may also say, To me, to me, it is sent. “ He loved me, and gave himself for me.”

3. Faith takes up the fitness and suitableness between Christ and the soul’s case ; and therefore makes particular application. As ever a plaister was suited to a sore, or a remedy suited to a malady ; so Christ is suited to the sinner’s case ; and faith discerns this, and says, There is wisdom for a fool like me ; there is righteousness, for a guilty soul like me ; sanctification, for a filthy soul like me ; redemption, for lost and miserable me ; there is light, for dark me ; and life, for dead me ; and liberty, for bond me : and therefore I cannot but welcome it to me.

4. Faith’s particular application flows from the approach of the Spirit of faith mixing itself with the word, to make application of Christ’s redemption. Though the external revelation fixes the duty

of believing, and all have an equal warrant to believe in Jesus, yet such is the distinguishing grace of God towards some, that he opens up the warrant to them particularly, and causes them make particular application thereof to themselves, and to believe what others have as fair a revealed warrant to believe as they have ; for, though this powerful coming of the Spirit is necessary to work faith, yet nothing else but the word is necessary to warrant faith, and to be the ground of it ; yea, in pure believing, the Spirit makes the soul build upon nothing but the word. Faith may be confirmed afterward by the feeling and sealing of the Spirit, as I said already ; but in nothing does the power of the Spirit more exert itself in the day of believing, than in bringing the soul to be denied to all external feelings, and to reject all other grounds of faith than what is proposed in the word of grace. Let every one, therefore, cry for the spirit of faith, who is to be received in the hearing of faith. There is a passive receiving of the Spirit, even as dry ground receives a shower of water from the clouds ; this is necessary for the working of faith where it is not, and exerting it where it is ; and there is an active receiving of the Spirit after faith, of which it is said, "Received ye the Spirit since ye believed?" And of which also it is said, "After ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise." Now, it is the former, the passive reception of the Spirit, or the Spirit coming as the Spirit of faith, that would make a happy believing and applying time among us, by making us listen to the voice of Christ in the word, and hear him only, of whom the Father says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased ; hear ye him."

2dly, Why is it necessary that faith have this applying property, applying the love of Christ as revealed in the gospel with a *me, me*, of particular appropriation ? Why, it is necessary on many accounts.

1. It is necessary to justification. Faith doth not justify but in a way of applying and appropriating the righteousness of Christ to itself, saying, as it is, Isa. xlv. 24, "Surely, in the Lord have I righteousness:" and hence the name of Christ, in whom we are justified, is a name of appropriation, Jer. xxiii. 6, "The Lord our righteousness;" which, in the singular number, when faith is acted personally and particularly, is, The Lord my righteousness. The justifying blood of Christ must be sprinkled on the conscience by a particular application of faith ; and it does not justify if it be

not appropriated, no more than a plaister can heal unless it be applied. It must be applied with a *me, me; and loved me, and gave himself for me.*

2. It is necessary unto sanctification, Christ is made of God to us not only righteousness, but also sanctification: and he is, says faith, made of God to me sanctification: hence it is the language of faith, In the Lord have I strength, as well as righteousness. In him there is strength for me, says faith; and without this applying and appropriating of the strength and grace that is in Christ to ourselves, we cannot be strong in the Lord, or strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

3. It is necessary to consolation. All the comfort we have in the love of Christ, is in the application of it; "He loved me." All the comfort that issues from his death, is in the application of it; "He gave himself for me." Take away this *me*, or this appropriation of Christ, and you take away comfort: and hence the more closely that faith acts upon Christ, the more comfortably; for "Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable." And hence, also, the more unbelief prevails, putting away the grace and love of Christ, saying, O! it is not for me; this promise is not to me; the more discouragement prevails.

4. It is necessary to peace, quiet, and rest: "Come to me all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. In me ye shall have peace," says Christ; in a way of applying me, and appropriating me to yourselves, ye shall have peace. Peace with God is a safe garrison in the time of outward trouble; but take away the *me—me* of faith, and you undermine the garrison—you blow up the peace of the soul.

5. It is necessary unto boldness in approaching to God—"We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;" and the boldness of faith flows from the applying quality of it. Faith walks on this red-sea: if it did not keep its feet upon this red carpet, it could not come boldly to God.

6. It is necessary unto evidential assurance, which is the fruit of faith. Faith's applying quality with a *me—me*, founded upon the Word, is fiducial assurance, which is the very nature of faith grounded upon the Word; but faith's reflection upon itself, and upon the work of God within one, is evidential assurance. And this cannot be without the former, no more than there can be true evidences of faith without faith itself. When a man can once say, by the assurance of faith, relying on the Word *He loved me*, then

he may come, in due time, to be able to say, by the assurance of sense, I feel his love burning in my breast, and warming my heart : “ After ye believed ye were sealed.”

7. It is necessary unto victory—spiritual victory. And,

(1.) It is necessary to our victory over the devil ; for, the more closely we apply Christ to ourselves, the more powerfully do we defeat and drive off the devil—the shield of faith quenches his fiery darts. This applying faith takes in Christ to itself, and then destroys the works of the devil. Christ for us did it once, and Christ in us does it again.

(2.) It is necessary to our victory over the world ; for, “ This is the victory whereby we overcome the world [as well as the god of this world], even our faith ;” and particularly faith as it appropriates his love. O ! when it sees, and applies, and feeds upon the love of Christ, how doth it despise the world, and would not give a glance of his love for all the glory of the world ? The believer despises its frowns and flatteries both, so far as he applies Christ, and confides in him ; whereas, when people take not hold of, and rely on Christ by faith, they take hold of the world, and the world takes hold of them, and overcomes them.

(3.) It is necessary to our victory over the flesh, and over sin and corruption : so far as we believe the love of Christ to ourselves, so far as we hate and loath sin ; the love of Christ eats out the love of sin ; so far as the love of Christ is believed, so far is the love of sin banished ; for sin loses its dominion while we are not under the law, which is the strength of sin, but under grace and love, which is the destruction of sin. Why does sin prevail so much, but because we believe the love of Christ so little.

(4.) It is necessary also to victory over death ; let death appear in all its most dreadful shapes, yet by this particular faith of Christ’s love, we will be able to say, “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. O, Sirs, when unbelief prevails, crying out, Alas ! I fear he hath not loved me ; I doubt of his love to me ; I doubt of his promise, if it be to me ? how can that soul stand before death ? The fear of death overcomes him ; but when faith applies the love of Christ, and the promise sealed with the love of Christ, then it overcomes all the fear of death, and overcomes by the blood of the Lamb.

8. This applying faith, saying, *me, me*, with the Apostle here

is necessary unto service, and to the right discharge of duties, particularly that of prayer and praise, &c., namely, that we may serve the Lord without slavish fear—"That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life," Luke i. 74. God loves a cheerful giver—a cheerful servant. Doubts and fears of unbelief make very unheartsome and unholy service; but the more lively the faith of the love of God in Christ is, the more loving and acceptable service is performed.

9. It is necessary unto suffering, as well as unto service. Who is the Christian that will take joyfully the spoiling of his goods, and suffer joyfully for the name of Christ? Even he that hath the most lively faith of Christ's loving him unto sufferings and death, saying, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." O! how ought I to love him, and give myself, my life for him, through his grace? We may be called to suffering, but it must be given us; and it is he that gives to believe, who must give to suffer; and he gives to suffer by giving to believe; for "By faith, we choose with Moses, to suffer affliction with the people God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." And the more closely faith applies the love of Christ, the more forward it is to suffer; and the more doubtfully it views his love, the more backward and unwilling to suffer for him.

10. It is necessary unto growth in all the other graces of the Spirit: for example, The grace of love will not grow, but by the faith of his love; "We love him, because he first loved us." The grace of humility and true humiliation doth not grow, but upon the appropriating faith of his love, and of God's mercy venting through Christ: "That thou mayst 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," Ezek. xvi. 63. The faith of God's being pacified in Christ, a loving and well-pleased God in Christ, abases the soul, and humbles it to the dust. The grace of patience does not grow, but upon this root. We bear all things, and suffer chastisement kindly, while we believe that he chastises not in wrath, but in love. Thus I might go through the other graces of the spirit, and show that this applying property in faith, is necessary to the increase of the whole of them.

11. It is necessary unto perseverance; hence, says Christ, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love;" intimating that the particular faith of his love, and of the

firmness, greatness, and duration thereof, like that between him and his Father, is a strong root of perseverance, and continuing in his love. Our love to him, and perseverance in the duties of love to him, is up and down, ebbs and flows with the believing persuasion of his love.

12. It is necessary unto our preservation, from the errors and defections of the times, and to our excitation to any zealous appearance for Christ. This particular faith of Christ's love is a notable fence against errors that abound in the day we live in; for, as the most part receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, and are given up to strong delusions, to believe a lie; so when the truth is received in love, and Christ, the centre of all truth, embraced in love, it makes the soul stand out against all damnable error, saying, Oh! shall I deny the truth, who have got the faith and feeling of the love of Christ therein.

It is a notable fence against the apostacy of the times: "Will ye also go away?" said Christ to his disciples; ye to whom I have manifested myself and my love, as I have not manifested myself to the world. No, no; "To whom shall we go?" said Peter; "Thou hast the words of eternal life:" intimating, that the faith of his word of grace, was a cord to bind them to abide with him, and to keep them back from apostacy.

This particular faith would also excite us to public zeal. Public religion is only right founded, when it stands upon personal religion, personal acquaintance with Christ, and the particular faith of his love. They that can say believingly, "He loved me," will endeavour to say it practically, showing their faith by their love, and showing their love by their zeal. Love is the fire, zeal is the flame; they will show the fire by the flame.

In a word, it is necessary in all these particulars, for teaching the great end of glorifying God, and enjoying him. When we are strong in the faith, we give glory to God; and especially when we believe against unbelief, by believing his love to us as revealed in the word, against all objections to the contrary from other quarters; but we dishonour him, by unbelieving jealousies of his kindness, and by his discrediting his word; denying both his mercy and truth. Again, the more closely we cleave to him by this applying faith, the more fully do we enjoy him; for, this faith is a drawing near to him; whereas the opposite, unbelief, is a departing from him, Heb. iii. 12. We come now,

IV. To the Fourth and last thing proposed, which was to make

application. And this we may essay in an use of information, examination, and exhortation.

1st. We may improve this doctrine for information. Is it the property of true faith, to entertain the giving love of Christ, declared in the gospel, with a *me, me*, by a particular application? Hence see.

1. The danger and disadvantage of unbelief: it rejects the grace and love of Christ, saying, It is not to me. It rejects the gift of God, and the great salvation, saying, It is too great for me; it is too good for me; I must resolve to want it; for I am not meet for it, and it is not meet for me. O! dangerous case! "He that believeth not hath made God a liar."

2. See the excellency and advantage of faith and believing. It takes home Christ and all his grace and fulness to itself, saying, Oh! here is a treasure for me; here is a portion for me; a good bargain for me: however unlovely I am, yet here is a wonderful Lover and Suiter for me: he evidenced his love for me, by giving himself for me: he is evidencing his love to me, in giving himself in the gospel offer to me: it welcomes Christ and his love, saying, "He loved me."

3. Hence see the danger of that legal doctrine, that obstructs their particular application of faith, by bringing in so many terms and conditions necessary, in order to be the ground and foundation of faith's persuasion; making either some work done by people, or some work wrought in them, to be the ground of confidence with reference to the love of Christ; thus leading people into themselves for a foundation of faith: and hence few or none can, by their doctrine, see any ground to apply the love of Christ to themselves, because they cannot see any ground in themselves, where indeed they ought not to seek it. That legal spirit is too natural to all mankind, and hath little need to be furthered by legal doctrine.

4. Hence see also the darkness that obscures many gospel sermons, even among these who are otherwise evangelical, yet in this they are bemisted, that they cannot take up any assurance or persuasion in the matter of faith, distinct from that assurance of sense, which follows after faith: nor take up the assurance, application, and appropriation of faith, grounded upon the word of God, which is the duty of all that hear the gospel, distinct from the assurance of sense, founded upon the work of God, which is the privilege of believers at times. How miserably do many confound

the grounds of faith, with the marks of faith? and so shut the door of faith, many times, against all that have not the evidences of faith; and, through mistake of the gospel method of salvation, sometimes make the marks and evidences of faith in them who have believed, to be so many lets and hindrances to the faith of them that never believed, as if they ought not to believe the love and grace of God revealed in the word, unless they have these marks: whereas sinners are warranted to build upon the grounds of faith that are without them in the word, though they can see no marks of faith within them; for to build upon these, although they had them, would be a building of sense, and not a building of faith.

2dly, This doctrine may be improved by way of examination. Try whether or not you have been ever brought to this particular application of faith; or to the *me, me*, that is here spoken of; "He loved ME, and gave himself for ME." If so, then,

1. The time hath been, when the wrath of God, revealed in the law, hath been applied particularly to you, and by you. Have you ever believed the curse and threatening of the law, saying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them?" Have you believed that with a *me, me*, saying, I am the man; I am the person; the sinful, miserable, guilty person, that, by sin, am exposed to God's wrath; and, "What shall I do to be saved."

2. The time hath been, wherein the love and grace of God revealed in the gospel, hath been applied particularly to you and by you, so far as to give you the hope of relief from the law sentence of condemnation, and to draw your heart to a particular acceptance of Christ, as offered in the gospel to you, for salvation from sin, and deliverance from the wrath to come. This imports the *me, me*, in the text, even though you have not been able, in express terms, to say it in the words of the apostle, "He loved me, and gave himself for me."

3. Are the defects of this faith grievous to you? Is it uneasy to you, That you cannot freely come out with the *me, me*? Do you find it matter of grief to you, that, through unbelief, you should so much question his love to you; and matter of joy to you, when you get kindly views of him, and can say with the apostle, "He loved me, and gave himself for me?" Know you what it is to believe his love, even when you do not feel it? that is, when you want the joyful sense of his love, yet, you hope in his word, and hang upon

it, saying, "I believe; Lord, help my unbelief." This argues particular application of faith. Know you what it is, notwithstanding of the power and prevalence of sin, yet to maintain some hope against hope, because his word endureth for ever, and his love endureth for ever; and therefore you are encouraged to return again and again to your first love? This imports and includes in it the heart, saying, "He loved me," even though you dare not, with confidence, express it.

4. Is your public religion founded upon personal religion? Public religion, and concern for the ark of God, and the work of God, and the cause of Christ, and his truth, and reformation principles, is very proper and necessary in a day wherein truth is fallen in the streets. It is fit to appear for Christ, especially when princes and parliaments are against him; when courts and judicatories are against him; then we should cleave to him, and to these that are engaged in witnessing work for him. But yet, before our public religion can be probative, or evidential of our true love to Christ, it will be founded upon personal religion; personal acquaintance with Christ, personal concern about his love to you, and a particular faith of his love constraining you to that appearance for him. Happy is the soul that can say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me:" therefore, it becomes me to love him, his name, his truth, his cause and interest; and to give myself for him, to act and do for him, to suffer for him; to suffer shame and reproach for him; to suffer losses, and crosses, and the spoiling of my goods, if he call to it; yea, and death itself for him. A public religion of this sort, flowing from the faith of his love, is a practical saying, "He loved me, and gave himself for me."

3dly, The doctrine may be applied by way of exhortation or address: and our exhortation shall be tendered both to unbelievers and saints.

[1.] We direct our exhortation to these who are unbelievers, and never came to make application of Christ to themselves, and are strangers to this appropriating faith. O Sinners! if you know yourself to be so, and have any need of a Saviour, come to him by faith, applying him to yourself in particular, with a *me, me*, of special appropriation. In order to this, I propose two things to your consideration.

1. Consider, in what capacity you ought to view yourself when applying this giving love of Christ with a *me, me*, to yourself in particular.

(1.) It is in view of your being a sinner, that you are to make this application: for, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly; and, Christ died to save sinners;" and therefore it is as a sinner, not as a saint, that you must shew this love, saying, "He loved me," a sinner; *me*, a most unlovely creature; *me*, an object of hatred and abhorrence. Unbelief makes a quite contrary improvement of this view saying, Alas! this love cannot be to me: it must be saints, and holy persons, and good folks that can say, "He loved me." Nay, but says faith, "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" and his name, as a Saviour, relates to sinners: and, in this gospel, he is manifesting his teaching love, to blind, ignorant sinners; his pardoning love, toward guilty sinners; and his conquering love, toward captive sinners, and such an one am I: therefore, as a sinner of that sort, I will venture on this love, and conclude, "He loved me." Again,

2. It is in the view of being, not only a sinner, but a chief sinner, that the soul applies this love; for, "Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am the chief; I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; yet, *He loved me*, says Paul; for, *I obtained mercy*," notwithstanding what I was, and what I am; for the gospel makes no exception; Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and so proclaims his good-will towards men. Here also unbelief starts up saying, No doubt, if sinners may apply this love and grace to themselves, yet not such sinners as I am: not such a guilty sinner, such a filthy sinner, such a black sinner, such a bloody sinner, such a backsliding sinner, that have returned again unto folly. Nay, but says faith, If he said to me, when I was in my blood, *Live*; and loved me, when I was in my blood before; and made me accept of his love offer, and say, "He loved me;" may I not again venture upon his grace and love, when his love is a-new manifested in his word of grace to *me*, and so take it home to myself with a *Me, Me*? The greater my sins are, the greater is his love to *me*; and the more will I say, with admiration and astonishment, "He loved *ME*;" even *me*, the blackest; *me*, the vilest; *me*, a run-away; *me*, a rebel; *me*, a dog; *me*, a devil, a monster!

2. Consider in what capacity you ought to view Christ, in order to this applying act of faith.

(1.) You are to view him as one in whom is all divine fulness, for the benefit of poor miserable sinners; fulness, not for himself, but for you: say not, What is it to me, that he is so full? Yea, it is for thee: "He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious,"

Psalm lxxviii. 18. And the reason of his communicating that fulness, is his own free grace ; “ He hath mercy, because he will have mercy.”

(2.) You are to view him as one, whose glory and perfection it is to give out himself and his fulness ; for, “ He is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins.” Thus it is his honour and exaltation to give out grace. There is a two-fold glory of Christ, the glory of his person as the Son of God ; and the glory of his office, as Mediator : the former is infinitely complete, admitting of no diminution or augmentation being unchangeably the same for ever and ever ; but the glory and perfection of his office, as Mediator, is still more and more complete, the more sinners he receives, and the more grace he gives out : hence the church is called his fulness ; and hence, saints are called the glory of Christ ; and hence Christ is said to be glorified in them ; and John xvi. 14, “ The Spirit, says Christ, shall glorify me ; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

(3.) You are to view him, as one, not only ready, but willing to receive sinners that come to him, and welcome them, in coming and applying him to themselves, by a particular appropriating faith ; but also rejoicing in nothing more heartily, and delighting in nothing more sweetly, than in sinners their coming to him, and matching with him : this is what he rejoiced in the thoughts of from eternity ; “ I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men,” Prov. viii. 30, 31. His joy is fresh, when the sinner is actually espoused to him ; “ 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, and in the day of the gladness of his heart, Song iii. 11. He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied,” Isa. liii. 11. Yea, he delights and rejoices in this espousals for ever : as he rejoiced in the thought of it from eternity, so he will do so unto eternity ; “ And I will betroth thee unto me for ever ; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord,” Hos. ii. 19, 20. The espousals are everlasting.

(4.) You are to view him as one, that hath no will to take a refusal at the sinner’s hand ; and that will admit of no excuse to hinder your coming to him, and closing with him for thyself, as a

match for thee, or hinder his accepting of thee. What is it that will hinder? Is it the broken law? No; he had fulfilled it; yea, magnified the law, and made it honourable. Is it offended justice? No; he hath satisfied justice: and therefore God says, "I have found a ransom." Is it outward meanness and baseness? No; though thou wert clothed in rags, if thou hast a mind for Christ, he will accept of thee; for, "To the poor the gospel is preached:" see 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28. Is it inward blackness and deformity? No; "Though you have lien among the pots, ye shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold:" see Isa. i. 18, xliii. 24, 25, lvii. 17. Christ marries none, but these who are sinners, that he may have the honour to take away their sin. Is it former refusals of him? No; though thou hast despised many gracious offers: see Prov. i. 21, 22, 23. They refused long and were long scorers. "How long, ye scorers, will ye delight in scorning? &c. Turn ye at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you." Is it any backsliding, or revolting of thine from him, after some kindly working of heart toward him? No; "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again unto me, saith the Lord. Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, and will not keep mine anger for ever," Jer. iii. 1. 12. Is it that he never saved the like of you, and that there is no sinner like you? No, no; for there is none like him for a Saviour; "Who is like unto the God of Jesurun?" Yea, what if your vileness and unworthiness qualify you for him as one said, My wants and unworthiness qualify me for Christ.

2. We shall now conclude with a word to these who have attained this appropriating faith, which hath in its nature this property of applying Christ with a *me, me*; "He loved ME, and gave himself for ME." Have you win to make application upon the ground of the words of grace? Then, O believer,

1. Be very thankful. Tell me, when you was under a sense of sin, a fear of hell and wrath, what would you have given for the things you now partake of? And what was your resolution, in case God should deliver you from your bonds of fear and dread? Therefore, now perform your vows of gratitude, and glorify God: for this end he made heaven and earth, and every creature, that he might get glory. And ought not you, especially to glorify him, not only in your heart, but also in your life and walk.

2. Be very humble ; for, “ Who made you to differ ? ” Know you not, that thousands and millions are going to hell every day, who are in many respects better than you ? Yet, out of sovereign grace you are plucked, as a brand out of the burning ; and they are passed by, without ever getting grace to improve the warrant they have of applying Christ to themselves by faith, for their salvation.

3. Be very active in making progress ; know that your salvation is but begun, all is not over : you have much work ado, a great warfare to accomplish ; therefore, press forward, forgetting the things that are behind : let your faith work by love.

4. Be very conscientious, that you may be in case to say, “ Herein do I exercise myself, to keep a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man.” This will be a continual feast ; and faith will be evidenced and furthered this way.

5. Take care, that you never misconstrue the providence of God, however hard and trying ; knowing, that whatever his outward dispensations be, yet he is still the same, and his word is still the same. Beware of putting harsh commentaries upon his dealings and disposals. Have you believed his love with particular application, upon the ground of his own word of grace ? Then let his word of grace and promise be the rule of your judging of his love, and not any alteration of your inward frame or outward lot.

6. Endeavour to maintain your relation to him, even under all dark providences, hidings, and desertions, saying, “ My God, my God,” even when you have occasion to say, “ Why hast thou forsaken me.”

7. Live near your strength ; and let the life you live be by the faith of the Son of God. “ He that abideth in me, and I in him, bringeth forth much fruit.” Renounce all confidence in the flesh, and in every piece of duty : “ Go in his strength,” for assistance, “ making mention of his righteousness,” and his only for acceptance : so thus maintain the life of faith that is begun.

8. Let it be your care and study to get others called effectually, as well as you : endeavour to call them out of darkness by your shining light ; “ Let your light shine in darkness : ” and particularly endeavour to open up the grounds of faith to them, that they may see what ground they have, as well as you, to make particular application of Christ to themselves, and to embrace him for their salvation. If you have been brought to a *me, me* ; “ He loved *ME* and gave himself for *ME* ; ” you will desire also that others may

partake with you, because there is enough in him for them and you both.

9. In a word, plead the promise of the Spirit for causing you to walk in his statutes, and enabling you to continue in the faith; and in this applicatory way of believing his love, that so his love may constrain you to his service; and that the joy of the Lord may be your strength while you stand to it by faith, saying, "He loved ME, and gave himself for ME."

S E R M O N L X I I I .¹

GOSPEL-HUMILIATION, GROUNDED ON FAITH'S VIEW OF DIVINE PACIFICATION.

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.—Ezek. xvi. 63.

AFTER great convictions of sin, and great denunciations of judgments against Israel, in the preceding part of the chapter, the Lord here, in the close, remembers mercy in the midst of wrath, and ends all his sad and heavy words with a sweet *nevertheless*, ver. 60. And, indeed, mercy must begin on God's side: "Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee, in the days of thy youth; and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." And what will be the effect of this, we see in ver. 61, "Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed." It is worthy our observation, that when God says, "I will remember my covenant," then he adds, "Thou shalt remember thy sins." Hence it is evident, that never a good thought, never a penitent thought would have come into our hearts, had not some thoughts of peace and good-will come into God's heart. When he remembers his covenant of mercy for us, so as not to remember our sins against us, then we remember our sins against ourselves with shame.

And in the latter part of the verse he adds, "When thou shalt

(1) This sermon was preached before the Associate Presbytery, on Tuesday, August 28th, 1739, being a Fast-day, appointed to be observed by them, in the parish of Kinross.

receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger :” that is, when the Gentile nations, some of them greater than thou art, and some lesser, both ancient and modern, shall be received into church-communion, and owned as members of the church of God ; “ And I will give them to thee for daughters :” they shall be my gift unto thee as daughters ; they shall be nursed up and educated by that gospel, that word of the Lord that shall come forth from Zion, from the Jews ; insomuch, that Jerusalem below may, in some sense, be called the mother ; and Jerusalem, which is above, which is free, shall be acknowledged to be the mother of us all. Gal. iv. 26, “ They shall be thy daughters, but not by thy covenant ;” that is, thy covenant of duties, or which thou turnedst to a covenant of works : not by that old covenant, which was violated ; but by that covenant, which promised to write the law in the heart, and to put the fear of God into the inward part. Now, when thou shalt receive them, and when Jews and Gentiles shall be united in Christ, the covenant-head, “ Thou shalt be ashamed of thine own evil ways.” Thou shalt blush to look a Gentile in the face, remembering how much worse than the Gentiles thou wast in the day of thy apostacy.

He farther signifies his gracious purpose, verse 62, “ I will establish my covenant with thee.” He had before said, “ I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant,” ver. 60. This covenant is God’s covenant : it is of his making with his Son Jesus Christ : “ I have made a covenant with my chosen : and it is established in him unto us ; and therefore may be said to be established with us. As if he had said, As I will establish it with him unto thee ; so I will re-establish it in him, with thee. And then the effect of that re-establishment of it shall be, “ Thou shalt know that I am the Lord ;” that I am JEHOVAH, a God of power, and faithful to my promise. It had often been said in wrath, “ You shall know that I am the Lord ;” you shall know it to your cost : but here it is said in mercy, “ You shall know that I am the Lord ;” you shall know it to your comfort. And it is one of the most precious promises of the covenant, “ They shall all know the Lord :” by a justifying knowledge ; so as to be delivered from the rule of sin, and from the punishment threatened in the law : by a sanctifying knowledge ; so as to be delivered from the *rule* of sin, and to be fitted for gospel-service and obedience : by an evangelical knowledge ; a knowledge of God in Christ, which is the beginning of eternal life ;

"This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent:" and likewise by a humbling knowledge; and here is the humbling effect of it described in the words of the text: "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."

Here you may observe both the nature of true Humiliation, and the ground of it.

1. The nature and properties of true humiliation, "Thou shalt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame."

2. The ground and spring of it, "When I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done:" when thou shalt so know the Lord, as to view him to be a reconciled God in Christ. He had before said, "I will remember my covenant," and when he puts them in mind of the covenant, then they mind their sin and misery, their evil ways and are ashamed. And here, when the covenant is further opened, the humiliation is further enlarged also. Why, the clearer evidence that persons have of God's being reconciled to them, the more grieved and ashamed will they be for offending them.

I shall farther explain the words, in discoursing upon the following doctrine.

OBSERV. "True gospel-humiliation is rooted in the believing knowledge and view of divine reconciliation: or, "Then is a soul truly humbled, when it apprehends God as truly pacified, and well-pleased in Christ Jesus."

To this purpose are these and the like words of scripture, "They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness, in the latter days. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" the kingdom of grace reigning through the righteousness of Jesus, declaring God to be pacified in him, it is at hand, it is proclaimed in your ears. Repent, and in order to this, believe the gospel; the gospel of reconciliation. "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord." Why? He will have mercy; he will abundantly pardon."

The method we would lay down, for prosecuting this observation, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, shall be the following.

- I. We would speak a little of this humiliation.
- II. Of this reconciliation ; or, of God's being pacified.
- III. Of the connection between them ; or the influence which the view and knowledge of God's being pacified, hath upon this humiliation.
- IV. Make some application of the whole.

I. We will touch a little at that humiliation here before us. And, O Sirs, since we are here met about humiliation-work, let us look upon it as the subject-matter of a divine promise, "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord, that thou mayest remember and be confounded." If you had this view, then you would have the more hope of coming speed, and meeting with success. This view may help you to know, that you are not come to *do* some great work of yourself, as if God were still standing upon terms with you, according to the old covenant of works ; but that you are come to *get* all the humbling and healing grace that you need, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, which is a giving covenant.

But now, I shall mention four ingredients of this humiliation that is here promised, and that we are to look for, and pray for, to be brought forth out of the womb of the promise, namely, remembrance, confusion, shame, and silence.

1. The first ingredient is remembrance ; "That thou mayest REMEMBER." The very first beginning of true repentance is, God's making a man thoughtful ; "I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies." Hence we are called to consider our ways. We forget God, and forget our sins against him ; but whenever God begins the good work, he makes the man to remember and call to mind his sins : as the prodigal, when he came to himself, considered matters. This remembrance, I think, includes illumination and conviction. The first part of the physic that God gives, is the eye-salve, that they may see ; for, until their eyes be opened, they will not turn from darkness unto light, Acts xxvi. 18. The first creature that ever God made in the primitive creation was *light*, and the first thing in the new creation is *spiritual light*. The sinner before repentance, is like a man sleeping in a dark pit, in the midst of a great many vipers, asps, and serpents, and venomous beasts : while he lies in the dark pit, they neither hurt him, nor is he afraid of them himself ; but whenever a ray of light comes in at a hole or window, presently they fall upon him, and sting and torment him,

and he sees himself to be surrounded with them. So here, before repentance, the sinner sleeps in the darkness of ignorance, atheism, error, and unbelief; but whenever a beam of spiritual light breaks in upon the mind and conscience, by an effectual conviction and illumination, then sin revives, and the sinner finds himself encompassed, as it were, with living serpents, tainted and corrupted with the poison of asps, destroyed and defiled with all the trash of hell in his heart.

It is not a bare speculation, or notion of our sinful ways, that is imported here. We many times, by a bare notion of our sins and mercies, write them, as it were, upon the waters: they are no sooner thought, or spoke of, but they are forgot again; but it is a feeling remembrance, and an abiding remembrance: such as that the psalmist had, when he said, "My sin is ever before me:" they haunt me like a ghost. The ghost of Uriah is still before me, might he say; the thoughts of my murder and adultery never go out of my mind. Yea, it is a remembrance of sin, as against God; "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," Psalm li. 4. This is the remembrance here also spoken of, "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord: and so thou shalt remember thine evil ways and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame." It is a remembrance of some sin or other, so as to bring in the remembrance of the rest, like that of the woman of Samaria, when Christ told her of her lewdness, she got, as in a map, a view of all that she ever did. Yea, it leads back to the fountain of sin in the nature; "Behold, I was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity," Ps. li. 5.

2. Confusion is another ingredient of the humiliation here mentioned; "That thou mayest remember, and be CONFOUNDED." It is true, this confusion may be thought to be the same with the shame afterwards mentioned; but, I think they may be viewed as distinct. There is a confusion of heart, and a confusion of face. The last of these I take to be the shame with shame; but the former, namely, confusion of heart, I think seems, especially here, to be intended; because it is joined with heart-remembrance of sin: "Thou shalt remember, and be confounded;" *q. d.*, Thou shalt have a heart-confounding remembrance of thy sin. And this confusion of heart, I think, takes in heart-contrition, or some degree of brokenness; heart-compunction, whereby the heart is pricked and pierced; heart-sorrow and anguish, and most of these ingredients of repent-

ance and godly sorrow mentioned, 2 Cor. vii. 11, "For behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge," &c. Yea, it seems to import the heart's being struck with astonishment at its own sinfulness, and with amazement at its own madness; like a man plunged into the deep, his senses are instantly confounded. O! when a man's thoughts are, by a spiritual remembrance, plunged into the depth of sin and wickedness, that he sees into his heart and ways, how he is confounded, so as he knows not what to think! His sins are beyond his understanding; "Who can understand his errors?" His very heart-sins do overflow his thoughts, and surpass his knowledge; "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. The man is swallowed up in this great deep, "Thou shalt remember, and be confounded."

3. The next ingredient is *shame*, such as is mentioned here, and Ezra ix. 6, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face unto thee; for our iniquities are increased over our heads: Lord, our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." The poor penitent publican is the reverse of the proud Pharisee; he is ashamed to look up to heaven. Sin brings shame one way or another; but is best when it brings in a holy shame before God. One may be ashamed of sin, as it brings him to open ignominy before men; but the truly humbled soul is ashamed of sin before God, and that on many accounts. Sin makes him guilty. Adam never blushed for shame, until he was guilty of eating the forbidden fruit, and perceived himself naked. Sin makes him ungrateful, and so he is ashamed that he hath requited evil for good: "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise?" He is ashamed, because sin makes him naked; he sees he is naked, as Adam and Eve saw themselves to be, after they had eaten the forbidden fruit. Sin divests us of our garment of righteousness and holiness; and hence the gospel offers the righteousness of Christ as white raiment, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear, Rev. iii. 18. The humbled soul sees itself naked, and therefore is ashamed. Sin makes him a beast, and therefore he is ashamed: "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee." The dog returning to his vomit, and the swine to his wallowing in the mire, is not so loathsome as the soul is to itself, when under a view of sin: "Truth,

Lord, I am a dog." Sin makes him a fool, and therefore, he is ashamed. He views himself as a fool and a madman, that hath been mad on idols; and is not this ground of shame? Sin makes him a slave; and that is matter of shame. Alas! that I should have been a slave to Satan, and a captive to divers lusts! Yea, sin makes him a devil; and he sees himself to be an incarnate devil; and therefore blushes that he should be reckoned even among the children of men, let be the children of God; and how can he look up to God, while he sees his nature to be not only earthly, but hellish, not only sensual, but devilish, Jam. iii. 15. He sees his sin to be not only greater than the sin of heathens, who never had the gospel, but greater than the sin of devils. They never sinned against the blood of Christ, as I have done. In a word, he is ashamed because his sin brought shame and disgrace to the eternal Son of God, the God of glory, who, as he endured the cross, and despised the shame; so our sin brought him to it; yea, our continued sin put him to open shame, Heb. vi. 6. Ah! the shame that the penitent rubs upon himself for sin! I read of Diodorus, a logician, that he fell down dead for shame that he could not resolve an argument that was propounded to him. Oh! if we were apprehensive of the horridness of our sin how might we blush to death for shame before God!

4. The next ingredient is silence; "And never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame." This holy silence before God, imports a not opening the mouth in opposition to God; not daring to quarrel with his dispensations, but owning that God only hath a right to speak against us; and that he will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth, Psal. li. 4. It imports a not opening his mouth in complaint of him, or reflections on him, whatever be his dispensations: "Why should a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his iniquity?" It imports a silent submission to the will of God, saying, with the psalmist, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," Psalm xxxix. 2. It imports a silent taking with the charge of sin and guilt justifying God and condemning ourselves; "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19. It imports a conviction of former pride, in opening of the mouth against God; a not opening it any more says, that this was the former practice. Men naturally justify and vindicate themselves by covering themselves with the fig-leaves of some silly excuse. Hence errors in principle are called but a free way of thinking;

errors in practice are denominated freedom of action ; drunkenness is termed but good fellowship ; swearing declared but a piece of bravery ; whoredom looked upon to be but a trick of youth ; malice and revenge styled but just resentment : thus the mouth of the whole world is open against God in the justification of sin ; but when once humiliation takes place, the mouth is shut. Finally, it imports a constant, habitual, self-condemnation, and silent taking with sin all the days of our life : for so the word runs, "Thou shalt never open thy mouth any more. The humbled soul's constant principle and habitual practice is never to open its mouth, but still to be silent before God.

II. The second thing proposed was, To speak of that which is the spring and ground of this humiliation : or, when it is that a sinner is brought to it ; namely, when God is pacified towards him for all that he hath done ; or when he is at peace with him. Now, I shall condescend upon six properties of this peace which are also included in the text.

1. It is a well-grounded peace ; peace upon the ground of an atonement ; for so the word pacified seems plainly to import : I am pacified and fully appeased with the blood of the covenant that I have established unto thee in Christ. "I have found a ransom ; I have set forth Christ to be the propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness : that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26. He hath made peace through the blood of his cross, Col. i. 20. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, who gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God." Hence,

2. It is a divine peace ; "I am pacified, saith the Lord God." It is a peace of God's contrivance, a peace of God's revealing, a peace of God's making ; it is a peace that God glories in ; "I am pacified." O good news, to hear of a pacified God.

3. It is a present peace ; "I AM pacified ;" though I was offended, yet now "I am pacified." I was displeased by sin, but I am well-pleased in Christ. "I am pacified ;" for the sacrifice is offered. It is true, this was said in our text before ever Christ died, and before he appeared in our nature ; but Christ having engaged to do it, it was as good as done ; and therefore he then said, "I am pacified : " and therefore much more may we believe that now God is saying, "I am pacified."

4. It is a particular peace ; “ I am pacified towards THEE.” It is true, it is a general peace that is published through Christ, according to the song of the angels, “ Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will towards men ;” but particularly published in Zion, even to all sinners of Zion, and to every sinner in particular, who hears the gospel. If you know the joyful sound, you may know it is God saying, “ I am pacified towards THEE ; and I have given a commission to all my ambassadors to preach the gospel of peace to THEE ; “ Go preach the gospel to every creature,” to every sinner of mankind, declaring that “ I am pacified towards HIM.” “ To YOU is the word of this salvation sent.” To thee, man ; to thee, woman : to every individual, whether young or old. Alas ! what think you of your sinning against this God, who says, “ I am pacified towards thee ?” Will not this break your heart for your enmity, when he is expressing such love to you, saying, “ I am pacified towards thee ?”

5. It is a wonderful and surprising peace, with a *non obstante* ; “ NOTWITHSTANDING all that thou hast done ;” or, “ FOR all that thou hast done.” “ Thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst,” Jer. iii. 5. Thou mayst remember, but I am not to remember it : “ Thy sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them ;” but imputing the righteousness of Christ unto them. I have got payment for all that thou hast done ; therefore, “ I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done.” Not one of thy sins, greater or less, but are answered for. The price of redemption is paid to the full.

6. It is a proclaimed peace, a spoken of and published peace ; and who speaks it ? It is said, “ The Lord will speak peace to his people :” and here it is a peace and reconciliation spoken with a “ Thus saith the Lord God ;” “ When I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, SAITH THE LORD God.” Thus saith the Lord God to thee, “ For all that thou hast done, and NOTWITHSTANDING all that thou hast done, I am pacified towards thee.”

Here is a sure footing and firm ground for thy faith ; it is the word gone out of the mouth of the Lord ; the God that cannot repent, that cannot revoke his word, and that can never unsay what he hath said : “ The word of the Lord endureth for ever ;” and upon this word thou mayst build thy faith, confidence, and hope. O sinner, it is the word of that JEHOVAH, who can give a being to what he

says ; it is a word of pardon and peace, for thee, guilty sinner, O ! wilt thou accept of the free indemnity proclaimed by the great God over the red cross of the blood of Christ, and over the market-cross of this everlasting gospel ?

III. The Third Head was, To shew the influence that this hath upon the former ; or, the influence that the view and knowledge of this peace and reconciliation, through Christ, proclaimed to the sinner, hath upon the sinner's humiliation : for, the connection between the two is evident from the particle *WHEN*, " That thou mayst remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, *WHEN* I am pacified : or, when thou shalt so far know the Lord, as in the verse preceding, as to see and apprehend that I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done." This is the main-spring of true repentance and humiliation. Hence, in our Lesser Catechism, repentance, or returning from sin to God, with grief and hatred of sin, is said to proceed from a true sense of sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. Now, if thou art sensible that thou art truly a sinner, then, O listen to the news of mercy in God through Christ ; the apprehension thereof will tend to humble thee : and here is mercy proclaimed, " I am pacified towards thee."

Now, the influence that the knowledge and view of God's being pacified in Christ hath upon gospel humiliation, may be opened in these following particulars.

1. The gospel-news of God's being pacified in Christ, is the vehicle of the Spirit of God ; " Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ?" Gal. iii. 2. The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit. If by the hearing of the gospel of peace and reconciliation the Spirit comes, then gospel-humiliation must come that way ; for he is the Spirit of grace and supplication, repentance and humiliation.

2. It is by the view of God's being pacified that faith comes ; Faith comes by hearing," Rom. x. 17. Faith comes by hearing these good news : and then it purifies the heart, and works by love. Who ever had faith, but by the revelation of the grace and mercy of God in Christ ? And who ever had this faith of mercy, but was melted and humbled thereby ?

3. It is by this view of God's being pacified, that hope is begotten : " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a

lively hope," 1 Pet. i. 3; the hope of life, the hope of glory: and then, "He who hath that hope, purifieth himself;" and the more of this purification, the more is the soul humbled and ashamed for sin.

4. It is by the view of God's being pacified in Christ that life comes into the soul; and hence the gospel of peace is called the ministration of life, 2 Cor. iii. 7, in opposition to the law, that is the ministration of death. Hence let a man preach the law as a covenant of life, upon doing, promising one heaven, if he do so and so: or let him preach it as a covenant of death, for not doing, and so threaten hell and damnation with all the art and rhetoric of the world; yet never shall he be able to raise one soul to a lively hope; or bring one soul from death to life by it. No; it is impossible. It may preach them dead, but never alive. It is the news and view of God's being pacified, that quickens the soul; and then it remembers, and is confounded and ashamed of its sins.

5. It is the view of God's being pacified, or the revelation of the grace of God in Christ, that brings in liberty, true liberty; "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. Every legalist is in chains and fetters; but so much of the knowledge of peace with God, as any have, so much liberty and freedom; freedom from soul-fetters; freedom of heart to mourn for sin, and turn from it: O! does mercy vent to the like of me? Then the bonds are loosed, and the heart dissolved.

6. The view of God's being pacified begets love; for his love kindles ours, and so kills the enmity; "We love him, because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. The great God, manifesting his great love to the hard-hearted sinner, makes his heart to break; and so the love of God in Christ constrains it, and makes it ashamed of its enmity, and confounded for its rebellion against such bowels of mercy.

7. The view of God's being pacified brings in joy and health to the soul; and then, the joy of the Lord being our strength, we are able, with tears of joy, to fall down before the Lord our Maker: and having the conscience healed by the pacifying blood of Christ, then the soul is ready to say, O! let me sin no more; let me never open my mouth any more against God.

8. The view of God's being pacified, or the revelation of the grace of God reigning through the righteousness of Christ, is the channel of the power of God; "I am not ashamed of the gospel of

Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith," Rom. i. 16, 17. And this being the channel of divine power, it is this power of God that brings down the pride of the heart, and humbles the soul under the mighty hand of God, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Thus God's being pacified in Christ hath a moral and a physical influence upon humiliation: a moral and argumentative influence; Oh! shall I not be ashamed and confounded for my ingratitude against such love and grace manifested towards me? And also, a physical, powerful, and operative influence; for thus the Lord draws the soul with cords of love, or melts down the hard and icy heart with the fire of his infinite love. So much for this head, viz., the influence that a view of God's being pacified, through Christ, hath upon the sinner's humiliation.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was the application. Is it so, as has been said, that true gospel humiliation is rooted in the believing knowledge of divine reconciliation, hence see,

1. What are the grounds of God's controversy, and of his being angry with the visible church, and of his not being pacified toward them. I mention these two from the text and context here.

(1.) When that church or land does not know that the Lord is God: when they are ignorant of him, and of his being Lord; Lord of all in general, and Lord of his church in a special way: when he is not owned and acknowledged as Lord of the vineyard, but is denied in his Sovereignty and Supremacy over his church, and affronted in his Headship; hence it is said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." When Christ is affronted openly in his supreme Deity, and in his supreme Headship, this cannot but be a great ground of controversy.

(2.) When that church or people do not believe in him, as a God pacified and reconciled in Christ; do not take him up as he is revealed in his word: believe not that he is pacified in Christ, but go about to pacify him themselves, and establish a righteousness of their own; contriving some other way of pacifying God, than God hath revealed: thinking to please God by their moral virtues and legal performances; and so going off from the gospel.

2. Hence see what are the fruits and evidences of God's anger and controversy with a church or land, and of his not being pacified; and, consequently, of their want of knowledge of the Lord as a pacified God in Christ.

(1.) When they are not brought to remembrance of their sin ; for, when God is pacified, then they remember. Here is an evidence of God's continued anger with a church ; when they do not remember their sin ; are not remembering their apostacy ; are not remembering that they and their fathers have sinned, and will not remember the same ; will not be put in remembrance ; will not remember their covenant-breaking and perjury ; will not remember the dishonours they have done to God. When God remembers mercy to a people, then they remember their sin. When he forgets their sins, then they remember them : But, when they forget their sins, God remembers them.

(2.) When they are not brought to confusion of heart for their sins ; when it is not a remembering so as to be confounded. If they barely remember, without confusion, it is as good as no remembering : when they remember, and think nothing of their sin ; when they remember their sin, and yet do not remember against whom they have sinned ; nor remember the heinousness of their sin, nor the aggravations thereof, nor the danger thereof, and the wrath their sins deserve, so as to be touched to the heart, and affected before God, or confounded.

(3.) When they are not brought to shame or confusion of face, as well as confusion of heart : when, instead of remembering their sin with shame, they sin without shame, are not ashamed of their sin ; but declare their sin as Sodom, and are bold in their sinning ; hardening their face against shame and blushing. When people are become shameless in their sinning, shameless in their apostacy, shameless in their defection, shameless notwithstanding all their corruptions ; yea, shameless in going on in their sin, notwithstanding all the convictions offered.

(4.) When they are not brought to silence, so as not to open their mouth against God, and in their own vindication : when they open their mouth, and say, they are innocent, then the controversy remains ; "Thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me : behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned," Jer. ii. 35, when they stand up in their own vindication with open mouth ; instead of opening their mouth in confessing of their sin, and in justifying of the Lord : when they will not openly and judicially confess their sin ; when they do not confess freely, nor confess fully, nor confess nationally, or as a church, that they have sinned ; but rather open their mouth in

justifying themselves, and condemning these that aim and endeavour at confessing or witnessing against their sin.

3. Is it so, that a soul is then truly humbled, when it apprehends God as truly pacified, and well-pleased in Christ Jesus? Hence see then, the miserable case of secure sinners, that know not God in Christ. They do not remember their sin against God. They sin without shame; and they have their mouth open against God, vindicating themselves, and justifying themselves. They glory in their shame; they see not their sinfulness.

4. Hence see what is the cause of so little humiliation. Because there is so little faith of the gospel of peace; unbelief, in not knowing and remembering that God is a pacified God in Christ, is the main cause of it; therefore they do not remember their sin. They do not believe that God is at peace with them; therefore they are at war with God. Perhaps they think and fancy that he is at peace with them; but if they had the faith of it, it is impossible they could be at peace with sin.

5. Hence see the matchlessness of the grace and mercy of God, that he should proclaim peace with rebels, and declare himself pacified towards them, for all that they have done: and, that he should send forth ambassadors, to publish peace in his name, and commit to them the word of reconciliation, to pray you in his name to be reconciled to God, because he hath made Christ to be sin for us, a sacrifice for us, through which he is pacified.

6. Hence see the necessity of preaching the gospel of peace: otherwise no true repentance, no gospel-humiliation. People will never remember their sins, and be ashamed for them, until they hear, and know, that God is pacified toward them, for all that they have done. Gospel-doctrine is a heart-humbling and heart-softening doctrine: but, such is the hardening nature of legal-doctrine, that, let a man preach life to the doer of the law, and death to the transgressor of it never so much, it will only tend to harden the man's heart against God, and to foster his rebellion and rage against God; for, "The law worketh wrath." Never will a sinner remember his sins, and blush or be ashamed, until he understand that God insists not upon the doing covenant with him, or upon the threatening covenant, denouncing wrath from Sinai: but, when God declares himself pacified, and when the sinner hears the doctrine of free remission, pardon to guilty sinners, and peace to rebel sinners; then will he remember his sins, and be ashamed; what! is there mercy, peace, and pardon for me! Then the soul melts.

7. Hence see what is the leading sin of the day and generation wherein we live; what is Scotland's chief sin, and the root of all our sin and rebellion, namely, unbelief, and rejecting of the gospel of peace; not believing this report, That God is pacified in Christ. Nothing provokes him to wrath so much, as the slighting and despising of his mercy. Why does not Scotland remember their sins? Why are they not ashamed of their sins? Why will they not confess their sins with shame and confusion of face? Why will they not humble themselves? Even because they do not believe in Christ, or that God is pacified in Christ. We have forgotten our God, and our resting-place, do not know and believe in him as a pacified God. Nothing kindles his anger so much as the slighting of his love. Why does he appear in arms against us, but because we refuse the peace which he proclaims? Why is he arming Popish powers against us,¹ and appearing in fury, but because we reject his favour? He may justly let us taste the bitterness of war, because we distaste the sweetness of peace; the peace that he proclaims through Christ.

8. Hence see an evidence of true gospel-humiliation. When is a person truly humbled for sin? Even when the mercy of God melts him, when the love of God in Christ shames him for his enmity; when the view of God's being at peace, makes him at war with himself; when, in view of God's grace, he is confounded at his own ingratitude: when he begins to fear the Lord and his goodness; when he loves much, because much is forgiven him: when the grace of God, that appears to him teaches him to deny ungodliness and wordly lusts; when the news of God's being pacified towards him, for all that he hath done, melts him more than all the flames of Sinai could; when his mouth is stopt from speaking ill against God, because God's mouth is open in speaking peace to him; when the view of peace and pardon, and the sense of God's kindness to him, confounds him for his unkindness to God.

9. Hence see what is the proper work of a humiliation-day, namely, to remember your sin, and be ashamed. O that Scotland

(1) Britain, for a considerable time before this, had been on the very point of an open rupture with Spain: several acts of hostilities had already commenced; and this year, war was openly declared by Britain against Spain, on the 23d October. France, ever watchful to embrace an opportunity to appear against the British nation, soon threw herself into the scale; at first, by making captures of many of our ships, under Spanish colours; and at last, by a declaration of war, in favour of the Spanish nation.

would remember their sin ; that king and parliament would remember their sin ; ministers and judicatories would remember their sin, and be ashamed. Let every one of us remember our sin, and all that we have done. Remember the sin of your heart and nature ; the sin of your youth, and follies of your non-age : remember the sin of your riper age ; remember the sin that hath accompanied your calling : ye that inordinately desire to be rich, how you lie, and cheat, and swear, and break the Sabbath : remember the sin of your holy things, of your reading, praying, hearing, communicating ; remember the sins of omission and commission you are guilty of : remember, and be confounded ; remember, and be ashamed, and be silent, and never open your mouth, because of your shame.

10. Hence see, how, and in what way, you may come to this right remembrance and due humiliation for sins. Why, the great and leading duty, in order to this humiliation, is a look to a pacified God. If you would be brought to holy shame and confusion of face for your sin ; then, O know and believe that God is pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done ; that there is mercy in God toward thee.

QUEST. How shall I know that God is pacified toward me ? For I thought rather to have heard that God was angry at me for my sin : since he is angry with the wicked every day, and hath revealed his wrath against sinners.

ANSW. Yea, in the law his wrath is revealed ; “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them ;” and the law-threatening shall be executed upon you, if gospel-grace be not received : and, as you may know the wrath of God is what you are liable to ; because it is revealed in the law ; so, you may know the mercy of God is what you may obtain, because it is revealed in the gospel ; and it is to you that this mercy is given in the gospel dispensation. To you the door of hope is open. God hath commanded us to go and preach the gospel to every creature : and what is this gospel of peace ? Even that God is pacified in Christ towards thee, for all that thou hast done.

OBJECT. But God hath no purpose or design of mercy toward *all* ; and therefore, how can I apply this gospel-offer to myself ?

ANSW. God hath not made his secret purpose the rule of thy faith, but his word : and you may and shall know his merciful purpose, if once you take his word, and believe his word, saying, “I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done.”

“But, say you, I am a monster of sin; I am an old sinner, a hardened and stout-hearted sinner.” Well, but hear his word, saying, in Christ, “I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done.” Alas! but I have done evil as I could. Nay, but says he, “I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done.”

OBJECT. “Oh! but I have done dishonour to God; I have done affronts to Christ; I have done despite to the Spirit; I have done injury to my neighbour; and I have done many villanies that you know nothing of.” Well, but what of all that? Says God, Behold, I am pacified in Christ; and “I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.”

“Alas! say you, but I have done more wickedness than ever any sinner before me did; and if you knew what I have done, you would neither think nor say that there is peace in God’s mind toward me.”

ANSW. Why, little matter what I think or say; but, O hear what God says; he is saying, “I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done;” you cannot think it; but my thoughts are not your thoughts; for, “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”

“Why, Sir, say you, if that be the case, that God is, in Christ, pacified towards me, for all that I have done, and thought, and spoken against him; this is such astonishing doctrine, and such astonishing grace in God, manifested toward me, that I am confounded at the thoughts of this marvellous grace; and I am confounded at the thoughts of my woful wickedness against such a gracious God.” Are you so? Confounded may you be, in God’s great name, and ashamed to the dust! This is the great thing that God would have you brought to, by making known his covenant of grace to you, even “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.”

S E R M O N L X I V .

CHAMBERS OF SAFETY IN TIMES OF DANGER.¹

“Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee : hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity : the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.”—Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.

MY friends, it is a very hard matter for people to be made sensible of their sin, and danger by reason of sin, so as to flock in to Christ, before he come and apprehend them in their sin by his judgments ; and therefore before he comes this way to us, he again and again requires us to come to him, and take shelter in himself as the only hiding-place. O what a mercy were it, if, when we hear of the Lord's coming to judgment, we were fearing and flying from the wrath to come ! At the voice of the Lord the birds will cry, the beasts will roar, the hinds will calve, the cedars will shake, the mountains will tremble, Psalm xxix. ; but behold men and women, though endued with rational souls, and hearing his threatening voice in his word, yet neither fear his voice, nor tremble at his word, nor flee from his wrath to his mercy, nor from their sin to the Saviour, to save them from sin and wrath : the most part will not hear on that side of the head. The wicked desire to be let alone in their wickedness, that they may live at peace therein ; while yet “ There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” We are all, by reason of sin, under God's anger, and yet know it not ; and therefore are not seeking to go out of the way wherein God's anger burns, nor to be friends with him ; but here the merciful God is opening the door of mercy, and all the chamber-doors of the city of refuge, saying, Before the storm of wrath come on, turn in there. O may we hearken to his call ?

This text is a call upon the back of a song in the former part of the chapter. After singing, the church may prepare for suffering. It is said of the disciples, after their last communion with Christ, “ When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of

(1.) This sermon was preached on a Fast-day at Evendale, September 19, 1739.

Olives," the place of suffering and trial. The songs of the temple do not exclude sufferings; but may be preparatory for them. The last part of the song here was with reference to a spiritual resurrection, pointing out also the general resurrection, ver. 19. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise; awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." It seems to be a prophecy of the spiritual resurrection of sinners, and particularly of the Gentiles, which was to take place upon the back of Christ's resurrection. "Together with my dead body shall they live;" they shall be called after Christ's resurrection, and shall rise with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; yea, as it is in the original here, where the words *together with* are but a supplement. "My dead body shall they arise." They shall become the mystical body of Christ, and rise as part of him: and this will usher in the last glorious resurrection of the saints, of whom Christ is the first fruits, 1 Cor. v. 20.

Now, how and by what means shall this spiritual resurrection be accomplished? Why, even by the call of God, and the voice of Christ in the everlasting gospel, whereof here you have one in my text, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."

In which words you have these four things more generally.

1. The duty to which they are called and exhorted; that is, to come and enter into their chambers, and shut their doors about them, and hide themselves. These are metaphorical expressions, drawn from the practice of peoples taking shelter before a storm; and importing, that they would speedily come in to Christ for refuge, and make use of all these ways and means God hath appointed in his word; particularly, by faith and repentance, turning from sin to God, through Jesus Christ. This is the duty.

2. The extent of the duty, "For a little moment, till the indignation be overpast; importing that they are to continue in the exercise of these duties till the effects of God's anger be over. And it is but a moment; though it be all your life-time, it is but a moment in comparison of eternity. All their afflictions here, however tedious they may seem, are but short and momentary, when compared with the happiness reserved for them. The storm may blow very hard, but it will over, and come to a period."

3. You have the persons to whom this exhortation is given, *my people* ; that is, not only these that are mine by profession, and common federal relation ; but especially mine by special covenant-relation, by special adoption and participation of my Spirit, that know my will, and do it : for these seem here to be set in opposition to the rest of the world, that are called the inhabitants of the earth, in the next verse.

4. You have the kindly arguments and familiar way wherein this duty is pressed. The kindly way is, "Come my people." It is not, go in thither, where I am not to be with you ; but, come in here, where I am ; come to me, come with me : and so, while he proposes the duty, he proposes himself to be the Leader and Helper in the duty. It is not, Go yourself alone ; but, "Come ; come with me from Lebanon."

The argument and reason is, there is a storm coming ; stay not without doors, lest the storm be upon you ; why, "Behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity ; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." Where also you may observe four things.

(1.) The certainty of the thing, it is with a Behold ; "Behold, he cometh : " it shall certainly be ; and you shall see God executing vengeance. It is certain, therefore behold it.

(2.) The solemnity of the thing ; "The Lord cometh out of his place to punish." It is spoken after the manner of man like one rising in fury out of his place, to reach a stroke to his enemy, as it is said, Isa. xxviii. 12, "The Lord shall rise up as in mount Perasim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work ; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." It is with a special solemnity he threatens to punish ; "Behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish."

(3.) The justice of it : God comes to afflict and plague them that are the inhabitants of the earth, but it shall be in righteous and just punishment of their iniquity ; the cry of their sins brings God out of his place, to punish them. Besides the everlasting punishment which the wicked shall undergo hereafter, there are instances of remarkable punishments of sinful nations and churches, when their sin has come to a height.

(4.) The necessity of it : "The earth shall disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain : " that is, the very earth cries for ven-

geance on the sinners that live upon the earth; the earth shall vomit up the blood that hath been unjustly shed, as the voice of Abel's blood cried from the earth, Gen iv. 10, 11. See Job xx. 27, "The heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him." These bloody sins that seemed to have been buried in oblivion will be called to mind; and the earth itself that seemed to cover and hide them will discover and reveal them, and witness against the sinner. Omitting many doctrines take this one.

Observ. "That in shaking times, when wrath is threatened upon a sinful people, such is the care that God hath for the safety and security of his own, that he wills them to come into their chambers, and not stay without doors, to be exposed to the violence of the storm that is a-coming."

For proof and illustration of this doctrine, we shall confirm both the branches of it.

1. That God hath a care of his own, their safety and security is plain here from his direction given to them, what they are to do, before he bring on a storm. And you may notice the respect he hath to their security, verse 1 of this chapter: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." See, to this purpose, Mal. iii. 16, 17, in evil times he will make up his jewels, and spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him. Read also, Amos ix. 8, 9, "Behold the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saying that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob saith the Lord. For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a seive, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." It is said, Matth. xxiv. 24, that "False Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect:" but it is not possible they can be either deceived or destroyed.

2. That God wills them to come into their chambers before the storm of wrath come on, as here and elsewhere. See Zeph. 1, 2, 3, "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired, before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you. Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." To this purpose you may read, Joel ii. 12, 13, 14, "Therefore also now,

saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rent your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat-offering, and a drink offering unto the Lord your God?" See some promises also to this purpose; "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock, Psalm xxvii. 5. Thou shalt hide me in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues," Psalm xxx. 20. See his name; "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee," Psalm ix. 9, 10: and also his peoples' practice; "I flee to thee to hide me," Psalm cxliii. 9.

The method we would observe, for the farther prosecution of this subject, through divine assistance, shall be the following:—

- I. Enquire when may the time be said to be a threatening time so as a storm is evidently approaching?
- II. Why the Lord will take care of his people's safety and security in such times?
- III. What chambers he wills them to come into, in order to their safety?
- IV. Make application of the whole subject.

I. When is it evident that a storm of wrath is coming upon a land, and that the Lord is about to come out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth? To this we reply in the following particulars.

1. When all manner of sins abound, and these become national, such as these mentioned, Hosea iv. 1, 2, 3, "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 therein shall languish," &c. Together with backsliding from God's covenant, hypocrisy, and lukewarmness, Isa. x. 5, 6, lviii. 1—8, xxix. 13, 14. When people are lukewarm, God will

spue them out of his mouth, Rev. iii. 16. Incorrigibleness, Deut. xxviii. 20. When they persecute the servants of God, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. When universal security prevails, as it did over the old world, Jer. v. 11, 12. Falling from their first love, Rev. ii. 4, 5. Obstinacy in sin, Numb. xiv. 41—44. Oppression of the poor and fatherless, Exod. xxi. 22, 23, 24. Covenant-breaking, Deut. xxix. 24, 25. Loathing of the heavenly manna, and despising the gospel, the word of God, Jer. xxvi. 4, 5, 6. Scoffing at religion and good men, Psalm xxxvii. 13, 14, Jer. xviii. 20, 21. When error abounds, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. Unbelief, the mother sin, Psalm lxxviii. 20, 21, 22—33, cvi. 24. Pride, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 26. Corrupting the worship of God, 1 Kings xi. 5—9. Disobedience to the call of God, upon whatever pretence, and following false light, 1 Kings xiii. 17—26.

2. It is evident that a storm of wrath is coming upon a land, when people's sins are aggravated. When they are the sins of Jerusalem, of a professing people, then six angels were sent to destroy them, while only two were sent to Sodom; as you see, Ezek. ix. 2. "And behold six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughtering weapon in his hand." When sins are committed against much light, against many checks of conscience, many beams of light, many means of grace, many calls of providence, many instances of mercy and divine goodness; and against the patience and forbearance of God, as you see, Rom. ii. 4, 5.

3. When the patience of God is not only abused, but laughed at, and ridiculed by a profane age, that begin to say, as it is said, 2 Pet. iii. 4. "Where is the promise of his coming?" Where is the threatening of his coming to judgment? Then is the Lord angry, and will let men know that he is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, though he is long-suffering to us-ward; and that he is not slack concerning his threatening, but will render vengeance to his enemies, Deut. xxxii. 41.

4. It is an evidence that the Lord is about to punish the inhabitants of the earth, when there are few or none to stand in the gap, and keep out the wrath that is coming in; "And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own

way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God," Ezek. xxii. 30, 31. Then it is the time for the birds to fly into their nests, the storm is approaching. When good men are taken away, and there is a great scarcity of them; "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come," Isaiah lviii. 1. It is on this account the prophet Micah cries out, "Wo is me, for the good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men," Micah vii. 1, 2. In a word sometimes the aspect of providence prophesies this to all that have eyes in their head.

II. We come now to speak a little of the respect the Lord hath to the safety and security of his own people when a storm is coming. And here we may consider, 1. The reasons why: 2. The manner how he secures them.

1st, He will do so, as appears from these reasons, following, among others.

1. Because he loves them with a peculiar love. Hence the Psalmist, Psalm cvi. 5, prays, that the Lord would let him see the good of his chosen, "That (says he) I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and that I may rejoice with thine inheritance." The love of God is above all love; and it is a tender and a compassionate love. He loves his people, and therefore can protect them in time of danger: "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that love and fear him," Psalm ciii. 13. "Though he visit their iniquities with rods, yet his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from them," Psalm lxxxix. 32.

2. He will take care of their safety, because of his relation to them; he being their God, and they his people; he their King, and they his subjects. He is indeed Lord and King of all the earth, but theirs in a special sense. He is their Shepherd, and they the sheep of his pasture: and because he is their Shepherd, they shall not want protection or provision in straits. He is their Father, and they his sons and daughters: will he not take care of his children? He is their husband; and will he not take care of his spouse? "No man hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth it, even as the Lord the Church," Eph. v. 29.

3. The Lord will provide for the security of his people, because of the constant intercession of Christ for them in heaven; for he is their Advocate, appearing in the presence

of God for them. There are some who have been given to Christ by the Father, whom he will take care of and protect by his prayers; "I pray not for the world, but for them that thou hast given me," John xvii. 9. The preservation of the remnant is owing to Christ's prayer and intercession. See this clear from Zech. i. 12, 13, "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of Hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against whom thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years. And the Lord answered the angel, that talked with me, with good words, and comfortable words."

4. The Lord will take care of his own, because of his promise engaged for their security; Ps. xxvii. 5, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. Isa. xxxiii. 16, He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure. Chapter xxxiii. 2, A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. Mal. iii. 17, And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." He will set a mark upon them, Ezek. ix. 4, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."

2dly, How, and in what manner will he secure them, when they seem as much exposed as the rest of the world? Do not good men fall in common calamities as well as others? True, indeed; sometimes it is so: but then it is,

1. For their compliance with the sins of the time, and not coming into their chambers, but staying without doors, when the storm comes on. When they partake of the sins of the wicked, they partake of their plagues: when they are too much conform to the world, they suffer with the world. Good men may be careless in sanctifying the Lord, and making him their fear and dread; but when they do so, then he is for a sanctuary, Isa. viii. 13, 14.

2. God sometimes suffers his own to fall in the common calamity, because there is another world, there is a rest remaining for them, a better happiness than this life.

Yet, after all, there is a vast difference betwixt the righteous falling in the common calamity and the wicked. 1. The godly man

may suffer affliction, and yet have the support of divine grace, while the wicked know nothing of it. 2. The sufferings of the one purge him, the sufferings of the other poison him. 3. They are for a chastisement to the one, but for a punishment to the other. 4. Yea, death itself to the one but kills his body, but to the other it is the destruction of soul and body both.

But, as to the manner how God secures his people in common danger,

1. He sometimes secures them by death itself, that they may not see the evil and farther calamity that is coming upon the earth. Thus it is said of Abijah, 1 Kings xiv. 13, "He shall die: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave; because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." None in Jeroboam's family had any good thing in them but this child. Thus see what is said of good Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 20, "Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil that I will bring upon this place."

2. God secures his people in the storm, by supporting and comforting them in their trouble; "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God," 2 Cor. i. 4. Who would not drink of that cup that is sweetened with the consolation of the Holy Ghost, sometimes making them say, This trouble is no trouble; this pain is no pain; this rack is like a bed of roses, for the sense of God's love swallows up all?

3. In a word, he hath wonderful ways of securing them by his presence and providence. Thus Paul was secured by the merciful providence of God, when forty persons and persecutors had vowed his ruin, and that they should neither eat nor drink till they had killed him. Both scripture and ecclesiastical history are full of instances of his merciful protecting providence. Infinite Wisdom hath many ways to secure his own.

III. The third head proposed was, To show what chambers he wills them to come into, that they may escape the storm when a-coming.

In general, when we speak of chambers, it supposes a house, where the chambers are. Now, as God himself, as God in Christ, is the house, Psa. xxxi. 2, "Be thou my strong rock, for an house of

defence to save me:" and there are as many chambers in this house as there are attributes and perfections in God, to which we are called to fly by faith: so the church of God is called a house; the church invisible a spiritual house: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, 1 Peter ii. 5; a habitation of God through the Spirit," Eph. ii. 22. And here there are chambers that belong to the house, and to which all the household of faith will betake themselves.

More particularly, I shall name four sorts of chambers we are invited to come into, that are the chambers of the house of God, as belonging to every one that hath come into the house. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers."

1. There are chambers of distinction we are invited to come into, even to our own apartments, so as not to be united with or conform to the world; "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," 2 Cor. vi. 17. Come out of Babylon; "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and so partake of her plagues," Rev. xviii. 4. How are we to come out of the world? It is by not partaking with the world in their sins; "Be not ye therefore partakers with them," Eph. v. 7, and by being not conform to the world; "Be not conform to the world, but be ye transformed," Rom. xii. 2. And thus we are to come out of Babylon, or out of the corrupt part of a church, by not partaking with them, or being conformed to them, but rather testifying against them in the name of Christ. This is the way how the saints in scripture have overcome their enemies; "They overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony," Rev. xii. 11. This is the way we are to distinguish ourselves for the Lord in threatening times, by coming into the chambers of distinction, or apartment of the house, that it may appear we are on the Lord's side. If God hath set the godly apart for himself, they ought to set themselves apart from this world.

2. There are chambers of defence we are called to come into, where we may be safe in the worst of times. The name of God is a strong tower, a strong chamber, a chamber of strength, Prov. xviii. 10, into which we are to run for shelter. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee," Ps. ix. 10. Every perfection of God is a chamber; "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." These are the secrets of his tabernacle, Ps. xxvii. 5, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the

most high, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Every office of Christ is a chamber; and he invites us to come into him, and rest safely; "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. Every promise of the covenant is a chamber; and they are very sure, firm, and durable rooms and apartments, being all Yea and Amen in Christ. The word of the Lord endureth for ever; and we are come in there by faith in his word, and holy confidence in a promising God. By faith every believer finds a way to these chambers, and there he hides himself with pleasure, and triumphs when he finds himself brought there; "The King hath brought me into his chambers, we will rejoice and be glad in thee," Song i. 4.

3. There are chambers of devotion that we are called to come into; "Enter thou into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which is in secret," and seeth in secret, Matt. vi. 6. Recourse to these chambers of devotion, for seeking God in private and secret, as well as public, is always our duty, especially in times of danger, and of threatened wrath; therefore seek righteousness, seek meekness; "It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." And thus we may hide ourselves in the evil day, when we put ourselves in God's hand to hide us; "I flee to thee to hide me," Psalm xliii. 9. And their hearts shall live that seek him. All that call upon him in truth shall be safe, and shall be hid either under heaven, or in heaven; "The prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself." O come into the chambers of devotion.

4. There are chambers of action, and business that we are called to come into. God's house is not only a house of prayer, but a work-house, wherein we are to do something for God in our day and generation; "Why stand ye here all the day idle," Mat. xx. 6. And chap. xxi. 28, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." God calls his people, not only to cry and pray to him, but also to action and diligence. When Israel were in great danger at the side of the Red Sea, and their enemies behind pursuing them, God says to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak to the people that they go forward," Exod. xv. 15. We are not only to cry but to go forward in our work and service, in our several places and stations, as magistrates, ministers, or people, in all the duties incumbent upon us, when judgments are threatened.

IV. The fourth and last head proposed was, To make applica-

tion. Is it so, That in shaking times, when wrath is threatened upon a sinful people, such is the care that God hath for the safety and security of his own, that he wills them to come into their chambers, and not stay without doors, to be exposed to the violence of the storm that is a-coming? Then hence see,

1. What good reason there is to apprehend that a storm of wrath is a-coming, and that the Lord is about to punish the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland for their iniquity. Scotland, England, and Ireland, are guilty of breaking a Solemn League and Covenant they made with God for Reformation. And our bloody sins cry from the earth for vengeance to come down from heaven: our perjury cries for vengeance; the sins of civil and ecclesiastic courts, the sins of princes, pastors, and people, cry for vengeance; our bloodshed cries for vengeance; our unbelief and despising of Christ, cry for vengeance; our long contempt of the means of grace cries for vengeance; our defection and apostacy cry for vengeance; all the catalogue of sins, formerly mentioned, cry for vengeance. Before Jerusalem was destroyed, a terrible sword hang over the temple. My friends, the sword of the Lord hangs over us in these lands. Though there want not signs in the very heavens and earth portending sad days, yet we need no other signs than what the word of God declares to us, that national sins must be punished with national desolation. Many special judgments are we under already; and the glory of the Lord is far removed from the sanctuary, and the slaughter-weapons are ready: even though France and Spain were not so ready as they seem to be, yet God, who hath many arrows in his quiver, is ready, saying, Joel ii. 13, 14, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get ye down, for the press is full, the fats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision."

2. Hence see who they are that alone shall be safe and happy in the day of public calamities and common destruction, namely, the Lord's people, who shelter themselves in the chambers of safety and protection which God calls them to come into; his poor humbled people who sigh and mourn for all the abominations done in the midst of Jerusalem.

But, leaving all other uses and inferences, I come to offer the exhortation in the text; "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself, as it were,

for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." Come, as Noah into the ark, and shut the doors about you, when God threatens a flood. Israel must keep within doors when the destroying angel is slaying the first-born of Egypt, else the blood upon the door-posts will not secure them; so must Rahab and her family when Jericho was destroyed.

I shall offer a few directions, and then lay down some considerations out of the text.

1st, We are to tender some directions to you. Well then, Sirs, O be persuaded to come in.

1. To your chambers of distinction, and side yourselves for God. If Baal be God, then follow him; but if the Lord be God, then follow him.

2. Come into your chambers of defence. "There is no other name given under heaven, whereby to be saved, but the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, to which the righteous run and are safe."

3. Come into your chambers of devotion; and, O pray, pray, pray. Let your carnal, formal, twice a day prayers, be turned into David's seven times a day; let your hypocritical howling be turned into praying; and your praying be turned into wrestling and violence; "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."

4. Come into your chambers of action, work, and business, in your several stations:

(1.) As magistrates, by their authority, whether supreme or subordinate. See how the king of Nineveh behaved when judgments were threatened, Jonah iii. 6, 7, 9, "For word came to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes: and caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed nor drink water: who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" So did Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 3, "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast. Magistrates should solemnly execute judgment and justice, Jer. v. 1, chap. xxi. 2; yea, they should solemnly reform themselves, and study the reformation of the land and places of their concern, so did Asa, Josiah, and Jehoshaphat.

(2.) Ministers are to do their duty ; partly by preaching boldly against all manner of sin, for the convincing and humbling of sinners ; “ Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins,” Isa. lviii. 1 : partly by praying and interceding in behalf of the Lord’s people ; “ Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth,” Isa. lxii. 6, 7. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine inheritance to reproach,” Joel ii. 17 ; and partly by using that authority God has given them for the edification of the body of Christ.

(3.) People are to do their duty, by humbling themselves for all their own sins, and the sins of the land, sprinkling themselves by faith in the blood of the Lamb, Exod. xii. 13 ; ceasing to do evil, and learning to do good ; and sighing and crying for all the abominations done in Jerusalem, that a mark may be set upon them. We shall now offer the following directions to all in general.

1. O ! agree with thine adversary while thou art yet in the way. If God be your enemy, we will be to you when you are in the midst of the storm, and have no friend’s house nor chamber to go into. O seek to have peace made up with God, by the mediation of your friend Jesus Christ, who is the friend of sinners.

2. See that thy faith and repentance be evangelical. In summer, a house with many holes and chinks may serve a man’s turn to dwell in ; but, in time of winter, men desire a house that is tenable, and will keep out the violence of the cold : so, in the days of peace, any sort of a faith serves the turn with many ; but, in time of danger, distress, or affliction, saving faith will only stand instead.

3. Endeavour to get strength of judgment, and soundness in the faith of gospel-truths, that in time of trial you may be able to give a reason of your faith ; and that might be an antidote, if popery were coming in, against your kneeling to the mass. Poor ignorant creatures have no antidote against any error in the world.

4. Seek not only to have a strong head, but a courageous heart, to stand the trial. Your cause is good, if it be the truth ; your master is great, if he be Christ. The captain hath gone before you.

5. Wean thyself from all things in the world, looking upon thy husband, thy child, thy goods and honour, as created things that must away ; and set your eyes upon what is permanent : and be

ready to express the love you think you have to Christ, and to express it even in the most perilous times.

6. Beware of the sins of the times, and bewail them; and seek to be affected with all the dishonours done God's name, both in former and present times; that, being purged from the sins of the times, you may be preserved from the judgments of the times. Live a life of dependence upon Jesus: keep within your chambers: go not abroad to the world, lest the storm be upon you before you be housed again.

2dly, We shall next lay down some considerations, drawn out of the text.

Consid. 1. "That there are some, who, in a peculiar manner, are the people of God. My people, says God here, in contradistinction from the inhabitants of the earth, in the following verse." And, indeed, when God is about to bring judgments upon the wicked, he would have his people out from amongst them. They will not hearken to his voice; but come you, who are my people. But probably you may ask, Who are his peculiar people? Why, his people are called, The sheep of his pasture. But, it may be still required, Who are the sheep of his pasture? They are described to be such who know and follow him; "My sheep hear my voice, and follow me," says Christ, John x. 27. They are always bleating, so to speak, after him, and crying to him, saying, "Lord, let me see thy face." They are not content with any thing in the world till they get a sight of him. They hear his voice, and regard it. But when Christ speaks to others; for example, to the drunkard, saying, will you come to me, and quit your drunkenness? No! he will not hear on this side of the head. If he say to the whoremonger, Will you come to me, and quit your whoredom? No; he rejects the proposal; he does not regard his voice; he goes on in his lusts. Such cannot be his sheep, cannot surely be his people. But when Christ speaks to his own sheep, and requires them to quit their lusts, and come to him; their answer is, "Lord, I cannot get it done; though it be long since I began to do it, yet I think I am never the nearer my purpose than I was many years ago; but, Lord, do it for me: Lord, make me come to thee; and, O make me quit all my lusts and idols." This argues they are his people, and evidence they are his sheep. They aim at obeying his voice, in his name and strength: and the day comes wherein he will save them completely.

Consid. 2. "That his people are a false people: they have the chambers that belong to them, for their safety in days of trouble: "Come thou into thy chambers." Besides the protection of their God, his name and arms, where they are, as in a castle, safe and sure indeed: for, "As the mountains are about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people:" they have inward peace, and the testimony of a good conscience, which is a heartsome chamber, like a dry house in a rainy day: "And the peace of God that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus," Phil. iv. 7: even keep them as in a garrison, as the original word signifies.

Consid. 3. "That their safety from the storm lies in keeping within their chambers, and keeping their chamber-doors shut." Whenever they go out of their chambers, they are exposed; for, in that case, when God strikes the wicked, they shall not be spared, any more than the rest. They must not only enter into their chambers, but abide within doors; and not only so, but shut the doors, lest the pursuer, the devil, come into them: they are to bar him out, as it were. This points out the necessity, not only of having faith, but of living by faith, and living a life of close dependence upon a God in Christ.

Consid. 4. "That the troubles and trials of the church and children of God, are but for a short time, but for a moment; yea, as it were, but a little moment, and the indignation shall overpass: the indignation of man against them, and the indignation of God; his fatherly anger and the effects thereof: and then you shall be set at liberty." The longest period of time here is but a moment, when compared with everlasting life. And what the worse will he be, who hath suffered longer, than they who have suffered a shorter time? he that hath suffered seven years, than he that hath suffered seven days? Nay, the gold glances the finer, the longer it hath been in the fire. Therefore, this should make you not at all to grudge or repine. You are not to think that it is good for you to be quit of affliction; for then you would think yourself well, and would not desire another heaven; but he orders affliction, that you may long for the place where there is no more affliction. But they who get all their pleasure here, let them not look for another heaven hereafter: for it will be told them, they have got their heaven here on earth: "Thou enjoyedst thy good things." But happy they who bear afflictions dutifully! It is good reason you be used as

your Master was before you, yet your affliction will not last long : though you get many a stormy day, yet a fair one is coming, that will make you think little of all you suffered. When once you come to the upper chambers of God's house, it will be no grief of heart to you in heaven, that you suffered so long upon earth ; it will appear but a moment when the indignation is overpast.

Consid. 5 "That the fear of the Lord's coming to punish the earth, the world, for their iniquity, is a good motive even to God's people to fly into their chambers, and hide themselves. Do it, says the text ; ' For, behold the Lord cometh out of his place.' " Because if they fly not out of the way, they may get a part of the shower and storm. When the Lord rained down the great hail-stones upon the Egyptians, all that were out of their houses were destroyed ; and they that left their beasts in the field went not thither to bring them off, all was destroyed : so, if you be out of your chambers, God will not spare you ; therefore this should be a motive to fly. The fear of that hell that is coming upon the wicked, both in this life and the life to come, will be a motive to his people, who, though they be secured from hell, and ought not to have the slavish fear of that, yet are to fear that God who can destroy both soul and body.

Consid. 6. " That it is a terrible thing when God comes out of his place to punish men : ' Behold the Lord cometh out of his place.' " It is observed by one, That God's place is the mercy-seat ; there he delights to sit and dwell between the cherubims, and there he is all mercy ; but, when he comes out of his place, and, as it were, leaves the mercy-seat, and betakes himself to the judgment seat, there he appears as an absolute God, a terrible God ; there he takes no pleasure to be : " As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked," Ezek. xxxiii. 11. But, when he is provoked thus to come out of his place, then he is all wrath, and nothing but a consuming fire. And, alas ! what a terrible thing is it, to see God out of his place, punishing and destroying sinners, raining the first drops of hell upon them here, to presage the everlasting storm of wrath that is to blow upon them. Consider, O sinner, what case thou wilt be in, when cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone ! It is a bottomless pit ; and, when thou art cast into it, thou wilt constantly be falling down, and never find a bottom ; and always the farther thou goest down, the more hot, and the more unable wilt thou be to endure it. And, as long as God lives, thou art to live in that case,

who live and die out of Christ. Alas ! “ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ;” and to behold him coming out of his place !

Consid. 7. “ That few, very few, will escape when the Lord arises to punish ; for, he is to punish the inhabitants of the earth.” Now, who are the inhabitants of the earth ? and, who are there amongst us that are not the inhabitants of the earth ? What, say you ! are none to escape ? To this we reply : A man is said to dwell where his heart dwells, and to be, not where he is, but where he loves, and where his heart is. These are properly the inhabitants of the earth, whose hearts inhabit and dwell fixedly upon the earth ; and so they only escape that have their hearts in heaven, their conversation in heaven, their burgess-ship in heaven, Philip. iii. 20 ; where these who have their conversation and burgess-ship in heaven, are set in opposition to these who mind earthly things, and whose end is destruction. They then who shall escape the punishment here threatened, are not burgesses in this world ; their heart is not here below. But they who have their heart set upon earth, they will perish together with the perishing things their heart set upon : they never desire to have their hearts elsewhere than upon the world ; nor are they uneasy because they want heavenly hearts. I suppose this may be a trying thing to most part here. Perhaps, when you send your heart once to heaven, you send it twenty times to the world : if you send your heart heavenward on the Sabbath-day, it may be you scarce do so till Sabbath come again ; and therefore I mightily fear you be of the inhabitants of the earth here spoken of, that are to be punished. A child of God may have much of a worldly heart, but then it is a burden to him, and a sore trouble ; a disease he seeks unto Jesus for healing of. However, those inhabitants of the earth here spoken of, are opposed to the people of God spoken of in the former verse : “ Come, my people.”

Consid. 8. “ That God hath just cause to punish when he arises out of his place to do so. He comes to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.” Wherefore is it ? For their iniquity. He will not punish without just cause, “ Shall not the judge of all the earth do right ?” He will declare their faults to them, and let them see it is for iniquity ; that it is for their iniquity, their own wickedness ; “ Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee,” Jer. ii. 19. Observe then, that God’s judgments are just, and sinners shall be obliged to con-

fess it; and none shall be able to say at the day of judgment, I have got wrong, I have got injustice; for that court is not like the courts among us, whether civil or ecclesiastic, from which some will come, saying, I have got a shameful wrong done me this day. But none shall have that to say here. As there is no appeal from God's court, so none shall have cause of complaint that injustice hath been done to them; nay, rather shall they have it to say, Ah! it was highly equitable, and a righteous sentence upon me; for how often have I been warned of this doleful day by the ministers of Christ. and told of all that is now come upon me; but I thought nothing of it, and delayed and shifted the grand concern! Their conscience shall condemn them: "Every mouth shall be stopped, and all the inhabitants of the world become guilty before God," and be forced to subscribe to the equity of their doom, and justice of the sentence. He punishes for their iniquity.

Consid. 9. "That heaven and earth will join together in condemning the wicked and ungodly, when God comes out of his place to punish them; 'For the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.'" All the wrongs and bloody sins that have been committed on the earth, from age to age, shall be disclosed, by the earth itself bearing witness to the wickedness done in it; as it is said, Josh. xxiv. 17, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us: for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us; it shall be a witness to you lest ye deny your God." So it may be said, the earth hath seen and heard all the wickedness done upon it: and by the recognition of conscience it shall witness and testify against the sinner. As the Lord, the omniscient God, will reveal the whole matter, even the faults that men thought were quite out of their mind, their twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years old wickedness laid as fair and fresh before them as it was the hour wherein it was committed; so the earth shall bear witness and disclose all the sins that seemed to be buried in it; for with the resurrection of the bodies of the wicked, there will be a resurrection of sins. In a manner, the earth will vomit up what it swallowed down, and beloved to bear so long in its breast. God will tell you the place where you committed your whoredom. The wall and timber of the house will bear witness against you. Take heed, drunkard, the day will come when God will make the table you sit at stand up, as it were, in your view, and bear witness against you. Take heed, adulterer, God will make the bed to rise

and witness against you. None but they that have a good Advocate and a good conscience shall escape. The earth will disclose the blood that hath been shed in Scotland; the bloody shambles will rise and witness against the persecutors. "The earth shall no more cover her slain, when the Lord comes out of his place."

Consid. 10. "That the time of the Lord's coming to judgment is not here specified; not only to shew that we know not how near hand the avenging stroke is, but also to shew that the Lord is not yet away out of his place; he is not yet risen up in his wrath, but as yet upon his mercy-seat." His judgments may be very near indeed; for much barrenness is amongst us; and he says, "Behold, the axe is laid to the root of the tree." And there are few watery eyes for sin among us; few sighers and mourners, that have the mark of preservation when the destroying angel comes about.

But as yet the chamber-doors of mercy are open, and the Lord is saying, Come, come; "enter into your chambers;" therefore, "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." O Sirs, come to Jesus for safety.

(1.) You who are without, and have never come in to these chambers, let me tell you that yet a little while, and the calamity here threatened will be upon you: sickness or sorrow may be upon you in a little; yea, death and judgment will be upon you in a little. Sword, famine, and pestilence may be hasting upon the land: many spiritual and temporal judgments are already surrounding us; and, if by these we will not be reformed, we may expect that God will punish us seven times more, and yet seven times more for our iniquities. And since Reformation amongst the generality is going back, instead of going forward, either in church or state: days of dreadful calamity, and storms, wrath, and indignation are hastening on. O then, why stay you without doors, where it is impossible you can escape the indignation of God, and the damnation of hell? O fly, fly for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before you. Christ is the city of refuge, the chamber of safety, and all the doors of the chamber are yet open to you; "Whosoever will, let him come." Christ, as a Prophet, is an open door of hope for ignorant sinners; O come in here, and be taught. Christ, as a Priest, is an open door of hope for guilty sinners; O come in here, and get remission of sin in his blood. Christ, as a King, is an open door of hope to captive sinners, under the power and slavery of sin and Satan; O let such come in here, and share of the victory of Christ, who came in the flesh to destroy the

works of the devil, and who comes in the Spirit by a preached gospel, for the same end. O come into him by faith and believing in him: and, if you cannot come, pray, pray that he may draw you in; for he stands ready to take you by the hand: he says not, Go in without me; but, come in and take my help.

(2.) You who are within, and who have entered into these chambers, let me tell you for your comfort that as you are in a place of safety, where you do well to stay and abide by faith; so yet a little while, and the indignation will be overpast, and all calamity will be over your head; yet a little while, and death itself will be a door of hope to you, so as you may sing there, and say, Farewell death, and welcome life: "Death shall be swallowed up in victory." Farewell faith and hope, and welcome vision and fruition. Farewell, fighting and war, and welcome victory, victory for evermore. Farewell sin and sickness, and welcome perfect holiness and perfect health, "For the inhabitant of that land shall not say, I am sick." Farewell vain world and ill neighbours, and welcome the innumerable company of angels. Farewell trouble, and welcome rest, the rest that remains for the people of God. Farewell sighing and sobbing, and welcome the song of Moses and of the Lamb, everlasting praises and hallelujahs. Farewell jars and contentions, and welcome peace, pleasure, and love. Farewell church militant and false brethren, welcome church triumphant, the general assembly and church of the first born, that are written in heaven. Farewell, sweet promises, and welcome full and glorious performance; "Not one good thing hath failed of all that he promised." Farewell partial enjoyments, scanty, fleeting, and little tastes; welcome full meal, and the table that shall never be drawn. Farewell wants and welcome fulness. Farewell darkness and doubts, and fears and dangers; and welcome light, assurance, eternity, security, and everlasting embraces of my glorious Lord. Farewell base lusts and corruptions, you and I have kept too long company together, and blessed be God, we will never meet again; but welcome grace in perfection, which is everlasting glory. Yet a little while, and you may sing these sweet notes upon the banks of the Jordan of death, for he that says, "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you," &c., says also, "In a little moment the indignation shall be overpast," and all clouds and storms shall vanish.

S E R M O N L X V.

THE WORD OF SALVATION SENT TO SINNERS. (1)

“To you is the word of this salvation sent.”—Acts xiii. 26.

PAUL is here preaching CHRIST JESUS in this chapter: and in this verse he makes application of his sermon to his hearers, and that very close. More particularly in the words you may observe,

1. The nature of the gospel described, it is “the word of salvation.”

2. The endorsement or direction, showing to whom it is directed or sent, “To you;” you men and brethren, you Jews or Gentiles, to whom it is preached.

The doctrinal proposition, natively arising from these words, is the following.

OBSERV. “That the gospel, as a word of salvation, is sent to every sinner that hears it.”

Before I proceed to speak to this doctrine, I would obviate an objection that may be made against it.

OBJECT. Is not the gospel-call here limited to them that fear God in the text?

ANSW. If by these that fear God is to be understood religious people, into whose hearts God hath put his fear; these are the persons that will most of all welcome the word of salvation; because they see most of their need of it: but the gospel-message is not here limited to them, and others excluded; no: the apostle here speaks to all his auditory, both gracious and graceless, as appears not only in this text, “Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, to you is the word of this salvation,” but also in the application of his sermon to the graceless as well as to the gracious, ver. 40, 41, compared with the two preceding verses.

2. There is a fear of God that is the fruit of conviction, and a fear of God that is the fruit of conversion; the former is by the law, the latter is by the gospel: it is like that the former is especially

(1) This subject was the substance of two Sermons: first preached at Cambusnethan, on Sabbath, September 16; and next at Stichel, on Sabbath, October 14, 1739.

intended here: for at this time the word was with power; it struck an awe and dread upon the apostle's auditory. And though no sinner, no, not the most stupid that hears the gospel, is excluded from the call thereof, so as it can be said, the word of salvation is not sent to him; no, no; it is sent to every one; yet none but such as fear God, so far as to be filled with an awe and dread of God speaking to them in the word, and with a conviction of sin, and of their need of this salvation; none but such will receive and welcome the word of this salvation: for, if they have no fear of God, and of his wrath, no sense of sin, and of their deserving damnation, they will not value, but slight and despise the word of salvation. This next, therefore, doth not limit the word of salvation, as sent only to them who fear God, but only points out the manner and method wherein this word of salvation comes to be received and entertained, and how it will not be received by these who have nothing of the fear and dread of God upon them.

3. These who are awakened to any sense of sin, and fear and dread of God, are the persons that are most ready themselves, as if the word of salvation were not sent to them; therefore, these, in a particular manner, are mentioned and encouraged to take it to themselves, because they are afraid to apply the word. Others that are called will not come. And they that have this fear upon them have a will, but want courage; and therefore the Lord says to them, as it were, Fear not to come, for "To you is the word of this salvation sent."

4. That the word of salvation is sent to all, even to them who, through the want of the fear of God, reject it, is plain both from this text and context, compared with other scriptures. See the commission, Mark xvi. 15. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Isa. xlv. 12. Harken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. 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." Any man, be what he will. In short, the word of salvation, importing all salvation necessary, looks to all sinners that need this salvation. The gospel would not be glad news to all people, if any sinner were excluded. Hence the call is to all the ends of the earth; "Look to me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth:" hence the call also is, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." And again, "To you, O men, do

I call; and my voice is to the sons of men. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c.

The method we would observe, for the farther illustration of this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to grant assistance, shall be the following :—

I. We shall speak a little of this salvation.

II. Of the word of salvation.

III. Of the sending of this word.

IV. Make application of the whole.

I. We shall speak a little of this salvation, and consider what it supposes, and what it implies.

1. What this salvation supposes, namely, misery. Our miserable state by nature is a state of alienation and estrangement from God. We are without God, and are alienated from the life of God; aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. It is a state of enmity; for, The carnal mind is at enmity against God; we are in actual rebellion against him. It is a state of darkness and ignorance; we are destroyed for lack of knowledge. A state of bondage to sin, Satan, and the world, and divers lusts; we are fettered and imprisoned, led captive. It is a state of impotence: we are, by nature, without strength; we cannot so much as ask deliverance: "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." It is a destitute state, a pit wherein there is no water; a comfortless state, a bewildered state, a cursed and condemned state; for "He that believeth not, is condemned already:" he that believeth not the gospel, is condemned already by the law; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." It is a state of death; spiritual death, and legal death.

2. What doth salvation imply? It implies the whole redemption purchased by Christ, and the whole of the application of it by the Spirit. It is salvation from a state of estrangement, to a state of acquaintance with God; from enmity, to peace and reconciliation; from darkness to light; from bondage to liberty. It includes pardon and justification, adoption and filiation, sanctification of nature, heart, and way, communion with God; afterward a glorious resurrection of the body, and eternal life and glory, in being for ever with the Lord.

II. The second head proposed was, To speak of the word of salvation, which I may do by answering these four questions.

QUEST. What is the word of salvation?

ANSW. Not the law, but the gospel; this is that which is the power of God to salvation, Rom. i. 16. Whatever discovers Christ, and salvation through him, is the gospel.

QUEST. 2 Why is it called the word of salvation?

ANSW. Because it discovers salvation; it describes salvation; it conveys salvation, as a charter does an estate, or as a testament does a legacy; it offers salvation; it establishes a connection betwixt faith and salvation to all mankind sinners; for, "He that believeth shall be saved;" and because it is the organ or instrument by which the Spirit applies salvation?

QUEST. 3. How does the word operate in the hand of the Spirit, when believed unto salvation?

ANSW. It operates as seed cast into the ground: it operates as rain and dew; "My doctrine shall drop as the dew, and distil as the rain:" as light; "They that sat in darkness saw a great light;" it is light shining in a dark place. As fire; "Is not my word like a fire?" As water, as wind, as a seal imprinting the divine nature: as a glass, through which we see God's glory: as balm for healing; "He sent his word, and healed them."

QUEST. 4. What are the qualities of this word of salvation?

ANSW. 1. It is a divine word; the word of God. God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the Author of it. Hence the gospel is called, "The gospel of God," Rom. i. 1; xv. 16.

2. It is a word of God in Christ, Heb. i. 1, 2; ii. 3. It is secured in the hands of a Mediator; Yea, and Amen in him. It is given to us by Christ, and sealed in his blood; "This is the New Testament in my blood."

3. It is a gracious word of God in Christ: it is free; it does not move upon our goodness or badness; our goodness does not further, nor our badness hinder it. It is a word that comes from pure grace, and springs from his free mercy, who is the God of all grace. It is such a gracious word, that it contains all grace. Hence,

4. It is a complete word, containing all our salvation; for it contains God in it, Christ in it, the Spirit in it. It contains a righteousness in it, founding a legal title to life eternal, *viz.*, the obedience of Christ; and a legal security from eternal death, *viz.*, the satisfaction and death of the Surety. It contains all the parts of

life, and may well be called the word of life : life in the beginning of it, in regeneration ; “ Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth.” The life of justification ; we are justified in believing and receiving of Christ, our righteousness, as offered in the word. The life of sanctification, the life of consolation, and the life of glory hereafter.

5. It is a sure word ; “ The sure mercies of David :” Sure, and more sure than a voice from heaven, such as even that which the disciples heard on the mount ; “ We have a more sure word of prophecy, unto which we do well to take heed,” 2 Pet. i. 19.

6. It is a gracious, complete, sure word of God in Christ to sinners, as well as saints : it is to sinners of Adam’s family ; for it presents a remedy for their malady. This leads,

III. To the third general head proposed, viz., To speak of the sending of this word. Here it may be enquired, from whom, by whom, to whom it is sent ; and for what purpose ?

1. From whom is it sent ? Why, it is a word of salvation sent from the God of salvation, to whom belong the issues from death ; and it carries the impress of himself upon it. As the word is God’s word, so it is of God’s sending ; “ He sent his word and healed them,” Psalm cvii. 20.

2. By whom is it sent ? It is not sent by angels, but by men ; “ We are ambassadors for Christ,” 2 Cor. v. 20. It is true, God sent his word first by Christ ; “ He so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life,” John iii. 19. Then Christ sends it by men, that we may not be afraid at his appearance, as Israel were of old ; “ We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” 2 Cor. iv. 7.

3. To whom is it that he sent the word of salvation ? He sent it to all sinners that hear it. Whosoever look to the word of salvation, will find it looking to them. What was the gospel preached to Abraham ? “ In thee, *or* in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed,” Gen. xii. 4. Is not this a word of salvation to us also ? It includes all ; so as every sinner may take hold of it. See John iii. 16 ; 1 Tim. i. 15. Christ came to call sinners to repentance. See Prov. i. 20 ; Isa. xlvi. 12. It is a word that suits the case of sinners : and therefore, if it be enquired,

4. For what purpose is it sent to sinners ? Why, for the very same purpose that a healing remedy is sent to a deadly malady ; for

Christ comes in the word, and is presented there for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: see 1 Cor. i. 30; Rev. iii. 17, 18. More particularly, it is sent as a word of pardon to the condemned sinner; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my own name's sake." Hence may every condemned sinner take hold of it, saying, This word is sent to me. It is sent as a word of peace to the rebellious sinner, saying, Christ hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious. Oh! I am a rebel, may the sinner say; yet here is a word for me. It is sent as a word of life to the dead; "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." It is a word of liberty to the captives; "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," Isa. lxi. 1. It is sent as a word of healing for the diseased; for the word says, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." It is a word of cleansing, or a cleansing word to the polluted; "I will sprinkle you with clean water; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." It is sent as a word of direction to the bewildered; "I will lead the blind by a way they know not, and in paths which they have not trode." It is a refreshing word to the weary; "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary." It is sent as a comforting word to the disconsolate; it brings the good news of the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; and of Christ, the consolation of Israel. It is sent as a drawing word, and a strengthening word to the soul destitute of strength, saying, "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me." It is sent in short, as a word of salvation, and all sort of salvation and redemption to the lost soul, saying, "Christ came to seek and save that which was lost;" and that we are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

IV. The last general head proposed was, To make application of the subject. Is it so, That the gospel, as a word of salvation, is sent to every sinner that hears it? Then,

1. Hence see the kindness of God in Christ to sinners of mankind. Why hath he made such a difference between sinning men and

sinning angels? There was never a word of salvation sent to angels that sinned; no not one word; "They are reserved in chains, to the judgment of the great day;" but it was sent unto mankind; To you, O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men;" "To you is the word of this salvation sent."

2. See what a valuable book the Bible is, which contains this word of salvation. O Sirs, how ought we to search the scriptures: for, in them we think, and think aright when we do so, that we have eternal life and salvation conveyed to us? Why, they testify of Christ: and we ought especially to search out the words of eternal life; the words of salvation that lie there.

3. Hence see what a valuable blessing the gospel is, and the dispensation thereof; and how welcome a gospel-ministry should be unto us; "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace!" Romans x. 15, that publish the word of salvation? How sad is it when gospel-ministers have not beautiful feet, when they defile their feet by stepping unto the puddle of defection and corruption, and so make poor souls to nauseate the very gospel preached by them! And how dismal is it, when these who profess the gospel of peace, have their feet defiled with the puddle of error! How desirable is it, when they have both the gospel of peace in their mouth, and beautiful shoes upon their feet, and are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and with a gospel conversation, declining to walk with others in a course of defection?

4. Hence see the inexcusableness of unbelief, in rejecting the gospel, since it is sent to every one that hears it. Men have no cloak for their unbelief; no ground to say, This word of salvation is not sent to me: yea, it is sent to thee, whosoever thou art: it is a rope cast down for thy drowning soul to lay hold upon.

5. Hence see how culpable they are who straiten the door, and hamper the call of the gospel, saying, in effect, If you have not such and such qualifications, this word of salvation is not to you: if you have not such and such marks and evidences, it is not to you: it is only upon such and such terms that it is to you: this is to make the gospel no gospel. It is as if Christ came to save saints, but not to save sinners. They contradict the very design of the gospel, which is a word of salvation to sinners of all sorts and sizes. "To you is the word of salvation sent:" to you, O sinner, is the door of salvation opened. Whatever straitens this door; whatever doc-

trines you hear, that hamper or limit the gospel-offer, and tend to make you suppose, that there is no room for you, no access for you, you may suspect that to be either no gospel-doctrine, or that has such a legal mixture accompanying it, as you ought to shun like the devil; because it would keep you at a distance from Christ and salvation.

6. Hence see the ground of God's controversy at this day, together with an antidote against the errors and evils of the day. The great ground of God's controversy, at this day, with the generality we live amongst, is, their rejecting the word of salvation. Wherefore is he now speaking in wrath and war¹, but because we will not hearken to his speaking in mercy? Scotland hath been long deaf to the word of God, and to the warnings of God. Judicatories have been deaf to the word of God, to the word of salvation, calling them to reform and return to the Lord; deaf to any testimony lifted up for reformation. And the whole land hath been, deaf to the voice of God in the gospel. And, what, if God now thunder and roar out of Zion, and say, You shall hear at the deafest side of the head? if you will not hear the voice of the word, you shall hear the voice of the sword; Oh! what is his quarrel? Why, God says, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him:" No; but we refuse to hear him. General Assemblies have refused to hear him; they gave ear to a patron, or a great man, and give more obedience to him than to the voice of Christ. He said, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs:" No say they; let them be devoured and torn to pieces with the wolves, rather than displease men of rank and power. How justly may God say to such, "Go to the gods whom ye have served," and see if they can deliver you in the day of death, or in the day of wrath?

See here also an antidote against many errors of the day. Here is an antidote against enthusiastic delusions, viz., If we take the word of God for the rule and the warrant of faith, and of every particular duty. Some will say, "We must wait for the Spirit being poured out; and till the Spirit come, there is no doing: therefore we may sit still and do nothing, either in the matter of our salvation-work or generation-work; either in personal or public work." Why, here is a delusion, here is enthusiasm, to make the Spirit the rule of faith and duty, and not the word of God. When God spake to Moses at the Red Sea, saying "Speak to the people, that they go forward." What! go forward, might unbelief say into the sea, and be all drowned?

(1) Britain and Spain were, at this time, upon the point of an open rupture.

Nay, stay till we see the water divided. No, says God, "Speak to the people that they go forward;" and in going forward at the word and call of God, making his call and word the rule of faith and duty, in this way they were to find the sea divided before them. To wait upon God's working, either outwardly or inwardly, without answering the call of his word, and going forward in the way of duty is to wait without a warrant; it is a delusion, a tempting of God. You are to aim at believing the word of salvation sent to you. The people we call Quakers say, They ought not to pray till the Spirit move them: making the inward motions of the Spirit, and not the word of God the rule of duty. Thus it is no wonder that they be led by a delusive spirit; for the word of God is the word of the Spirit; and though we cannot fight without the Spirit, yet the Spirit will not fight for these, or with these that will not take his sword in their hand: though we can do nothing without the Spirit, yet the Spirit will do nothing without the word. But if once we take the sword of the Spirit in our hand; I mean, take the word for our rule, and essay duty, and the work of believing, which is the work of God, according to the direction of the word of God; then, and not till then, are you to expect God will work powerfully; for, out of his own road he will not, namely, if you turn away your ear from hearing his word; or, if he do, he will bring you to this road before he do any thing more.

Here also see an antidote against all, or most of all the errors of the age wherein we live. Here is an antidote against all practical error; against all profanity, looseness and luxury, whoredom and debauchery, that have been running down, like a mighty stream, through all ranks of persons, from the throne to the dunghill, in every corner of the land. What would remedy these evils? Even the receiving of this salvation that is sent in the gospel to us. Unbelief in rejecting this salvation, which is a salvation from all sin as well as misery; this unbelief in slighting the Saviour and salvation, is the root of all the looseness and profanity in the age. Men do not see this root that lies hid under ground. Here is an antidote against the Deism of the age. Why do men undervalue the scriptures, and deny the necessity of divine supernatural revelation? Even because they reject the word of salvation; they do not see that the gospel only is the word of salvation; and that there is no salvation but in the faith of it: but the faith of this word would cure the Deism of the age. Here is an antidote against Arminianism; for

salvation comes not of the free-will of man, but of the free grace of God in a word of salvation sent to us. Here is an antidote against Arianism. Would any soul deny the supreme Deity of Christ, and his proper Divinity, if they believed that with him are the words of eternal life ; and that a word from his mouth is a word of salvation ? “Look to me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else,” Isa. xlv. 22. Here is an antidote against Antinomianism ; for, by this salvation we are not saved to sin, and to work wickedness, and break the law of God, but saved from sin and wickedness. The gospel being a word of complete salvation, the grace of God therein appears to all men, teaching effectively what the law does preceptively, namely, “To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world.” Here is an antidote against Legalism, or Neonomianism, as some call it, which turns the gospel to a new law, and the covenant of grace, as it were, to a covenant of works. This text and doctrine shews that we are not saved by a work, but by a word ; not by any work of ours, but by a word sent from God to us, even a word of salvation : “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,” Titus iii. 5. See 2 Tim. i. 9. Here also is an antidote against ignorant preachers of the gospel, that confound the marks of faith with the ground of faith, or the evidences of faith with the warrant of faith, or the condition of the covenant with the qualities of the covenanted, as if the gospel call were only to saints, or to sinners so and so qualified ; and so leading men in to themselves for a ground of faith, instead of leading them out of themselves to Christ, exhibited to them in a word of salvation sent to them. The gospel-method of salvation is the reverse of all the legal schemes in the world. The legal strain supposes some good quality about the sinner, before he be allowed to meddle with the word of salvation ; and so shuts the door of the gospel, which it pretends to open. But the gospel-strain brings the word of salvation freely to every sinner’s door, and supposes him to be destitute of all good qualities whatsoever, and leaves no room for any sinner to say, I am not allowed to come in.

7. Hence see how much it concerns all and every one to try and examine what entertainment they have given the word of salvation that is sent them. Have you received it or not in a saving way ?

(1.) Have you received it as the word of God ? *the word by*

way of eminency? the word of God in Christ? 1 Thess. ii. 13, and received it not as the word of man, of this or that man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God?

(2.) Have you received it as a word of salvation, or as a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, both as a truth and as a good? This reception of it supposes a view you have of your being a lost sinner welcoming a Saviour.

(3.) Have you received it, as the word of this salvation, a present salvation, a particular salvation? This particular salvation from sin and wrath, that you need; this near salvation; "I bring near my righteousness to the stout-hearted and far from righteousness; my salvation shall not tarry," Isa. xlii. 12, 13. This great salvation, this purchased salvation, this promised salvation, this offered salvation, presently offered. Faith fixes upon something present. You need not say, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, "Who will ascend to heaven, to bring Christ down? or, descend into the deep, to bring Christ up? The word is nigh thee, even in thy heart, and in thy mouth." Again,

(4.) Have you received it as a sent salvation; as God's send, as God's gift, sent by the hand of Christ, sent by the hand of his ambassadors, sent freely and sovereignly, without your seeking after it, sent out of the store-house of divine grace?

(5.) Have you received it as sent to sinners, to sinners in general? For here is glad tidings of great joy to all people: "Upon 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," Isa. xxv. 6.

(6.) Have you received it as sent unto you in particular? To you, sinners, says the general dispensation; to thee, sinner, in particular, says the particular offer: "Whosoever will, let him come." Hast thou then received it, as sent to thee, though a guilty sinner; to thee, though a vile sinner? Hast thou entertained it with a *me*, *me*, of particular application, saying, Here is an offer to me, a gift to me, a promise from heaven to me? Hast thou found thyself called by name, and said, I am warranted to take hold of Christ, and the salvation he brings with him, in this word of salvation, and even so I take him at his word; "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief?" Have you hereupon found the virtue of this word, as a word of salvation, saving you from your doubts and fears, saving you from your bonds and fetters, saving you from your helpless and

hopeless condition, and making you to hope for complete salvation from sin and misery? Have you found salvation begun in the faith or the word of salvation, and been begotten to a lively hope thereby? And does this hope begin to purify your heart, and this faith begin to work by love to God and hatred of sin, and of yourself for sin? And is your continual recourse to this word of salvation, or to the promise of God in Christ, for all your salvation?

8. Hence see what matter of joy and praise believers have, who have been determined thus to entertain the word of salvation; for, when the word of salvation is received through grace, then the work of salvation is begun; and you need be in no uneasiness now, though you be called to work out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling; because it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do. "He that hath begun the good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of the Lord." The word of salvation may be to thee, O believer, the word of consolation all the days of your life: for, it is a word of salvation, not only from the sinful state, and miserable state you was in, but is a word of salvation also, bringing the good news of salvation in every case; salvation from the devil, the world, and the flesh; salvation and deliverance from the hands of all your enemies; salvation from the sting of death; salvation from the terror of judgment; salvation from the curse of the law, and from the guilt of all your sins; salvation not only from all evil, but salvation to eternal life; for the word of salvation, which you have received and entertained through grace, contains all the words of eternal life. The word of salvation is the word of life for you, when under deadness, and the word of liberty for you, when under bondage; a word of rest for you, when under weariness; a word of relief for you, when under distress of whatsoever sort. It is a word of salvation confirmed with the oath of God, "That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them."

9. Hence see matter of terror to those who neglect this great salvation that is sent to them by this word: "How shall they escape who neglect so great salvation," and so near to them? O sinner, it is a salvation sent to your house, and will you reject it? A word of salvation sent to your soul; a word of salvation sent to your hand to receive it, and will you reject it? A word of salvation sent to your ear, saying, "But hear, and your soul

shall live." A word of salvation sent to your heart, and by it God is knocking at the door of your heart. O Sirs, will you refuse him that speaketh from heaven? "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escape not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven," Heb. xii. 25. If you will not hear God's word of grace in the gospel, saving, "To you is the word of this salvation sent," you must lay your account to hear his word of wrath in the law, saying, yea, swearing in his wrath, "That you shall not enter into his rest." If you have no fear of God, as it is in the verse where my text lies; if you shall never be persuaded to fear the Lord and his goodness, manifested in the word of salvation sent to you, you must lay your account to fear the Lord and his wrath, manifested in the word of condemnation, which the law pronounces against them who believe not the gospel: "He that believeth not, is condemned already," John iii. 18. And there is no escaping this sentence of condemnation, but by receiving the word of salvation.

10. Hence see how much it is the interest of every one to receive, and entertain, and welcome this word of salvation. O Sirs, "Hear, that your souls may live." Hear the joyful sound of salvation, O lost, perishing sinner, before the door of mercy be shut, and the day of grace be over. To persuade you hereunto, we shall lay before you the four following considerations.

(1.) Consider what sort of a salvation is offered to you. It is a spiritual salvation; the salvation of the immortal soul: "What shall a man profit, though he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?" If you would not lose and ruin your souls, O receive the word of salvation. It is a costly salvation; it comes running in the channel of the blood of Christ. It is bought to your hand, and free to you, however dear bought by the Redeemer. You have nothing to pay for it; the price of it is paid already; the condition of it is fulfilled. It is a complete salvation; salvation from every thing you need to be saved from: salvation from unbelief, enmity, atheism, heart-hardness, heart-deadness, and every thing that you make an objection against receiving of this salvation. You say you cannot believe, you cannot repent; but would you be saved from your unbelief and impenitence? This and all the other branches of salvation is sent to you, when the word of salvation is sent. Will you welcome a Saviour to save you from all, to be wisdom,

and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and all to you? It is an everlasting salvation. Would you be happy after death, and have an eternity of happiness? "Life and immortality is brought to light by this word of salvation." O poor dying sinner, consider what an everlasting salvation this is.

(2.) Consider what need thou hast of this salvation. Thou hast a dark mind; and needest salvation from that darkness and ignorance. Thou hast a guilty conscience, and needest salvation from that guilt. Thou hast a hard heart; and needest salvation from that hardness. Thou hast powerful and strong corruption; and needest salvation from that. Thou hast a corrupt nature; and needest salvation from that. Thou hast many heart-plagues; and needest salvation from these plagues, and healing. Behold, all this salvation, and infinitely more, comes with the word of salvation; no salvation thou needest is excepted. Thy need is great, death is at hand, judgment at hand: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." There will be no word in the day of judgment to sinners, but a word of condemnation: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" but now, in the day of salvation, is sent to you this word of salvation; now, now is the day; and, perhaps, now or never.

(3.) Consider what a firm ground this word of salvation is for faith to build upon. It is the word of God; the God that cannot lie. It is ratified by the oath of God. It is a word confirmed by the blood of the Son of God. It is a word attested by the Three that bear record in heaven. It is a word spoken by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches. The Spirit and the bride say, Come;" come and hear this word of salvation; come and believe; come and apply to thyself what is offered to thee.

(4.) Consider the good warrant you have to intermeddle with this word of salvation. It is sent to you on purpose that you may believe it with application to yourself; and that every one of you, thou man, thou woman, may take it home to thy own heart; for, "To thee is the word of salvation sent." To thee is this love-letter sent from heaven. Read the indorsement, and see if it be not to thee. It is backed to thee, O guilty sinner, saying, "Christ came to save sinners." It is backed to thee, O inhabitant of the earth, that art not yet in hell; "Look to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth." It is backed to thee, O scorner, that hast hitherto been

a mocker of God and godliness ; " Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets : How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity ? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge ? Turn you at my reproof ; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you ; I will make known my words unto you," Prov. i. 20, 22, 23. It is backed to thee, O rebellious sinner. If thou wert excepted, all mankind would be so : behold, " Christ hath ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts from men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them." It is backed for thee, O black and bloody sinner ; " 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," Isaiah i. 18. It is backed to thee, O sinner that are thirsting after other things than Christ ; Isaiah lv. 1, 2, " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come. Wherefore spend you your money for that which is not bread ? &c. Wherefore do ye thirst and pant after other things that cannot give you satisfaction ?" Yea, it is backed for thee, O unhumbled, unconvinced sinner. Say not that it cannot concern thee, because thou art not convinced of thy sin : Oh ! the word of salvation comes even to thee also ; Rev. iii. 18, " I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; eye-salve, that thou mayest see ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." Even to thee that, as in the preceding verse, art saying, that thou art rich and increased with goods, and standest in need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Unconcerned sinner, to thee, even thee, is the word of this salvation sent. Is this love-letter backed for thee ? O then know, that though you have no will, you have a warrant to receive it, and Christ in it. If you reject this word of salvation, it is either because you will not, or dare not, or cannot receive it.

If you say, you will not take it to you, then remember you are subscribing your own doom. And I take instruments against you, that you will not have salvation ; you will not come to Christ that you may have life ; you are preferring some base lust to the Lord of glory, and so preferring, of consequence, damnation to salvation, death to life.

If it be not a will of obstinacy, but of impotency, saying, Oh ! if my will were subdued ; behold the word of salvation comes with

salvation from that plague of unwillingness, saying, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power:" and, "To you is the word of this salvation sent," that you welcome it; and so far as you welcome it, so far are you willing.

If you say you dare not take the word to yourself, as the word of salvation to you: why dare you not do what God enjoins you? Why dare you not take what God offers you? How durst you sin against God, when he forbade you? And now you dare not take his word for your salvation, when he requires you! How durst you venture on his fury against his command? And now you dare not venture on his favour, through Christ, at his call and command? Was it not enough to offend his justice? And will you now venture to slight his mercy? This is worse than all your former sins, to refuse salvation that he freely offers from the guilt of all.

If you say you cannot, because of utter impotency, that shall be no stop. You cannot believe, you cannot come to Christ; but, as the word of salvation is sent to you, so salvation is come to you, because you cannot come to it. The Saviour is come to you, because you cannot come to him: are you for him? The word of salvation is a word of power, and drawing power is in it, to draw you that cannot come: "When I am lifted up I will draw all men after me." Are you willing to be drawn? Then the word of salvation hath so far taken effect upon you, as to remove your unwillingness and to make you willing. Look for another pull of omnipotency, for the word of salvation is a word of omnipotency: It is the almighty word of the almighty God. Saving power, drawing power is in it. Welcome it as such; and, in due time, you shall be able as well as willing. Your faith is not to be acted in the sense of self-ability and sufficiency, but in the sense of self-inability and insufficiency. "Our sufficiency is of God;" salvation is of God; saving faith is of God; "All things are of God, who hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation," 2 Cor. v. 18, and given to you this word of salvation: and it contains all your salvation. And if any part of it were left to you, it would not contain all your salvation. What you cannot do, this salvation can; therefore receive it, and bless God for it, that "To you is the word of this salvation sent."

S E R M O N L X V I .¹GOSPEL-COMPULSION ; OR MINISTERIAL POWER AND AUTHORITY.¹

“Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”—LUKE xiv. 23.

MY friends, though the work of sequestering some to the MINISTERIAL OFFICE, be ordinary in the Church of Christ, yet the occasion and circumstances of this work to-day, among our hands, is extraordinary in many respects, in so much that there was scarce ever a parallel it hath had in Scotland. But, as extraordinary cases require extraordinary services ; so, it is matter of lamentation, that the defections and corruptions of the times should make it not only highly expedient, but absolutely necessary, for the relief of Christ’s scattered sheep, and oppressed heritage, through the violent measures of church judicatories.² But my business at present is to give a hint at the nature of that ministerial work to which one is to be set apart here : and the text I have read lays before us a sum of their work, as it relates to the sinners with whom they have to do : their orders are, “Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

These words are part of a parable, wherein the free grace of God, in Christ, is represented by a rich man making a great supper ; that is, the rich and bountiful Lord providing all the treasures and blessings of the new covenant, and inviting all poor, indigent sinners, to whom the gospel comes, to come and share of these blessings of everlasting life and happiness, to be had in Christ Jesus.

(1) This sermon was preached at the ordination of Mr John Hunter, to the pastoral office in the united congregations of Morbottle and Stitchel, by appointment of the Associate Presbytery, on the 17th October, 1739, being set apart for, and observed as a day of fasting and prayer at Gateshaw. The first edition of the sermon acquaints us that it was published at the earnest desire and repeated entreaty of a great many hearers. To which is subjoined an appendix, directed more especially to the united societies in and about the foresaid Morbottle and Stitchel, upon account of the much-lamented death of the above Reverend Mr. John Hunter, who deceased January 7th, 1740, not having been four complete months ordained minister.

(2) Mr. Hunter was the first probationer licenced by the Associate Presbytery ; and his settlement in this new-erected congregation, the first of its kind that had taken place among them.

The entertainment that this kind offer gets is various ; some reject it, and others embrace it. The rejectors make trifling excuses, preferring their ground, their oxen, their wives ; that is, their worldly possessions and sensual enjoyments, to all the blessings of the everlasting gospel.

Hereupon care is taken to furnish his table ; Go, says he, to his servants, pick up the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind ; by whom might be meant the despised, out-cast Gentiles, who were taken in, when the Jews, who slighted Christ, were rejected of him.

But though many of this sort came in and embraced the offer, yet the servant is brought in telling his Lord, saying, "It is done as thou hast commanded ; and yet there is room." Ministers are to give account to Christ, relating to their ministerial commission : 1. Of the execution of it ; "It is done as thou hast commanded." 2. Of the success thereof ; "Yet there is room : " intimating that though several were come in, yet there was entertainment for many more.

Upon this a new warrant is given out to the servants, to go to the highways and hedges, since none among the Jews, if it be not some of the despicable sort, the publicans and sinners, the halt and the blind, but none of the Scribes and Pharisees will come in ; "Go out into the highways and hedges (*i. e.* to the open country ; pick up the vagrant, the poor straggling Gentiles), and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Where we may observe the three following particulars.

1. A commission given to ministers, shewing what they are to do towards sinners, to whom they minister in sacred things, or to whom they preach the gospel, "Compel them."

2. The design of this commission, what end they are to have in view and aim at by this compulsion, "Compel them to come in."

3. The reason assigned for all this work, of compelling them to come in, namely, "that my house may be filled." As if the Master should say, These whom you have to deal with, will be very shy and backward, and will hardly believe that they shall be welcome therefore, there is a certain kind of compulsion must be used towards them ; you must be in earnest, and very importunate with them to come in to me, and share of the provision I have made for them, that by this means the number of my ransomed ones may be completed, the outcasts of Israel may be gathered, my table may be furnished, my church and house may be filled. But I refer the

further explication of the words to the prosecution of the following doctrine.

OBSERV. "The ministers of Christ have a power and warrant to compel sinners to come in to him, that his house may be filled."

The doctrine being much the same with the text, I need not stand upon the proof of it. You have this matter very elegantly represented, Prov. ix. 1—5. "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars. She hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine ; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth upon the highest places of the city. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither : as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." Ministers have authority from their master, to rebuke, exhort, command, and compel.

We shall endeavour the prosecution of this subject, through divine aid, in the following method :—

- I. We shall speak of the ministerial commission and authority, imported in this word, "Compel them."
- II. Of the end and design of it, namely, that they come in ; "Compel them to come in."
- III. We shall speak of the reason, viz., "That his house may be filled."
- IV. Make some application of the whole.

I. We are to speak of this ministerial power and authority, imported in this expression, "Compel them." And here we are to touch at three things: 1. Who are they that have this authority to compel. 2. Whom they have warrant to compel. 3. What is the nature and import of this compulsion.

1st, Who are they that have this authority to compel. The context shews, that they are the servants of Christ ; "The Lord said unto the servants, Go." Here is the office of the gospel-minister ; he is the servant of Christ and of his church ; "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake," 2 Cor. iv. 5. Their station in the church is not as lords of God's heritage, but servants.

This does not at all detract from their ministerial office, while we consider that Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and serve. If he was the Father's servant, and our servant in

his Father's business, surely it is no small honour to be his servant, and a servant to immortal souls for his sake; only here we see, that the apostles themselves did not pretend to be lordly prelates, nor assume to themselves a domination in the church, as having dominion over their faith, but as helpers of their joy, 2 Cor. i. 24.

Nor can it be constructed a slavery, where it is for Jesus' sake, to promote the honour and interest of Christ in the church, and to act, not as an inferior, menial servant, but as one clothed with authority, in the Master's name, to compel.

This office of the minister, as a servant, imports both suitable abilities, and a call to improve them for the Master's use in his house.

1. It supposes and imports qualifications and abilities, fitting them for the discharge of this work in some measure: "Every scribe that is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old," Matt. xiii. 52. And there is a threefold stock of ability that he should have: 1. A stock of graces; for, if one be not a good Christian, he will never make a good minister. 2. A stock of gifts and learning, that he may be able to convince gainsayers, and may be apt to teach. 3. A stock of experiences, that he may teach what he knows himself, that knowing both the terrors and comforts of the Lord, he may persuade men: that also he may be able to say, "I believe, and therefore speak; and what I have heard and seen, and felt, declare I unto you;" otherwise his preaching will be, at best, but like cold milk in a vessel, and not like warm milk from the breast.

2. This office supposes and imports a divine call. It is not sufficient to warrant any man to meddle with the ministerial office, that he hath a competent stock of abilities and qualifications, fitting him for the work: except he hath also a ministerial power conveyed to him, either immediately by God, as it was in the apostles, which was such an extraordinary call, as we are not now to expect; or mediately, according to the order which God hath established in his church. This ordinary mediate call is twofold, either outward or inward.

(1.) The outward call by the church (including both the judgment of the eldership or presbytery, and the election of the congregation, when the minister is to be fixed to any particular charge.) God hath given to his church, or to the lawful courts and judica-

tories thereof, a ministerial power, whereby, upon trial and knowledge of a man's abilities for that work, they make manifest that God hath called him ; for it is not the church that makes the minister, but God himself, by conferring ministerial qualifications : the church only declares and authorises for exercise these whom God doth qualify for such purpose. It is God himself who makes any to be able ministers of the New Testament, 2 Cor. iii. 6.

(2.) There is the inward call of the Spirit of God, of which I apprehend, that, as it lies in the Lord's qualifying a man with gifts and graces for that work (for, without these qualifications, God calls none, whatever men do) ; so it lies also in the Lord's quickening, inclining, and stirring them up to improve these talents which he hath given for his service in the gospel of Christ ; and in their having the testimony of a good conscience, that the motive that presses them is God's glory, and the edification of the church.

This outward and inward call and commission is declared necessary ; " How shall they preach, except they be sent ? " Rom. x. 15. Here then is the servant, but what the service is will fall in afterwards. Having then shewed who they are that have this authority to compel, I come to shew,

2ndly, Whom they are warranted to compel, or whom does their office oblige them to deal with, by calling and compelling them to come in ? Why, upon the Jews their rejecting of Christ and the gospel, the commission here seems to respect the rustic Gentiles ; or all these who are represented to be, as in verses 21, 23, in the streets and lanes, in the highways and hedges, as to their situation ; and to be poor, maimed, halt, and blind, as to their condition. The first and leading part of the ministerial work relates to the bringing in these who are strangers to Christ ; and afterwards the feeding and edifying of these that are brought in. But first they are to " compel them to come in : " THEM ; whom ?

1. Aliens that are without doors : Without, it is said, are dogs. But even such dogs as the Gentiles were, may come in when the door is open to them. We are to open the door to these who are aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, Eph. ii. 12. Even those that are without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world ; if they were not without, they need not to be called to come in.

2. They are warranted to call in the poor ; for, " To the poor the gospel is preached : " both these that are outwardly poor, and in

mean outward circumstances in the world ; the rich generally condemn the gospel-offer : and also these who are inwardly poor ; that is destitute of all spiritual good and excellencies ; destitute of grace and righteousness ; let them be called in to share of the grace and righteousness that is in Christ.

3. They are warranted to call in the maimed : that is these who want legs or arms, unable to walk and unable to work. The call of the gospel is to be extended to maimed souls, as all naturally are, being by nature without strength, and destitute of all ability to walk, or work spiritually that they may come where they will be furnished with power.

4. They are warranted to bring in the halt ; the poor cripple souls, who if they have received any strength to walk, yet cannot go without halting. They are, like their master, to take up in their arms the poor lame sheep, that cannot follow the rest of the flock ; for, “ feeds his flock like a shepherd, and gathers his lambs with his arms,” Isa. xl. 11.

5. They are warranted to bring in the blind ; representing how blind souls, that have no eyes to see, but are ignorant of God and Christ, and the way of salvation, are called to come and receive their sight ; for Christ is given for a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, Isa. xlii. 7. And the great design, upon which God sends out a gospel-ministry among people, is to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18.

6. They are warranted to bring in wanderers ; these that are in the high-ways and hedges : as if he should say, The straggling vagrants, yea, the highwayman, the thief, the robber, the debauchee, the wicked and graceless, who are walking in the broad way to hell : for, as God, by the gospel, brings near his righteousness and salvation, even to the stout-hearted and far from righteousness, Isa. xlv. 12, 13, so Wisdom and her maidens, Christ and his servants that he sends forth, are warranted to stand upon the high places of the city, Prov. i. 20—23, and to “ cry without, to utter their voices in the streets, to cry in the chief places of concourse, in the opening of the gates, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and ye scorers delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge ? Turn ye at my reproof,” &c. Even the wicked mockers of God and religion, the most wicked and wretched, and abandoned like sinners, are to be dealt with, and compelled to come in.

Thus you see whom they are warranted to compel. But now I come to consider,

3dly, What is the nature and import of this compulsion. Here we may consider, 1. What sort of compulsion it is ; and, 2. What power and authority it imports.

[1.] What sort of compulsion it is. I would explain what I take to be the nature of this compulsion, in the following particulars.

1. It is not an outward, but an inward compulsion ; it does not mean a dragging of their body, but a drawing their heart and soul to Christ : and when once the heart, or the internal man, is drawn, then it will draw the body to the external part of religion also. But what draws the heart ? Why, says the apostle, " With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness ;" and this believing, or, " Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God : " that is, by the preaching of the gospel, the heart is drawn to Christ.

2. It is not magisterial, but a ministerial compulsion. As external compulsion hath no foundation in the text ; so the ministers of the gospel, who are thus spoken to, have not, by Christ's commission, any civil power committed to them. It is not a compelling of men's consciences, far less a compelling men against their consciences, in matters of religion : as for example, in the business of the sacramental test, you shall be fined, imprisoned, ruined in your estate, if you take not the Lord's supper : no such compulsion is here intended. Ministers are not lords over God's heritage. Hence,

3. It is not a carnal, but a spiritual compulsion. It is not by force of arms, but by force of arguments, men are to be compelled ; for, " The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. It is not by cudgels, but by considerations, that the will can be compelled : when the Lord concurs with these considerations that are spiritual, then they are cogent and compelling to the soul. The very opening to men the riches of divine grace, fitted to their lost and undone state, is, through grace, a compelling of them : for,

4. It is not a natural, but a gracious compulsion. It is not by the power of natural abilities and free-will, which is the Arminian arms, that men are compelled ; but by the power of free grace : therefore, in compelling sinners to come in, we are not to tell them what they can do (for, indeed, they can do nothing spiritually, nothing acceptably ; they can do nothing but destroy themselves ;)

but we are to tell them what grace can do, and how all their help lies here; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help."

5. It is not a legal, but an evangelical compulsion. It is true, "By the law is the knowledge of sin" and misery. By the command of the law applied, is the knowledge of sin; and by the curse of the law apprehended is the knowledge of misery: and so, by the law we may have the knowledge of the need we have of Christ. The law, therefore, is to be used in a subserviency to the gospel; but the law, though it may compel sinners to come down from their lofty thoughts of their own natural power and ability to help themselves; yet it is only the gospel that will "compel them to come in:" for, the more they see of their sinfulness and misery by the law, the more will they stand at a distance from coming to God; but will run away hopeless from him, until once the grace of God, manifested in the gospel, and the love of Christ constrain, and "compel them to come in." Hence,

6. It is not a rigid, harsh, and unpleasant, but a kindly and affectionate compulsion. It is a drawing with the cords of love, and the bands of a man. Here we may say the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. The minister is to use violence and force; but it is not the force of fire and sword, but the force of love, and the violence of reason, spiritual and scriptural reason. And because man's reason now is out of reason, therefore,

7. It is not a merely rational and argumentative, but a divine compulsion, in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power; 1 Cor. ii. 4, "My speech, and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God;" that it might not be merely rational faith, standing upon a human testimony, or human reasoning, but a divine faith, standing upon a divine testimony, a divine demonstration. Many have no other but a merely rational religion, and a faith grounded only upon rational arguments, by the force of which they are compelled to own and acknowledge this or that gospel-truth; but what comes of that faith, when a better arguer appears on the other side? Down their faith must go, that stands upon such a sandy foundation, as human wisdom and reason. You may get a poor, illiterate man or woman, that never learned philosophy, nor any thing of the art of arguing, that will have a better faith, a firmer

persuasion of the truth as it is in Jesus, than all these rational believers, and learned Rabbies ever could be masters of. Why? because these poor, unlearned, yet true believers, are *θεοῦ ἰδᾱκτοι*, taught of God; and the gospel hath come to them, not in word, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance.

This, then, is the compulsion that gospel-ministers should aim at, in preaching and teaching, namely, that it be in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power; but without this, men's essays and flourishing harangues, whereby they think to compel men with the mere force and strength of their reasoning, will be found but a carnal weapon, not mighty through God, but weak or unavailable: "Not by strength, nor by might, but by my SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts." Let us never expect, that the exterior call in the ministry of the word will avail, without the efficacious operation of the Spirit of God. And, therefore, let us seek to pray in the Spirit, and preach in the Spirit, that through him we may do valiantly, in conquering sinners, and compelling them. Hence,

8. It is not a despicable, lawless, and unwarrantable, but an authoritative compulsion. *Go*, says the great Master, *and compel them*. It is in his name and authority, who is the great King in Zion, that they are to do it. As they are to deal with sinners with all sincerity and earnestness, so with all authority and boldness: both these are joined together, 2 Cor. v. 20, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." While they present his bowels and compassion, they are also to represent his authority, as ambassadors for him. But this leads to another question on this head.

[2.] What power and authority doth this compulsion, they are warranted to use, import? I think it imports all that power and authority that belongs to them, as the servants and ministers of Christ. I cannot enlarge upon all the particulars here, that might be treated; I shall only mention what occurs.

The ministerial power is either that which they have jointly, in conjunction with one another, or that which they can exercise separately, when invested with that sacred office.

1. There is a power they have jointly, in conjunction with one another, and with the other officers, or office-bearers in the church, when judicially met, and constitute as courts of Christ; such as a power of ordaining ministers, which is presbyterial: "Neglect not

the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery," 1 Tim. iv. 14.—A power of discipline and government, they being such servants as are also rulers, and said to have rule, Heb. xiii. 17, according to the commission given unto them, Matt. xvi. 19, and xviii. 18. A power, hence resulting, of administering ecclesiastical censures, excommunications, &c. clearing up marches wisely between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Cæsar. A power of making laws for the good of the church, agreeable to the law of Christ, and relating to the orderly government of his house, that all things be done decently and in order. They have no power, indeed, or authority to do any thing against the truth, but only for it, 2 Cor. xiii. 8, 10, and for the edification of the church. When their power is otherwise employed, it is not to be regarded, but to be reckoned void and null; as many pretended acts of judicatories in our days are.¹ But this ecclesiastical power of judicatories, and courts of Christ, lawfully constitute, is sufficiently exemplified, Acts xv. and xvi., where, notwithstanding the wrangling of these that deviate to the Independent and Sectarian way, alleging, that the congregation of believers was equally the members of the court with the apostles and elders, because sometimes the brethren are mentioned with them; I think, to me it seems unanswerably evident, that the apostles and elders only were the constituent members of the court, by whose judicial determinations alone the decrees of the court were rendered valid, whosoever else were present there as consenters or approvers. This, to me, I say, is plain, in that (1.) The question that was in hand was referred to none for decision but to the apostles and elders, Acts xv. 2, "They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question." (2.) The apostles and elders only are mentioned as these that came together, to consider of that matter, ver. 6. (3.) The apostles and elders only are they by whom the decrees of the court are said to be ordained, Acts xvi. 4. But this by the bye.

2. There is a power and authority here also imported, that

(1) It is probable that our author here, among other Acts, hath his eye upon the Acts of Assembly, 1720, 1722, condemning the "Marrow of Modern Divinity;" the Act 1730, against recording Protestations; the Act 1732, concerning Patronage; the Act 1733, restricting ministerial freedom and faithfulness, the different Acts of the respective judicatories, viz. Synod, Assembly, and Commission, against the Associate Brethren.

ministers have, which they can and may exercise separately : such as, not only in general, that of administration of the word and sacraments, Matt. xxviii. 19 ; public preaching, praying, and praising, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3 ; Acts vi. 4 ; James v. 13 ; Col. iii. 16 ; but also particularly, they have a power declaratory, to declare the whole counsel of God. A power instructory, to go and teach all nations. A power hortatory, to exhort, and to give much exhortation, as it is said, Acts xx. 2. A power reprehensory, to reprove, as John did Herod ; and to exhort and rebuke with authority, Tit. ii. 15. A power refutatory, to refute error and heresy, to confute and convince gainsayers, Tit. i. 9, and shew them their sin. A power mandatory, to command them in name of the Lord, to turn from sin to God, through Christ, by faith ; for, "This is his command, that we should believe in the name of his Son ;" and this command they are to give forth in his name. Again, they have a power minatory, to threaten the unbelieving and impenitent, saying, "He that believeth not, shall be damned ; and, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." They have a power minatory, to warn them to flee from the wrath to come. They have a power consolatory, to comfort the broken hearted, and bind up their wounds. They have a power ligatory, and solutory ; that is, of binding and loosing, according to the threatenings or comforts of the word. A power desponsatory ; that is, as co-workers with Christ and his Spirit ; a power of espousing sinners to Christ : "I have espoused you to one Husband," says the apostle, 2 Cor. ix. 5. A power regenerative, and of begetting them by the word, 1 Cor. iv. 15. "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." There is a power edificatory they have ; to edify the body of Christ, and build them up in the most holy faith. A power adjutory, to help them much, who have believed through grace, and to be helpers of their joy. So much concerning this spiritual compulsion, and the power and authority imported in it, both for beginning and advancing the good work, and how ministers may be said to compel. This is the first general head, the ministerial commission and authority, "Compel them."

II. The second general head proposed was, To speak of the end and design of this compulsion, namely, "To come in : Compel them to come in." I shall here only shew, what I take to be the import of this coming in, in a few particulars. The general import of coming in, is believing in Christ, who, so many times in Scrip-

ture, calls sinners to come to him, "Come to me all ye that are weary ; whosoever will, let him come ; him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." But more particularly, this coming in imports,

1. That sinners are without, otherwise they needed not be called to come in. Now, ministers being called to compel them to come in, is a warranting them to shew, and to cause them know, they are without doors. And this is the first mean to be used for bringing in souls, to convince them of their estrangement from God ; their cursed state while without God, without his image, without his favour, without his fellowship ; and that, being without a covering from his wrath, they are exposed to eternal death and damnation : that so they may be compelled to cry out, "What shall we do to be saved ?" What shall we do to be housed, and sheltered from the wrath of God.

2. To come in, imports, That the door is open ; and to compel them to come in, is to cause them to know, that there is an open door of access to God, that the door of faith is open to the Gentiles ; the door of faith is opened by the gospel ; the door of mercy is open ; the door of life and salvation, "Life and immortality being brought to light by the gospel ;" and that Christ is the door, John x. 9. The door of the old covenant of works is a shut door ; the door of personal righteousness of ours, the door of Pagan morality, the door of natural endeavours, these are all shut doors ; "There is no name under heaven, whereby any can be saved, but the name of Jesus : " but this door is open : "I am the door ; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture : " ANY MAN, any person whatsoever. Hence,

3. "Compel them to come in ;" it imports a full warrant to come, and a hearty welcome ; and that ministers must both warrant and welcome them. They are to warrant sinners to come in, by the command of their Lord and Master : "This is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23. They are to welcome them by his promise : "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37.

4. "Compel them to come in ;" it imports, That notwithstanding of the warrant and welcome they have to come in, yet sinners will have a strong aversion and unwillingness to come in ; and that therefore the utmost pains must be taken with them to conquer their prejudices, and gain their affections. There must be line upon line, and precept upon precept ; call upon call, and one offer upon the

back of another, one motive and argument upon the back of another; and all is insufficient to overcome the enmity of sinners against a Saviour, till power come along with the means; yet these are still to be used in dependence upon his blessing, not knowing when, or in what mean, a prosperous gale may blow.

5. "Compel them to come in;" it imports something they are to come in *to*, which ministers are to inculcate upon them; namely, that they are to come in to himself, who is the door by which, and the house to which they are to come in. Christ is called, "An house of defence," Psal. xxxi. 2. Sinners are to be taught, that they must come in to his arms, which are stretched out, even to a disobedient and gainsaying people, Rom. 31. That they must come into his heart and bowels, which yearn toward them, as they did toward Ephraim; "My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord," Jer. xxxi. 20. That they must come in to his blood and righteousness, and come in to his grace and fulness.

6. "Compel them to come in," imports something they are to come in *for*, as well as what they are to come in *to*: and so they are to be taught the errand, as well as the object of faith. Christ is the object, and salvation is the first errand of faith. It as a receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation: they are to come in for a feast at his table: and surely salvation is a good feast for a lost soul. They that are aliens, and without, are to come in for acquaintance with God in Christ; for, "This is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." They that are poor are to come in for riches, even durable riches and righteousness. They that are maimed are to come in for the supply of all their defects, that, "Out of his fulness, they may receive grace for grace." They that are halt are to come in for healing and strength, that his grace may be sufficient for them, and his strength may be made perfect in their weakness: "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart." They that are blind are to come in for light and sight; for, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened." They that are straggling in the highways and hedges are to come in for rest and satisfaction in him, which they are in vain seeking among their lusts, and in the broad ways that lead to death and hell.

In a word, sinners are to be compelled to come in for life and happiness; for pardon of sin, for peace and reconciliation with God, and for all the privileges of the sons of God; to come and hear, that

their souls may live ; to come and see the salvation of God ; to come and handle the word of life ; to come and taste that the Lord is gracious ; to come and smell the sweet savour of the Rose of Sharon, that perfumes heaven and earth, and puts away the stinking savour of sin and corruption. And, in short, they must be taught, that they may come in, and that they must come in, and share with him in his grace here, and glory hereafter. "Compel them to come in."

7. It imports, That he is before them, ready to help them in, and to take them in. It is not, compel them to *go* in, but to *come* in. We are not to require them to go where he is not, but to come in where he is, and where they shall have his presence, aid, and assistance. Christ's invitations to sinners by the gospel are not *go*, but *come* ; come to me, and come with me ; "Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden ; Come with me from Lebanon ;" importing the strongest encouragement, and anticipating all objections drawn from weakness and inability, saying, I cannot come : why ? there is no fear if you come. If I were commanding you to go without me, you might be afraid ; but when I desire you to come to me, and come with me, and come in, you may be sure I am at the door of the house, ready to take your hand and help you in : Hence it is said, Heb. vii. 35, "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him :"
by him ; that is, not only by him as the way, but also by him as the leader, to take your hand. "Compel them to come in."

8. It imports, That he would be joined to them, and would have them joined to him ; and that it is the most intimate union to him, and communion with him, he would have them brought into. "Compel them to come in ;" it is not only to him by an outside profession, but to come into him by faith. Though the people of the old world had come to the ark, and taken hold of the outside of it, they would have been washed away with the waters of the deluge ; none were safe but these that came in. Our safety lies in coming in : and ministers must not rest till they get sinners brought in, so as to be joined to the Lord Jesus, and married to him. We are to compel them, saying, "All things are ready, come to the marriage," Matt. xxiv. 4, and thereupon to the marriage-supper ; "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb," Rev. xix. 9. Ministers are warranted to court a bride for their Master, and to compel sinners, by all means, to come in to

him, and join hands with him, and join hearts with him. So much for the import of this phrase, "Compel them to come in."

III. The third general head proposed was, To speak of the reason here given for this work, viz., "That my house may be filled." This metaphorical expression, in a suitableness to the parable, supposes that Christ hath a house, and that his house must be filled. I might here consider, 1. What is his house? 2. What is the import of filling his house? 3. How full his house should be. 4. Why his house must be filled.

1st, What is his house? By his house we may understand his church and people, whether the church visible or invisible. In several respects they are called his house where he dwells and resides; symbolically, by the external symbols of his presence in the church visible, Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14; and graciously and spiritually in the church invisible on earth; therefore called the habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph. ii. 22, and a spiritual house, 1 Pet. ii. 5. This house, in scripture, comes under several names and designations. It is his pleasure house; for, "The Lord takes pleasure in his people;" there he delights to dwell. It is his treasure-house: his people are his treasure and his portion; he gives out of his treasure there. It is his magazine-house; being built for an armoury, where hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men: and there he lays up his magazines for military provision, the whole armour of God, which we are called to put on. It is his banqueting-house, where he feeds and feasts his people; "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love." It is his hospital-house, where he hath cures for all maladies, and all sorts of diseased persons, the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. It is his washing-house, where he hath a laver for cleansing of polluted souls, and a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. It is his house of prayer, and his house of praise, where he is worshipped and adored. It is his own house, and his father's house; "Shall my Father's house become a den of thieves?" The church of Christ is God's house, he founded it; "The Lord hath founded Zion." It is Christ's house, for he is the foundation of it; and, "Other foundations can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." He is the builder, and the bearer of all the charges of the building, and of all the honour of it: "He shall build the temple of the Lord, and shall bear the glory." Thus much for a hint at what the house is.

2dly, What is imported in filling his house? "That my house may be filled;" that is,

1. That the elect may be gathered in; "Compel them to come in," that the election may obtain, as indeed it shall obtain: for, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me; and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out."

2. "That my house may be filled;" that is, that my saints may be gathered together, these who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice, Psalm l. 5. And that they may gather themselves together before the decree bring forth, before the day of the Lord's anger come, that they may seek righteousness, and seek meekness, since in this way it may be, they shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. This is the call of God to his people, in such days of threatened judgments as these are, wherein we live.

3. "That my house may be filled;" that is, that the church visible may be sorted and settled, united and cemented in one visible profession of the faith, after they have been scattered and divided by wolves in sheep's clothing, or by erroneous and cruel shepherds, that rule with force and with cruelty. The Lord is calling his people, at this day, to fill his house, by gathering under his standard, who gathers the outcasts of Israel into one, that the church visible may appear by their visible profession of, and adherence to the truth and cause of God, in opposition to all that are making a visible defection from it; and so, instead of being a true, visible reforming church, are visible opposers of any endeavours that some are making towards Reformation.

4. "That my house may be filled;" that is, that the church triumphant may, in due time be completed, and all the mansions of glory may be filled up; for, "In my Father's house are many mansions; and I go to prepare a place for you;" and you must prepare for it, and must, in my name, endeavour to prepare all, that are to be heirs of glory, for these heavenly mansions: and therefore, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled;" first here below, and then above, that being once brought in, they may be brought up stairs, to the place where I am, to be for ever with the Lord.

3dly, How full should his house be? Why, he would have every corner, every seat, every chamber, and every story of his house filled.

1. Every corner of his house should be filled, there being all

kinds of supply for all kinds of sinners ; and, if I may so express it, a corner for every kind, an apartment for every sort of sinners. As all kind of creatures had a place, a corner, or apartment in the ark ; so all sorts of mankind sinners, Gentiles as well as Jews, have a place or corner for them in his house, according to Peter's vision of a sheet, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air, Acts x. 12, representing sinners of all sorts upon earth, from all winds and airts, east, west, north, and south, from whence his house is to be filled, Isa. xliii. 5, 6. He would have every corner of his house filled from every quarter of the habitable earth ; and, we hope, the time cometh when, according to his promise, "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters do the sea : and that "His dominion shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Look to me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved," Isa. xlv. 22.

2. Every seat of his house should be filled ; "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled : " that as there may be no empty corners, so there may be no empty seat. There are seats in his house for every one, according to their rank, order, and station. A proper seat for the pastor, than whom, indeed, there is no higher officer in the church. A proper seat for other officers, such as elders and deacons. And though the ministerial office is a seat and station in the house of Christ, superior to that of the people, yet there is no superiority in one pastor over another by divine appointment, but a comely parity and equality as to office, whatever difference there may be, as to gifts. And whatever pre-eminence the minister hath, it is not a magisterial dominion, but a pre-eminence of administration, and of pastoral instruction and inspection. Now, that every seat of his house may be filled, his servants are to "compel them to come in," and take their seats ; these who are fit for the ministerial station, to come in and take their place ; these that are qualified for being elders and deacons, to come in, and take their places and posts in his house. David chooseth to be a door-keeper in the house of God, rather than to dwell in tents of wickedness, or to sit upon a throne of iniquity.

3. Every chamber of his house must be filled. We read of the chambers of the king, Song i. 4, "The King hath brought me into his chambers ;" and all the Lord's people are called to come in to the several chambers of his house, Isa. xxvi. 20, 21. "Come,

my people, enter thou into thy chambers." Here we shall tell you four sorts of chambers in his house he will have filled.

(1.) There are chambers of distinction he wants to be filled, so as we may not be mixed with, nor conform to the world; "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, &c., 2 Cor. vi. 17; come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues," Rev. xviii. 4. In a day of general defection we ought to side ourselves, by coming out from the corrupt part of a church, and testify against them: this is the way how saints in scripture have overcome their enemies; "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony," Rev. xii. 11. This is the way we are to distinguish ourselves for the Lord, in declining times.

(2.) There are chambers of defence in his house, which he would have filled, where we may be safe in the worst and most threatening times; "The name of the Lord is a strong tower;" a strong chamber of strength, Prov. xviii. 10. Every perfection of God is a chamber of defence; "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Every office of Christ, promise of the covenant is a chamber.

(3.) There are chambers of devotion in his house, he would have filled; "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly," Matt. vi. 6. There are chambers of public worship and devotion; societies meeting for spiritual edification; chambers of family worship and devotion, every family apart; and chambers of secret devotion, every person apart, like doves in the valleys, mourning every one for his own sins, as well as the sins of the land in general: he would have all those chambers filled. And indeed, every chamber of your house should be a chamber of devotion; and so far as it is so, it is a part of the house of God. Let every convenient apartment be a praying place, for "Their hearts shall live that seek God."

(4.) There are chambers of action and business he would have filled. Christ's house is not only a house of prayer, but a work-house, wherein we are to do some things for God in our day and generation, "Why stand ye here all the day idle? Go, work to-day in my vineyard," Matt. xx. 6, xxi. 28. The Lord calls his people not only to pray, and cry to him, but also to action and diligence. When Israel were in great danger at the side of the Red

Sea, and their enemies behind pursuing them, God says to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak to the people that they go forward." We are not only to cry, but to go forward to our work and service in our several stations as magistrates, ministers, or people; every one to the work and duty of their station, that they may glorify God therein.

4. As every corner, every seat, every chamber, so every story of his house must be filled. There are two stories of his house, the lower story upon earth, and the upper story in heaven; and he will have both filled: both the church militant and the church triumphant. They are but two stories of the same house; and hence all believers, that are said to be come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, Heb. xii. 22, are said also to be come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven; to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. Why, who are come to this house? Even all believers in Christ, who are said, in the following verse, to be come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. That every story of his house, therefore, may be filled, sinners must be compelled to come in.

In a word, he will have his house so full, that there may be no empty room. There is access for sinners as long as the servants have occasion to say, So many are already come in, and yet there is room. There is room for all the innumerable number mentioned, Rev. vii. 9, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. O that sinners would come in! Let there be no empty corner, no empty seat, no empty chamber, no empty story of his house; for he would have all filled.

4thly, Why, or what reason, must his house be filled? I offer only these two reasons.

1. The more full his house is, the more advantageous to the guests. Happy they that throng in to him, and fill his house. The more full it is, the more useful and helpful they are to one another: when they are converted, they strengthen their brethren. The more full it is, the more pleasant and heartsome it is, while joining together in prayer and praise: they are also the more encouraging to one another, as iron sharpeneth iron; and the more encouraging, even to these that are without, to come in; for then they are ready

to say, "We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." The more full, the more safe, and free from hurt; for an empty house goes to ruin. It is the greatest curse, when it is said, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate and empty;" but it is a great blessing when the house is full; full of guests, and full of provision for them: and truly in his house there is bread enough and to spare.

2. The more full the house is, the more glory redounds to the master of the house. The more God's house is filled, the more and the greater revenues of praise will be paid to him by the inhabitants of it; for, "Blessed are they that dwell in his house, they will be still praising him," Psalm lxxxiv. 4. He will then have his house filled, that he may have many to sing forth the praise of his grace and mercy, power and pity, to all eternity. So much for the third general head, viz., the reason assigned for the work. That his house may be filled.

IV. We come now to the fourth thing proposed, viz., To offer some Inferences for the application. Is it so, that the ministers of Christ have a power and warrant to compel sinners to come in to him, that his house may be filled? Hence see then,

1. That the ministers of Christ, who are sent of him, are clothed with authority: they are, as it were, the mouth of Christ, 2 Thes. ii. 8. They are the stars in his right-hand, and co-workers with him. They are Christ's ambassadors; and as God sends Christ, so Christ sends them. They have the keys of the kingdom of heaven put into their hands. And the greatness of their ministerial power is evident from the great charge given to them, Jer. i. 17, 18. "Gird up thy loins, and arise and speak unto them all that I command thee. Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them: for behold I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah," &c. The power and authority committed to them is, that of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. v. 4. The greatness of their power is evident from the great challenge they get for not executing their office, and using their authority against seducers and erroneous teachers, Rev. ii. 14, 20. It is evident also from the great glory they are to have from God, who faithfully execute the ministerial trust; "They shall receive a crown of righteousness, which fadeth not away," 1 Pet. v. 2, 3, 4. People ought therefore to regard their authority; for Christ hath said, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me."

2. Hence see the due limits and boundaries of church-power and authority. It is to be used for the good and edification of the body of Christ, and for compelling sinners to come in. Church power is unlawfully used, when it compels men to go out, and not to come in. It is the greatest rebellion against a king, when his arms and artillery are employed against himself and his family ; so it is the greatest rebellion against the king of Zion, when a church makes use of the power and authority he hath given her, even against himself, and his children, his cause and interest. Ministers and judicatories have no power to do any thing against the truth, or against the edification of God's children. See 2 Cor. x. 8, where it is said, "—Our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction." See also chap. xiii. 8, 10. The church power that is exercised against the truth, and for the destruction of the people of God, or the ruin of their souls and spiritual privileges,¹ is to be declared void and null, and by no means to be acknowledged.

3. Hence see the efficacy of the word and ordinances of God, when duly administered in his name ; Mat. xviii. 18, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." Notice the power and efficacy thereof from Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. Great is the power of the word of God, and of a gospel ministry in the hand of the Spirit. It hath a power of illumination and direction, a power of conviction and conversion, a power of humiliation and consolation ; "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple ; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes," Psalm xix. 7, 8. It is dangerous to despise the word ; for, it is the power of God unto salvation.

4. Hence see the enmity of the world against Christ, that they must be compelled to come in to him ; and consequently what hard work that of a gospel-minister is. If he be faithful to his trust, he cannot but meet with opposition from earth and hell. Ministers must lay their account with the contradiction of sinners against themselves, and of being every where opposed, every where spoken against. If they be faithful they must be reckoned men of conten-

(1.) Alluding to the opposition made to a testimony for truth, and the encroachments made upon the rights of the Lord's people, to choose their own pastors.

tion to the whole earth ; troublers of Israel ; and such as turn the world upside down. If their testimony be faithful and honest, it must torment them that dwell upon the earth ; and the earth will seek to torment them again, and to kill the witnesses : but they must seek the ruin of Satan's kingdom, and the repairing of Zion's desolations ; and the maintaining and defending the truth, however men and devils rage.

5. Hence we may learn how culpable they are that straiten the door and hamper the call of the gospel, instead of compelling sinners to come in. The erroneous and legal teachers drive men in to themselves, instead of bringing them in to Christ. They say, in effect, there is no room for such and such sinners in Christ's house ; no room for you that are not humble and penitent, and so and so qualified ; no room for the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the vagrant sinner. How contrary is that strain of preaching to the design of the gospel, which is to compel those very sinners to come in, whom the legal strain of doctrine would keep out and exclude ?

6. Hence see the nature of faith ; it is a coming in as we are ; poor, maimed, halt, blind, and naked as we are, without tarrying and waiting, for better qualifications, which we shall never have till we come in to Christ for them. Faith is expressed in scripture according to our natural situation ; because we are naturally high in our own esteem, therefore it is expressed by a coming down ; "Come down, and sit in the dust, Isaiah xlvii. 1. Come down, Zaccheus ; salvation is come to thy house." Because we are naturally low, and earthly in our affections ; therefore it is sometimes expressed by a coming up ; "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved?" Because we are naturally far from God ; therefore it is sometimes expressed by a coming nigh ; "He shall be sanctified in them that come nigh to him." Because we are naturally engaged in departing and backsliding from God ; therefore it is called a coming back and returning ; "Return, ye backsliding children." Because we are within, as to fellowship with the world ; therefore it is called a coming out ; "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." And because we are without, as to fellowship with God in Christ ; therefore it is called a coming in : "Compel them to come in." Again,

7. Hence see that the church is Christ's house : "That my house may be filled." MY HOUSE ; he is the Lord of the house. The law of the house is Christ's law ; and therefore must not be

violated. The ordinances of the house are Christ's ordinances ; and therefore must not be abused. The servants of the house are Christ's servants : and therefore must not become the servants of men, or men pleasers in any way that is displeasing to Christ. They are not the servants of Christ, when they become the servants of kings, to read and proclaim their acts and laws, that disagree with the acts and laws of Heaven¹ : they are not the servants of Christ, if they become the servants of patrons and great men, to the oppressing of Christ's little ones in his house and family. The servants of the house must be Christ's servants ; the children of the house are Christ's children : and therefore must not be robbed of their spiritual privileges. The courts of the house are Christ's courts ; and therefore must not be employed against him, so as to establish iniquity by a law, otherwise they can have no fellowship with him ; nor ought we to have fellowship with them. The government of the house is Christ's appointment, as Lord of the house ; and therefore must not be invaded or inverted, despised or disparaged. Some cry up the doctrine, and cry down the government of Christ's house ; but there is a doctrine of the word concerning the government of the church : and therefore, if they had a due respect unto the whole doctrine of Christ's house, they would shew respect to the government of his house also. Presbyterian church government, as founded on the word of God, is a part of Scotland's covenanted Reformation : and unless these that have professed themselves to be Presbyterians can now prove that presbytery is sinful and unlawful, and disagreeable to the word of God, they must acknowledge that our National Covenants are binding in this matter, as well as in other doctrines : and, indeed, if a covenant with God, in things lawful, be not binding, then no covenant ever was.

8. Hence see what a heavy and lamentable matter it is, when Christ's house is empty. What a pity is it, that his house should be empty, who is such a kind and liberal Lord, that he loves not to have an empty house ? Nothing is more displeasing and dishonouring to him, than to see his house empty of incomers, and few thronging in to it. He looks upon his house as a desolate house, when it is empty of comers, that come in by the door ; and full of thieves and robbers that come not in by the door, but climb up some other way. Hence it is one of the heaviest dooms he passes against a church, when he leaves it empty and desolate, because of their un-

(1), Alluding to the affair of Captain John Porteous, formerly laid open.

belief, in not coming in to him at his call ; “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children, &c., but ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate,” Matt. xxiii. 37. Heavy is the case of a church when it is left empty of sound professors, empty of faithful ministers, empty of pure ordinances, empty of precious influences ; such emptiness and desolation is a heavy doom ; and when it is left in the hands of robbers, that rob Christ of his honour, and the royalties of his crown and dignity, and rob his people of their rights and privileges ; then his house comes to be alienated from him, as it were to them, so as to be no more his house, but theirs ; “ Behold your house is left to you desolate.” Wo to that church that is given up of Christ, and left into the hands of enemies and robbers ! What will they do with the doctrine, discipline, and government of the church, but rob on and raze on to the foundation ?

9. Hence see that it is matter of praise, and thankfulness, and a great mercy in declining times, when there is any to come in and fill his house, that it be not altogether left empty. It is a mercy if there is a remnant that keep up the name of his house, and favour the dust of Zion ; Psalm cii. 13, 14. “ Except the Lord of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah.” Some cry out, O division, division ; such and such men are for nothing but schism and division ! But when defection becomes general, then division becomes a necessary duty, and a great mercy ; otherwise all would run down into the gulf of defection together, making peace and pretensions to brotherly-love, a grave for burying all zeal for God, and his truths and interests. If Christ’s householders have not salt in themselves, as he commands, Mark ix. 50, how can they have peace one with another, unless it be a peace without the salt of truth, like the peace of a dunghill, where every particle doth but corrupt another ? Peace without truth being but a confederacy against heaven ; suspect their honesty who cry out, O the schism and division of the day ! but never a word of the corruptions and defections thereof. Who are the schismatics and dividers in Scotland ? These that adhere to the covenanted reformation thereof, founded on the word of God, or these that are razing a covenanted work of reformation to the ground ?¹ Suppose a company walking on a

(1) The witnesses for the truth have usually, in all periods of the church, been treated with the greatest contumely and reproach, by the enemies to Reformation.

road by the side of a ditch, most of them fall into the ditch, and then cry to their fellows, If ye come not here, and join with us, we will charge you with schism and division; how ridiculous would that accusation be! Surely, these may be said to go out of the house, who go out of the way of the house, out of the order, rule and government of the house: but these may be said, properly, to come into the house, and abide in it, who abide by the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the house: and I say, in declining times, it is a mercy there are any to come in and fill his house, and to abide in it, and keep possession of it, by zealously testifying and contending for the faith, when others are going out by the door of defection and apostacy; and, perhaps, Christ hath some disciples among them, to whom he is saying, "Will ye also go away?" May the Lord awaken all the virgins that are asleep in our day.

10. Hence see the duty both of ministers and people. The duty of ministers, and their work: their work is not only driving work, while they preach the law as a schoolmaster to lead to Christ;

Whenever the corruptions, defections, and tyrannical measures of a church came to such a height, that the bond of union could no longer be kept, in a consistency with truth, the opposers of these deviations have been calumniated as Separatists and Schismatics. The Associate Brethren, when making a stand for truth, against the torrent of defection, got their own share of this obloquy. The charge of Schism, as laid against them, would soon vanish, if the nature thereof were duly considered: "Schism, in the Scripture sense of the word, says a late grave and judicious divine, is when the members of a particular organical church put a difference amongst their faithful ministers and teachers, who are holding the same testimony of the Lord Jesus. In this sense the apostle used the word several times in his first epistle to the Corinthians, as chap. i. 10, xi. 18. There were divisions, differences, and janglings amongst the members of that church, who still remained joined together in external church-communion, or in the same church-order, discipline, and worship. The apostle gives a particular instance of these divisions and janglings, 1 Cor. i. 12, iii. 4. One said, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos. There was a siding amongst them about their ministers and teachers, who held the same testimony of Jesus." Mr. Wilson's Defence of the Reformation Principles, p. 198, 199. The worthy and pious Mr. Rutherford says, "When the greatest part of a church maketh defection from the truth, the lesser part, remaining sound, the greatest part is the church of Separatists. Though the maniest and greatest part, in the actual exercise of discipline, be the church; yet, in the case of right discipline, the best, though fewest, is the church." Divine Right of Presbytery, p. 255. To the same purpose the reader, if he pleases, may consult the learned and judicious Dr. Owen's Humble Testimony, Pref. p. 7. Treatise on Schism, p. 265. And the celebrated Mr. Forrester, Rect. Instr. dial. III. p. 7. Also, Claud's Defence of the Reformation, part III. p. 17, 18. And the famous Mr. Shields, in his preface to Mr. Renwick's life.

but it is also drawing work, while they preach the gospel of Christ, who was lifted up to draw men to him by his love and grace. Their work is winning work, seeking to win souls to Christ, compelling them to come. And their work is filling work, that their Master's house may be filled; that every corner, every seat, every chamber, every story of his house may be filled. As long as the gospel is preached, his house is a filling; and as long as there is room in his house, there is work for the minister; his work is never over, so long as his Master's house is empty; "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

Further, their duty is, as the context points out,

(1.) To go out, ver. 21, into the wide world, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," Mark xvi. 15. And, as they must go out to the world, so they must go out of the world, and out of themselves.

(2.) To go out quickly, ver. 21; to lose no time, for sinners are in hazard of perishing eternally: and we must hasten to pull them as brands out of the burning; "Now is the accepted time;" now is the Spirit promised.

(3.) To let them know we are in earnest for our Master; and endeavour not to tickle their fancy, but to touch their heart; to compel them by importunity, and take no refusal.

(4.) However many have come in, we are to tell them, *That yet there is room* for more; and, that Christ's heart is open, and his riches inexhaustible; and, that in his house there is bread enough, and to spare.

(5.) The zeal of his house must eat us up; for our concern must be, that his house be filled; the number of the elect must be completed, and the rest left inexcusable; All that the Father hath given him shall come to him; yea, these he must bring, and they shall hear his voice. Let this encourage us, when many believe not. Yet,

(6.) We must shew them the danger of refusing, and making excuses; ver. 21. The Master of the house was angry: we must tell them what a terrible thing it is to offend Christ; and, that they must kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and they perish; grace despised, is grace forfeited, like Esau's birthright.

(7.) Ministers must remember the accounts they are to give; here the servant gives account, ver. 22. "Lord, it is done as thou commandedst, and yet there is room." Ministers must give account

of the success of their ministry : they must give account of what they do, and how it prospers : they must do it now at a throne of grace ; if they see the travail of their soul, they must go to God with their thanks ; and if they labour in vain, they must go to God with their complaints. They must give account hereafter also, at the judgment-seat of Christ, they will be brought as witnesses against these that persist, and perish in their unbelief, to prove that they were fairly invited ; and as witnesses for these that, through grace, accept of the call ; "Behold I, and the children which the Lord hath given me." The apostle urges this, as a reason why people should give ear to the word sent to them by his servants ; "For they watch for your souls, as these that must give account," Heb. xiii. 17.

(8.) Ministers must be as he-goats before the flock, by a good example, and "compel them to come in ;" to come, not to go in without us : but to go in, so as we go in with them, or go in before them. Ministers little need to be as the carpenters that built the ark for others, and yet were drowned themselves ; that preach the gospel to others, and yet themselves to be cast-aways : people have eyes to see what we do, and how we walk, as well as ears to hear what we say, and how we speak.

Again, hence see the duty of people that hear the gospel. Have ministers authority to compel you to come in, that our Lord's house may be filled ? Then, O Sirs, be persuaded to come in ; come in to our Lord Jesus ; and if you have any objection, any aversion or unwillingness, O ! suffer yourselves to be compelled. Do not resist the ministerial compulsion that God is pleased to make use of ; surely willing souls are welcome, when these that are unwilling must be compelled. If God hath made you willing, it is well ; the day of power hath made you so : if you be presently willing, peremptorily willing, pleasantly willing, and universally willing ; presently willing, without offering to delay ; peremptorily willing, saying, I must have him, or I perish ; pleasantly willing, content joyfully to sell your all for the pearl of great price ; and universally willing, willing to have Christ in all his offices ; to be a Saviour to save you from sin, as well as to save you from hell : I say, if you be made willing, and can be active in coming, the willing soul is the welcome soul. But if you find difficulties and objections, and cannot be active ; then, oh ! yield yourself passive, if you cannot be so active as to come in without compulsion, then yield your-

self passive ; that is, willing to be compelled and drawn in : do not resist the Holy Ghost, and his drawing motions and influences ; do not resist the call of the gospel ; but lay yourself open to be compelled, that is, to be convinced, to be converted, to be turned, to be persuaded, to be exhorted, to be entreated to come in, that our Lord's house may be filled.

O ! come in, poor sinner ; let me compel you to come in to Jesus Christ, who is ready to welcome you into his house and heart, both at once. Come in ; how ? O come in believing ; and, if you cannot believe, come in looking to the author of faith, saying, " Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief." Come in repenting of all your former sins : and, if you cannot repent, come looking to Christ, as exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Come in praying : and if you cannot pray, come to him looking for the Spirit of grace and supplication promised in the gospel. Come in running ; and if you cannot run, seek that he may draw you, saying, with the spouse, " Draw me, we will run after thee."

By what arguments shall I compel you to come in ? There are some awful arguments I might make use of.

1. Consider, enemies are coming in upon you like a flood, and what will become of you, if you come not in to Christ ? The floods will drown you, if you get not into the ark : a flood of errors is coming in, which is like to drown your soul in perdition : a flood of defection and corruption is coming in, and is come in already ; and you will be carried away in the flood, if you come not in to Jesus : a flood of wrath is coming in ; Oh ! consider the circumstances of the day we live in ; God is in arms against Britain and Ireland, for breach of covenant and perjury ; though Scotland and England had walls reaching up to the heavens, and navies covering the ocean, and though France and Spain were both sleeping ; yet God hath a controversy, which he will plead ; for he says, " Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?"

But, though God had no controversy with the church and land in general, yet he hath somewhat against thee in particular : O man, woman, that has never yet closed with Christ and come to him ; you are under condemnation by the law, as long as ye have not believed the gospel. May I compel you by the curse of the law you are under, to cry out, " Oh ! " what shall I do to be saved ?" If you saw your need of Christ, and the everlasting wrath you lie

open to, while you are out of Christ, you would cry out more than a dying man ever did for a physician, or a drowning man for a boat. What ! are you content to lie, and die under that everlasting wrath of the everlasting God ? “ Knowing the terror of the Lord, we would persuade men ” to come into Christ. Alas ! “ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ! ” But,

2. I would rather compel you by the blessings of the gospel : and, O that God himself would draw you, with the cords of love and of grace !

Consider therefore, O sinner, that the call is unto you ; “ To you is the word of this salvation sent.” We are required to go out and bring in, ver. 21 of this chapter where the text lies, “ Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind : ” go out, and “ Preach the gospel to every creature.” And now, in providence, we are come out, as far as this place, to compel you to enter in. You that are poor, come in and be enriched. You that are maimed, come in and be supplied. You that are halt, come in and be restored. You that are blind, come in and be enlightened. You that are wandering in the highways, and running in the broad way to hell, come in and be saved both from sin and wrath. You that never came to Christ before, O come in now ; whatever you have been formerly ; whatever atrocious crimes you have been guilty of ; yet all bygones shall be bygones, if you come in this day ; from this day will he bless you : if you come in this hour, from this hour will he bless you : and O may this be the happy hour when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live. You that fancy ye have come in to Christ formerly, and yet may be deceiving yourselves, and debarring yourselves from believing, by the notion you are believers already ; O come, and make it sure work ; come and take a better grip of Christ, a faster grip than ever, such as death itself shall not loose. You that are young, come in and get grace to remember your Creator, and grace to be early seekers of him who says, “ I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me.” You that are old, come in to Jesus, and get your gray hairs crowned with righteousness, that when death comes, you may be among the blessed dead that die in the Lord. You that come here only to gaze upon strangers, O come in, and ye shall get a view of the King in his beauty. You that came here to satisfy

your curiosity, come in, and ye shall get satisfaction to your souls, and food to your heart, and not to your fancy only. You that came here for some trifling reason, like Saul going to seek his Father's asses, some carnal beastly errand or other, O come in, and ye shall get a kingdom before you go; for, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." You that came here to mock and to scorn, O come in to Jesus, who says, "How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity, and scorers delight in scorning? Turn ye at my reproof; and I will pour out my spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you." You that come here under the heavy load of the guilt of sin, O come in and get pardoning grace: God's indemnity is offered unto you; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquity for mine own name's sake." You that came here under the power of sin, and the pollution of it, O come in and get sanctifying and purifying grace; for here is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. You that came here, and know not for what you came, O come in to Jesus, and ye shall know wherefore he brought you here in his providence; ye shall know, whatever your designs were that God had a design of mercy in it to you. You that came here only to see a minister ordained in these extraordinary circumstances of the church, O come in; we would compel you to come in to Christ, and ye shall see a greater sight, and a more extraordinary ordination; ye shall see Christ ordained of the Father to be a Minister and a Saviour unto you; a Prophet, Priest, and King for you; for, "Him hath God the Father sealed." You that came here only to get a minister amongst you, O come in, come in, and get the best minister first, our Master, to be your minister. Take Christ first, and then Paul and Apollos are yours, ye shall then have the minister, and God's blessing with him.

Consider again, for compelling you to come in, that every door of his house is open to you to come in, that his house may be filled; "I am the door," says Christ; and in this everlasting gospel, this door is opened, and there is no impediment to hinder your entrance. All impediments on God's part are actually removed; the law is fulfilled, justice is satisfied, wrath appeased, death vanquished by this JESUS: and all impediments on your part, are virtually removed; faith, and all grace, and glory is purchased; "All things are ready, come to the marriage." The door is open, come in, and take him by the hand of faith, give your assent and consent to the bargain: here the door of grace and mercy is opened:

the door of hope is opened to you in the valley of Achor : the door of life is opened to you that are dead sinners ; O come in, that you may have life : the door of pardon is opened to you that are guilty sinners ; the door of peace is opened to you that are rebels ; Christ hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious ; the door of sanctification is opened to you that are polluted sinners : "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin ;" and he is made of God to you sanctification ; the door of faith is opened to you, faithless sinner ; Christ is the author of faith, as well as the object of it ; O come in and get grace to believe : the door of repentance is open to you impenitent, hard-hearted sinner ; Christ is exalted to give repentance : the door of salvation is open to you, lost sinner ; Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost ; the door of consolation is opened to you dejected sinner ; come in to him who is the consolation of Israel : the door is opened to you that do not think, and cannot think it is opened to you ; "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord ; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, and my ways than your ways."

Our Master's house is like the New Jerusalem, that hath three gates to every airth, Rev. xxi. 13. "On the east three gates, on the west three gates, on the south three gates, and on the north three gates ;" and all the gates of his house are open. Where dwell you, man, woman ? In Scotland, or in England ? In the east, or in the west ? In the north or in the south ? O come in, come in : for the gates are open to you ; "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west : I will say to the north, Give up : and to the south, Keep not back ; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, Isa. xliii. 5. If you, or any of you, go away thinking or saying, that there was not a word said to you, I take all the four quarters of heaven, east, west, north, and south, to witness, that you are called to come in.

This is the first offer that ever the present speaker made of Christ to the most part of you, and it is like it may be the last. It is the first sight that ever we all had of one another, and it is like we shall never hear or see one another again, till it be before the awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he comes in the clouds of heaven : and, in the view of that awful day of judgment, I would now compel you to come in to him, who will then say to the wicked, "Depart from me, ye cursed ;" but now is on a throne of grace, say-

ing, Come to me, ye cursed sinners, and get a blessing. O Sirs, let me compel you, by the awful authority of the great God, and by the blood and bowels of the Lord Jesus Christ, to come in to him for all the ends I have mentioned.

Consider how empty his house is, and what room there is in it and how few are coming in; and shall his house be left empty for you? Every corner of his house stands empty, every seat of his house, every chamber of his house, every story of his house stands empty for your part, though you be called to come in, that his house may be filled: Oh! "Tell it not in Gath, nor publish it in the streets of Askelon."

Will you tell me what displeases you at Christ? Is his person contemptible who is IMMANUEL, God-man, God with us? Is his purchase contemptible? Is his grace and glory, and a happy eternity nothing to you, and unworthy of your regard? Yet a little while, and time shall be no more; and, if time be gone before you come in, in vain will you cry, Oh! call time again. What a terrible sting will that reflection give you, Alas! I had once a fair call to come in to Christ, but I slighted it! I had convictions of sin, but I crucified them! I had warm desires to come to Christ, but I quenched them, by returning to my lusts, and sinful diversions! Oh! what madness possesses me, that I did not accept of Christ as well as others; that I refused Christ, and choosed perishing vanities?

Consider, and be compelled to come in, by the greatness of the grace of that God, whose orders we are executing, when we endeavour, in his name, to compel you to come in. The word of a God is a compelling word. The poor man that speaks to you cannot compel you; but the God that speaks by him can. And, if you can hear this word, not as the word of men, or of the poor worm that is speaking to you, but as it is indeed the word of God; if you can believe that God is speaking to you, then the word will work effectually in you that so believe. O Sirs, could you believe that this Almighty Speaker is present, speaking to you, you would hear a sound of omnipotent power in his word going through your heart.

What! is the power of the spirit to be expected to go along with the word, in this day of clouds and darkness, in this day of shaking and commotion? Yea, he can make the clouds his chariots, for riding in to your heart. He hath said, He will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come. And, even in the

midst of these shaking times, he is coming to you in this kind offer of himself; and shall we not hope he is coming to some in the power of his Spirit? For the gracious offer of the gospel is the channel wherein the powerful influences of the Spirit run. Oh! shall any heart here resist the grace and kindness of Christ, saying, "Come in." He doth not say, Go in without me, but come in to me; importing, if you would gladly come, and want my help, there is my helping hand.

May the Lord himself effectually persuade you, and "Compel you to come in, that his house may be filled."

APPENDIX.

Directed more especially to the United Societies in and about Morbottle and Stichel, upon occasion of the much lamented Death of the Reverend MR. JOHN HUNTER, lately ordained Minister among them; and at whose Ordination the foregoing Sermon was preached.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THIS awful dispensation of providence, in the speedy removal of this worthy pastor, cannot but be most afflicting to all the Lord's people through the land, that ever enjoyed the benefit of hearing the joyful sound of the glorious gospel out of his pleasant edifying lips; but more especially to you, that had the prospect of enjoying the advantage of his fixed ministry among you, and who are so quickly bereaved of such a blessing. To you the stroke must be very heavy and smarting.

He was indeed a burning and shining light, that burnt so fast, and shone so bright, it is the less to be wondered at that he did not burn and shine long. The precious oil that was in this lamp, being once lighted, by a licence to preach, burnt so intensely, that the lamp itself behaved to waste: for, beside the appointments that were laid upon him, after his licence, and before his ordination amongst you, which appointments he might have accomplished more easily, considering his great abilities; besides these, I say, his heart was so much set upon the great work of feeding Christ's lambs, that he could not refuse the constant solicitations of poor starving souls, crying for more and more of the bread and water of life from him, in the several corners of the land where he went;

insomuch that, as I am informed, he would have preached upwards of thirty times in the space of fourteen days. And though what was the gain of others, may be supposed to be your loss, that this bright candle was so far burnt and wasted, in this manner, before it was set up amongst you; yet you also shared as liberally as others, of that circumambient blessing, so as to enjoy more of it before than since his ordination: however, you ought to adore that holy providence, that made such a bright star to shine among you, though but a little. He that hath the stars in his right hand, may give or take them when he pleases.

It was, no doubt, a great loss to the generation that such a gracious person, endued with such great and useful gifts, as he was, should have lived so long in such a retired and obscure way: and, as this was mostly owing to the corruptions of the times, with which his zealous soul could never mingle itself, and against which he always, in his station, testified: so, having once joined himself with the Associate Presbytery, and having been once licenced by them to preach the gospel, it may be matter of conviction to the corrupt age, by which such excellent talents were so long smothered, that, whenever they came to be occupied, they were universally taking and edifying, insomuch that he became the darling of the little flock, the followers of the Lamb. His preaching and praying gift was reckoned, by many, to come nearest, of any we have heard of, to that of the great and eminent Mr. Samuel Rutherford, being so full of homely similies and metaphors, tending to convey the truth with such pleasure and evidence into the hearts of hearers, that few or none who heard him once, but were fond to hear him again. These things considered, together with his holy, humble, and meek conversation, his great learning, profound judgment, aptness to teach, and ability to convince gainsayers, with other great and excellent endowments, wherewith he was blessed of God, contribute, no doubt, to heighten your grief, that have lost such an eminent, well-qualified pastor, and that in such a sudden manner, which screws up the trial to a very great height, in the holy, wise, and adorable providence of God.

It is more than probable there will be various commentaries upon, and interpretations people will make of this trying, and afflictive providence, according to their various sentiments concerning the public differences of the times. Many are apt, too soon, too rashly and hastily, to explain the works of the Lord, which yet re-

main inexplicable, till the vision, which is for an appointed time, speak out the mystery, and explain the mind and design of God therein: "What I do, thou knowest not now," says Christ;" but thou shalt know hereafter."

Meantime, till the mind of the Lord more fully appear, let all murmuring and mutinous thoughts be silenced by these two following considerations:

1st, Consider the sovereignty of God, and his absolute dominion over you, and all his creatures, as the potter hath over the clay. It is the Lord that giveth, and the Lord that taketh; and therefore we are to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." It is the Lord who can do us no wrong, and who hath undeservedly done us much good; "Let him do to us what seemeth good in his sight." Let not too much thoughtfulness about your affliction and loss, divert you from an humble inquiry at this sovereign Lord, what he aims at by this dispensation? What he would have you to learn out of it? What he reproves and contends with you for? What he would have amended in you? What he would have you weaned from, and mortified to? You may humbly ask him, What he would have you to do? And what he means by this hard beginning; that you, who were first provided in this manner, should be first laid desolate. That the Lord should seem to give you, in his providence, a deliverance from the bondage and oppression of church judicatories, and yet, on a sudden, withdraw the deliverance, and increase your grief. You may think, can such a case be exemplified in Scripture? While many, through the land, are of the mind that the Associate Presbytery are raised up of the Lord, in his holy providence, to give some relief to his oppressed people in Scotland: now, here is one instance in the entry of their ordaining work. Some relief was thought to have been given, but behold it is blown up; we are in as great straits as ever, and our grief is doubled. God hath not smiled upon the means of deliverance that have come this way.

My dear friends, if you search your Bible, you will see how God may, by such sovereign steps as this, be even carrying on his great work of delivering. Moses was sent to deliver Israel out of their Egyptian bondage, *Exod. iii. 7-10*; but, behold, instead of present deliverance, on a sudden, their hopes are dashed, their bondage is increased, and they come crying to Moses and Aaron, saying, "The Lord look upon you, and judge, &c. Ye have put a sword

in their hands to slay us." Wherefore Moses returned to the Lord, saying, "Wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? Thou hast not delivered thy people at all," Exod. v. 21, 22, 23. Yet how gloriously God delivered in the issue, the sacred history shews. Now, after this one instance is adduced, let none, in their commenting upon the providence that hath befallen you, conclude, that your case is desperate, and that the work, which the Lord wrought among you, in beginning your deliverance, was not of God, because your hopeful prospect was so suddenly dashed. Nay, what if, from such instances as that I have mentioned, it look more like the way of our sovereign God, in delivering his people from their thralldom.

2dly, Consider the infinite wisdom of God, that knows much better what is good for you, than you yourselves do. He knows what to be most needful for you, which you may judge to be most hurtful and dreadful; to this purpose you may put a remark upon the words of Christ to his disciples, John xvi. 7; where, having spoken of his leaving them, upon hearing of which, sorrow had filled their heart, he says, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away." What! (might the shallow wisdom of the disciples say) can that be true, that it is good and expedient for us, that our great Lord and Master go away from us? This is a thing that hath the most dreadful aspect. What will become of us if he leave us! It seems utterly impossible to us, that this can be for our good and advantage. Nay, but says he, who is truth itself, and who is the wisdom of God, "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away." Now, could the loss of the great Master's presence be made up? and could his departure be needful and expedient for them and us? And will you think it strange, if he be saying to you, with respect to a servant, however eminent, It is expedient for you that he should be taken away? God can do no needless thing: even what he does is awful, yet still it is needful. Whenever we are in heaviness, through any or many trials, it is always and only *if need be*, 1 Pet. i. 6. And if ye, at present, are in heaviness, through this awful blow of his hand, you may be sure it was needful: though you cannot see it, infinite wisdom knows the necessity and expediency thereof. And, if you stand in need of what you are trysted with, in all its sad and sorrowful circumstances, which must be the case, since God, that cannot lie, hath said it, surely you ought to submit to his pleasure,

which hath your profit inseparably joined with it, Heb. xii. 10. Nor have you reason to complain of God's ordering that for you, whereof you stand in need, even the quick removal of such a precious and desirable pastor : for, if you did but exceed in over-valuing or doting too much upon him, and in reckoning yourselves happy in having him, as Micah did in another case, Judges xvii. 13. It was needful, that by his being taken away, you should be made to see that your good and happiness lay elsewhere, and be brought to a blessed necessity of crying more ardently than ever, with the tear of godly sorrow in the eye of faith, to our glorious Lord and Master, Christ, that he himself may come and fill up the room that he hath made void. And, indeed, it is a great vacuity, that he, "In whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead," cannot fill. A few moments of his gracious presence, and a few drops of his special love, is sufficient to fill up the greatest void, that is made by the removal of the choicest and most desirable of all earthly comforts. "And happy they, as one says, who, when they lose any near friend, or dear idol they are fond of, are helped of God to make Jesus Christ succeed to it as its heir, by taking that loss as a summons to transfer and settle their whole love to him, as the object incomparably worthy of it ; he being altogether lovely, and infinitely more amiable and fairer than the sons of men." Say not, There is no sorrow like our sorrow, no trial like ours ; and if it had been any thing but this, we could have borne it ; for your heavenly Father sees that this, even this very cup, with all its bitter ingredients, was fit to be given you to drink ; and that this, this very trial, in all its heavy circumstances, was necessary for you, even the sudden death of a lately settled minister among you ; might not the Lord see it needful for you, thus to correct you for your former iniquities ? And needful that, after so many sweet sermons he had preached to you, before and after his ordination, you should have this one very bitter sermon, to help you, through grace, the better to digest the former. Might he not see it needful for you, that, before his departure, he should be brought into a pastoral relation with you, that not only his widow and fatherless children, being thus entitled to a share of your kind and generous concern, you might have occasion to shew it, so far as that may be requisite ; but also, that you, in particular, might have the special benefit of a louder sermon by his death, than ever you heard from him in his life. And if this last and loudest sermon be blessed and sanctified to you, for awakening you to seek

the Lord more earnestly, and for compelling you to come in to him more speedily, then it will be sweetly verified in your experience, that it was expedient for you, that he should be taken away.

When you so earnestly entreated the publishing of the foregoing Ordination Sermon, I suppose you little expected, that it would need to be subscribed, as it were, with a Funeral Sermon : but, since holy providence hath made this addition to that exercise not unsuitable, I hope it shall not, though in this rude and unexpected address to you, be unacceptable, notwithstanding the occasion be mournful ; as I would therefore presume, that the preceding considerations shall not be reckoned unseasonable, and hope they will be duly pondered by you ; so I shall conclude this discourse to you with some advices suitable, I think, to the present occasion.

I. Think not strange that your minister should die, and be so quickly called away. As the prophets do not live for ever, Zech. i. 5 ; so they may live but a very short while : for some may be called to work but one hour in God's vineyard, and yet be rewarded equally with those that have wrought the whole day, Matt. xxi. 12. Some may think, that, if any could be exeemed from death and a dark grave, it should be they who are the lights of the world ; that, if any should escape the house of silence, it should be they who are to convey the joyful sound of the gospel to the ears of men ; but yet they must die, as well as others, and may be called off very quickly, especially in two cases.

1. When their work is done, that God hath allotted to them in this world. Some ministers live longer than others, because God hath appointed them more work than others. Some live a shorter time, because either God hath appointed them less work, or enables them to dispatch a great work in a short time.

2. When desolating judgments are hastily advancing towards the place, or land, wherein they live, even as Noah, that famous preacher of righteousness, entered into the ark but a few days before the old world was destroyed by a deluge. Such righteous men are often taken away from the evil to come, though few observe and lay it to heart ; even though terrible judgments may be at the door.

As these are two sovereign reasons, so I shall mention two sinful causes, that may hasten the death of faithful ministers. Though their days are determined by that God, in whose hands all our times are ; yet men may be instrumental in shortening their life, either by undervaluing, or overvaluing of them.

(1.) By undervaluing them; slighting and contemning their person, their gifts, their message. If we do not prize our mercies when we enjoy them, God may make us know the worth of them by the want of them. Much contempt was poured upon your pastor, now dead in Christ, by many of this generation: therefore God hath said, They are not worthy of him; they shall not enjoy him long.

(2.) By overvaluing them; people may shorten their days, when they give that honour to them which only belongs to their great and glorious Master, who will not give his glory to another. If people fall down and worship these bright and glittering stars, no wonder if the Father of lights remove them away. If, in any respect, they be advanced to God's throne, he will quickly lay them in the dust. It is true, gospel-ministers, that have the divine mission and message, ought to be highly esteemed for their work's sake, and there can be no sin in honouring these whom God honours; or in loving these very dearly, whom God makes the happy instruments of our conversion, or spiritual edification: but yet, if these instruments get more of our heart than is due to them, or any share of the room that Christ only should have, then he may justly hasten them out of our way. How far, as I said above, any might have exceeded in doating too much upon your eminent pastor, I know not, unless it was evidenced by the great following of people that he had flocking to him, which yet I dare not wholly condemn in them, lest I should reproach our blessed Master, who never reproveth the multitude for flocking to him, even when they thronged him and pressed him, Luke viii. 45; except when they followed him only for the loaves, or the bread that perisheth, John vi. 26, 27. Nor did ever John the Baptist, nor any of the apostles challenge the multitudes for thronging to them. But if any were guilty of immoderate doating upon this short-lived pastor of yours, they may acknowledge the Lord to be righteous, when they robbed him of his honour, that he robbed them of their idol. The best of ministers are but mortal men: though the rich treasures of spiritual gifts and graces are poured into these vessels, they are but earthen ones, and will soon be broken by the blow of God's hand. These gourds may be very delightful to us, and we may find great refreshment in sitting under their shadow; yet the worm of death will make them to wither. And we do not well to be exceeding or excessively glad of them, while they grow; nor do we well to be angry when they wither.

II. Endeavour to make a right improvement of this awful providence: in order to which I shall recommend a sixfold study, with relation to your minister's death.

1. Study to be sensible of the hand of God in this providence. Be not insensible of the stroke: though you must not murmur at it, yet you ought to mourn for it, and for your sins that provoke the Lord to take such labourers out of his vineyard. Insensibleness of God's hand is interpreted by the Spirit of God a despising of it, Heb. xii. 5, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." Yea, it is accounted a high provocation, Jer. v. 3, "I have smitten them, and they have not grieved." It argues stubbornness in a child not to cry when his father whips him. When God chastens by the loss of a dear friend, it is very smarting; but when he does it by the death of a dear minister, a soul-friend, it is yet more heavy and grievous.

2. Study to profit by what is past. Hath God taken away your minister? Endeavour to recollect and retain these excellent truths that were delivered by him, while he was with you. Call these blessed sentences to mind, as far as possible, in order to feed upon them, as the prophet says, "Thy words were found of me and I did eat them; and they were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart," Jer. xv. 16. So far as you can remember them, and reduce them to practice, so far will you profit by them. The voice delivering these truths to you, was a passing voice; but the word delivered is an abiding word. Though he is dead, the word of the Lord liveth, and abideth for ever. These counsels which he gave you from the word of God, are binding upon you, though he is bound with the chains of death.

3. Study to know Christ, as the only minister who lives for ever, and that can make up your loss. It is he who says, Rev. i. 18, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." It is he, Rev. ii. 1, who holds the seven stars in his right hand, and who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: and it is he who, when he ascended on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, and gave gifts to them, Ps. lxviii. 18, compared with Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. These gifts and gifted persons, and his powerful presence with them, for the benefit of his church and people, he hath promised to the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. This living Jesus can make up your loss, by raising up others. When

Moses died, the Lord sent Joshua to lead Israel into the land of Canaan. When Elijah is gone to heaven, he that hath the residue of the Spirit with him, can make a double portion thereof to rest upon Elisha. When God hath work to do, he will never want instruments. He can perfect praise out of the mouth of babes and sucklings ; and therefore,

4. Study to employ this glorious Lord Jesus, both to provide another pastor or pastors, for you, and to bless the provision he shall make for your saving good. When God calls any labourers out of his vineyard then supplicate the throne of grace, and cry mightily to the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust out more labourers into it, that there may be a succession of faithful ministers, who may rightly divide the word, and faithfully break the bread of life to you, and to your posterity, when your places shall know you no more. Endeavour also to depend upon our exalted King of Zion, for his blessing upon, and continuing of the provision he may make for you ; and for grace to make a due improvement of all the spiritual waterings he shall allow you, whether more transient or fixed. And since he is now teaching us, that what we call a fixed ministry is, at best, but transient ; as these that are ministers should hence learn to be diligent in bringing in as much glory and honour to their Master's name, as they can, while they live ; for when they die, they can do more, but give an account of the stewardship ; though, alas ! many that enter upon the work of the ministry, little consider that awful account they have to give unto the Judge of all the earth, when they depart hence, Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8 ; 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. So you, that are the people, should hence learn how much it concerns you to endeavour, through grace, to get as much good as you can, from gospel-ministers, while they live : for, when once they are entered within the gloomy shades of death, they can be no further beneficial to you, by their warnings, entreaties, counsels, comforts, or prayers. As death stops the ear of the hearer, so it lays the tongue of the speaker. The offers they make of Christ, and salvation through him, should be speedily embraced ; for you know not how soon the feet of those who bring these glad tidings, may go down to the grave, and you be left only to lament and bewail your mis-improvement of them. Yea, as ministers must die, and appear before the divine bar, to give an account of their ministry ; so you must also appear there, to give an account of your proficiency : and therefore,

5. Study to improve your minister's death, as a mean of preparation for your own ; that so you may extract meat out of this eater, and gain out of this loss ; which you would do, if this mournful death should subserve the good purpose of stirring you up to consider your latter end, so as to be restless till you be ready for it, by a readiness both of state and frame. By a readiness of state, I mean, a being brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace, or a getting into Christ, and being found in him. By a readiness of frame, I mean, an habitual walking in Christ, and living by faith upon him, both for righteousness and strength. In this case, as the death of your minister was his gain, while he hath exchanged the cross for the crown, the pulpit for the throne, a militant for a triumphant state ; so his death now, and your own death afterwards, will also be your gain. You will go but the same way that the most eminent servants of God have gone, and must go to the glorious society of Jesus, and of all his holy prophets and apostles, that are made perfect in holiness, and shall eternally reign with him. Could they, who are rejoicing above, speak to you who are mourning below, they would say to you, as Christ said to the woman that followed him to the cross, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves ;" weep not for us, who are happily come to our journey's end, but weep for yourselves, who are travelling yet through a waste and howling wilderness ; weep not for us, who have arrived at the happy haven of rest, for, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord ; they rest from their labour ;" but weep for yourselves, who are yet tossed to and fro upon a tempestuous sea, and are still labouring and toiling ; weep not for us, who stand upon the mount of triumph, and have obtained a complete victory in Christ Jesus over all our enemies ; but weep for yourselves, who are still on a field of battle, wrestling not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers : but yet a little while, and ye who are prepared, as I have said, for your own change, and who have reaped spiritual profit and gain, by your minister's doctrine and death ; yet a little while and you shall meet with him again, never to be separated from him, and enjoy his society in another manner, and in a more glorious place, where you, who joined with him in worship here, shall join with him in a triumphant song of praise, "To him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever ;" and where you will see the great minister of the sanctuary, our Lord Jesus Christ, sitting on his majestic throne ;

and all the others ministers of Jesus, like so many bright stars surrounding the Sun of righteousness for evermore. And, that you may be the more prepared for that happy state, to which your minister is, by death, removed, I add another advice.

6. Study to imitate your departed minister in all these things that were good and commendable in him. It is true, the best of ministers, even these that are gone, have had their failings and imperfections; Moses and Elias were men subject to like passions as we are. The most eminent saints are to be followed by us no further than they followed Christ; but when they are gone, all their failings should be buried with them, and their excellencies should be kept alive in our memory, in order to our imitation of them. And, indeed, there were several things of this nature, very evident in your late pastor, wherein you would do well to follow his example; such as,

(1.) His blameless and circumspect walk, wherein he endeavoured (though sinless perfection is unattainable in a mortal state) to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. Such was his caution herein, that his greatest enemies had nothing against him, except only in the matter of God, as it is said, Dan. vi. 5.

(2.) His meekness and humility. He never appeared to be of a proud and lofty temper, notwithstanding of his eminent gifts, and the great popular applause he had, which he seemed rather to be ashamed of, than to affect; but like his Master whom he served, was meek and lowly, stooping and condescending to all men, and passing by these injuries, he received from any of them.

(3.) His laborious concern for the spiritual profit of immortal souls. Such was his love to the souls of men, that he loved to spend and be spent for them; having little pity upon his own body, in comparison of the pity he shewed to their souls. And hence it may be said of him, especially after his mouth was opened to preach the gospel, that he was not weary in well-doing, but went about doing good. He not only wasted his bodily strength in this spiritual work, but when his flesh and heart seemed to fail, and his body so weak, that he could hardly bear to stand in a pulpit or tent, yet his affections were so much engaged in his work, that he was very unwilling to leave it.

(4.) His love to the saints. He especially embraced these, in the arms of his love upon earth, with whom he thought he should

join in singing the song of the Lamb in heaven. His love of benevolence extended unto all, as appears in the foresaid concern he had for the salvation of sinners; but his complacence was with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth, in them was his delight.

(5.) His readiness to suffer for his Master, and for the gospel's sake, and his willingness to take up his cross, and follow Christ, in the thorny road of tribulation, persecution, contempt, and reproach for the name of Christ, of which sometimes he had his share, even in some of the idle public prints; which yet he never resented, but generously disregarded, as one that rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus, whom he preached.

(6.) His zeal for his Master's honour, cause, and interest, which made him to witness, even in his private station, before ever he entered upon the public ministry, against the corruptions and defections of the times; and induced him to come out to the field of battle, and join himself with the Associate Presbytery, as a society which he judged to be contending for the faith of the gospel, for the liberties of God's people in Scotland, and for a covenanted work of Reformation, which he saw the judicatories, by their proceedings, were razing. Thus he appeared, we may say, and died in the wars; and herein also he ought to be imitated by all these that desire to come forth to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, Judges v. 23. This likewise should be matter of encouragement to you, that were under his actual ministry before his death. I read of Xenophon, who having a crown upon his head, the news came to him that his child was dead, and he presently puts off his crown in token of sorrow; but then inquiring how he died, answer was made, that he died in the wars; then he called for his crown again: even so, your dear minister is dead; and therefore you have cast perhaps the crown of joy off your heads, and are under discouragement; but if you consider how he died, in the spiritual wars, and is now a conqueror, you may put on your crown of joy again, and study to take courage, and to follow his example, in fighting the good fight of faith against all inward and outward enemies, which he did to the last, and then died in the faith he preached, witnessing a good confession to the end of his life. Though the particulars of his death have not, as yet, so fully reached me, yet I am informed, that among his dying words, some dropped from him to this purpose—"I have had many adversaries, both within and without, to wrestle against; but now mine head is lifted up

above all mine enemies ; and I would not change my lot for the heaviest crown of gold."

In a word, as your minister commended his Master, Christ Jesus, to you ; and set life and death before you ; so now, his Master hath set your minister's life and death before you, that by all these means, you may be "compelled to come in, that his house may be filled."

Though such as have enjoyed a nearer, and longer intimacy with your worthy minister, who is now with the Lord, may perhaps find the account I have given of his character, to be but lame and defective, and might readily be in case to make a more full representation of these glorious virtues that adorned him, and ought to be imitated by you ; yet, I hope, what is here, according to knowledge, laid before you, will be the more acceptable to, and regarded by you, that it is not without some special unforeseen providence, that he who was particularly employed, first in licensing, and then in ordaining him, should also, after all, be brought under a providential necessity of doing this last office to his memory : wherein I shall not reckon my poor labour vain, if it do any justice to his character, or service to your souls.

EPITAPH ON THE REVEREND MR. JOHN HUNTER,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT GATESHALL.

*Ipsæ Petrus, quamvis hominum Piscator, obiit :
Horum hic Venator, quin properanter ? obiit.*

This mighty HUNTER well employed,
Between the distant poles,
His mortal body soon destroyed
To save immortal souls.

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

GAD, THE CONQUERED, YET CONQUERING TRIBE; OR, THE VAN-
QUISHED AT FIRST, THE VICTOR AT LAST.¹

“Gad, a troop shall overcome him; but he shall overcome at the last.”—GEN. xlix. 19.

JACOB is here upon his death-bed making his will: and though the eyes of his body were become dim, yet the eye of his mind was enlightened to see what would befall his children, and to prophecy their lot. The twelve sons of Jacob were men of renown: but the twelve tribes of Israel that descended from them, and were denominated by them, were yet more renowned. We find their names upon the gates of the new Jerusalem.

From the third verse of the chapter we have the predictions concerning each tribe: this verse is concerning GAD; and the prediction is in allusion to the name Gad, which signifies a troop. Jacob foresaw that they were to be a warlike tribe: and so we find they were, 1 Chron. xii. 8, “The Gadites, it is said, were men of might; men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.” He foresaw, that the situation of that tribe, on the other side Jordan, would expose it to the excursions of the neighbouring enemies, the Moabites and Ammonites. And here two things are told about them.

1. Something for their humiliation, to prevent their pride; “A troop shall overcome him.” That they might not be puffed up with their strength and valour, they are told that the troops of their enemies should in many skirmishes overcome them: “A troop shall overcome him.”

2. Something for their consolation: to prevent their discouragement by their defeat, he assures them that they should “overcome at the last;” which, accordingly, was fulfilled, when, in Saul’s time and David’s, the Moabites and Ammonites were wholly sub-

(1) This sermon was preached at Stirling, on Monday, June, 1740, being the thanksgiving day after the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

dued. See for this, 1 Chron. v. 18–22, “The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore that went out to the war. And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetor, and Nephish, and Nodab. And they were helped against them; and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them, because they put their trust in him. And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand; and of sheep, two hundred and fifty thousand; and of asses, two thousand; and of men, an hundred thousand. For there fell down many slain, for the war was of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity.” Thus it was accomplished what Jacob here foretold of Gad, “A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last.”

Now this, together with all other scriptures, is given for our instruction, and represents the case and lot of God’s church and people to the end of the world. Hence I deduce the following observation.

DOCT. “That the Israel of God may, for a time, be baffled, vanquished, and defeated by troops of enemies and oppositions; yet, they shall be victorious at last.”

Thus grace in the soul is frequently foiled in its conflicts: troops of corruption overcome it. But the cause is God’s; and grace will, in the issue, come off a conqueror; yea, more than a conqueror, Rom. viii. 37.

Instances in scripture, of the defeat and conquest of God’s people, are many. Jacob seemed to be defeat, so as he was obliged to fly from the face of Esau: but he defeat him at last. Joseph was defeat by a troop of false cruel brethren, and mighty oppositions; but he overcame at the last. Israel was many times overcome by troops of enemies; but they overcame at last. Christ, the Captain of salvation, seemed to be overcome for a while, by troops and armies of assaulting oppositions from heaven, earth, and hell, by which he was brought down to the dust of death; but he was victorious, and overcame at last.

Here we may touch a little, through divine aid, at the following heads of method:—

- I. At the foils which the Israel of God meet with ; and shew what are the troops that defeat them in this world, and how far the troops may overcome them.
- II. Speak a little of their victory, and how they may be said to overcome at last.
- III. Offer some reasons of the doctrine, shewing why they are many times overcome, and why they shall overcome at last.
- IV. Make application of the whole subject.

I. We are to speak of the foils which the Israel of God meet with in this world. And I am here to observe these two things, 1. What are the troops that overcome them : and, 2. How far the troops may overcome them.

1st, What are the troops that overcome the Israel of God in this world ? To this we reply in the following particulars :—

1. There is a troop of lusts and corruptions, by which they are many times defeat : “ Iniquities prevail against me,” says David, Psal. lxxv. 3. This is a numerous troop, comprehending innumerable vain thoughts, and vile imaginations, besetting and besieging the soul in time of hearing, praying, communicating, and every religious duty. This troop is a body of sin, that makes the Israel of God to cry out sometimes with Paul, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from it ?” Rom. vii. 24.

2. There is a troop of ungodly men in the world, that they have to fight with, and that sometimes overcome them : “ Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation,” Psalm xliiii. 1. This is a troop that many times bears down the work of God in a church, and the work of God in the heart. As it was with Israel of old, so it is with the church in all ages : she is never without enemies that annoy her ; sometimes the tyrant, by heart-hatred and open persecution ; the atheist, by profaneness of life ; the heretic, by corruption of doctrine ; and the hypocrite, by mere pretences to holiness.

3. There is a troop of devils that annoys and defeats them, while they wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, Eph. vi. 12. The devil and his instruments are the troops of hell that surround them, and armies from the bottomless pit that assaults them, and throw many fiery darts of temptation at them.

4. There is a troop of officers in church and state, members of courts and judicatories, civil or ecclesiastic, that sometimes fall heavily upon them. Thus Christ warns his disciples, Matt. x. 17, "That they will be delivered up to councils, and scourged in synagogues, and be brought before governors and kings, for his sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles." And he warns them not to be offended, saying, "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service," John xvi. 2. I might here mention many troops and armies of oppositions they may meet with; such as, a troop of earthly cares and vexations, a troop of hellish snares and temptations, a troop of grievous trials and tribulations, and cross dispensations that may attack and overcome them. But I hasten to shew,

2dly, How far the troop may overcome them. I shall mention four degrees of victory that the troop of enemies and opposers may obtain over them.

1. The troop may overcome them so far, as to bring them to distress and great bondage, as Israel was under in Egypt, and in the days of Nehemiah, when he said, chap. ii. 17, "Thou seest the distress we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste." The child of God may be brought to David's prayer, Psalm xxv. 17, "O bring me out of my distresses:" a troop hath overcome me, and brought me into distress; O bring me out!

2. The troop may overcome them so far, as to bring them to discouragement and disquietude, as well as distress. Thus it was with David, when troops of sin and iniquity had defeat him, and gone over his head: "I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart," Psalm xxxviii. 8. A man may be outwardly distressed, and not inwardly disquieted; but then he is greatly defeat, when he is greatly disquieted.

3. A troop may overcome them so far, as to bring them to despair; this is yet a sorer defeat, when the church or child of God is so far vanquished and overcome, as to say, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord! remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall," Lam. iii. 18. So far were the disciples overcome with the troop of temptation, when their Lord was dead and buried, that their hope was giving up the ghost, when they said, "We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel:" but now, might they say, We find ourselves

mistaken; our hope is gone. Oh! what a great victory does the enemy gain, when the Israel of God are brought to despair!

4. A troop may overcome them so far, as to bring them to death, to the sentence of death, and to death itself. To the sentence of death, as it was with the apostle, 2 Cor. i. 9, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead." Yea, to death itself, and actual killing: "Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, shall think he doth God service," John xvi. 2. And thus you read of the killing of the witnesses, Rev. xi. 7. The children of God may be so defeat and overcome, as in a spiritual sense to be killed, dead, and buried, and have the gravestone laid upon them, as it was upon their glorious Captain. Thus the church cries, Lam. iii. 53, "They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me." Alas! how has a troop overcome them! when they are saying, Ezek. xxxvii. 11, "Behold, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts." And as it is, Psalm cxli. 7, "Our bones are scattered about the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth or cleaveth wood upon the earth."

Thus a troop may overcome them so far, as to bring them to distress, discouragement, despair, and death. And, O Sirs, where is the Christian that is not conquered many a time by a troop of inward corruptions, or outward temptations, or both? Where is the tribe of Israel, that may not be named by the tribe of Gad? "A troop shall overcome them." How does the enemy overcome their faith, overcome their hope, overcome their patience, overcome their courage and comfort, and dash them down to the ground? So much of their foils.

II. The second thing proposed was, To speak of their victory: "They shall overcome at last." As did Gad, so shall all the true Israel of God. Here it may be considered, How they overcome, and when they overcome; or in what respects they may be said to overcome at last.

1st, How they shall overcome. I name six means, by which they effectuate this.

1. They overcome by knowledge; Dan. xi. 32, "They people that know their God, shall be strong, and do exploits." And particularly, by getting the knowledge of, and acquaintance with the Captain of salvation, having abandoned their old general, the devil, under whose standard all the children of men by nature wage war

against God ; but now, by the knowledge of Christ, they are strong and do exploits ; for, by him strengthening them, they can do all things. They overcome by the knowledge of the warfaring life of the Christian, so as to be resolved upon this life, and not to be always lying in a bed of ease. By the knowledge of the nature of the war, that it is spiritual, and that the weapons of it are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down strongholds, casting down imaginations, &c. And by the knowledge of the necessity of new recruits of grace and strength from Jesus Christ. This knowledge comprehends acquaintance also with the opposite interest and parties concerned in the war ; how it is grace on the one side, and corruption on the other ; Christ on the one side, and the devil and the world on the other : the dragon and his angels, against Michael and his angels. It is necessary in order to overcome, that the soldier know his friends and foes. It comprehends also, a knowledge both of the power and policy of the enemy, and of the power and wisdom of the captain to counteract the enemy. "The people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."

2. They overcome by faith ; 1 John v. 5, "This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith." The lusts of this world, and the god of this world are thus overcome : "Whom resist, stedfast in the faith. Above all, taking the shield of faith." By faith we wax valiant in fight, Heb. xi. Faith hath a sister that is called Hope, and they are both joined together, as part of the Christian armour, 1 Thess. v. 8. Where faith serves for a breastplate : and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

3. They overcome by love ; this is also joined with that same faith, 1 Thes. v. 8, "Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love." Love is a very strong piece of armour, that can go through troops of oppositions ; "Love is strong as death, &c. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it," Song viii. 6, 7.

4. They overcome by the means of prayer : Matt. xxvi. 41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." This weapon ye find among the rest, Eph. vi. 18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." This weapon Paul used, when a troop invaded him, and a messenger from Satan attacked him ; "For this I besought the Lord thrice." The prayerless man is a vanquished man : but as long as a man can pray in faith and in the spirit, he is armed against the devil and his troops. It is

best wrestling against sin and Satan, fighting on our knees ; but cease praying, and victory is gone.

5. They overcome by the blood of Christ, in a special manner ; “They overcome by the blood of the Lamb,” Rev. xii. 11. This is the principal weapon, without which the rest are useless. It is the blood of Christ that satisfies justice, purchases victory, cleanseth from all sin, and washes away enemies as a flood. It is the blood of Christ that poisons the old serpent, and destroys Satan’s power : when Satan bruised the heel of the woman’s seed, Christ, the promised Seed, gave the serpent’s head a blow, as it were, with his bloody heel, and broke the devil’s head therewith ; for, “By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

6. They overcome by the word, which is the sword of the Spirit, Eph. vi. 17. Hence Christ repels Satan still with this word, “It is written, it is written.” See 1 John ii. 1, “I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you ; and ye have overcome the wicked one.” Are ye assaulted with the troops of temptation ? Then call to mind God’s word of command, his word of threatening, his word of promise. You may do thus, and thus, says Satan : no, but say you, So and so hath God commanded. There is no harm, says Satan : nay, but, say say you, So and so hath God threatened. You will be nothing the better of your religion, says Satan : nay, but, say you, So and so hath God promised. Is sin and corruption strong ? Then plead the promise, saying, as it is, 1 Kings i. 13, “Hast thou not said that Solomon shall reign ? and, behold Adonijah hath usurped the throne.” Thus they overcome.

These two weapons, the blood of Christ, and the word, are joined together, Rev. xii. 11, “They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” By cleaving zealously to the cause of truth, they were helped to convince their beholders, and confound their enemies, to confirm their friends, and so overcome the troop of opposers.

2dly, When they overcome, or in what respects they may be said to overcome at last. These six things are here imported.

1. The partial victory they obtain in time, so as they get day about, as it were, with the enemy, when the Lord returns to them, and faith gets up its head, and their spiritual armour is exercised.

2. The final and full victory they obtain at death and judgment, when, as the last enemy to be destroyed is death ; so death

itself shall be swallowed up in victory. They "shall overcome at last;" it imports,

3. A gradual victory; or that to which they come by various degrees, risings and fallings, hopes and fears; yet by little and little, as the Lord drove out the Cannanites before Israel.

4. A difficult victory, that is not obtained till the last, after much ado; for. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." They must force their way all along to the very last. It imports,

5. A mysterious victory, wherein they conquer, even when conquered; and by being overcome, do overcome: as Christ, by death, destroyed death; so they, by being conquered, do conquer; when, by their foils, they are excited to fight more courageously: and by their falls they are made more circumspect, more humble, tender, wary, and watchful. Thus "they overcome at the last."

6. It imports a certain victory in the issue; "He shall overcome at the last," however uncertain at first, it seems to be; yea, and not only dubious, but desperate like, when troops of enemies overcome them; yet he that promises the victory will give it to them, and make them ascribe it only to him, saying, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 27.

In a word, they may be said to overcome at last, when, however weak, yet, out of weakness they are made strong, Heb. xi. 34. When, after grievous dashes, they recover new strength; and so go from strength to strength, till they appear before the Lord in Zion, Psalm lxxxiv. 7. When, in extremity, they are helped with surprising auxiliaries from heaven, so that it may be said, "Jehovah-Jireh, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide." When, in the heat of the battle, the Lord makes himself known by his ancient name, "Jehovah-nissi, The Lord their banner." When he shews himself a present help in time of trouble, when all other helps and assistance is gone: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left," Deut. xxxii. 36. When, though the enemy prevails, yet they keep the field; and when, though they lose many battles, yet they gain the war. Then, and in these respects they may be said to overcome at last.

III. The third thing proposed was, To offer the grounds of the

doctrine. And here also, there are two things to be evidenced ; 1. Why a troop shall overcome them. 2. Why they shall overcome at last.

1st, Why it is so ordered of God, that his people, while on earth, should be thus foiled, defeat, and overcome ?

1. It is so ordered, for the honour of God's perfections. That his wisdom may appear in leading them through the midst of their enemies : his power, in enabling their dead men to rise and regain the conquest, and overleap a wall : his faithfulness in bringing them through fire and water to a wealthy land, according to his word : and his goodness in not suffering them to be tempted above what they are able, nor always trampled upon.

2. It is so ordered, for the exercise of their graces, and of their spiritual arms ; yea, he suffers them to be defeated, notwithstanding their arms, that they may learn not to trust to their graces and borrowed armour, but to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

3. It is to make their victory the more remarkable, and their heaven the more sweet, where they shall sing an eternal *Επινικιον*, a song of victory over all their enemies ; and that while they are by the way, every new victory they obtain may be the more sweet, glorious, and wonderful ; when, after they were dashed and conquered, they become conquerors.

4. It is so ordered, that there may be a conformity between them and their head, their Captain ; for, they are predestinated to be conformed to his image, both in sufferings and glory. Now, he was made perfect through suffering : by death he overcame death ; by being overcome, he overcame.

5. It is so ordered, to make them humble and dependent ; humble in the sense of their own weakness, while they cannot stand before the enemy without being foiled and overcome ; the devil, the world, and corruption being too strong for them ; and that they may learn to live a life of faith and dependence upon their powerful General.

6. Hence it is thus ordered to help their memory ; Psalm lix. 11. "Slay them not, lest my people forget." Slay not the enemy, says God, but rather let them slay and overcome, lest my people forget their prayers, and forget my promise, and forget what they have ado for me, and what I have ado for them ; lest they forget to watch, and wait, and keep under my standard.

2ndly, Why they shall overcome at last. Their victory is sure.

1. Because their Head has overcome ; their Captain hath conquered all their enemies, and spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross, Col. ii. 15 ; and he is exalted far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, Eph. i. 21. And therefore they may be convinced of judgment, and of victory, because the prince of this world is judged.

2. Because their Captain heads them, and goes before them in the van ; " The breaker is come up before them : and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them," Mic. ii. 13. How can they but have success in the issue, the angel of God going before them, as with Israel of old ?

3. They shall overcome at last, because the Captain follows them, and not only leads the van, but also brings up the rear ; " Depart ye, depart ye ; go ye out from thence ; touch no unclean thing : go ye out of the midst of her ; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight : for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear-ward," Isa. lli. 11, 12 ; that is, God will both lead their van and bring up the rear, securing them from enemies that either meet them, or follow them ; for, " With his favour will he compass them." God's presence with his people will be that to them, which the pillar of cloud was to Israel, both behind and before them. See Isa. lviii. 8, " Thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rear-ward." Christ, thy righteousness, before thee as thy van-guard ; and the glory of God, Christ, the rear-ward, in whom God's glory shines, and on whom alone we can depend, when our sins pursue us, and are ready to take hold upon us, and when we are pursued by any other enemy.

4. They shall overcome at last, because their enemies are Christ's enemies ; Exod. xxiii. 22, " I will be an enemy to thine enemies, and an adversary to thine adversaries." The troops that overcome them are the troops of hell, that fight against the God of heaven ; and therefore they shall not always prevail : " When God arises, his enemies shall be scattered, Ps. lxxviii. 1. Moab shall be destroyed, because he magnified himself against the Lord," Jer. xlviii. 42.

5. Because his honour is engaged ; his glory is concerned. It is said once and again, nay a fourth time, in the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel, *He fought, or wrought for his name's sake*, ver. 4, 14, 22, 44. And, indeed, when his name and glory is concerned, he has more to lose than they, in case they should not overcome at last ; they would but lose their life, their soul, their salvation ; but, he would lose his truth, his honour, his glory, which is infinitely greater : therefore, they shall overcome at last.

6. Because they have more for them than against them : their name is Gad, a troop ; a company of two armies ; yea, they have many troops and regiments on their side : and, if our eyes were open, according to Elisha's prayer, 2 Kings vi. 17, we might see mountains full of chariots and horses of fire, before the Israel of God. I will name ten regiments or (to keep by the words of the text) troops, they have upon their side, by which they cannot fail to overcome at last.

(1.) The greatest and strongest is a troop of divine attributes surrounding them, as the mountains are about Jerusalem, Ps. cxxv. 2. And hence, the place of their defence is said to be the munition of rocks ; attributes of God, like rocks of defence about them. It is under the shadow of these attributes, they are safe and victorious ; for he sends forth his mercy and truth for that end : " 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 overpast. He shall send from heaven and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up : God shall send forth his mercy and his truth," Ps. lvii. 1, 2. " I am God all-sufficient," says God to Abraham ; and so to all his spiritual seed. My wisdom, sufficient for your direction ; my power, sufficient for your protection, &c. " My grace shall be sufficient for thee ; my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness." How can these that have such troops for them but overcome at last !

(2.) They have a troop of graces ; namely, faith and all the rest, of which Christ hath prayed that they fail not ; " I have prayed for thee, says Christ to Peter, that thy faith fail not." And so, he hath prayed that their hope fail not utterly ; that their patience fail not ; that their love fail not ; that their graces fail not : therefore, corruption shall fall before grace ; " Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for you are not under the law, but under grace." Under that grace of God, that is the fountain of all graces in them.

(3.) They have a troop of divine offices, and divine officers on their side; Christ the chief officer, clothed with all saving offices; whether general, as that of a Saviour, Redeemer, Friend, and Captain of salvation: or particular, as Prophet, Priest, and King; by whom they cannot but overcome at last. And of under-officers, they have a guard about them, represented by Solomon's life-guard about his bed; "Threescore valiant men are said to be about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night," Song iii. 7, 8. These officers, when faithful to their prince, and armed with the sword of the Spirit, and their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, are helped to defend the Lord's people from the snares and corruptions of the times, and the troops of corrupt teachers and corrupt judicatories.

(4.) They have a troop of saints and witnesses on their side. Witnessing saints, in past and present times; witnessing saints, old and late, are spoken of as helpers and encouragers in the holy war; as those spoken of, Heb. xi., of whom it is said, chap. xii. 1, "Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; Looking, especially, unto Jesus (that is, the head of the witnessing remnant) who, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Witnessing saints at present also, so far as they are faithful witnesses for God, will be powerful wrestlers with him that shall prevail, and through God do valiantly.

(5.) They have a troop of angels on their side; "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him, and delivers them," Ps. xxxiv. 6. What havoc did one angel make in the camp of the Assyrians in one night, destroying an hundred fourscore and five thousand: they are all ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, and destructive spirits to their enemies.

(6.) They have a troop of heavenly luminaries on their side, whenever God pleases to call them to the assistance of his people; even as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. God has made sometimes the stars of heaven, the sun in the firmament, to subserve the design of his people's overcoming their enemies.

(7.) They have a troop of earthly creatures on their side: God has sometimes raised up an army of inferior despicable creatures,

frogs, lice, flies, and vermin; the most inconsiderable like insects as a formidable troop to invade the enemies' camp, and make Israel to overcome, as in Egypt; for when their ways please the Lord, they are in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field are at peace with them and at war with their enemies, Job v. 23, Deut. xxviii. 26, 27.

(8.) They have a troop or army of prayers on their side, which God, the hearer of prayers, hath obliged himself to answer. Both the prayer of their High-priest upon the throne, whom the Father hears always, and who hath prayed for Jerusalem, Zech. i. 12, and whom God answers with good words, and comfortable words, saying, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies, my house shall be built in it," notwithstanding all opposing enemies: and also the prayers of his people, offered in the faith of acceptance through Christ: these shall be answered, for the Lord hath said it, Ps. cii. 16, 17, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory; he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." As the prayer of faith hath power with God, so this troop hath sometimes been terrible to his enemies; as to the Scots Queen Mary, that was more afraid for John Knox's prayer, than for an army of ten thousand men.

(9.) They have a troop of promises to side with them, and assure them, that they shall overcome at last: though they be overcome, yet it is promised them, that they shall overcome at last: compare Rev. xiii. 7, "It was given him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them," with Rev. xvii. 14, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him, are called, and chosen, and faithful." It is promised, the Lamb shall overcome them; and make his followers overcomers; and, "All the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God:" and therefore, this troop shall overcome for them; "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not a jot or tittle of his word shall fall to the ground."

(10.) They have a troop of providences, divine providences, however cross in appearance to bring about their complete victory; for, "All things shall work together for good to them," Romans viii. 38; even all the victories that the enemy doth obtain over them: "All these things are against me," said Jacob; and yet they were working for him. All Joseph's troubles, and the afflic-

tions that he met with, were but bringing about his advancement ; and, so all the foils and defeats that the believer meets with, contribute to his being victor at last : even all the plots of hell, and rage of men and devils against Christ, contributed to bring about his triumphant victory ; so, all his people, however contradicted and conquered, shall overcome at last. Though a troop overcome them, yet having these numerous troops upon their side, the final victory shall be on their side also.

IV. The next thing proposed was the application. If it be so, as in the first branch of the doctrine, that the Israel of God may for a time be foiled and defeat by troops of enemies and oppositions, hence see,

1. That the state of the church and children of God in this world, is not only a militant state, but may be a mastered state, may be conquered by their enemies within and without ; Israel may be long in bondage to their enemies. Believers may be long under captivity to the law of sin and death : " I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members," Rom. viii. 23. Think it not a new or strange thing, to see the cause and people of God oppressed and born down, vanquished and overcome.

2. Hence see, it is no small opposition that the Lord's people should lay their account with : " A troop shall overcome him ;" importing, that confederate forces against them may be expected : " The kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers of church and state may take counsel together against the Lord, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us," Ps. ii. 2, 3. See Ps. lxxxiii. 1-8.

3. Hence see, that confederate powers against the people of God, may be conquering powers, for a time ; they may gain the day for a while, and the Lord only knows how long. The Israel of God may be put to cry under the continued prevalence of inward corruption, and outward opposition, as Ps. xiii. 1, 2, " How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever ? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me ?"

4. Hence see, that the true Israel of God are at the worst, but involuntary captives to their enemies, viz. sin, Satan, and the world of wicked men, but are never voluntary subjects or servants to them : " Gad, a troop shall overcome him," against his will ; he shall never incorporate or be embodied with the troop, nor make league with

the enemy. The doctrine of the falls and foils of believers, may be dangerous to the secure, and a stone of stumbling to them. Why, say they, I am daily overcome by sin ; daily mastered with corruption ; my heart dead like a stone in prayer ; but, my blessing on the minister, for he gives me hope, saying, Believers may be just like me ; and so I conclude myself among the number of believers, and hope to be saved as well as the best : alas ! beware, man, lest this kind of reasoning prove your spot to be none of the spots of God's children. The saints may be foiled, and fall before the enemy, but they will not lie in the puddle like the swine in the mire, but rather struggle like a sheep in the mire, restless till relief and recruits come.

5. Hence see the reason of the variations and the changes in the believer's case and lot ; a troop may overcome him, but he is overcome with a *but*. There is opposition to opposition in the case ; and, as the enemy treads upon him, so sometimes he treads upon the enemy ; and, by alternate turns, they defeat one another, so as the issue seems dubious, and the poor believer fears, lest one day he fall by the hand of Saul.

6. Hence see matter of daily humiliation and exercise to the children of God, while they are here in this world, where they may expect, certainly, that a troop shall overcome them ; and therefore they ought not to be secure, but watchful ; they ought not to be proud, but humble ; they ought not to be lazy, but active ; they ought not to faint, but to fight. Spiritual action is the first, the second, the third, and the last part of a Christian. Religion is no easy business ; nor is it enough to begin well in the way of God ; unless we hold on, we cannot be victorious : "He that endures to the end, shall be saved." It is dangerous to sit down and make a truce with the enemy, or go into a cessation of arms. Yea, it is dangerous to parley with temptation, and to reason with the devil, whether you should venture on such a sin or not ; though you should muster up arguments, you may find the devil is a better politician than you ; his agents also, that oppose God's work and cause, may defeat you in point of policy, and reason more strongly against the cause of Christ, than you can do for it ; they may silence you in dispute, but it were best for you in such a case, to say with the woman, that spake with the spirit of a martyr, "Indeed, I cannot dispute for Christ, but I can burn for him." So may you say, when unable to answer subtile adversaries, Though I cannot reason and argue for

Christ, yet I will fight for him, witness for him, I will do for him, I will suffer for him ; and, through grace, I will die for him.

7. Is it so, as in the second branch of the doctrine, that the true Israel of God shall overcome at last? Hence see, then, matter of examination and trial. Let us search and try if we be of the tribe of Gad, that however conquered for a while, shall overcome at last. See if you be, in a spiritual sense, what Gad was in another. The tribe of Gad was a warlike and a wrestling tribe, a valiant and a victorious tribe, 1 Chron. v. 18, 20, xii. 8. Try then what Spirit you are of.

(1.) Have you got a warlike spirit ; a disposition for the holy war against sin, Satan, and the world? If so, then you have seen yourself by nature, to be a slave to these enemies, a slave to your lusts, a slave to Satan, and a drudge to the world ; you have found the cursed chain of sin, dragging you downward, downward, downward ! You have seen yourself in prison and bondage to spiritual enemies, and would have given a thousand worlds to be out of the prison, out of the house of bondage. Next, you have got a view of the glory of the Captain of salvation, so as to embrace him as your General, and come under his colours, knowing that there is no fighting, no overcoming, but by his strength ; “ Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” Have you got a Spirit of warfare, so as to commence and carry on a perpetual warfare against sin, and never to be at peace with it?

(2.) The tribe of Gad was a wrestling tribe, they wrestled with their enemies, and they wrestled with God, like their father Jacob, for victory over their enemies : hence it is said of them, and the rest who joined with them, 1 Chron. v. 20, “ They cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them ; because they put their trust in him.” Try if you have a wrestling spirit ; know you what it is to wrestle with God for the blessing ; to wrestle with God for victory over your lusts? And as it was the Lord’s battle, that the tribe of Gad fought against the enemies of God ; so, see what side you are upon, for only these that are upon God’s side, upon Christ’s side, upon truth’s side, shall be overcomers, and at last victorious.

8. Hence see matter of terror to the enemies of God, and of his people, who are fighting against God, and his work, cause, and interest ; though they should overcome at first, yet they shall be overcome at last. If the children of God, and his cause amongst their

hands, shall overcome at last, then you shall be overcome at last ; though you should fight and prevail for a while, you shall be dreadfully defeat at last. If you continue in the enemies' camp, fighting with the dragon and his angels, against Michael and his : fight as you will, you shall be destroyed at last. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death ;" but you may be amongst the first enemies to be destroyed. If you remain, O sinner, an enemy to the Son of God, know, that he is manifested to destroy the works of the devil ; and all the instruments of the devil, that are workers for him ; they are all devoted to destruction : "The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of rams, they shall consume ; into smoke shall they consume away." God hath promised to Christ, that his enemies shall lick the very dust ; and that he will plague them that hate him. You may think that you carry the day, and carry all before you, when you get the ministers and people of God oppressed ; the witnesses killed ; pastors set to the door ; and people set to the field ; but yet a little while, and Zion will be a burdensome stone to her enemies ; they that fall under the weight of it, shall be grinded to powder ; for, "God shall arise, as in mount Perazim ; and be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon. When he whets his glittering sword, and his hand takes hold of judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, and will reward them that hate him."

You shall be overcome at last : though you be of the troop that overcomes the tribe of Gad a thousand times, yet you shall be overcome at last, even though you mistake, and think you are doing good service to God, while madly persecuting them. It may aggravate their trial at the time, that you pursue them as enemies to God, and disturbers of Israel, and such as turn the world upside down ; but it shall aggravate your torment, that, under a profession of religion, you was an enemy to religion ; that, in the name of God, you fought against God ; that you hated and persecuted God's cause and people ; and you said, *Let the Lord be glorified*. What shame and confusion will God rub upon such actions, and such agents for the devil ? The countenance and authority of corrupt Judicatories and General Assemblies, will be a poor defence, when you are arraigned for counteracting the great God. What shall become of magistrates that sit upon the throne of God, abusing civil authority, by opposing themselves to the work of God ? And, what shall we think of ministers, who sit in the temple of God, exalting them-

selves above the heritage of God, oppressing and scattering them? This anti-Christian spirit is devoted to destruction and perdition, 2 Thes. ii. 3, 4. Let all wicked sinners, who continue in sin and rebellion against God, know that it is hard for them to kick against the pricks: they make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them, and oblige them to cry with the apostate emperor Julian, *Vicisti, O Galilee?*

9. Hence see matter of comfort to all the followers of the Lamb, that cleave unto him, and to his name, truth, and cause; for it is sure, the oppressed cause and heritage of God shall get up their head, however long they be run down: they shall not be always under the hatchets of depression, or apprehension from enemies; no; they shall overcome at the last: "The rod of the wicked shall not always rest upon the lot of the righteous," Psalm cxxv. 3. The poor believing soul may be crying, Oh! I am overcome: overcome with a troop of lusts and corruptions, a troop of devils and temptations, a troop of enemies within and without, but raise up your head and heart, believer, in the faith of this, that you shall overcome at last. Your victory over sin and Satan, death and hell, is secured by the word and oath of God, the two immutable things, by which it is impossible for God to lie. It is secured by the death, resurrection, and exaltation of your captain, Jesus Christ; because he lives, you shall live; and because he hath overcome, you shall overcome: "He was dead and is alive, and lives for evermore; and hath the keys of hell and death." It is secured by his victories, his blood and his intercession: this can answer all challenges of the adversaries; "Who can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? is it Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again, and sitteth at the right hand of God." Victory is secured by God's covenant with Christ your head, in whom it stands fast, and by the love the Father bears to the Son, our shield; "My loving-kindness will I not take away from him. If his children break my law, and walk not in the way of my commandments; I will visit their iniquities with the rod, and their transgressions with stripes: nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail," Psalm lxxxix. 30—33. Victory is secured to

(1.) Alluding to such in civil power, at this time, who opposed a testimony for truth, and oppressed those who favoured it; and to such ministers, who oppressed the Lord's people, in the affair of patronage, formerly observed.

you by the inhabitation of the Spirit of Christ; "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you: he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you: for, if he live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live," Rom. viii. 11, 13. It is secured by the earnest of the victory already given: some gracious experiences are the earnest of the glorious victory; such as grace to hate sin and yourself for it; grace to pray and plead the promise against it: grace to rejoice in Christ, and in the hope of being for ever with him: grace to hope against hope, that you shall overcome, because the victory is of the Lord; grace to esteem heaven on this account, because it is a place of perfect victory and freedom from sin.

Victory is secured; but alas! when shall it be? Why, you shall overcome at last: you may be sure of it, 1. At the last extremity: for, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide." 2. At the last battle you may be sure of it; for, "The battle is the Lord's." 3. At the last breath, for then your warfare shall be accomplished, and death will bring down the house upon the Philistines, and slay them all. 4. At the last day; for then the victory will be complete, not only over death, which shall be swallowed up in victory, but over the grave, which till then detains the dust of the saints, as an evidence that victory over the grave was not till then consummate. But "The Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead, shall then quicken our mortal bodies," that soul and body may for ever triumph together in him, that made them more than conquerors. It is said, "The righteous shall have dominion over them in the morning." Thus you shall overcome at the last.

10. Hence see matter of exhortation and direction; in a word, first to the enemies, and then to the friends of God.

(1.) You that are the enemies to God and his cause and people, joined with the troops of hell that are in arms against heaven. Alas! Sirs, throw down your rebellious arms! *We, as ambassadors for Christ would pray you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God.* Why will you fight against him? you are not a match for him. "Who can harden himself against God and prosper?" Yea the tribe of Gad, and the troops that are upon their side will gain the day against you, and all the legions of hell, ere all be done: therefore, O come, come and enlist yourselves with our Captain of salva-

tion? He is a glorious and victorious Captain; he hath upon his vesture and thigh, this name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords: the standard-bearer amongst ten thousands." And, though you have been fighting against him all your days, to this very moment, by a loose and profane wicked life of rebellion, yet he is content to take all comers, though they have been rebels; for "He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious: he is obliged by his office to distribute of these gifts amongst the rebellious, to engage them to come in to his camp; and this is the money that the Captain is offering you, to allure you to come out from amongst the troops and tribes of hell, and to come to him, and to his side. O come, come to our Lord Jesus Christ! and I promise, in his name, you shall be as welcome as if you had never lifted up arms against him. Come, though you have no money; come without it; for he hath enough, he hath all fulness. Come, though you have nothing, for he hath all. Come, though you have no arms, he hath armour to give you. Come, though you be not able to stir, if you be but willing, he will take your hand and help you, saying, Come, give me your hand, for I am come to take you out of Satan's service and slavery, to be one of my soldiers henceforth. If enmity and unwillingness be still your darling that you hug, and you are resolved to go on in your rebellion, then his sword is drawn against you; "He will wound the head of the wicked, the hairy scalp of him that goes on in his trespasses," and you perish by your own choice. But, if enmity and unwillingness be your disease that you would have healed, your foes that you would have conquered, then come; come to him, and he will conquer your enmity, and make you a valiant soldier, a hearty volunteer, and more than a conqueror at last. The Lord effectually persuade you.

(2.) Our next exhortation is to you who have enlisted with this glorious Captain, and become his soldiers, desiring to fight under his banner, against the devil, the world, and the flesh: O Sirs, be encouraged to fight the good fight of faith. Be not discouraged, poor believer, even though a troop of temptations and corruptions shall overcome you, yet rise and fight again, by faith and prayer; for "You shall overcome at the last." Be not discouraged you who honestly espouse the cause of truth and reformation against the errors and corruptions of the day, though troops of opposition should arise from courts and judicatories in greater fury than yet they have done; though the cause may seem to be a lost cause, and utterly defeat, yet the cause of truth is the conquering

cause, and shall overcome at last. Though a corrupt church should instigate the state against the witnesses for a reformation-interest, and overcome them, and kill them, as it is said of these, Rev. xi. 7, because their testimony torments them that dwell upon the earth; yet he that can give them power to prophecy in sackcloth, can, after three days and a half, make the Spirit of life enter into them, and make a living succession of witnesses, to be as terrible to their enemies, as an army with banners. See the courage of Nehemiah, chap. iii. 17—20, when building Jerusalem, and when Sanbalat and Tobiah laughed them to scorn, and despised them, and at the same time instigate the state against them, and represented them as enemies to the civil government, saying, "What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king," by disturbing the lieges? Nehemiah answers, "The king of heaven, he will prosper us: therefore we his servants will rise and build." Be not discouraged from duty, you who are amongst the praying and wrestling remnant, even though a troop of foreign enemies should invade and overcome the land, and turn it into a field of blood, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein, though the devouring sword should be sent to avenge the quarrel of his covenant¹; yet the mourning remnant shall be safe: though a troop should overcome them, yet they shall overcome at last.

Let me exhort you, O soldiers of Christ, to put on your armour, and to look to heaven for skill to manage your arms.

1. Fortify your weakest side with the strongest guard, by watching, especially against the sin that easily besets us.

2. "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ." The soldier is not well trained for war, that cannot endure the hardship of coarse entertainment, or an ill made bed; how shall he watch all night, and fight all day? Again,

3. Let me exhort you to keep your eye upon the Captain General, that hath already overcome all your enemies; enter yourselves heir to his victories; "Be strong in the Lord," and in the strength that is in him, in the grace that is in him. And,

4. Fight much upon your knees, like the Christians that prayed down thunder and lightning upon their enemies. Luther calls prayer, *Christianorum bombardo*; "The gunshot and artillery of the Christians." Again,

(1), It was formerly observed that this nation was, at this time, in open war with the courts of Spain and France.

5. Keep close to the Captain and his bands ; do not disjoin the conquering tribe, the tribe of Gad, that you may be sealed as conquerors at last : for, of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand among the rest, Rev. vii. 5.

6. Be not dispirited with the foils you may get, and enemies you may meet with. You may have troops of them defeating you ; but, O rise and take courage ; for what can hearten a soldier more, than to be sure he shall overcome at last ? Fight, therefore, in the faith of the final victory : never lay down your arms, nor give over praying, believing, trusting, hoping, waiting, watching, and warring, though you should be foiled and defeat a thousand times ; the Captain's honour is engaged that you shall overcome at last. Set the troops of heaven against the troops of hell. Know, that it is Michael and his angels that fight against the dragon and his angels ; therefore, whatever blows and overthrows you may meet with at first, whatever battles you may lose, yet remember what is coming at last. Be not surprised, if, after a communion, a troop overcome you ; lo, he hath warned you it shall be so ; but, he hath made victory as sure ; "These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues ; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me ; but these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them," John xvi. 1—4. Be strong in the faith of everlasting triumph in heaven over all your enemies when the palm of victory will be put in your hands, and the crown of victory on your head. Lay your account with being conquered here ; for, a troop shall overcome you : and perhaps too soon after this solemnity, you may be foiled by your surrounding foes within and without. But, O believer, rise and fight in the faith of complete victory at last : your Captain's name is "JEHOVAH-NISSI, the Lord your banner : " And therefore, O believer ! your name at the lowest shall be, Gad, a troop shall overcome you, but you shall overcome at last.

SERMON LXVIII.

THE FOUNTAIN-HEAD OF ALL BLESSINGS; OR, THE GREAT STORE-HOUSE OPENED.¹

“All things are of God.”—2 Cor. v. 8.

MY friends, here is a short, but very substantial and comprehensive text, God, and all things are in it. If our thirst were great this day, here we may drink our fill, not only at the streams, the word and sacrament, and the good things, the great things held forth therein, for all things are here; but also at the fountain-head of all things that we want, by beholding and believing that “all things are of God.” The nearer we come to the fountain this day, the better and the sweeter; and the surer will our communion be: for streams may fail us, and take a different turn; ministers may fail us, and be but dry breasts without milk; frames may fail us, and that which hath a sweet flow, may soon have a sad ebb; yea, flesh and heart, and all things may fail us: but there is a fountain of light, and life, and comfort, and of all good things here, that is always full, and never empty, that is constantly flowing, and never ebbing, that never changes, but is perpetually the same. And could we fix the heart and eye of faith upon this fountain of all things, we might have a full communion this day, or a communion with fullness, notwithstanding of emptiness.

Though you were saying, I want a pardon, I want a blessing, I want a frame, I want all things I should have: yet faith may say, that is no matter; I have what is better than all these things, I have the fountain here present, the God in whom I live, move, and have my being; in whom, and from whom I have all: “Having nothing, I possess all things;” for, “All things are of God.” If this be a feast-day, here is ample provision; here is a stream-feast, all things in Christ: here is a fountain-feast, “All things are of God.” If the stream be let out, then here is enough for sense, *all things*: yea, though these streams should be dry, yet here is enough for faith and hope; “All things are of God.”

(1) This subject was the substance of three Sermons. The first was an action-sermon, preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dunfermline, August 10, 1740. To which is annexed, a discourse at the service of the first table. The other two sermons were delivered at the same place, sometime after the sacrament.

The verse immediately preceding shews us what view we are to have of the *all things* here spoken of; for we are told there, that "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." So that the *all things* here intended, are these that relate to the new creation in Christ Jesus. The context immediately following shews us, what view we are to have of this GOD, viz., as a reconciled God in Christ; for the words are, "All things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ; and hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation." Hence the text in this view affords us the following doctrine :

OBSERV. "That all things relating to the new creation in Christ Jesus, are of God, as a reconciled God in him."

This is a great point of saving knowledge, as you see from Christ's words to his Father concerning his disciples, John xvii. 7, "Now they have known, that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee." To this agrees that word, John iii. 35, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Whatever blessings then we share of out of Christ's hand, are given first out of the Father's hand; for, "All things are of God." See also to this purpose, Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10, "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." It is of God: "Not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." Where it is evident, that all things relating to the new creation in Christ Jesus are of God; "All things are of God."

The method we would lay down, for the prosecuting of this observation, through divine aid, shall be the following :

- I. We would instance some of these "all things," relating to the new creation, that are of God.
- II. Inquire how all these things are of God?
- III. Whence it is that "all things are of God?"
- IV. Make application of the whole subject.

1. We would instance some of these "all things" relating to the new creation, in Christ Jesus, that are of God. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," ver. 17. Who makes them so? Why, God says of himself, Rev. xxi. 5, "Behold I make all things new; and here it is said of him, "All things are of God," namely, all the new things here spoken of; particularly,

1. The new birth is of God; and therefore they that are born again, are said to be born of God, 1 John iii. 9, v. 1. They are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13. They are born of the Spirit, John iii. 5, 6, 8. And hence, to the same purpose,

2. The new heart is of God; "A new heart 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," Ezek. xxxvi. 26. If you get a believing heart this day, it will be of God; if you get a humble heart, a praying heart, a loving heart, a tender heart, a fixed heart, it must be of God.

3. The new life is of God, who is the fountain of life, and who saith unto us, when we are in our blood, Live, Ezek. xvi. 6. The spiritual life, hid with Christ in God, is of God. Why, the life of justification in Christ, is of God; "It is God that justifieth, who is he that shall condemn? The life of sanctification and holiness is of God; "I am the Lord that sanctifieth you."

4. The new light is of God; "The God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. God is the Father of all lights, natural and spiritual; "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Lights," James i. 17.

5. The new liberty is of God; "The Lord looseth the prisoners, Ps. cxlvi. 7, and where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. If any bonds be loosed here this day, God must get the glory of it: and the soul that is loosed from the bonds and fetters of darkness, doubts, fears, and unbelieving jealousy, so as to be at liberty to serve the Lord with freedom, ought to say, "Thou hast loosed my bonds."

6. The new garment is of God: it is he that clothed us with the garments of salvation, and covers us with the robe of righteousness, Isa. lxi. 10. It is of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,

speaking in the plural number, that says to the spouse of Christ, Song ii. 11, "We will make thee borders of gold, with studs of silver." The robe of imputed righteousness is of God's making; He by whom Christ is made sin for us, by him we are made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21. The robe of imparted grace and holiness is of God's making; "The king's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold," Ps. xlv. 13; wrought by the finger of God, whose workmanship the new creature is.

In a word, All things relating to the new creation in Christ, are of God. The new eye is of God, who opens the eyes of the understanding. The new ear is of God, who opens the ear to discipline, and seals instruction. The new tongue and language is of God, who creates the fruit of the lips. The new food for immortal souls is of God's giving; "My Father giveth you the true bread." The new appetite and desire after Christ is of God, who draws it out after him; "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." The new will is of God, who maketh willing in the day of his power. The new hope is of God, in opposition to the old hope of our life upon our doing so and so. The new hope of life, upon the doing, dying, and rising of Christ, is of God, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The new walk is of God, who says, "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." The new strength is of God, who giveth power to the faint, and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength. All our new ability and sufficiency is of him; "We are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." All things relating to the new creation are of God. The new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, is of God, who maketh all things new. The new covenant is of God, who says, "I have made a covenant with my chosen." The new-covenant feast is of God: "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all his 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," Isa. xxv. 6.

II. The second general head proposed was, To shew how all these things are of God.

1. "All things are of God," as the contriver and willer of them. The old creation was a great contrivance; but the new crea-

tion is not only a great, but a good, and yet a more glorious contrivance. It could never have been devised but in the breast of infinite Wisdom. All proceeds from an act of God's sovereign will: "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth," James i. 18, and Heb. x. 18, "By this will we are sanctified, through the body of Christ, once for all." Hence all the promises of the new covenant are so many *I wills*. Ezek. xxxvi. 25-30, "*I will* be your God; *I will* take away the heart of stone; *I will* put my Spirit within you," &c.

2. "All things are of God," not only as the contriver, willer, and promiser of them, but also as the Creator, worker, and effecter of them. Who creates the clean heart; who creates the fruit of the lips; who creates the new heavens, and the new earth; who makes the faculties of the soul like a new heaven, in point of spirituality; and the members of the body like a new earth, in point of instrumentality for service? Who, but God the Lord doth all these things? Isa. xlv. 7. Who turneth men, who are like beasts, into saints? "Behold, I will do a new thing: 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," Isa. xliii. 19, 20, 21. Hence our Lord saith, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," John v. 17.

3. "All things are of God," as the disposer, director, and manager; as he upholdeth all things by the word of his power, Heb. i. 3, "Fear not, for I am with thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness," Isa. xli. 10; so he orders and disposes all things in the new creation, according to his sovereign pleasure; partly, by preserving and maintaining all things that he hath wrought; partly, by advancing, building up, and furthering his work; and partly, by restoring and repairing all things relating to the new creation, that fall under a decay: "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit," saith Job. "The builder of all things is God," saith the apostle. "He restoreth my soul," saith David. "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine," Hos. xiv. 7.

He alloteth to every one such a share of all things, that are of him in the new creation, as he sees fit to grant. As he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, so the vessels of mercy are sometimes very empty, sometimes half-full, and sometimes overflow with communications: "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy

sight." "All things are of God." How comes it, that the praying vessel of mercy, the praying soul is like a dry vessel, not a drop can fall from it; and, at other times, able to pour out a prayer, to pour out water like a flood before the Lord? Why, the reason is, "All things are of God," as the disposer. How comes it, that there is such an ebbing of grace in the believer at times, and such a flowing of the raging, roaring tide of corruption, as grace cannot be seen; and such an ebb of corruption, at other times, and flowing of grace, like an overwhelming flood, that sin and corruption seem to be drowned, and cannot be seen? Why, it must be resolved ultimately into divine unaccountable sovereignty: "Be still, and know that I am God," Ps. xli. 10. All things are of him, as the wise disposer.

4. "All things are of God, as the perfecter and completer thereof: for, as he is a rock, and his work is perfect, so he will not leave the new creation-work unperfected: "Being confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun the good work, will perform it, [*perfect or finish it, as in the margin,*] until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 6; that as it is already complete in Christ the head, Col. ii. 10, so it may be complete in all the members of his body, who are to be presented at last a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, Eph. v. 27.

In a word, *all things*, relating to the new creation, are of God, in Christ; of the purpose and decree of God, of the will and pleasure of God, of the word and promise of God, of the Spirit and power of God, of the grace and mercy of God, of the work and operation of God; and, if there be any good or great work among us this day, or at this occasion, it must be of God, as the worker; and therefore, let us imitate David, Psalm lvii. 2, "I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me;" and acknowledge, with the apostle, Phil. ii. 13, "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure;" that he may get the praise that the church ascribes to him, Isa. xxvi. 12, "Lord, thou hast wrought all works in us and for us."

III. The third thing proposed was, To give the reasons why "all things are of God, that relate to the new creation." I offer these four grounds of the doctrine.

1. "All things are of God," because he is GOD, and it is his will to be the Author of all things, "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. iv. 11. Being God, he is the fountain of all things and beings; the fountain

of life : as without him nothing was made that was made ; so, without him no new creation can take place ; neither men nor angels can create : “ In the beginning God created heaven and earth, and all things in them ;” and he only could do it, because he is God, and there is none else. And if all things be made new, a new heaven and a new earth, a new heart and a new life, a new faith and a new hope, he only can do it, because he is God, and there is none else. The work here is greater ; for, when he made the world, there was nothing to resist him ; but all the powers of earth and hell oppose this new work.

2. “ All things are of God,” relating to the new creation, because he therein designs the glory of his perfections. He that is the beginning, is the end of all things ; and all things are of him, because they are to him ; “ For of him, and through him, and to him are all things,” Rom. xi. 36. Of him, as the efficient ; through him, as the disposing ; and to him, as the final cause. And, particularly, the new creation of all things in Christ Jesus is for the manifestation of his glory : “ Thy people shall be all righteous, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified,” Isa. lx. 22. “ That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified,” Isa. lxiii. 1. And again, as in the forecited text, “ This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.” He makes them to himself a peeuiliar people, to shew forth the praise of him that called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. Yea, they will never be so active in shewing forth his glory, as he is active in glorifying himself, in shewing forth his own glory herein ; therefore, Isa. xlv. 23, “ Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it ; shout, ye lower parts of the earth ; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.” He hath designed, in all things, the glory of all his perfections.

3. “ All things are of God,” relating to the new creation, because all things relating to *redemption* and *reconciliation*, which is the ground upon which the new creation stands, are of God. Here is a special ground why all these things are of God, that relate to the new creation ; why, the new creation is in Christ the Redeemer, and all things relating to this Redeemer, and redemption through him, are of God.

And here I shall give instances why the Redeemer himself is of God. It is true, the Redeemer, Christ Jesus, is God, being the

eternal Son, co-equal with the Father : yet, as Redeemer, he is of God ; he took not this honour to himself, but was chosen and called of God unto it ; and so he is a Redeemer of God's calling and electing, Isa. xlii. 1. Every thing he hath, as Redeemer, is of God. As his divine Sonship is of God the Father, by eternal, ineffable generation, so his human nature is of God, by special, wonderful donation. Therefore Christ says, "A body hast thou given me," i.e., *a human nature*. His divine person, in the constitution thereof, as God-man Mediator, is of God : therefore God says, "A virgin shall bring forth a Son, and his name shall be called IMMANUEL, God with us." His mission is of God ; for, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." His saving offices are of God, who says, "I have found David my servant ; with mine holy oil have I anointed him ; I have laid help upon One that is mighty." And that our help might be laid upon him, our sin and guilt was laid upon him ; and this imputation of our sin to him is of God : "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. He hath made him to be sin for us." His ability to execute these offices is of God ; for, "Him hath God the Father sealed ;" and he opens up his sealed commission : "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised," Luke iv. 18 ; Isa. lxi. 1. His furniture and fulness is of God ; for, "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell ;" and he says, "I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." His fittedness for us, and our necessities, is of God ; for, "Of God he is made unto us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." His work of doing and suffering is of God ; and his warrant to do and suffer for us is of God : "He is the man of God's right hand, whom he made strong for himself" and who could say, "I have power to lay down my life for my sheep, and power to take it up again : this commandment have I received of my Father." His approbation in this work is of God, who says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased ;" and Christ says, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again." His satisfactory sacrifice, that he offered to justice, is of God ; for, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him. He spared not his own Son, but

delivered him up for us all; and the sacrifice was of a sweet-smelling savour unto God." His being a ransom for us is of God, who says, "I have found a ransom; therefore deliver his soul from going down to the pit." His being a propitiation for us is of God, for he hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. His death, which we commemorate this day is of God whose holy hand over-ruled the wicked hands of men in crucifying him at Jerusalem: for, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, says the apostle, "and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;" and they did whatsoever his hand and his counsel determined before to be done. His resurrection from the dead is of God; "Ye killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses, Acts iii. 15. He did not suffer his holy One to see corruption." His exaltation and glorification is of God; for, "Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, therefore God hath highly exalted him, &c.;" and, "By him we believe in God who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory," 1 Pet. i. 21—His blessed tongue, by which he pleads for us in heaven, and speaks into our hearts on earth is of God; for Christ says, "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I may speak a word in season to the weary." And he hath made him a Priest for ever.—His headship over the church is of God: for "He hath given him to be Head over all things to the church." His Lordship is of God; therefore saith the apostle, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."—His universal dominion is of God; "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me," says Christ. His principality and Saviourship is of God, "Who hath exalted him with his right-hand to be a Prince and Saviour to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sin." And, as his coming in the flesh is of God; so his coming in the clouds of heaven, his coming to judgment is of God; "Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained," Acts xvii. 31. And till that awful day come, his coming in the Spirit from time to time is of God; "I will pray the Father, says Christ, and he shall give you another Comforter, that shall abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth," John xiv. 16. See also John xv. 26, "I will send him unto you from the Father." All his usefulness to us is of God who says to him, "I will give

thee for a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house, Isa. xlii. 6, 7 ; and to be my salvation to the end of the earth," Isa. xl. 6. His gifts and graces for our use are of God ; " He hath received them for men, even for the rebellious."—In a word, *all things* that he hath are of God ; " The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Why then, " All things are of God : all things that are in Christ are of God. O what a precious Christ is this ! O what of God is in this Christ ! He is the Christ of God the Son of God, the sent of God, the Sealed of God, the Gift of God, the Word of God, the Wisdom of God, the Power of God, the Lamb of God, the Image of God, the centre of all the perfections of God ; " My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted." Surely then *all things* relating to the new creation in Christ are of God, because all things relating to redemption and reconciliation in Christ, which is the foundation of that new creation are of God.

4. Another reason of the doctrine is, *All things are of God*, relating to the new creation in Christ, because he is a reconciled God in Christ ; so say the words following the text, " All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Now all things are of him, and from him, as he is, and because he is a reconciled God in Christ : if he were not so, we could expect nothing, we could have no ground of hope ; but because he is reconciled in Christ, pacified and appeased in him ; therefore we have ground of faith and hope ; for all things contained in the covenant of reconciliation in Christ, who, having fulfilled the condition of that covenant hath paid the price of them all to his infinite satisfaction ; and therefore is ready to give out all things we need freely to us, upon the ground of that righteousness, through which his grace reigns to eternal life. And hence, in the context here, God as a reconciled God in Christ is represented to us.

(1.) As a giving God : giving to us the word of reconciliation, that we may give it to you ; and that you may take it upon his word, that he is a reconciled God.

(2.) He is represented also as a pardoning God ; not imputing our trespasses to us, but imputing our sin to Christ, and his righte-

ousness to us, that he might be sin for us, and we the righteousness of God in him.

(3.) He is represented as a praying God ; praying us to be reconciled to him, because he is reconciled and well-pleased in Christ ; “ As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s stead be ye reconciled unto God.” And,

(4.) He is represented as a God powerfully effecting this reconciliation, and ready to make us yield to this treaty of peace : for whereas it is said, verse 20. “ He hath committed to us the word of reconciliation ;” in the margin it is *put in us*. He hath put it in us, that by us he may put it in you, even in your heart, and cause your heart to yield to the word of reconciliation.

As all things are of him, so this among the rest, that he makes sinners to believe the gospel of his grace, kills the natural enmity this way, and actually makes up the peace. It is he who inclines the hearts of sinners to hearken to the offers of Christ, to believe the word of reconciliation, and so be at peace with God, and reconciled to him, who, being reconciled to us in Christ, gives out all things needful through him. And why is it that sinners get so little from him, that hath all things to give out through Christ, but because we cannot believe, that he is a reconciled God in Christ ? We take him to be no friend, but an enemy ; and therefore can have no confidence in him : but, O sirs, we might come good speed at his hand this day, if we could believe him to be a reconciled God in Christ. Whatever good cause he hath to be angry at us, and to give us nothing ; yet he is well-pleased in, and hath no cause to be angry at Christ, in whom he hath all good things to give. Thus you see why *all things* needful to make us up this day and for ever, are *of God*.

IV. The fourth head proposed was, To offer some inferences for application. Is it so, that all things relating to the new creation in Christ Jesus are of God ? Then,

1. Hence we may see, the substance of the sacramental supper, which we have here before us, both as to the matter and Maker of it. The matter of it is all things. Christ and all good things with him, called a *feast of fat things*. The Maker and Master of the feast is God ; “ All things are of God,” as a reconciled God in Christ ; all things that relate to the new creation, the new covenant that stands fast in Christ, are of God. Here is the sum and substance of the sacramental feast.

2. Hence see, that we are equally obliged to the whole glorious Trinity, for all things that belong to the new creation in Christ Jesus; for, "All things are of God;" all things are of God the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Ghost. Think not diminutively of the Father's love and grace, besides that of the Son of God, our Saviour: for the Father sent him, the Father sealed him, the Father anointed him with the Holy Ghost for that great work. Christ is the ordinance of God for our recovery from the pit of sin and misery. "All things are of God."

3. Hence see, if "all things be of God," then nothing is of man. Let all boasting be excluded, and "Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord:" for, not only all our temporal outward blessings are of God, our life, and health, and liberty, and comforts; as the very heathens could say,

O Melibæe, Deus nobis hæc otia fecit;

but also all our spiritual blessings are of God, so as the Christian should say, My new life is of God, my righteousness is of God, my strength is of God, my faith and hope is of God. Let Arminian doctrine be doomed and disclaimed by all that would have God glorified, and their souls saved. Let the doctrine of man's free-will and natural powers fall before the ark of God, the doctrine of God's free grace, and of his divine power; for "All things are of God." Let none assume a deity to themselves, as if they were gods; but come down and lie in the dust: "Let the haughtiness of man be brought down, and the loftiness of man laid low, that the Lord alone may be exalted," Isa. xlvii. 1. O that he would stain the pride of man!

4. Hence see a strong motive to the use of means. Indeed, the language of proud nature, upon hearing that "All things are of God," is, Then we may ramble at our pleasure, and need use no means, for God must do all: but, though all is of him, in point of power; yet there is something incumbent upon us, in point of means; and the language of Scripture bears this as the greatest encouragement to use the means, that the blessing of them depends on God. This you see in outward affairs of life. What encouragement hath the labouring man to plough and sow the ground? Why, God hath promised seed-time and harvest, and he usually gives it; and, if man had not that encouragement, he needed not put to his hand: so, in spirituals, we are called to work out the work of our salvation with fear and trembling. Why? what encouragement have we,

since nothing is of us? The encouragement follows, "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13. And, indeed, if the willing power and the doing power were not of God, you could have no heart or hope in the use of the means; but because it is of him, therefore up and be doing. Thus, the witnessing work for Reformation at this day, it must be of God; for it is he that buildeth the temple, and shall bear the glory; therefore we should put to our hand and build with hope. Thus, if believing work and communicating work were not of God, we would have no ground of hope this day: but, that "All things are of God," is the greatest encouragement. As the work is of God, we are to stand still and see the salvation of God, as was said to Israel at the Red Sea: and, therefore, in point of means, we are to speak to ourselves, and to the people, that they go forward. Though there were a Red Sea in the way, and insuperable difficulties to surmount, let us go forward and see the work of God, the salvation of God in Christ Jesus.

5. Hence see an evidence of faith, by which we may try and examine ourselves, before we go to the Lord's table. One sure mark may be as probative and evidential as twenty. Try then if your faith be founded upon the saving knowledge of this, that "All things are of God." Do you know, that all things relating to the new covenant, and the new creation, are of God? This is such a point of saving knowledge, that it is observed in Christ's prayer to the Father, as a high attainment and a special character of his people; John xvii. 7, "Now, they have known, that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee:" *q. d.* They are otherwise taught than the blasphemous Jews, who thought of my person, that I was but a man, the carpenter's son: and, of my miraculous works, that they were of the devil, as if I had been in compact with him: but, "They have known, that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee;" that they are neither of men nor of devils, but of God.

Now, examine if ever you have got this view, namely, the knowledge and faith of this, that Christ is wholly the Christ of God; that his commission and authority is of God, he being sent of the Father: that all his offices and powers are of God: that all the gifts of the Spirit, all his graces and comforts, which God gave him without measure, were all from God, contrived by his wisdom, appointed by his will, and designed by his grace for his own glory, in our salvation.

What gives you satisfaction in believing and relying upon Christ? Is it that sure and good bottom, that all that Christ is and hath, is of God; that all that he hath said, is of God; that all that he hath done, is of God; that all that he doing, is of God; that all that he will do, is of God; that his whole mediation, and all his mediatorial actings are of God; and that therefore you may well venture your soul and salvation upon him? Hath this given confidence to your faith of justification, through his righteousness, because it is the righteousness of God; and to your faith of sanctification, through his grace, because it is the grace of God; and to your faith of washing in his blood, because it is the blood of God? This is true faith indeed, built upon the foundation of God's laying in Zion.

Do you know and believe, that all things whatsoever the Father gave to Christ, are of God still; that not only they were of God's giving, but are still the things of God? This is what the Spirit shows, when he comes to glorify Christ: "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath, are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you," John xvi. 14, 15. All things that the Father hath are his and all spiritual blessing are given by the Father to the Son for us, and the Son intrusts the Spirit to convey them to us, and so to glorify Christ, by shewing that all his things are of the Father. And, as it is remarkable here how Christ gives his Father the glory of all things that are given him, declaring that they *are of God*; so the true and saving knowledge of Christ leads the soul natively to God, and to give God the glory of all things that Christ hath. And, indeed, the knowledge of Christ would not save us, if it did not lead us to the knowledge of God himself: therefore, says Christ, as Mediator, "I am the way," not the end; "No man cometh to the Father but by me." You must not terminate the knowledge of Christ, in Christ himself, but use it as a medium and way to bring you to the Father; 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," 1 Pet. i. 21; for, "All things are of God." And hence the faith of Christ, which is beyond all mistake and delusion, is such a faith of Christ as terminates in God, in the enjoyment of God, in the love of God, the fear of God, the worship and service of God, the honour and glory of God in Christ. Thus by your faith of this doctrine,

6. Hence see an open door of faith and hope to sinners and saints. I am come to tell you this day, that as all things you have already, as creatures, are of God, as a creating God ; your life is of God, your breath is of God, your being is of God, in whom you live, and move, and have your being : so all things you want and need to have, as new creatures, are of God, as a redeeming God, a promising and giving God, in Christ Jesus. God hath set up a ladder between heaven and earth, between him and us. Christ, the God-man, is the true Jacob's-ladder, by which we may ascend up to God. By the gospel of God, this ladder is discovered to you : and now this day God is shewing himself at the top of the ladder, proclaiming that all things are of him, and saying, " Behold, I make all things new."

Here is an open door of faith and hope to you, man, woman, who are destitute of all things, and by nature cursed in the want of all things, because of your want of God, of whom all things are. Here you may see not only the foundation of all the good things you need and want, that are of God ; but also the channel through which, and the reason why you may hope and expect to have them ; because all things are of him, as a reconciled God in Christ. If you look upon God as an enemy, you will expect no good thing from him ; and, indeed, the first look that a sinner brought to Christ, gets of God, is of God in the law, as a sin-revenging God. And, as you are a sinner and transgressor of God's laws, you are doomed to death and wrath, and have nothing to look for from God, but destruction and damnation. But, if you see this, and be crying out, " What shall I do to be saved," who am such a vile and guilty sinner beyond all sinners ? Then view him in the gospel-glass upon the top of the ladder of mercy, on a throne of grace, as reconciled by Jesus Christ to you. You, by your sin, have provoked him ; but Christ, by his righteousness, hath reconciled him to you : and the word of reconciliation is committed unto us, and we must execute our commission, by preaching the gospel to every creature, and proclaiming him to be a reconciled God in Christ to you, O sinner ; and, O sirs, if this moment you could believe that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, and reconciling you to himself, you would no longer doubt, that he is ready to give you all things that you want. Life and pardon, grace and glory, and all good things are of God, and ready to be given to you upon the price paid for them by the Son of God. You cannot think, perhaps,

that there is any thing to be expected from God for such a sinner as you are; but think again, whether any thing, yea, all things good and great may be expected from God, because of such a righteousness as Christ's is, and because of such a Beloved as Christ is, and such a love as the Father bears to him; for all things relating to the new creation, and the new covenant in Christ Jesus, are exhibited to you, in the gospel, only in him.

Here then is good news and glad tidings to all people that hear this gospel, that all things, relating to the new heaven and the new earth, are of God. Good news to the hardened, unconvinced sinner; conviction is of God, who promiseth to send his Spirit to convince the world of sin. Good news to you that are not yet regenerated; regeneration is of God, who, of his own will begets us, by the word of truth. O sirs, cast yourselves down at the footstool of sovereign grace, reigning through the righteousness of Christ to eternal life. Here is good news to you, guilty sinner; justification is of God in Christ: He is the God that justifies the ungodly, and hath set forth Christ to be the propitiation through faith in his blood. Here is good news to the polluted sinner; purification and sanctification is of God in Christ: "The God of peace can sanctify you wholly. I am the Lord that sanctifieth you. Good news to miserable wretched sinners: redemption is of God in Christ, who of God is made to you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Good news to the weak and impotent soul, that can do nothing; for power and ability is of God in Christ, who says, "He giveth power to the faint, and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength." Good news to the weary and restless; soul-rest is of God in Christ, who says, "Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Good news to the unbelieving soul, plagued with an evil heart of unbelief, that faith is of God: it is the gift of God in Christ, who is the author and finisher of it. Good news to the impenitent and hard-hearted sinner, that sees the stony heart will not break, the new heart, and the heart of flesh is of God: the penitent heart is of God, who exalted Christ to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. Here is good news to the soul diseased and overrun with all spiritual maladies; health and healing is of God in Christ, whose name is JEHOVAH-ROPHI, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Good news to the black deformed soul, all blackened, as it were, with the smoke of hell;

beauty is of God, who says, "Though ye have lien among the pots, ye shall be as the wings of a dove, covered over with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." Good news are here to the tempted soul, tossed with the horrid suggestions of Satan : the way to escape is of God in Christ, the God of peace that shall bruise Satan under your feet. Good news to the harassed, distressed, and oppressed soul, sighing under some heavy burden ; relief is of God, who is a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in a time of trouble : your time of need is his time of pity, who is the burden-bearer ; Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee."

Let the disconsolate conceive hope in him : for consolation is of God ; he is the God of all consolation. Let the poor and needy conceive hope ; for your sufficiency is of God ; your supply is of God. Let the naked and starving soul conceive hope ; for food and raiment is of God, who feeds the ravens, and clothes the lilies, and how much more will he feed and clothe you, O ye of little faith ! As all things are of him, so the bread of life and the garment of salvation also. O let the bound and fettered soul have hope in him ; for, liberty is of God ; "The Lord looseth the prisoners : and God hath anointed Christ with the Spirit, to proclaim liberty to the captives. Let the bewildered soul here, that hath lost its way in this dark and cloudy time, conceive hope in him ; for light and leading is of God, who hath promised to lead the blind in a way they know not, and in paths which they have not trode.

May not the barren and fruitless souls conceive hope here ? Fruitfulness is of God, who hath said, "Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree ; and instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtle-tree ; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." May not the withered soul conceive hope here ? For a blessed watering is of God, who says, he will pour waters on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. O ! let the backsliding and backfalling soul conceive hope here ; for recovery and restoration is of God, who says, "I will heal their backslidings. I have seen his ways, and will heal him, and restore comforts to him and his mourners." O ! let even the graceless souls, that have any sense of their graceless state, see a door of hope here ; for grace is of God, who is the God of all grace. Let dead sinners, dead souls, dead hearts here, in the name of the living God, rise and hear the good news that life is of God, who is the God that quickens

the dead, and calls the things that are not, as though they were. "All things are of God."

But perhaps, some may say, What ground have I to expect these things? Though they be of God, yet perhaps not for me. Why, because he is a reconciled God in Christ. But what ground have I to think that he is reconciled to me? If the word of reconciliation be sent to you, upon that ground you may believe that he is reconciled to you. Now, he hath committed to us the word of reconciliation, and charged us to preach the gospel of reconciliation to every creature, to every soul among you; and he that hath obliged us to proclaim to you how he is reconciled in Christ and hath all things to give in and through him, he obliges you to believe, that he is reconciled to you. He commands you to believe in the name of his Son Christ. This is his commandment, that through him you believe him to be a reconciled God to you; and if he were not so, he would not send this word of reconciliation to you, and pray you to be reconciled to him, who is reconciled to you. It is to you sinners, to you rebels, that this word of reconciliation comes; and therefore, you may be quite sure, that as "All things are of God, as a reconciled God in Christ," so the good news are to you. He hath all things ready for you that you need.

QUEST. But how can this be, seeing he hath not a secret purpose of reconciliation to ALL, and therefore, perhaps, not to ME?

ANSW. Oh! what a malicious devil is tempting thy unbelieving heart to look to what God designs, before you look to what he declares; to look to his purpose, before you look to his promise! How can you see his purpose, but in the glass of his promise? How can you know his heart, but by his word? But in the glass of his promise you may see his purpose of grace to you; for, "The promise is to you;" and in his word of reconciliation you may see his reconciled heart toward you; for, "To you is the word of salvation sent: to you is the word of reconciliation sent. And if thou, man, woman, canst believe that this kind word is to thee, and thee in particular, then thou shalt see that this kind heart is towards thee, and thee particularly.

QUEST. But is not God appearing at this day, as an *angry* God? How shall we conceive him to be reconciled, and believe his word of reconciliation, when we are compassed with so many tokens of his anger and indignation?

ANSW. God is, *out* of Christ, reconciled to none of Adam's race: but God is *in* Christ reconciling the world to himself. Out of Christ

his anger will burn to the lowest hell. And why is he appearing in anger at this day, but because men will not believe that he is reconciled in Christ? He is angry at your unbelief, and the unbelief of the generation, who, through an evil heart of unbelief, depart from the living God, and from his truths and cause: therefore, his anger burns against it, because they reject the word of reconciliation: but as, in Christ, he says, "Fury is not in me;" so the only way of escaping his wrath is, to conceive right and kindly thoughts of God, as a God in Christ; believing in Jesus, and beholding with wonder, that he is a kind God to him and us, giving all things to us; for "All things are of him." Nothing displeases God so much, as that we will not believe his kindness manifested in his word to us, but by unbelief, make him a liar, and so ourselves blasphemers of him.

Well then, sirs, before you adventure to come to a communion-table, let me exhort you to come to the Christ of God; for, as "All things are of God," so, in the name of this great and glorious God, I come to offer you the best of all things that are of God; and, I hope, you shall not think the worse of him that he is the Christ of God, and the best thing that God hath to give you; nay, shall it not recommend him to your heart, that as, in his person, he is the Son of God; so, in his office, he is the Sent of God, and that his righteousness is the righteousness of God; that his blood is the blood of God; that his wisdom is the wisdom of God; and his power is the power of God; and that all things he hath are the things of God; and that he is made of God all things that you want for time and eternity, even wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? If Christ, and all things that he hath, as our Redeemer, were not of God, he could not be profitable to us for bringing us to God; we could not see God in him, we could not meet with God in him, we could not have communion with God in him: but he, being wholly of God, when we come to him, we come to God in him. O sirs, by receiving him the profit is infinitely great; you receive God himself the eternal God: and, by rejecting him, the peril is infinitely great; you reject the eternal God. By coming to Jesus, and receiving him, you shall have all that God hath to give; for God hath given him all that he hath. As Abraham's servant said, in courting a wife for Isaac, "My master hath a son, and unto him hath he given all that he hath," Gen. xxiv. 36; so may not

we, as servants of God, court a bride for our Master, by telling you, that he is his only begotten Son, and to him hath he given all that he hath? For, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand;" even all things that can make you happy in life and death, and through eternity. O! will you go with this man, this God-man? Is there no heart here saying, It is a bargain? None to say, Content, we will go? All things are ready, in Christ's hand, to be given you. Pardon and grace, and "All things are ready, come to the marriage." The marriage-supper is also ready for you, if the marriage-consent be given.

God cannot but make you welcome to come to Christ, and to give him your heart, to whom he hath given his all. O then come, not only for your own salvation's sake, but also for the sake of God's glory. The dishonours you have done to God by your sin are not so great as the honour you put upon God by coming to Christ, believing that all things whatsoever the Father hath given him are of God.

In short, my dear friends, I cannot use a stronger argument, to excite you to come to Jesus by faith, than this, which yet you may reckon a strange argument, namely, that as "All things are of God," so all things relating to faith, and coming to Jesus, are of God. The object of faith is of God; Jesus Christ is the Christ of God. The grace of faith, and the act of faith is of God; for, "Faith is the gift of God." The call to faith and believing is of God; for, "This is his commandment, that ye believe in his Son Jesus Christ." The *will* to believe is of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure; and who says, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." And, indeed, you can have no encouragement to believe, if this believing were not of God; nor would there be any faith here to-day, if it were not of God, the giver and the worker of it by his Spirit; "This is the work of God, that ye should believe on him whom he hath sent," John vi. 29. Men naturally magnify their own works, even when they are most serious about eternal happiness, saying, "What shall we do that we may inherit eternal life?" But, O sirs, will none here be content that God magnify his work, and be content to inherit eternal life by his word? Now, this is the work of God, that ye believe on Christ. It is the work of God both as it is of his approbation, and as it is of his operation.

The work that Christ had to do for us, sirs, was the Father's

work : and was it the worse or the better that his work was the work of God ? Of God's approbation, and of God's operation, who says, " Behold my servant, whom I uphold," in that service ? And would it ever have been done by him, if it had not been the work of God ? Even so, " This is the work of God, that you believe : " is it the worse for you, that it is wholly the work of God ? Would there be any hope that ever it should be done, if it were not so ?

O then, poor sinner, that hast nothing about thee but sin, and guilt, and deadness, and disorder, let all thy objections against believing in Jesus be hushed to silence in the view of this truth, that, as " All things are of God," so faith and believing itself is the work of God. You cannot believe, say you, for you have no power, no will, no grace, no sufficiency of yourself. True ; but then are you content that God have the glory of this great name of his, that all things are of him, and that your whole salvation, from the beginning to the end, be of him, and that the pride of nature be dashed down for ever in the cordial acknowledgment that nothing is of you, and that the God of power and grace be exalted for ever in the cordial acknowledgment that all things are of him ? Then, a way is paved for your believing in Jesus, and working this work of God, in imitation of Christ, who was content to run his errand at his Father's expenses, and do his great work on God's charges ; willing it should be reckoned nothing else, but his Father's work ; yea, that it should be wholly the work of God. Upon this condition and consideration, he joyfully set about it, and effectually went through with it ; even so, here is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent. Are you content, however weak and impotent you are, to set about this work at God's charges, and that it be the work of God in you ? Are you joyfully content to believe on the Son of God, upon this condition and consideration, that the work is of God, and that the power is of God, and that the will is of God, and that all things relating to this work are of God ?

All things relating to the new creation in Christ are of God. This believing is the work of God, as it is a part of the new creation, which you can no more effectuate of yourself, than you can create a world : but, though it be not of you, yet you may fall in with it hopefully and joyfully, because it is of God.

Upon no other terms was Christ called to, or fell in with redeeming work, than you are called this moment to fall in with believing work. He fell in with it upon these terms, that all things

relating to that redemption work, and all his redeeming power, should be of God : even so, is there any soul here determined to fall in with this work of believing on the Son of God, upon these terms, that all things relating to this believing work, and all your believing powers be of God ? Then, I hope, believing power is at hand. Are you content this moment to open your heart and arms to embrace the Son of God upon these terms, that the heart-opening power be of God ? Why, upon these terms only this work of God can be done, and shall be done : therefore, in the name of the great God, of whom are all things, and of whom is this power to believe and embrace Christ, I call you, this moment, to stretch out the withered hand, the withered heart, and all your withered arms to embrace the Son of God ; for you have no more to do in this matter, but to know and believe that the work is of God, that the day of power is of God, that the word of power is of God, the Spirit of power is of God, that the heart-quickening power is of God ; and to be content, this moment, that all things relating to this new creation work be of God, and that God get the glory of this name upon you, in creating you in Christ Jesus for himself, and making all things new. Why, then, it is to be hoped, the good work is begun, if you are glad to be put down, to be nothing, and that God in Christ be set up to be all in all, and glad to own that, in the whole of this work, from the beginning to the end, nothing is of you, but *All things are of God.*

THE END OF THE SERMON.

A DISCOURSE AT THE SERVICE OF THE FIRST TABLE.

OW, as all things relating to the new creation are of God ; so, here you have an ocular demonstration of it : for, all the good and great things of the new covenant are here represented as in a glass, and we may see them all to be of God. Christ, who is here represented, is the gift of God : his love, that is here commemorated, is the love of God : this table is the Lord's table, the table of God : the provision laid upon it is God's provision ; and he that hath provided so far outwardly the signs representing will, we hope, provide inwardly the spiritual blessings represented : " Here is the fire and the wood,

but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" Why, the sacrificing knife of justice was, by the law, to be put to your own throat, O sinner: but behold, God will provide himself another sort of a Lamb for a burnt-offering. The name, the old name of our God, is his new name to this day, JEHOVAH-JIREH: "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen; the Lord will provide."

"In the same night in which our Lord was betrayed," &c. Behold, my friends, as all things are of God, so this bread is the bread of God, that came down from heaven; look to it through this element: it is the bread of God's giving, who so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son. It is bread of God's breaking and bruising: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." It is bread of God's sending: "To you is the word of this salvation sent;" to you is this bread of life sent; to you, sinner, it is sent in the word; to you, believer, it is sent in the sacrament a-new: "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever."

"After supper he took the cup," &c. "I am the true vine," says Christ. Indeed, he is a bleeding vine; his blood is squeezed into that cup: and as all things here are of God, so this blood is the blood of God; and all things that relate to our salvation vent through this blood, being all the blessings and purchase of this blood. Grace reigns through this righteousness of Jesus to eternal life. Grace does not cease to be the grace of God, because it reigns and runs through the righteousness of Christ; for this righteousness is of God. The blessings of the covenant do not cease to be the blessings of God, because they vent through the blood of Christ; for this blood is also the blood of God.

And now, what blessings do you need or desire? Want you any sacramental grace? Want you grace to believe, grace to love, grace to repent, grace to communicate worthily? All is of God. Do not think to extract them out of your own heart, as if they were of you; but look up to God in Christ for them; for all things are of him. Are you destitute of strength and furniture for any work or warfare? All things relating to this are of God in Christ: therefore you may say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only." Are you destitute of light, life, liberty, comfort, peace, or pardon? Why, now you are at the fountain-head, whence you may draw supply: *All things are of God.*

But, say you, though all things be of God, what relief does

that yield to me, while I find myself destitute of all these good things, and kept empty-handed? Why, is it not good that all things that are of God are put in Christ's hand, and that your stock lies surer there than if it were in your own hand? You know, believer, that you cannot keep it: what you get this moment you are ready to lose it the very next moment: and are you not obliged to God, who puts your all in a hand that can keep that which is committed to him?

What though you should be kept empty all this day? Can you not trust him with your stock all this day? Is it not as well in his hand as in yours? Whenever any comfortable supply is given to you, you are apt to abuse it and dishonour him, by trusting to the grace that he puts in your hand, more than to the grace that is in his hand; whereas you are called to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and not in the grace that is in you: and, lest you thus abuse it, and dishonour him, he keeps you, as it were, at short allowance, and that too very scrimp. But, O sirs, be content, that, as "All things are of God," so all the things of God are in Christ your glorious head, and, if you can be glad of this, it shall not be long ere you get what is needful from him, as well as have all your treasure always in him.

Now, if Christ and all things be of God, then let nothing vex and torment you, poor believing soul. Let it not vex you, that you find a want of all things in you; but let it ease and please your mind, that all things are of God in Christ. Let it not trouble you, that you cannot communicate as you ought to do; but let it afford relief to your heart, that communicating grace is of God. Let it not grieve you, that you want a frame, such as you would have; let it satisfy and please you, that a communion frame is of God, and you must trust him with that, to give it when he pleases. Let it not afflict you, that you have prayers and bills lying before the throne, and never yet answered: O let not your heart be troubled with this; let it suffice, that the answering of them all is of God, as a prayer-hearing God in Christ; as a reconciled God in him, who will take his own time and way to answer them. Let it not disquiet you, believer, that there are some promises you were to hope upon, never yet accomplished: let it suffice you, and quite ease your mind, that they are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, and that the fulfilling them is of God, a promising God in Christ, who, in due time, will do as he hath said. Let it not make you uneasy,

that you are guilty, guilty beyond all. You may be grieved indeed for the affronts you have done to your Lord ; but be not vexed so as to think there is no hope. I think, Christ is now saying to the soul, oppressed with the sense of guilt, " Let it not vex and torment you, that you have been so unkind to me ; I can put up with a thousand affronts you have done me. My soul was once vexed, and exceedingly troubled, even unto death, with your sins and guilt, and you need not be grieved to death with them again : only acknowledge your iniquities, and believe, that as all things, so remission of sin and pardon is of God, as a reconciled God in my blood." Again, let it not vex and trouble your heart, that your lusts and corruptions are so strong and masterly, that you have been so many hundred times conquered and captivated by them : but let it give ease to your mind, and pleasure to your soul, that sin-conquering grace is of God, that sin subduing grace is of God, as a reconciled God in Christ, who hath said, " Sin shall not have dominion over you." Let it not perplex you, that you have so many running sores, broken bones, and deadly like diseases about you : let it quiet your mind, and ease your soul that healing is of God, who says, " I am the Lord that healeth thee." O ! will you sing with the psalmist, Psal. ciii. 3. " Bless the Lord, O my soul, who healeth all thy diseases ?" He saith not, who hath healed them all, as if there were no more healing needful ; nay, that will never be the song in earth, but in heaven : but the song of faith here, by the way, is of God in Christ as a healer. I find the malady remaining, saith the soul ; but I see the remedy, and that healing is of God in Christ : and let it give me present ease, that there is a Healer, a Saviour here. Fellowship with God in Christ above, is betwixt him and saints that are perfectly whole ; but all the fellowship here is between the Saviour and the sinner, the Physician and the diseased. Let it not disquiet you, that many burdens seem to be laid upon your back, burden upon burden, pressure upon pressure ; the Lord knows what your burdens are : but let it give real ease to your soul, that God hath provided a burden-bearer, Mat. xi. 27, 28. " All things, saith Christ, are delivered to me of my Father," even that of burden bearing amongst the rest ; therefore, " Come to me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" to your souls ; " Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee." Let it not vex you, that you have some difficult work, an intricate affair upon your hand, and you know not how to manage

in it: let it content your heart, that strength, and counsel, and direction is of God, who leads the blind in a way they know not. Let it not trouble you, that you have no strength and sufficiency for any thing; let it ease and please you, that his grace is to be sufficient for you, and his strength to be perfected in your weakness, and that your sufficiency is of God. Let it not vex or torment you that you are straitened even as to your outward circumstances in the world, and that you have much ado to get food and raiment: let it give ease and comfort to you, that as "All things are of God;" so the ordering of your lot in the world is of him, and that your provision is of him, who clothes the lilies, and feeds the ravens, and who hath said, "Bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." O trust in and rely upon him: he that hath given you Christ, the best bargain in the world, will he not give, together with him, all things, which are but like paper, and pack-thread, into the bargain? Without doubt he will. Again, let it not vex and grieve you that you have, perhaps, come under many worldly losses, and that, at such a time, you lost a pleasant child, or such and such a near and dear relation; for, as this was of God, the Orderer and Over-ruler of all things; so he can make up your loss, and shew himself better than all things to you, and that it was expedient, that such an earthly comfort should be taken away from you, that perhaps, had much more of your heart than Christ. It was expedient for us that Christ himself should go away, otherwise the Comforter had not come; and much more may not the Lord see it expedient, that such an earthly comfort should be taken away, that there might be room for a better comforter. Let it not trouble you, that all things seem to be against you, as Jacob once said when he thought Joseph was lost, and feared that Benjamin also was like to be lost, "All these things are against me." If he had waited a while, he would have heard again, that all these things were for him: and you know, when he heard again of Joseph, "It is enough," says he, "Joseph is yet alive." So you are, perhaps, saying, All things are against me; many ministers are against me; good men and bad men join together against me; presbyteries, synods, and assemblies, are against me; all the kirk-judicatories of the established church of Scotland are against me, and against the way that I am taking, and the cause that I am espousing: the last Assembly hath shewed this, with a witness, by

deposing all the ministers here,¹ and condemning the whole reformation cause that you are appearing for ; and inferior judicatories, since that time, have homologate and approved of their deed : all these things are against me. Why, Joseph, I think, is gone ; Jesus, by his Spirit, is withdrawn and away : and, I fear, the little Benjamins will be taken away also ; that the little remnant, that is reserved, will be taken away with a flood of opposition and persecution by church and state. What may fall out, the Lord knows ; the aspect of affairs is awful indeed : but be not vexed or troubled, believer ; let it ease your heart and mind, that “all things are of God,” who as the God of providence, over-rules all events : let it suffice you, that Joseph is yet alive, and is governor over all the land of Egypt ; that Jesus is alive, and is the Governor among the nations, and the government of Zion is laid upon his shoulders. It is enough to faith that Jesus is alive, and that the Father hath given all things into his hand, even all power in heaven and in earth. In a word, let it not vex you, that, for the present, your soul is dead and lifeless : let it content you, that, as the living God and the living Jesus are still remaining, so life and quickening is of God : life and liveliness will come in due time, if you can believe that God is the God that quickens the dead, and that Christ is the resurrection and the life.

Do you believe that “all things are of God,” as a reconciled God in Christ ? Then put in a bill now for all things you need. If there be many things that you have to say, and many things that you have to seek, that I have not mentioned, and cannot mention ; yet surely they are all wrapt up in this bundle, “All things are of God :” put in a bill, therefore, for any thing you want for yourself or others ; a bill for your graceless friends and relations, that are but Gallios, caring for none of these things ; a bill for God’s ancient people the Jews, and for the blinded nations, and the poor negroes, and in behalf of the instruments that God is employing to bring gospel-light among them ; a bill for your children, that God may be your God, and the God of your seed ; a bill for poor Scotland, that God would yet return and dwell amongst us gloriously ; a bill for your several congregations and families, whose circumstances you know : “All things are of

(1) A short account of the occasion, ground, and progress of the prosecution, raised and carried on by the church-judicatories, against the seceding brethren, was formerly narrated. This year the Assembly finished the process, by passing the sentence of deposition upon all the eight brethren.

God ;” and therefore acknowledge him in all things. The more bills, the better ; the more things you employ him in, the more honour you will put upon him, as the God of whom are all things, and without whom you can do nothing : and therefore, “ In every thing by prayer and supplication, make your requests known to him, with thanksgiving.”

Go in peace, believing and rejoicing in this, that all your stock and strength is secure in Christ, who is made of God all things you need in time and eternity.

SERMON LXIX.

2 Cor. v. 8.—“ All things are of God.”¹

[The third Sermon on this Text.]

MY friends, this text hath such a wide bosom, that we can never speak of all that may be brought forth out of it. To speak of some things, may be easy ; of many things is hard ; but to speak of all things is impossible ; and yet more so, to speak of the fountain-head, whence they all rise : however the context limits the subject a little to all things that relate to the new creation ; and yet even these are so vast and numerous, that time must be swallowed up in eternity, ere the subject can be exhausted.

The doctrine that I spoke to at the late solemnity, from this text, was,

That all things relating to the new creation in Christ Jesus,
are of God, as a reconciled God in him.

Hence, besides the inferences that I then deduced, I have, since that time, inferred the following, namely, That effectual calling, or the new creation itself, is of God ; That justification is of God :² And I come to another inference, namely, That sanctifica-

(1) This Sermon was preached at Dunfermline, Sept. 21, 1740, being a short time after the sacrament.

(2) What the Author delivered upon these two inferences was never transmitted to the public, the notes having fallen by ; and were the subject-matter of the second Sermon on the text.

tion is of God. And this I shall a little insist upon, by proving and improving it.

For proof of it in general. He is the commander of it: "Be ye holy as I am holy." He is the willer of it: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." He is the effector and worker of it: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly," 1 Thess. v. 23. It is of God the Father: Jude 1, "To them that are called and sanctified of God the Father. It is of God the Son: Eph. v. 25, "Christ gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify it." It is of God the Holy Ghost: 1 Cor. vi. 11, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." More particularly,

1st, The root of it is of God. Justification is the root of sanctification; and justification is of God, as I have already demonstrated, and might further shew, in whatever sense we view it. Justification is of God, if we view it preparatively: it is God that prepared the justifying righteousness: "I have found a ransom." View it imputatively; it is God that imputes the righteousness of Christ, Rom. iv. where it is ten times spoken of. View it meritoriously; it is of God, in Christ, that purchased our justification, and merited for us. View it operatively; it is God, in Christ, that performed the righteousness for which we are justified, and accepted as righteous. View it applicatively; it is of God, by his Spirit, applying the blood and righteousness of Christ for justification. View it instrumentally; though faith justify as the instrument, yet this faith is the gift of God, and the work of God: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent," John vi. 29. View it manifestatively, and sensibly, to the comfort of the believer: it is God that gives the peace and joy of justification, as he is the God of peace, that fills with joy and peace in believing. View it declaratively; if works justify, by evidencing and declaring our justification, whence do they proceed? Why, "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure;" and, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." View it reputatively by men: when we are thus justified by being reputed so, it is of God as the God of providence, giving us favour and respect even in the eyes of men, as justified persons. View it publicly and openly at last, before all the world, at the last day: "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," Acts iii. 19.

Thus justification, in all respects, is of God ; and therefore sanctification must be so ; because justification is the root of sanctification, even as ingraftment into Christ is the root and cause of fruitfulness. It is only the justified person that is a saint ; “ Whom he justified, them he also glorified ;” that is, sanctified partly here, and perfectly hereafter. “ There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ ;” there is justification the root : “ Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit ;” there is the fruit of it, and the evidence and character of the justified person. Again,

2dly, That sanctification is of God, appears from this: that *every thing* relating to sanctification, is of God ; particularly,

1. The beginning of it is of God, therefore he is said to begin the good work, Phil. i. 6, “ Being confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun the good work in you, will perform it unto the day of the Lord.” He begins it in regeneration, or effectual calling, at the same time that he justifieth ; and so it hath a double root. As we are twice dead by nature, dead in sin, and dead in law ; so we need to be twice quickened, as it were before we be sanctified. In opposition to our being dead in sin, we need to be regenerated and born again ; and in opposition to our being dead in law, we need to be justified, and so liberate from the sentence of death ; and then is the foundation of sanctification laid : then he that begins to renew the will passively, in effectual calling, begins to renew it actively in sanctification, by making us active receivers of his grace.

2. The advancement and progress of it, is of God, who makes the rain of heaven to fill the empty pools for the passengers, through the valley of Baca, Psalm lxxxiv. 6, 7. As the fruits of the ground grow up by the influence of the natural sun ; so the Sun of righteousness, arising with healing in his wings, then his people go forth, and grow as calves in the stall, Mal. iv. 1.

3. The promise of it is of God. He hath promised to be as the dew unto Israel ; and then it is said, “ He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon ; his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon,” Hos. xiv. 5, 6.

4. The restoration of it, when decayed, is of God ; “ They that dwell under his shadow shall return ; they shall revive as the corn, and grow up as the vine, and the scent thereof shall be as the wine

of Lebanon," Hos. xiv 7. It is he that restoreth the decayed soul, Psalm xxiii. 3. Let these that are under lamentable decays of grace, see where their help lies.

5. The means of it are of God, both inward and outward. Is faith a mean? Yea, the heart is purified by faith; and this faith is of the operation of God. Is hope a mean? Yea; "He that hath this hope purifieth himself:" and this hope is of God; for by him we are begotten to a lively hope. Is knowledge a mean? Yea; "Beholding his glory, we are changed:" and this knowledge is of God, who hath promised, "They shall all know me." The external means are made effectual, through the blessing of God. The word is a mean; but it is of God, who puts virtue in the mean. The rod is a mean; but must be like a pruning knife in the hand of God, who purgeth the branches in Christ "that they may bring forth more fruit," John xv. 2.

6. The motives of it are of God. It is he that moves his people to all the duties of holiness, and draws them to his service: and especially by cords of love, so as the love of Christ constrains them. He moves them by a regard to his glory and honour, and to their own interest and happiness; because their fellowship with him is furthered thereby: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John xiv. 23. See also ver. 21.

7. The cause of it: the efficient cause is of God, who says, "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, to do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 27, "Every thing shall live, whithersoever the river cometh," Ezek. xlvii. 10. And John iv. 14, "The water that I will give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of life in the believer, and the fountain of sanctification: "Because I live, says Christ, ye shall live also."

8. The extent of it is of God, both to the inward and outward man: for, it is a "renewing of the whole man after the image of God, and enabling of us to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness." It is he that sanctifies the understanding, the will, the affections, the memory, the soul, the body; "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. v. 23.

9. The measure and degree of it is of God. Some have more,

and some less of sanctification. Though all believers are equally justified, and perfectly, even in time, upon the ground of Christ's perfect righteousness; yet, they are not equally sanctified, but some of them more holy, more humble, more zealous, than others. Some of them more glorify God, by doing and suffering his will, than others. Some of them are more active than others, just according as the Lord stirs them up. And who maketh them to differ thus? Why, even he who gives a double portion of his Spirit to some and not to others, and makes his wind to blow where it listeth; he makes it to blow in what measure and degree also he listeth; he pours out his Spirit plentifully at times, and then sanctification thrives, and goes on progressively: "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses," Isa. xlv. 3, 4.

10. The knowledge and comfort of it is of God. Some are sanctified, and do not know it, till the Lord make it known to them, by shining upon the graces that he hath given, and shining upon this and that experience of his powerful presence. He sometimes makes them feel the drawing cords of his love about their heart, strengthening them with strength in their soul; and makes them run the way of his commandments, when he enlargeth their heart; and making them know their sanctification by their consolation, and know their grace, by the dash that he gives to their sin and corruption, Rom. vii. at the close. Again,

11. The perseverance thereof is of God: "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 heart, and they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii. 40. They shall never totally and finally depart; but, after all their partial departures, "I will put my fear in their heart," that shall make them turn back again to me, saying, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now," Hos. ii. 7.

12. The perfection and completion of it is of God, who hath undertaken to present his people to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish, Eph. v. 27. Thus sanctification, in all respects, is of God. "All things," relating to it, "are of God."

Now, for Application. Is it so, that sanctification is of God? Then,

1. Hence see the holy nature and holy will of God. By his will he commands it: for "This is the will of God, even your sanctification," 1 Thess. iv. 3. And by his will he effects it: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. By which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," Heb. x. 10.

2. Hence we may see great encouragement to use the means of sanctification, without resting upon the means; because it is not they, but God, that can sanctify us; and yet hopefully using them. Therefore, says God, "Sanctify yourselves;—I am the Lord that sanctifieth you." Use the means, because I can put a blessing in them: "Work out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." We could have no encouragement to use the means of sanctification, if sanctification were not of God.

3. Hence see how foolish they are, that think they can sanctify themselves by their own natural powers and endeavours; they can repent and reform when they will. No wonder that these cry up free-will as the cause of conversion, and deny the efficacy and necessity of special grace, deny also the perseverance of the saints; for the grace that is the fruit of man's free-will cannot indeed persevere. They that know God will know that all things are of God, and that sanctification particularly is of him.

4. Hence see, that poor, weak believers, wrestling with a body of sin and powerful corruption, need not despair of victory over their sin and corruption; for, sanctification is of God, and mortification is of God: "If ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The Spirit will be master over the flesh; and the Spirit of God, that dwells in the children of God, will subdue their iniquity. Up with your heart and hope, poor conquered and captivated believer; sanctification is of God. Though your own power cannot effectuate the victory; yet a merciful God can and will: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy; and mercy shall be built up for ever." The mercy that saves your soul will slay your sin.

5. Hence see, that sin is of the devil. If sanctification be of God, and holiness be of God, then is sin of the devil; yea, "He that committeth sin, is of the devil:" God is not the author of sin. Drunkenness, swearing, whoredom, adultery, Sabbath breaking, lying, and all unholy actions, are of the devil. Unholy neglect of prayer in secret and in your families, is of the devil. The sins of

the time, that provoke God, are of the devil. The wicked acts and sentences of church judicatories, are of the devil. The corruption of courts, civil and ecclesiastical, are of the devil, and not of God. For, "all things are of God," except sin, which is no part of the new creation in Christ Jesus. However God permits it, for holy and wise ends, to overrule it for his glory; yet, it enters contrary to his revealed will and royal orders. The condemning of the reformation-cause, at this day, is not of God, but of the devil. Wicked compliances with any such sinful sentence are not of God, but of the devil; and will bring in little credit or comfort in the close of the day. The defections of the day are of the devil; and so are all the complaints and outcries about the divisions of the time, more than about the defections, that are the cause and root thereof. The wicked reproaches cast upon the work of God, and any testimony lifted up for his truth and cause, these wicked reproaches and calumnies, I say, are of the devil. The wicked commentaries upon God's providences, and upon sad accidents, are of the devil. There is no new appearance for God's work, or for a reformation cause, condemned at this day, but sad accidents may be ascribed to it; as the Pagans of old ascribed all the sad accidents and ills that befel them to the primitive Christians and their new religion, in opposition to their old heathen idolatry. In a word, if sanctification be of God, then the unholiness, even of saints, is of the devil; their little zeal, and their great lukewarmness about their own personal concerns, are of the devil. Christ said to Peter once, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou savourest not the things that be of God, but these that be of men." Whatever sinful things in our day take place, let us never ascribe them to God, but to men, and to the devil; for holiness and sanctification is of God: whatever, therefore, fall out, let us justify God, and condemn ourselves; because we have so much of the devil about us.

6. Hence see the great need of coming to Christ: for sanctification is of God in him, who is made of God unto us sanctification. O consider how sanctification is of God, namely, as he is a God in Christ, a reconciled God, and a reconciling God, reconciling us to himself. While we apprehend God as an enemy to us, or a hard Master, we will remain enemies to him and his way: but, if you look to God in Christ, as a well-pleased God, and be reconciled to him, then you will be reconciled to his will, and sanctified. O then, look to God in the glass of the gospel; that is, in a word of reconciliation to you. I own, indeed, the first look you must have of

God is in the glass of the law, as a sin-revenging God, making you cry out for mercy, saying, "What shall I do to be saved?" But yet, never will you be satisfied, saved, or sanctified, till you look to him in the glass of the gospel, as a reconciled God, reconciling you to himself; as a God pardoning your sin, and imputing his righteousness to you; a God putting your sin upon Christ, and making him sin for you; and putting his righteousness upon you, making you the righteousness of God in him. The faith of this wonderful grace and mercy will reconcile your heart to God's heart, and reconcile your mind to God's mind, and your will to God's will. The unbelief of this good-will works by enmity and unholiness; but the faith of this grace and good-will of God would work by love, which is the fulfilling of the law, and so by holiness and sanctification. O then, seek after this sight of God, as coming and appearing in a word of reconciliation to you; for "all things," relating to the new creation, "are of God;" and sanctification is of him, as a reconciled God in Christ.

7. Hence see matter and ground for trial and examination, whether you be sanctified or not. And, if sanctification be begun, two things will take place.

(1.) You will see and know your own pollution and deformity, and that sanctification is not of you; nay, not one holy thought. You will be brought to acknowledge, that you are not sufficient of yourselves to think any thing, as of yourselves; and that nothing is of you but sin. These that are most holy, do see most of their own unholiness, and know the plagues of their own hearts. It is the light of the Sun of righteousness, shining into the window of the heart, that discovers all the moles and atoms of sin and filthiness, all the corruptions and abominations that were before undiscerned. They that think they have a good heart, a holy heart, a heart right enough, are far from being sanctified; for sanctifying grace, though it removes sin according to the measure of it, yet it discovers sin more than ever, and makes it appear. Like a golden ball put into a vessel brim-full of water, it makes the water rise and run over, while it makes room for itself: even so does the gold of grace put into the heart full of sin and corruption; it makes sin appear more than ever, and rise up, as it were, and run over. Hence it is possible, where sanctifying grace comes, the soul may think itself more unholy than ever it was.

(2.) You will see and know, that your sanctification is wholly

and only of God, and that in all the particulars that I have before-mentioned ; that the beginning of it is of God ; that the progress and advancement of it is of God ; that the restoration of it, when decayed, is of God ; that the means and motives of it are of God ; that he is the efficient cause and author of it ; that the extent and measure of it, the knowledge and comfort of it, the perseverance and perfection of it, are all of God, as the God of peace and reconciliation in Christ. And hence your dependence will be only and wholly upon him for it ; and you will find that the more you live upon him by faith, the more holy, both in heart and life, will you be ; whereas the more that, through an evil heart of unbelief, you depart from the living and life-giving God, of whom the life of holiness and sanctification is, the more unholy will you be.

8. Hence see where we ought to go for sanctification. If it be of God in Christ, then to God in Christ let us go for it. Never was there more sin and less holiness, both among sinners and saints, than, perhaps, in our day. O let us come to the fountain of purification that God hath opened. We read, Isa. xii. 3, of the wells of salvation, out of which we may draw water with joy ; now, sanctification is a great and leading part of salvation ; and because sanctification is of God, therefore he hath opened so many wells and fountains of sanctification, that thence we may come and draw living, and life-giving, and soul-purifying water. I shall direct you to some of these ; and may the Lord enable you to come and draw.

(1.) One fountain of sanctification, that God hath opened, is the death of Christ : Eph. v. 25, 26, where it is said, “ He gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word.” Tit. ii. 14, “ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Look then, O sinner, to a crucified Christ, whose cross hath a purifying virtue : they that look to him by faith, are accounted in law, to be dead to sin in him, Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5, 6-11. He died as a public person ; and, “ Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.”

(2.) A second fountain of sanctification, that God hath opened unto us, is the resurrection of Christ, which is the ground of our faith of life : “ 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.” 1 Pet. i. 21. As he rose for our justification, so also for our sancti-

fication, that we might be planted together with him in the likeness of his resurrection, and might be made alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. 4. Look then to a risen Christ. The view of his resurrection will make you rise and live a holy life.

(3.) Another fountain of sanctification, that God hath opened, is the ascension of Christ: "He hath ascended on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord might dwell among them," Ps. lxxviii. 18. Look to an ascending Jesus, receiving the Spirit above measure, and all the sanctifying gifts and graces of the Spirit for you, that you may be sanctified.

(4.) Another fountain of sanctification, that God hath opened, is the exaltation of Christ to his right hand: "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," Acts v. 31. He is exalted to save and sanctify sinners, as well as he was humbled for that end. And, if you could look to him as once upon the cross, and now upon the throne, for these blessed purposes, sanctification would follow.

(5.) A fifth fountain that God hath opened for sanctification, is the intercession of Christ, who hath prayed, John xvii. 17. "Sanctify them through thy truth." This was a prayer for all his ransomed ones; and all sinners that need sanctification, may look to him for the benefit of his intercession; for, "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, because he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25.

(6.) A sixth fountain of sanctification that God hath opened, is the covenant of promise that stands fast in Christ; and by these precious promises we are made partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4; Ezek. xxxvi. 25-33, "Having these promises, we are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The more improvement we make of these promises, which are Yea and Amen in Christ, by believing and pleading in them, the more holy will we be.

(7.) A seventh fountain of sanctification God hath opened, is the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, promised to cause us to walk in his statutes, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. See what a plentiful communication thereof is promised, and the effects thereof: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the

water-courses," &c., Isa. xliv. 3, 4. Let us seek the promised Spirit to be in us a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

(8.) Another fountain of sanctification God hath opened, is the sanctifying blood of Christ. God hath provided this well for us to wash in ; it is a fountain opened to the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xii. 1. "Even the blood of Christ that cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John i. 7, that we may sing and say, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever," Rev. i. 5, 6. The blood that Christ shed is still an open fountain : it was the price of sanctification on the cross, and it is the plea for it on the throne, and the plea we have to make use of at the throne of grace.

(9.) Another fountain of sanctification God hath opened, is the sanctifying relation that Christ hath to the Church, as the root on whom alone we grow in grace and holiness, and from whom alone we draw sap and sanctifying virtue, John xv. 1-5. All our stock of grace is in him ; and he communicates life to the branches in him, whereby they grow, and bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of God. O look to him who says, "I am like a green fir-tree, from me is thy fruit found," Hosea xiv. 8.

(10.) Another fountain of sanctification, that God opens to us, is the sanctifying offices of Christ. O look to every one of these offices, and you will find them springs of holiness and sanctification. Why, as a Prophet, he instructs us in the way wherein we should go ; as a Priest, he purchaseth and procures grace and holiness for us ; and, as a King, he subdues all our spiritual enemies, sin and corruption ; yea, in all these particular offices, it is his general office to be a washer of polluted sinners and polluted saints, as he said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me," John xiii. 8.

(11.) Another fountain of sanctification, that God hath opened to us, is the sanctifying example of Christ, who hath said, "Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matt. xi. 29 ; which may import both the encouragement we have to come to this school, because he is such a meek and condescending Master, and also the lesson we are to learn of him, viz. that of meekness and lowliness. "He hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps," 1 Pet. ii. 21. It is true, some will have Christ to be only an example, and not a proper sacrifice to justice for our sins ; but "We have not so learned Christ." In vain do men speak of making Christ a pat-

tern for our imitation, if they do not own him also to be the propitiation for our sins.

(12.) Another fountain of sanctification, that God opens to us in the gospel, is the sanctifying victories of Christ, who came to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8, and in whom we may be more than conquerors. We are to look to his victories, and be convinced of judgment to be executed upon Satan's works in us, because the prince of this world is judged, John xvi. 11. By following the Captain of our salvation, we may expect to have all the works of wickedness in our souls destroyed, sin subdued, and our hearts and lives sanctified.

Now, in order to the due improvement of these fountains of sanctification, that God hath opened to us, I shall close with a caution or two.

1. Let us beware of neglecting the means, the outward means: such as, the instituted ordinances of God, the word, sacraments, and prayer; for these are sanctifying means. The word of grace is a sanctifying word; therefore, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2.

2. Beware of the careless performance of, and attendance upon the means of sanctification; for, in this world it is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich: and "Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully," or NEGLIGENTLY, as in the margin. Beware of sloth; for, what fruit can be seen in the garden of the sluggard? Yet,

3. Beware of laying weight upon the means, and depending upon them, as if they could work the effect. We tempt God, if we think to be sanctified without the use of means, which he himself hath appointed; and we provoke him also if we depend upon them, as if sanctification were of them; whereas means can do nothing but as the principal agent is pleased to make use of them, and to work by them. When we lean to means and instruments, we provoke God to leave us, so as we can find no advantage by them.

4. Beware of slighting the motions of the Spirit, or of grieving the Spirit, and quenching the Spirit. We may lose the best opportunities of thriving in sanctification, and improving these open fountains thereof, if we stand not always ready to embrace the motions and breathings of the Spirit. And if we resist the Holy Ghost, by whom the work of sanctification is begun and carried on, we have a hand in marring and retarding his work; especially if, by restrain-

ing prayer, and by neglecting known duties, and living in known impiety, and conscience-wasting sin, we provoke him to be gone.

Let us live under the conviction of the necessity of holiness, without which no man shall see God; under a conviction of our own utter inability to sanctify ourselves, and of this, that our sufficiency is only of God. Let us despair of doing any thing in our own strength, knowing the treachery and deceitfulness of our own hearts, as deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. And let us keep our eye fixed upon the all-sufficiency of Christ, as able to save us to the uttermost, and as made of God to us sanctification. And, that we may be the more provoked to come to God in Christ for salvation and sanctification, let us consider the pleasure and satisfaction that he hath in saving and sanctifying of lost sinners, and in seeing them come to him for life, salvation, and sanctification; it is promised to Christ, "He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; and that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," Isa. liii. 10, 11. His delights were with the children of men from eternity; and they are fresh in time when sinners come in to him: their day of coming to and believing in him, is the day of the gladness of his heart. Many a time have we grieved him by our sin and unbelief. O may we now give him a glad heart, by coming to him to be saved from our sin, and sanctified throughout: and thus may we give evidence, that we believe that sanctification is of God, and that whatever relates to the new creation in Christ, whether as to its commencement or advancement, continuation or consummation, these and *All things are of God*.

SERMON LXX.

CHRIST, THE TRUE MOSES, SENT TO DELIVER HIS TRUE ISRAEL
FROM THEIR SPIRITUAL EGYPT.¹

"I have seen, I have seen the afflictions of my people which is in Egypt; and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt."—Acts viii. 3.

THE temporal deliverance which God gave his church out of their Egyptian bondage, was typical of the spiritual deliverance of his

(1) This discourse was delivered at Cross-hill, near Glasgow, October 11, 1741, immediately after the admission of the Rev. Mr. James Fisher, late minister of the gospel at Glasgow.

people in after ages, from whatever spiritual bondage they are under. The text now read shews God's pity and mercy towards his people, after they had been for many years in a pitiful case, and under grievous oppressions. And there are these five particulars I would observe in the words. 1. The designation of the people who were pitied of the Lord, *My people*. 2. The grievous case and distress they were in. It is called their affliction in Egypt. 3. The carriage and behaviour of these people under their distress; they groaned. 4. How the Lord shewed his pity to them, namely, both by seeing their calamity, "I have *seen*, I have seen it;" and by hearing also, "I have *heard* their groaning;" and then by coming to their help, "I am *come* down to deliver them." 5. What means he used for this end, and how he calls Moses for that purpose: "And now come, I will send thee into Egypt."

Waving the formality of a doctrinal proposition, at the time, we shall speak a little to each of these particulars, in the order now laid down, viz. :

- I. Speak to the designation of the people who are pitied.
- II. The grievous case and distress they were in.
- III. Their behaviour under their distress.
- IV. How the Lord shewed his pity to them.
- V. What means he used for this end.
- VI. Make some improvement of the whole.

I. The first thing then is, The designation of these who were pitied of God, and shewn compassion unto by him: "My people; I have seen, I have seen the affliction of *my people*." Why, what people of the earth are not his? It may be said, indeed, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." All the people in it are his. All the people in heaven, angels and saints, are his. All the people on earth; yea, and all the people in hell. He is Lord of all, and hath power over all. There is not a fish in the sea, nor a fowl in the air, nor a worm in the earth, but they are the Lord's. But yet, for all that, God has a people that are his in a special manner. And you may see the description of them, Rom. ix. 4, 5, "To whom belongeth the adoption, and the glory, the covenants, the promises, &c. Whose are the fathers, and of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, blessed for ever." God claims a relation to them.

And here it is proper to observe, that in this, and several other places in Scripture, this title of God's people is spoken of with respect to a visible church, a mixed people of good and bad ; as when he says to Israel, " I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage." And whereas, in many instances, it is spoken collectively of the whole body of the church, this rule is to be observed, that, where the Lord is mentioned thus, in relation to a mixed people, all the privileges that flow from such a relation of God, to that people are but common privileges : I mean, common to all that visible church. Thus the privilege of bringing out of the land of Egypt was a common privilege ; common to all the people, good and bad among them ; even as our deliverance from Romish Babylon, in the Reformation, &c. But though God be called the God of a church or people, collectively, and they called his people, which infers many excellent privileges, though common to them all, as in the forecited, Rom. ix. 4 ; yet he is not their God in the same respect as he is the God of these that are believers and true Israelites amongst them. As " they are not all Israel that are of Israel," so the true Israel have distinguished favours and privileges conferred on them beyond others ; he is their God, and they are his people, in a peculiar manner ; and they are possessed of saving privileges. Israel, or the church in general, hath a right *to* Christ, but true Israelites have a right *in* him ; by their being made to take possession of the general right that all the rest have, by the federal relation to him as his people. Israel was a people in covenant with God ; he choosed them for his people, and they choosed him by profession for their God ; and happy Israelites they were, that did so in reality. They had his truth for their security, his mercy for their comfort, his wisdom for their counsellor, his Spirit for their guide, his angels for their guardians and ministering spirits.

My people : It is, (1.) A title of peculiarity, importing a separation from other people ; that they are not the people of the world, but chosen out of the world ; they are not their own people, but bought with a price. (1.) A title of propriety, importing God's interest in them ; being a people of his choice, his purchase, his promise, his conquest, his love, and his care. (3.) A title of dignity, importing their high privilege ; his people are his pleasure, his treasure, his heritage, his flock, his witness, his crown, his glory, &c. (4.) A title of divinity, God's people ; importing their professed or

real participation of the divine nature and image ; a people formed by himself to shew forth his praise.

My people: they were so federally, by virtue of the covenant God made with their fathers. God said to Moses, when sent to deliver them, "I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob." Now, he calls them his people, because they were come of these, of whom he declared himself to be their God, and the God of their seed ; and with whom he had before entered into covenant, saying, "I am thy God ;" namely, in Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, who was to descend of them, according to the flesh. Indeed, it is only through Christ that we can be God's people ; for all the promises are made to Christ, and through him to us. The promise made to Abraham was of the Messiah : "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." And it is said, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son," Hosea xi. 1. There the prophet seems only to mean God's people, whom he delivered out of Egypt ; but yet we see, Matt. ii. 15, it is applied particularly to Christ, because it was only through him, and for his sake, that this deliverance was both promised and wrought. We are not then of the number of God's people, if we be not in Christ ; take away Christ and the gospel, and you take away your title to be God's people.

My people: how? They were his by virtue of the old relation to their fathers. There was a long time between his saying, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed," and the time that he said to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." It was at least the space of four hundred years : yet, by virtue of that covenant, he calls them that were come of them, after so long a time, *my people*. Hence many years after a covenant is made, the covenant stands. When God hath manifested his covenant of grace to a people, receiving them to be his ; and they have thereupon entered into a covenant of duty with him, avouching him to be their God, and promising, through grace, subjection to him, though it were four hundred years old ; yea, though it were four thousand years, it stands ; and they who succeed are bound by that covenant. There are personal covenants and national covenants. In baptism, and the Lord's supper, there is a personal covenanting to be the Lord's, and to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh. But besides, there are national covenants, wherein we in these lands have devoted ourselves to the Lord, and avowed ourselves to be his people. In which practice we were warranted by many scripture

precedents, such as Joshua xxiv. 14-18, 2 Kings xvii. 11, 2 Chron. xv. &c. Never was any action done more sedately and advisedly than this covenanting work was done, that is now so much buried, forgotten, and slighted. The binding obligation thereof upon us is plain; if we have the benefit of that religion to which our forefathers swore an hundred years ago, then we must be heirs of the oath they came under to the most high God. We find, in scripture, that Levi is said to pay tithes to Melchisedec; and yet Levi was not born at this time; but it was Abraham that paid tithes, and Levi being to come of Abraham, therefore he is said to pay them. Therefore, when our fathers swore to this Covenant, we swore as well as they; and we are obliged to stand to it, though it were never so many years after. This generation is now making light of Scotland's Covenant with God; and are so far renouncing their relation to him, as his people by solemn Covenant. But see how God speaks in scripture of his people, and their posterity after them, it is said, Psalm lxvi. 6, that God did turn the floods into dry land, and they went through the flood on foot; *then, there* did We rejoice in him. How could this be, that they did rejoice in him, *then* and *there*, since they were not then come into the world? Why, because they got deliverance at that time: otherwise they had been destroyed, and had not then existed. Even thus, when this land was delivered from Popery, at the Reformation; and, by solemn Covenant, got the true reformed religion, we being partakers of the benefits, are bound to perform that which they promised to do for it. Thus the prophet Hosea, chap. xii. 4, speaking of the wrestling of Jacob with God at Bethel, says, "He met with *him* in Bethel, and there he spake with *us*," though many years before they were born. Here the prophet shews, that they were degenerate from their believing progenitors; and that they had turned Bethel to Bethaven, the house of God to the house of vanity. Thus people are charged in scripture with the breach of covenant that their fathers made.

What did we receive from our forefathers? Much light was conveyed from them; but what are we transmitting to our posterity, but darkness and defection? Is it any wonder then we are broken to pieces, because of a broken Covenant? The children of Israel made a covenant with the Gibeonites; and though it was obtained by fraud, yet when after four hundred years, that it might have been thought forgotten, for breaking of it they were plagued of God with a great famine; and God's wrath could not be appeased till seven

of Saul's sons were hanged for the hand they had in it. How then may we suppose, will God avenge the violation of a lawful oath made with himself in this land? If but a parent bind and oblige his children to do so and so, we count it justice to do it, and great injustice and iniquity if it be not done, when parents are dead and gone; is not their seed and heirs bound by their right, promise, or covenant, as well as they were? What continual change and confusion would there be in the world, if persons themselves were only to be tied by their own personal bonds? How much more iniquity is it for men to deny their obligation by Covenant to God, made by their forefathers in their name? And, indeed, Scotland is more obliged than other nations; for God was never more with any than with them, nor any more with him than they. Many arrows hath God to shoot against such a nation, if we be a nation: many arrows hath he shot. As the Israelites, when they made the golden calf and worshipped it, it is remarked by one, that "never a plague came upon them after, but there was an ounce of the golden calf in it." God could not forget that it was such a heinous sin: and so we may say, many a plague hath God sent these years bygone, and many more terrible ones seem a-coming; but never a plague hath yet befallen us, but there has been an ounce of this great sin of covenant-breaking in it: for God hath a just controversy with the land for our covenant-breaking and perjury. Meantime, however light we make of our solemn covenant, yet this is one of the grounds of our claim to him as his people. It is also one of the grounds of his continuing to lay claim to us, who own these Covenants, and to call us his people: *My people*.

II. The second thing in the words is, the miserable condition they were in: "I have seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt." I have seen it to be a great affliction, and the greatness of it may appear in the following particulars.

1. They dealt craftily with them when they increased: for the king of Egypt and his counsellors said, "Come, and let us work wisely with them." Their affliction was devised by the king and his council. Their whole wit and policy was employed to afflict God's people, and the wisdom of Egypt was not small; though it was not true wisdom, yet it was great, like that of the old serpent. The afflictions of God's people are great, when the wisdom and policy of men and devils are employed against them.

2. The greatness of their affliction appears from the manner

how they were enslaved; they were employed in mire and clay, by the side of the river Nile, and making of tile for building houses for the king, and erecting their pyramids. They were not employed in curious work, but in the coarsest of work in making bricks; and their tasks were doubled upon them: they behoved to do twice as much work as they did before. Task-masters were set over their head, by whom they were beaten, if they fulfilled not their task. And yet, being denied straw, one part of them must wander about seeking straw, and another making tile.

3. The greatness of their affliction appears in that it lasted long; for it seems to have begun shortly after the death of Joseph and his brethren, when there arose another king who knew not Joseph: and though their trouble was not all that time in extremity, yet it was a growing trouble, till they came at last,

4. To be cut off from all hope of any posterity; the midwives of Egypt being commanded to kill all their male children: and when the midwives refused, the Egyptians were commanded to take and cast them into the river Nile: and, you know, this occasioned the miraculous preservation of Moses. Thus their affliction was great and grievous: it was as great as the wisdom of Egypt, and as base also; likewise growing and lasting, till it came to an extremity. Then it was that the Lord said, "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people."

QUEST. How came they to be thus afflicted? Was it not by the providence of God? Yea, indeed, it was; as you see Psalm cv. 25, where it is said, "He turned their hearts to hate his people, and to deal subtilly with his servants:" so that their afflictions were ordered of the Lord, for these and the like ends.

(1.) Lest his people, living amongst the Egyptians, should become too familiar with them, and so be drawn to their idolatry, he would have them to hate them; for if they had been well entertained among them, they might have fallen away from the true God, as some of them did, Joshua xxiv., Ezek. xxiii., for as sore as they were afflicted. How much more would they have fallen, if they had been kindly entertained by them? For they had as much natural inclination to fall away from the worship of the true God, to idolatry, as all other men hath; therefore he would have the Egyptians to oppress them.

(2.) That they might long to be delivered from their grievous affliction, and to be possessed of the good land promised to them,

as the seed of Abraham. He would thus stir up in them a sense of their present state, and a desire after liberty. Hence, when Moses was sent, they were glad to hear of their deliverance, and that there was hope they would get their head out of the yoke of bondage they were into.

(3.) That they might not return to Egypt again, when once they were out of it, remembering what slavery they were in; though yet it is strange, as you see, Num. xiv., they would gladly have been back again; though Canaan was called a land flowing with milk and honey, and Egypt a place of onions and garlick; yet, when they found but a little distress in the wilderness, how would they have been back again? Much more would they have longed to return, if they had not been sore afflicted in Egypt. I may add another reason,

(4.) That in their deliverance from the affliction, God's glory might be the greater, both in manifesting his justice, in punishing the Egyptians; and his truth and mercy, in delivering his people.

And here, to adapt this matter to the case of God's people at present in Scotland, have they not been in great bondage, and under grievous oppressions and church-tyranny? Have not judicatories been dealing craftily with them? And, have they not been brought under great hardships, by severe task-masters, and cruel watchmen? How long hath the bondage continued, and how greatly hath it been growing these good many years? How have defections come to such a height, that a covenanted Reformation was like to have no shadow of a testimony for it, and so all hope of transmitting it purely to posterity, was ready to be cut off, and we from having a posterity to praise the Lord, and do service to him, as a covenanted land? Those that were appearing for that cause of God, have been cut off, and cast out of the synagogue; and so they, and all that cleave to them, cast, as it were, to the door: the Lord having turned the hearts of this generation to hate his people, and deal subtilly with his servants.¹ And wherefore hath the Lord done this?

1. That we may not fall in love with the fashions of the generation, nor may go on in the same course of defection. Nay, how

(1) The oppression and tyranny of Church-judicatories, the severity and cruelty of the watchmen, their opposition to a testimony for truth, and their thrusting out of the synagogue those who befriended it, and adhered thereto, have been already laid open in the notes to the former volumes.

hath God made his people's affliction and oppression, by ecclesiastical sentences, the occasion of rendering their crafty and cruel oppressors hateful and contemptible in their eyes, and their ways to be odious?

2. God hath so ordered it, that his people might long to be delivered from their afflictions, and relieved from the hardships they were under with reference to the want of church privileges.

3. That, being once set at liberty, they might use all means not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

4. That God might be the more glorified, both in shewing his just displeasure against oppressors, and his mercy to his people, according to his promise in Christ.

III. The third thing here is, The carriage and behaviour of this people under their distress and affliction: it is expressed by the word *groaning*. In the book of Exodus it is said, they *sighed*, they *cried*, they *groaned*: here there is but one word used. For understanding whereof, there is a twofold cry to God in affliction.

1. The cry of oppression. 2. The cry of the oppressed. The first is real, the other is vocal.

1. The first, I say, is the real cry of sin itself: The hire of the labourer is said, James v. 4, to cry in the ears of God. A mercenary servant, that has no more to live upon but his wages, the withholding of it cries for a curse in the ears of God. And, Gen. iv. 10, when God questions Cain about his brother Abel, and he says, "Am I my brother's keeper?" God answers, "The *cry* of thy brother's blood is come up to heaven before me." And, Gen. xviii. 20, the sin of Sodom is said to cry in God's ears for a curse. Thus the sin of oppression is a crying sin, and many other sins are crying sins. Scotland's perjury is a crying sin. Sin cries for vengeance to come down upon the committers thereof: thus when Israel were afflicted and oppressed, their oppression cried. But,

2. This was joined with the cry of the oppressed; the cry of the prayer of God's people, Deut. xxvi. 7, "When we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression." Sirs, when people are afflicted and oppressed, what is the reason that the Lord rises not up to deliver them? Do not oppressions cry in the ears of the Lord? Yea, but there should be a two-fold cry; with the cry of oppression, there should be the cry of the oppressed: for, God has two ears, so to speak; an ear of justice, to hear the cry of

oppression ; and an ear of mercy, to hear the cry of the oppressed : now, when the cry of oppression comes up before him, he keeps up the stroke till the cry of the oppressed come also up. Well, the cry of oppression, even of church oppression in this land, hath come up before the Lord of hosts : O that there were more of the cry of the oppressed ! the cry of the prayer of faith. It is not a clamour I am speaking of ; *Non vox, sed votum*. Moses is said to *cry*, when he uttered not a word ; and there are “groanings which cannot be uttered,” which the Lord hears and answers. If under the influence of the Spirit helping our infirmities, our hearts and voices were going together, through the land, to cry to the Lord, we might expect he would hear. As the ear of his justice hath been deafed, as it were, with the cry of oppression, obtrusions, errors, defections, and corruptions ; if the ears of his mercy were also deafened with the importunate cries of the oppressed, afflicted, and scattered heritage of God ; as we believe, in some measure, this exercise is taking place among some of the praying societies in Scotland : but if there were more and more of it, we might expect the Lord would remember his covenant, and put to his hand, and help up with reformation-work, maugre all the opposition made to it.

Observe, It is a pitiful case when people are in affliction, and yet are not groaning nor crying to the Lord, nor seeking help from him. You should look upon affliction as a scourge to drive you to God. As a good child, when beaten by his father, will not run away from him, but draw nearer to him, and cry for mercy ; so, in affliction, we are to rent our hearts, and cry to a God in Christ.

IV. The fourth thing here is, The way how the Lord shewed his pity to his oppressed people : “I have seen, I have seen ; I have heard ; I am come down to deliver.” There are three expressions here by which he shews his pity and compassion.

1st, It is expressed by *seeing* : “I have seen, I have seen their affliction ;” or, “seeing I have seen it.” Here is mercy in his *eye* ; he gives a look of pity and compassion.

2dly, It is expressed by *hearing* : “I have heard their groaning, I have heard their groaning.” Here is mercy in his *ear*, which was open to their cry.

3dly, It is expressed by a *coming down* : “I am come down to deliver them.” Here is mercy in his *feet*, and *hand*, and *motion*, for their help. These are figurative expressions, God speaking after

the manner of men, by an usual allegory ; and you have it very orderly expressed, Exod. iii. 7, 8, 9.

We shall here observe three reasons of these expressions.

1. To shew his wisdom, that when men would act rightly towards oppressors or oppressed, they should cognosce, and put matters to a fair trial ; or should see with their eyes, as it were, how matters are ; and hear with their ears, what humble supplications are made to them, and act a just and equal part.

2. To let us see the patience of God, that he runs not at the first to strike, like a furious person, but comes at leisure, and by degrees : having seen the case of his people, he hears their cry.

3. To let us see the certainty and solidity of God's dealings, that though he suffers long, he will not suffer always : and that, when he comes, he comes to purpose, for judgment on his enemies, and mercy to his friends. When men have pronounced judgment, they may retract, because they have not considered duly beforehand ; but God hath seen, and seen again ; and heard, and well considered matters, before he strikes. If he hath come with feet of wool, when he comes, he will have hands of iron. We need not say, the Lord is long in coming to punish the wicked ; for when he comes, his strokes are sad, and sure, and heavy. His judgments are great and heavy. Nor that he is long in coming to deliver his people ; for, when he comes indeed, he comes down with a vengeance on their enemies, and with an out-stretched arm of salvation and deliverance towards them : "The day of vengeance is in my heart ; for the year of my redeemed is come," Isa. lxiii. 4.

Therefore, let us reverence the providence of God in a way of shewing mercy ; let us wait upon God, and give him time ; his own time, to see, and hear, and come. He must have his seeing-time : "I have seen their affliction." He must have his hearing time : "I have heard their groanings." And then he will have his coming-time : "I am come down to deliver." "He that believeth maketh not haste," but waits his time. Are you oppressed with spiritual enemies ? with strong, powerful, and prevalent lusts and corruptions ? Are you crying day and night, "Lord, avenge me of mine adversary ? Luke xviii. 3. Are you longing for God's coming down for your deliverance ? O wait patiently upon this merciful and compassionate God : for he is neither blind, nor deaf, nor dead, like the idol gods of the nations : No ; he is a seeing God, an all-seeing God : "I have seen, I have seen your affliction ;" he is a hearing God : "I have heard your secret groanings ;" and he is a coming

God, he is on his way coming down to you : " He is a God of judgment ; blessed are all they that wait for him."

V. The fifth thing in the words, is the means and instrument that he uses for their help. " And now come, Moses, I will send thee into Egypt." Now, we are to consider these words, 1. Literally, as they relate to Moses ; and, 2. Typically, as they relate especially to Christ, of whom Moses was but a type and shadow.

1st, Let us consider them literally, as they relate to Moses : " Come now, and I will send thee into Egypt, to be a deliverer to my people there." And here the following remarks may be offered.

Remark 1. " That though God could have delivered Israel by his own almighty hand immediately, without any means or instrument, yet he choosed to do it by a Moses." He that made a voice to speak to Moses, could, by a voice, deliver them without the help or hand of any instrument. He could, by an extraordinary providence, do whatever he did by an instrument ; but he chooses to employ instruments. Thus God could bring about a reformation in Scotland, without the instrumentality of any man ; but he chooses to do otherwise : therefore let none say, I need not put to my hand, for God will do his work whether I meddle or not : but if he be calling us to do work for him, let us not say it is needless. What if Moses had said so to God at this time ? surely it would not have become him to have refused such an honourable employment. Put to thy hand, in the name of God, to the work of personal, family, and national reformation ; and, if you can do more, pray the Lord earnestly that he would work the work. We ought not to go into lurking holes, when God hath anything ado ; for, God honours men thus when he employs them in any good work. Yet it is not for want of strength he does this, but to try people, if they will be zealous and valiant for a good cause. We should bless the Lord, if he be making any small number to take the cause of reformation to heart. I have heard how, in our glorious reformation days, God spurred a number of young noblemen oftentimes to meet by six or seven in the morning, to stay together till nine or ten at night ; and all that time to be only occupied about religion, and never a word of any other thing ; and yet not at all wearied or uneasy. How did this appear to be a work of God ! Indeed, if God has a mind to bring about reformation in our day, it looks not very likely as yet, that God is to honour our nobility and gentry to be the beginners of it ; but if he shall leave in the midst of us a poor, afflicted and

despised people, a contemptible handful, and make them his instrument ; he can do glorious things even by very base and contemptible means ; for so did he here. Therefore,

Remark 2. “Moses is taken from the station of a shepherd, to be a king in Jeshurun ; a commander and deliverer to Israel ; like David, from following the ewes with young.” Moses, from his mean service, is called to lay the foundation of the Jewish church. So the apostles, a company of poor fishermen, were taken from their ships and nets, to lay the foundation of the Christian church. . God doth great things by small contemptible means, and means that are despised ; for so was Moses, as you see in the verse following the text. This Moses, whom they refused, saying, “Who made thee a ruler and a judge?” the same did God send to be a ruler and deliverer by the hands of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. When God appears for his work in a church, some expect it will be by very remarkable instruments ; and that he will make use of silver or golden trumpets to gather his church : but if he come not that way, but rather by most despicable means, like rams horns ; why, think they, what will these do ? O how apt are we to mistake Christ, even when he comes for our deliverance, especially if he come in some strange unbeaten path, as when he came to the disciples’ relief, but came walking on the waves of the sea ? Indeed, the floods have lifted up their voice : floods of opposition to God’s work, floods of church authority and ecclesiastical sentences against the work of God, and witnesses for it. If Christ come walking upon such floods, and treading but these proud waves, and pouring contempt upon human authority, which stands in his way : some are frightened at his coming in such a road, and afraid it be a spirit, a delusive spirit : yea, but God has strange ways of delivering his people : “His ways are not our ways.” Man’s ways savour of the things of the earth : “Is this the manner of man ?” says David : No ; not a man in all the world would have taken you from sheep-herding, and made you a king ; nor Moses from being a shepherd also to be a prince : yea, but it is part of God’s way, whose ways are above our carnal and earthly ways, as the heaven is above the earth.

Remark 3. “The time of God’s employing Moses : Come now, I will send thee, &c.” Moses might have thought with himself, why now ? for I was forty years there already ; and now it is forty years since I came out of it : yea, but he was to be employed now

a third forty years, in leading Israel towards Canaan. But my appearing formerly to be a deliverer among them misgave, might he think; why therefore *now*? Well, but the time was not then come; but *now* is the time come for delivering them; and therefore his errand was to be the more successful. *Now* their affliction is come to an extremity; now is the accepted time; now the four hundred years are elapsed, and the promise to their fathers, that I would appear for them about such a time; therefore, there is work for you now, Moses, not only as a prophet, to tell the people that I am about to deliver them; but as my ambassador to Pharaoh, to demand, in the name of the King of kings, that he would render the Lord's people to him. He is sent as a king of Israel to lead them forth. God, many times, when he is about to deliver his people, screws up their trials to the highest degree, that so their deliverance may be the more wonderful and remarkable.

Remark 4. "That Moses runs not till he is sent." He declared himself indeed somewhat unwilling at first, but this flowed from a sense of his own unworthiness. True ambassadors of God are sent of him; they have a regular mission, and must not fail to go when they are sent. Their comfort, if not their success, depends upon their being called of God and sent. The success, indeed, must be referred to God; but we must evermore look to our duty, and yield obedience to the divine call, using the means, and leaving the event to God.

2dly, Consider these words typically, as they relate to Christ, of whom Moses was a type. His being sent to deliver Israel out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage, was a typical representation of God's sending his Son to redeem us from our natural state of sin and misery, and worse than Egyptian bondage. Moses himself prophesied of Christ's being sent of God upon this errand, Deut. xviii. 18. See Acts vii. 37, where our text lies. Now, as it relates to Christ, and the spiritual salvation from the spiritual Egypt, we are to take a twofold view of it, namely, Christ in his person, and Christ in his ministers and messengers.

[1.] As it relates to Christ himself, here typified by Moses, we observe, That Christ is the Sent of God to deliver us out of the bondage of a natural state. He is sent of God, of God the Father, for our redemption. God the Father says, upon the matter, in this transaction, "Come now, and I will send thee into Egypt." John iii. 17. "God sent not his Son to condemn the world, but that the

world through him might be saved." Christ made no objection, but says, "Lo! I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me." Here consider a few things.

1. The person sent: "I will send *thee*." *THEE*, my eternal Son; for, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. Thee, my Servant whom I have chosen; mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth."

2. The person sending, in the pronoun *I*: "I will send *thee*." Who is this *I*? It is even God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, by unanimous counsel, ordained and appointed the Son to come into the world, in his own person, upon the errand of man's redemption; and God the Father being the first in the order of subsistency, and so the first in operation, *ad extra*, therefore the sending is primarily ascribed to him, John xvi. 28, "I came forth from the Father," says Christ; "and they have believed that thou didst send me." John viii. 42, "I come not of myself, but he sent me;" and verse 29, "He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone."

3. Observe the sovereign reason of Christ's mission; it is the divine will: "I *will* send *thee*." Christ went into it, saying, "Lo! I come; I delight to do thy will." By this will Christ is sent; by this will we are sanctified, saved, and redeemed. The whole covenant of redemption or grace stands upon this divine will: "I will give thee for a covenant of the people." See how Christ opens up his commission, saying, This and this is the will of him that sent me: John vi. 38, "I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing." See ver. 39, 40, "I lay down my life for my sheep; and this commandment have I received from my Father." Thus it was the Father's will, for the great ends of his glory, to send his Son, our true Moses.

4. Observe here, the errand on which he was sent: "I will send thee to EGYPT;" to my people, who are in the Egypt of this world, and are in a state of sin and misery, and bondage to Satan, death, and hell, and wrath, that thou mayest deliver them: "I will give thee to be my salvation to the ends of the earth, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them which are bound," Isa. lxix. 6.

5. Observe the solemnity of his mission, and the time of it: "Come now, and I will send thee." "We have struck hands

from all eternity, might the Father say to the Son; we have been waiting for this time; our delights were with the sons of men; and now come, let us accomplish our love-design: now is the fit time; the necessity of my chosen ones cries for the accomplishment of the promise, That the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. "Come now, and I will send thee to Egypt." And accordingly, Gal. iv. 4, "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."

6. Observe here, the nature of the mission itself; it is called a sending; "Come now, and I will *send* thee." And it imports the incarnation of the Son of God; "The Word was made flesh:" it imports the fitness of Christ for the work; "I will send and qualify thee, and put my Spirit upon thee, that thou mayest bring forth judgment to the Gentiles:" it imports the authority of Christ's mission, and God's confidence in him as able for, and faithful to perform the whole work that he gave him to do; hence the Father glories in him, Psalm lxix. 19, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty:" and again, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:" and, in a word, it imports the Father's zealous concern for the errand on which he was sent, viz., the redemption and salvation of men, that before this be left undone, he will rather part with his own Son, and send him to Egypt, and send him clothed with all authority, office, and ability, needful for this work: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." He was sent, and came as a fruit of his everlasting love.

Hence, by way of application of this particular, viz., the Father's sending Christ, two things especially may be inferred.

(1.) O sirs, see and admire the love both of the Sender and the Sent; both of the Father and of the Son towards lost and undone sinners, lying in their Egyptian bondage to sin, and Satan, and death: "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John iv. 9, 10. And as the love of God in sending Christ, so the love of Christ in coming, is wonderful: Eph. v. 2, "He loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God." Rev. v. 2, "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Gal. ii. 20, "He loved me, and

gave himself for me." "I will send thee," said the Father; and "I will go," said the Son: I will go down to earth, down to Egypt, down to the cross, down to the grave, and down to a hell for thee and for them.

(2.) See what a sure foundation is laid in Zion, for the salvation of sinners, whereof a number must and shall be saved out of the Egyptian bondage of their state of sin and misery: "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12. O how should sinners welcome the Sent of God! John v. 24, and believe in him as sent upon such a saving errand as that mentioned, Acts iii. 26, where it is said, "That God having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless us." He hath sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities. But how does God send him to bless us, even after he hath raised him from the dead, and received him into heaven? Why, it is even by the continued ministry of the gospel to the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 18. This leads to another view of the words, viz.,

[2.] As they relate to Christ in his ministers and messengers. "Come now, and I will send thee into Egypt." And here is the effect and consequence of God's sending Christ, namely, Christ sent his servants: "As my Father sent me, so send I you," John xx. 21. Which words may be viewed either as they relate to the apostles, and so to shew their immediate mission from Christ, "I send you;" or, as they relate to other ordinary ministers, and what is common to them with the apostles: it may be said of them, "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you." Where there is, 1. The act of sending. 2. The manner of it: *so* send I you, *as* my Father sent me.

I. The act of sending, "I SEND you." Christ is the author of this ministerial function. He sends not only immediately, by himself; but immediately, by the church; in such order as he hath appointed in his word. This ordinary gospel-mission is necessary; for, "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" Rom. x. 15. Why, God looks upon them as imposters, Jer. xxiii. 21, "They have run, and I have not sent them." Their message is void, even as one that is an ambassador, without the prince's leave; his whole embassy is null. And only these that are sent can promise themselves and expect his blessing, his sustenance and support in their

work, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, to whom he says, Go ; to them he says, "Lo! I am with you." Christ says of every faithful minister, whom he sends to labour in any spot of his vineyard, "Come now, and I will send thee into Egypt," to deliver my people there, that are yet in the house of bondage, in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity ; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

2. The manner in which he sends them : "*As my Father hath sent me, so send I you ;*" and that in the following respects.

(1.) Christ was sent into the Egypt of a sinful world by his Father : so are ministers sent of Christ, John xvii. 18, "*As thou hast sent me into the world, so have I also sent them into the world.*" Mark xvi. 15, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*"

(2.) And more particularly, it is as if he had said to his servants, *As my Father sent me out of his bosom, to declare his mind, John i. 18 ; so send I you out of my bosom to discover my mind and message, to declare the whole counsel of God, Matt. xxviii. 20, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."* *As my Father sent me with authority, to act in his name, as his Ambassador ; so send I you with authority to act in my name, as my ambassadors ; "We are ambassadors of Christ."* *As my Father sent me with a promise that he would be with me, John viii. 29, "He that sent me is with me :"* *so send I you with the promise, "Lo! I am with you always unto the end of the world."* *As the Father sent me to do nothing of myself, but as he taught, John viii. 28, so send I you to do nothing of yourselves, but as you are taught of me. As my Father hath sent me not to speak of myself, but as he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak, John xii. 49, so send I you, not to speak of yourselves, nor for your own glory, John vii. 18, but as I give commandment what you should say, and what you should speak. As my Father sent me, and anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek, Isa. lxi. 1, so send I you to preach the gospel to every poor creature. My Father sent me to live by him, John vi. 47, "The living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father ; so send I you, so as that you may live by me ; that the life you live, may be by the faith of the Son of God. My Father sent me to give out freely of the gifts I received for men, even for the rebellious ; so*

send I you ; “ Freely you have received, freely give ; ” tell the poor world, they have nothing to pay for life and salvation, for I have paid for all. My Father sent me to be assaulted by many bulls of Bashan, compassing me about ; so send I you, Matt. x. 16, “ Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves ; ” think not strange though they attempt to tear you and your commission. My Father sent me to be an example to you, and to leave you an example, that you might follow my steps : so send I you, that ye may be ensamples to the flock, 1 Pet. v. 5. My Father sent me with a promise of a reward of my work ; Though Israel should not be gathered, yet should I be glorious in the sight of the Lord : even so send I you ; for, “ When the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away. ” Again, my Father sent me to be a light to the world, a light to lighten the Gentiles : so send I you ; “ Ye are the light of the world, ” Matt. v. 14, and ye are to shine as lights in the world, Phil. ii. 15. My Father sent me to be a sign, a sign that should be spoken against, Luke ii. 34, even so send I you, Ezek. xii. 6, “ Son of man, I have set thee for a sign to the house of Israel ; ” a sign of mercy to some, a sign of judgment to others, and a sign of reproof unto many. How sad ! that some instead of being signs are snares ! Hos. ix. 8. Again, my Father sent me to be a world’s wonder ; “ Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me, are for signs, and wonders even in Israel : ” so send I you, Zech. iii. 8, “ O Joshua, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee : they are men wondered at. Psalm lxxi. 7. I am a wonder to many ; but thou art my strong refuge. ” My Father sent me to be a witness ; and “ To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth : ” even so send I you, to be witnesses for me ; “ Ye are my witnesses, Isa. xliii. 10, 11, 12. Ye are my witnesses, that I am God ; I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no Saviour ; therefore ye are my witnesses that I am God. ” My Father sent me to gather sinners unto him ; and “ How often would I have gathered them, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings ? ” So send I you, to gather the outcasts of Israel, and to gather the dispersed of Israel into one. In a word, my Father sent me down to Egypt, down to this world, a place of Egyptian darkness and idolatry, of Egyptian bondage and slavery : so send I you, with the gospel of light and liberty, to deliver sinners from darkness and bondage. My Father sent me, and sealed me, and anointed and qualified me ; “ Behold my

servant whom I uphold ; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth :” so send I you, with my seal, my anointing, my furniture ; you go not on this warfare at your own charges, but at my cost. Finally, my Father sent me, with a “come now, and I will send THEE,” *thee* in particular ; even so send I you ; not only *you* in general, who are ministers of mine, but *thee* in particular ; every minister in particular, is to apply the mission to himself ; I send thee to such a corner, and thee to such another corner. He that hath appointed the bounds of our habitations, hath appointed the bounds of thy ministration. It is true, thy general commission is large, “Go, preach the gospel to every creature,” as you have access ; but he ordinarily assigns his servants also each his particular charge ; and wherever it is, it may be called an Egypt, because of the multitude of bond slaves to sin and Satan that are there ; and therefore his call is, “Come now, and I will send thee into Egypt.” Thus of the manner in which he sends.

Hence, see, by way of application, these two particulars following.

1. What regard ought to be paid to a faithful gospel-ministry. It is to be revered as God’s send. Christ hath said, “He that receiveth you, receiveth me ; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.” Respect is due to the ministerial vocation, because it resembles the call of Christ from the Father. It is a divine call and mission, *I send* : it is God that sends a faithful minister. It is a particular call, *I send THEE*. God points out in providence, the particular person for the particular charge. It is a sovereign call : *I WILL send thee*. It is my will and pleasure to give you such a minister. It is not a pastor at the pleasure of the patron, prince, prelate, or prelatical court ; no : it is according to the will of God, and the mind of God, that a faithful minister is given in an ordinary way : and therefore to be regarded and revered. Again, it is a weighty call that a gospel-minister hath, a weighty mission ; *I send thee into EGYPT*. O sirs, people should pray for their ministers, and pity them when sent to Egypt ; hard work is upon their hand there. It is a needful mission : when the cry of the oppressed is great, when the case of sinners is sad and deplorable. It is a solemn mission ; *Come NOW*, “and I will send thee.” The circumstances of the present admission of a minister here amongst you is such as makes the matter very weighty and solemn in all its circumstances : I doubt if ever there was the like. The

circumstances of the time, and the place, and the persons that gave the call, and the person called, yea, admitted amongst you.

I have heard of Glasgow, that some time ago it hath been like a Goshen for religion, when men could not walk almost through the streets of it, without hearing the morning and evening sound of family worship on week-days, as well as Sabbath-days; but I have also heard, that now it is degenerate to an Egypt of gross darkness, error, irreligion and ungodliness; an Egypt where a number of God's people, that desire to see reformation-work reviving, have been long oppressed, scattered, reproached, and kept in bondage; and (though I know the modesty of the minister this day admitted amongst you, will hardly bear with such an honourable application of this text, yet) what a mercy would it be to this place, if God be this day saying, with reference to him, "Come now, and I will send thee into Egypt; for I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people; I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver," and am to make thee the instrument? This would be such a mercy, that, I think, all the Lord's people should be crying with their hearts to God for it, saying, "O! that he may be sent of God to be the happy instrument of delivering many souls out of their house of bondage to sin and Satan!" Let this be your prayer and desire in secret; and, who knows what God may do? Though a Red-sea of difficulties should be in the way, the God of Israel still remains; he can work his work by what instruments he will.

2. Is God saying to every gospel minister, whom he calls to work for him, "Come now, and I will send thee to Egypt?" and is Christ saying to us, "As my Father sent me, so send I you?" Then you may look upon us ministers here this day, as sent from him who is the Son of God, and the Sent of God, to call you to believe in him whom the Father has sent. We are only sent to speak in his name and not in our own. We are only sent, indeed, of Christ at the second hand; but Christ is the Sent of God immediately, and at the first hand. We are sent of Christ to call you to come to the Sent of God; and, indeed, saving faith lies in a coming to, and believing in Christ, as he is the Sent of God. Many a time, in the gospel according to John, the main hinge and mystery of faith is made to lie in this; John v. 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth in him that sent me, hath everlasting life. John xi. 42. As I said, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. John xii. 54. He that

believeth on me, believeth on him that sent me." And, verse 45, "He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. John vii. 22. That the world may know that thou hast sent me," verse 41, "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Yea, about forty times, in that one book of John, Christ is proclaimed as the Sent of God. He spake of himself as the Sent of God, and also of faith as fixing upon him as the Sent of God. And John vi. 29, when it is questioned, "What shall we do, that we may work the work of God?" Christ answers, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." This is the work of his approbation; yea, this is the work of his operation, verse 45, 65, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him." But how does he draw? Why, as the Father sent Christ, so Christ promises to send the Spirit; "If I go, I will send him," says Christ, John xvi. 8, "and when he is come, he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He shall testify of me, and he shall glorify me." And thus he shall draw sinners to me, and that by the ministry of the word: for the Spirit again, he sends and qualifies his own ministers, and makes them able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 6. And when their ministry is the ministration of the Spirit, which is the Spirit of power and life; "For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." And thus the word of grace, in the mouth of the minister, and in the hand of the Spirit, sent by him who is the Sent of God, is the means of quickening the soul to this faith of the Son of God, and Sent of God.

O then, sinner, before you go, consider how many sends there are for you; Christ is sent, the Spirit sent, the minister sent; he that said to Moses, "Come now, and I will send thee to Egypt," said to Christ, our true Moses, "Come now, and I will send thee;" and Christ is saying to the Spirit, "Come now, and I will send thee," and the Spirit is saying to the minister, "Come now, and I will send thee, to deal with such a soul, in the name of Christ, to come to him, and believe in him as the Christ of God, the Sent of God."

O then, sinner, if you would have the benefit of this day's work, and the profit of a gospel-ministry to your eternal salvation, I call you to this work of God, which is to believe in him whom he hath sent; to believe that God hath sent Christ to the Egypt of darkness, death, and bondage that you are into; to believe that he

is sent to loose your bonds, and bring you out of that house of bondage: "If thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God."

O sinner, sinner, that hears me, you cannot deliver yourself out of your bondage; you cannot save yourself either from sin or wrath: but wilt thou believe that Christ is sent to deliver you? that "God hath sent him to bless you," O cursed sinner? That God hath sent him to save thee, O lost sinner? That God hath sent him to pardon thee, O guilty sinner? That God hath sent him to wash thee, O polluted sinner? You shall die in your sin, if you believe not that God hath sent him as a Jesus, to save thee from thy sins. But if thou believest in him as the Sent of God, thou shalt see the glory of God; for, "If thou believest, thou shalt be saved." We are sent to tell you what the Sent of God says; he says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." God hath sent him down to Egypt, to deliver thee from death, spiritual and eternal; and he is come to save and deliver thee, because his Father sent him.

And wherefore hath he sent him? Why, he is sent to bring thee out of thy Egyptian darkness and ignorance of God: and particularly,

(1.) He is sent to make known his Father, and his Father's mind; and hence he says, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." And, "No man hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

(2.) He is sent to make known himself, both as the Son and Sent of God; as the Son equal with the Father, and one with him, saying, "I and my Father are one." And as the Sent and Sealed of the Father, to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

(3.) He is sent to make known the Spirit, as he is the Spirit both of the Father and of the Son; and as such, promised to be sent of Christ to apply, by his power, all that Christ purchased by his blood: and to be sent in the most plentiful manner after Christ's ascension to heaven; "If I go, I will send him." And, "When he is come, he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: He shall testify of me. He shall glorify me." Thus Christ is sent to make known a glorious Trinity, God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the concern that each person hath in our salvation and deliverance out of Egypt, and the house of bondage.

And is he now come to seek and save you after this manner?

Shall I not ask you, "Do you now believe?" Or, will you come now to him, and be delivered? Will you now come and welcome the deliverer? "Now is the accepted time;" and what if it be now or never? You have been long in Egypt, some of you. Some of you have been long enough in the Egypt of a corrupt, persecuting church. What if this day's work be a call to you to come out of that Egypt, and join in with the witnesses for Christ, and the doctrine, discipline, worship, and government of his house, against the defections, errors, corruptions, and ungodly measures of the day? Some of you have been long enough in the Egypt of a natural state, in a state of spiritual darkness and death; and behold now Christ is sent to give you the Spirit of light and life! And, if you believe in him, as the Scripture hath said, John vii. 38, out of your belly, out of your bowels and heart, shall flow rivers of living waters: "This he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." But then it is said, "The Spirit was not then given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." But now he is glorified; having run the errand on which he was sent of the Father, he is gone back again to the Father, that he may send the Spirit, and to give the Holy Ghost more plentifully; and, if you now believe in the Sent of God, then the Holy Ghost is here, the living water is running through your heart; the quickening Spirit is within you, as a well of water, springing up to everlasting life.

O sirs, he is come! he is come to open the fountain of living water, and he is saying, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." *Any man*, be who he will, if you be of the race of Adam; if any man need a drink of these quickening, purifying, healing waters of the sanctuary, let him come to me and drink; for, "He that believeth on me, shall never thirst;" either with a thirst of total want again, or with a thirst of greedy desire after worldly lusts and passing vanities again; nor after the flesh-pots of Egypt. O poor soul, do you now believe in him who is come down to Egypt for you, down to your hell of sin and misery for you? Say not, Where is he, that I may believe in him? Nay, you need not say, "Who shall ascend, to bring him down? or descend, to bring him up? He is near you in this word," by his Spirit that he promises to send; and what if, by the hand of a poor servant, sent to speak in his name, he be saying to you, just now, as he said to the woman of Samaria, "I that speak unto thee am he;" I am "the Messiah; I am the Sent of God, to deliver you; I am the resurrection and

the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And if you now believe, then life is begun, that shall never end.

O sirs, may it be evidenced by your walk and deportment, and conversation for the future, that the Sent of God hath got his errand, that you are delivered out of Egypt, and are in your way to the heavenly Canaan! Depend upon this glorious Deliverer; a greater than Moses is here; whatever Red seas be in your way, or wildernesses of temptation and trouble be in your way, he is able to carry you mercifully through it, as on eagles' wings, till he bring you to the Jordan of death; and he will not leave you there, as Moses did Israel; no, he can make the waters of Jordan to divide before you, and bring you safely to the rest that remains for the people of God.

May the Lord follow with power what is delivered in weakness. To his name be praise.

SERMON LXXI.

THE POWER AND POLICY OF SATAN, BOUNDED AND BAFFLED BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.¹

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon; behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."—LUKE xxii. 31, 32.

THE quarrel between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, is ancient, mortal, and implacable. It is almost as old as the world, Gen. iii. 15. This enmity is maintained between the church militant, and the church malignant; between the synagogue of God, and the synagogue of Satan; as between the Israelites and the Philistines. Each of these parties have their champion; as the Israelites had David, and the Philistines, Goliath. Satan's armies are legions of evil spirits, and evil men, seduced by errors, deceived by false promises, and hired by the wages of unrighteousness; their general is the Devil or Satan. CHRIST's armies are the good angels, who encamp about them that fear God, as so many horses and

(1) This subject was handled in three sermons, preached on Saturday, Sabbath, and Monday, before, in time of, and after the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Stirling, June 13, 1742.

chariots of fire, as Gehazi saw, when his eyes were opened; and saints, who are as an army with banners; with banners displayed, ready to fight, having put on the whole armour of God. But the great General and Captain of the host, is the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who did encounter our grand enemy two remarkable times, once in the wilderness, and once on the cross: and both times killed him with his own weapons, once by Scripture, and once by death, as David cut off the head of Goliath with his own sword; and so, "Through death, did destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and, in sign of victory, brought away the keys, Rev. i. 18, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." *For evermore!* there is our part, and our hope. He is alive for evermore, until he shall tread down Satan under our feet, Rom. xvi. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. Till then, we must neither look for peace nor truce, but stand upon our ground with our swords drawn, and our watch set, and our armour girt on; knowing that our cause is good, our Captain great, our conquest certain, and our crown immortal, that fadeth not away.

This enmity in Satan proceeds from malice and envy, two active and stirring principles; malice to God, and envy to men: for, not being able, with his poison, to reach God, he casts it out upon man, his image-bearer. Now, as the quarrel is old, so it is deadly. He is a murderer from the beginning; a serpent, a lion, a dragon, an enemy, an accuser, a destroyer: yea, the older the subtler; having still the more experimental subtilty. And knowing that his time is short, he rages the more; as a stone moves fastest when it comes nearest the centre. He is now the old serpent, the red dragon, Rev. xii. 3, the roaring lion, 1 Pet. v. 8, "A murderer from the beginning," John viii. 44. Satan practised his cruelty upon the first pair of men that ever were in the world, and prevailed, when Cain slew his brother; and upon the old quarrel, because Abel's works were good, and Cain's evil, 1 John iii. 12. Ever since the blood of Abel, red hath been the church's colour, and sanguine hath been her complexion; their constancy in suffering being an evidence of the truth they suffered for. Yet they had not been more sorrowful than fruitful; for, the blood of the martyrs hath still been the seed of the church. From Abel's time, to this day, the serpent hath never been idle: the devil hath never been asleep; never hath he changed in his mind, abated in his malice, nor de-

sisted in his mischief, wherein he hath prevailed upon the children of men. His method hath still been either by subtilty or cruelty; sometimes as a crooked serpent, by the insinuation of error, heresy, and delusion, wherewith the church hath been dangerously infested; at other times, like a flying dragon, or a roaring lion, by the fury of threatenings and tortures, battering down and devouring with tyranny and persecution. Hard and difficult is it to tell in which of these he hath been most successful. No sooner had the church rest and peace from the bloody sword, but they fell out in factions; insomuch that the church hath grown most, when most oppressed, as Israel multiplied in their bondage. It was so from the beginning; it was so in the first and best days of the church; as a serpent he began, and he will be but the old serpent still. It was so when Christ himself was present in the army: "Simon, Simon; Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat," &c.

Thus powerful and thus malicious is our enemy; thus vigilant and thus implacable. What then shall we do? Shall we hang down our heads in despair? Or, like cowards, trust to our heels, as if they were better soldiers than our hands? No, says our Lord; as David of Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 32, "Let no man's heart fail because of him;" more are with us than against us: yea, "If God be with us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Is the motto of the Christian warrior, Christ, the Captain of our salvation, is surely more vigilant for the safety of the church, than Satan can be for their ruin. He can break the lion's teeth, and take away the serpent's sting. His wisdom can baffle the subtilty of Satan, unbottom his depths, and defeat his wiles; easily break through his forces; yea, "The God whom we serve, is able to deliver us;" for, as he hath promised, "The gates of hell shall not prevail." Neither his subtilty nor cruelty shall be able to overthrow the faith of the elect, as the text assures us: "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

In the words, viewed more generally, we have first a Premonition; and then an Admonition.

1. We have a Premonition: "Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." And therein we may observe two things; first, the temptation, and then the success of it.

In the temptation you may observe, 1. The person warning of

the temptation, Christ. 2. The person tempted, Simon. 3. The quality of the temptation, a winnowing. 4. The limitation of it; it is a desiring to winnow you.

In the success of this matter, observe—1. The grace assaulted, his faith. 2. The power of this assault, tending to make faith to stagger and fail. 3. The protector in this case, Christ our defence, the seed of the woman. 4. The mean and prevalence thereof, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

2. The latter thing observed in the words, is the admonition here given to Peter, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

The subject being too copious for any one doctrine, we would just offer some remarks,

- I. Upon the circumstances of the time and occasion wherein these words were spoke.
- II. Upon the circumstances of the text.
- III. Upon the warning itself

I. We are to offer some remarks upon the circumstances of the time and occasion wherein these words were spoke. Here the circumstances are to be considered, namely, 1. The time that Satan chose. 2. The occasion, Christ’s suffering and passion. Hence observe,

1st, The afflictions of the godly are stumbling-blocks; so it was with the sufferings of the Head: the smiting of the Shepherd occasioned the scattering of the sheep, Zech. xiii. 7. The afflictions of the godly are stumbling-blocks through Satan’s policy. The cross of Christ is called a scandal. Paul’s chain and bonds were matter of offence to many. But it is said of Onesiphorus, “he was not ashamed of any chain, 2 Tim. i. 16. “For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain,” Acts xxviii. 20. But there are two ways whereby Satan makes the trials of the godly, and their afflictions, stumbling-blocks; and that,

1. By corrupting our judgments. The devil persuades men that the religion that is persecuted is not good. On this account Eliphaz was tempted to condemn Job, chap. iv. 7, “Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off?” When the wicked prosper, and the godly seem to perish, and be cut off in this life, it is a great temptation even to

the godly : as it was to Asaph, who got not over this stumbling-block, till he went to the sanctuary, Ps. lxxxiii. 3-17. When we served the queen of heaven, we were in a better state, said the idolatrous Jews, Jer. xlv. 17-19.

2. By stirring up base affections, self-love, and selfish inclinations : base fears. The Israelites were valiant till they arrived at the Red Sea : and till they heard of the Anakims. Set down therefore, what religion will cost you. Expect not to go to heaven in a chariot. Lay your account with the worst. Choose with Moses, to suffer affliction. Mortify your base affections, and get on a resolution to suffer. No fearful soldier should go to war. Love of God and the world cannot stand together.

2ndly, Observe from the time, that Satan is wary and watchful in taking opportunity to tempt : "The devil walketh about like a roaring lion," 1 Pet. v. 8. "He goes to and fro in the earth, and walketh up and down in it," Job i. 7. We read, Eph. vi., how the whole armour of God is to be put on, to note, or point out to us, the vigilance of the enemy, his sleights and ambushments, snares and gins. We have a remarkable instance of the cunning and subtilty of Satan, in the first temptation, when he assaulted Eve. 1. He tempts the weaker vessel. 2. When she was alone. 3. By a subtle lie : "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of the tree?" intermixed with some truth, to make the lie the more taking, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil ;" a truth, but the dreadfulness of it covered ; for they were to be indeed as devils, knowing good and evil to their fearful experience. 4. By a solemn attesting God himself to confirm this truth ; for "God knows, says he, that your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods." Where learn, that Satan's strongest attacks to delude are in God's name. If he did not father his lies, deceits, delusions upon God, they could not be so successful. Satan's slaves, and these that are tempted and deluded by him, are most ready with their solemn appeals to God, that he knows this or that to be a truth, which yet is but a lie ; "God knows that you shall have your eyes opened, and be as gods, knowing good and evil." He then said, God knows you shall know ; and now he is ready to suggest, saying, God knows that you do know. What if Satan, at this day, be making some to say, "God knows that now my eyes are opened ; I see what I did not see. God knows that I know some good and evil, that I did not know : God knows that a good work is wrought upon me ; I am so sure of it, that I can attest God in the matter : I am so sure of it, that no man shall make

me think otherwise. People may have confidence of this sort, and yet be under a devilish delusion. Satan teacheth them to say, God knows that my eyes are opened, and I see what I did not see, &c.

This should teach us to be wise and wary, because we are weak : "Be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8. The devil will have some advantage, though we were never so watchful ; but the more watchful we are, the less he will have.

1. We are to watch and observe the time. It is like when we are weak in body and mind, distempered and discouraged, he will set upon us, and most successfully prevail against us.

2. When we are alone. Some sins are not committed but alone. The enemy sets upon his adversary alone, and too often prevails most powerfully over him.

3. When a faithful ministry is absent and forgot. Thus the Israelites turned to the golden calf in Moses's absence. In time of gospel-preaching, people do not provide for the time of temptation, but forgot the instructions they have got, and so lie open to snares.

4. When we are in evil company. Joseph in Egypt learns to swear ; Peter, in the judgment-hall, to forswear. Put a coal in the fire, and it receives the colour of the fire. The very sight of gaunting and yawning smites others with the same disease : a fit of laughter will provokes others to laugh ; and so will the weeping and wailing of one or two set an hundred a weeping and wailing, which may be merely the fruit of a natural sympathetic temper in people. But when these take footing in places of temptation, especially spiritual and devout assaults of the enemy, the infection may prove very dangerous and dismal ; and that even,

5. When we are in good company. So Peter was a temptation to Christ, and afterward to Barnabas, when carried away with the dissimulation : Aaron and Miriam were a temptation to Moses. So may good men and ministers be great temptations, through the power and policy of Satan.

6. When the occasions of sin are present, and tempting objects are in view, then we need to be most watchful and wary : "Look not on the wine when it is red, when it giveth the colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright," Prov. xxiii. 31. When occasions of sin are of a ruddy and beautiful colour ; when the cup of temptation moves itself aright ; when spiritual temptations, and religious

ones, have a fair and glorious-like appearance ; look not then upon them ; beware of them, they are like water and wind to a mill.

Again, if Satan be so wary and watchful, we need to take heed of four sins that are his opportunities ; as, 1. The sin of our calling, such as we are liable to therein. 2. Sins of custom, that you have been long inured unto. 3. Sins of constitution ; for, though all sins be like weeds in a garden, yet some are such as overtop the rest. 4. Sins that easily beset, and sins that the present occurrence makes you most liable unto. So, when Christ had fasted long, then he is tempted to turn stones to bread, at the devil's motion. When people have prayed long, and not been heard, then he tempts to say, Why should we wait any longer ? O sirs, look to a once tempted Jesus, who suffered being tempted that he might be able to succour them that are tempted, Heb. ii. 8.

II. We proposed next to offer some remarks upon the circumstances of the text ; which are these four. 1. The person warning, namely, Christ. 2. The person warned, Simon. 3. The ingemination and doubling of the name Simon, Simon. 4. The solemnity of the warning, "*Behold*, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat," &c.

1st, The person warning, namely, Christ, here called *the Lord* : "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat." Here we may observe that Christ is a LORD, the Lord of lords ; the Lord of hosts ; Lord over heaven, earth, and hell. He hath right by nature, as God, and by donation, as Mediator, to the universal government. All the devils in hell are under his check and control, being far exalted above all principalities and powers, and head over all things to the church.

2ndly, The person warned, Simon. But, perhaps, it may be inquired, Why doth Christ address himself to Simon, when the danger was general ? The word here is, "He hath desired *you* ; but I have prayed for *thee*." The reason may be either from the eminency of the person, or the imminency of Peter's fall, which Christ foresaw.

1. The reason may flow from the eminency of his person ; for we can allow a pre-eminency and priority of order, though not of office. To them all was committed the word of reconciliation, the administration of sacraments, and the power of the keys, as well as Peter : nor is the promise here made to him, as a promise peculiar

to him, and to his successor, the bishop of Rome, as a privilege of infallibility in judgment, and indeficiency of faith ; as the flatterers of the Roman faction gather from hence ; but, as a stake in a hedge, well shaken and knocked, should stand the faster ; so, Peter being tempted, and then converted, should strengthen others as he soon attempted, in going first in to the sepulchre, though John was first there ; for, though love be nimblest, faith is boldest.

2. The reason may arise from the imminency of Peter's fall, which Christ foresaw, and gave him a swatch of it here ; but more expressly anon, ver. 34, with a Peter, "I tell thee, that the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." Christ saw where Satan had aimed his poisoned arrow, and warned him. He saw that he lay open by his presumption, and so calls upon him as Delilah did upon Samson, but with more sincerity, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson ;" so Christ here, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you." As fine a web as that spider, Satan, can spin, to inwrap the souls of men ; the nimble eye of Christ can espy it out, and when he pleases, he can sweep it down.

If any ask, Why did he not prevent what he foresaw, and could hinder ?

I answer, 1. The grace of God is not debtor to any man : God cannot be unrighteous in suffering that which he is not bound or obliged to hinder.

2. God would not suffer evil in, or upon, his children, if he did not know how to bring good out of evil ; yea, the greatest good out of the greatest evil. So, out of Judas' treason, in betraying Christ to death, he brought the life and comfort of all the world. God suffers temptations to take place for many good reasons, as we may see afterward ; but here I shall only say, from Simon's case, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Here we may remark, That these whom God advances to the greatest excellencies, Satan assaults with the greatest violence. As the sun beats hottest upon the rising bank ; so is Satan's envy levelled most against those whom God hath advanced above others, either in grace or honour. God had no sooner marked out Job for his uprightness, but Satan marked him out for envy and mischief. So the king of Syria commanded his soldiers to bend all their force against the king of Israel, 1 Kings xxii. 31. When Joshua stood before the angel of Lord, Satan stood at his right hand to resist

him, Zech. iii. 1. Our first parents escaped not long, as we see from Gen. iii. 1-5. Yea, he set upon Christ himself with all his forces, Matt. iv. 3-11.

QUEST. Why does God permit this ?

ANSW. 1. God permits it for the trial, and so for the honour of his graces in them ; "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. Thus he turned Satan loose upon Job. As a cutler taking a sword, and striking it against an anvil ; why, he knows what metal it is made of, so God knows what metal his servants are made of, and what Satan can do, what he would do, and what he shall do. By this means, God designs the advancement of his own glory, in the victory of faith in the issue : "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown," James i. 12.

2. God's grace is increased in his children by being exercised. Temptation is a school for training up Christ's soldiers ; as a sword glisters by using, which would rust in the scabbard. Exercise is good for our spiritual health ; especially such as God designs for high and honourable service : he will have them will tried ; as we dig low when we have a mind to build high.

Again, as God has his ends, so Satan has his. And his design is, 1. To oppose God ; out of envy, hating them most whom God honours most. It is the nature of envy to aim at the fairest. 2. This is his subtilty ; by a compendious way of mischief to strike at the root, and so the branches must wither ; to cut off the head, and then the body must die ; to poison the fountain, and then the streams must needs be deadly ; to cut off the captain, and then the common soldiers must needs yield or fly. Therefore, they that are most eminent must be most fiercely assaulted.

1. Hence learn, that we should pray for all ; especially for those that are in eminent stations ; as all the members of the body run to the succour of the head. We must pray for them, that our petitions may prevent Satan : "Pray for us," says the apostle, and for me. We have many enemies, we that are ministers ; especially if aiming at the overthrow of Satan's kingdom, and the advancement of Christ's. The devil came with open mouth against Christ : "Why dost thou trouble us before the time ?" The preaching of

Christ crucified, and calling men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, troubles the devil exceedingly: and, alas! how many enemies did he inflame against Christ, scribes, Pharisees, lawyers, Herodians, and the people?

2. Let men be content with a low state, if God has put them into it; for the more honour, the more danger. The chimney and the weathercock are the highest in the building; but the one most foul, the other most shaken. The foundation that lies lowest, lies surest. Let every one be content with his own place: God knows how to dispose of us. Again,

3. Men in eminent place may expect to be much assaulted. There was never any tall cedar but was well shaken, and if not well rooted, in great danger.

4. Hence see, that you should pity these whose eminent place expose them to be shaken. Peter did not well understand himself when he said, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." A coward may buckle on harness, and break the air with great words; but when he comes into the midst of the enemy, then his valour is put to it; as a pilot's skill is most seen in a storm. It is easy to discourse of wars and storms, and dying for Jesus Christ; but it is another thing to meet with them."

3rdly, Another circumstance of the text is, the ingemination and doubling of the name: "*Simon, Simon*; behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." This ingemination of names in scripture is usual, and useful in these three respects.

1. It expresses an ardency of love and affection; as in David to Absalom, "Absalom, Absalom! my son, my son!" And our Lord Jesus to Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how oft would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!"

3. As it points out the dearness of love, so the nearness of danger to the person beloved; so the angel to Abraham, when he had his knife drawn in his hand to kill Isaac, the angel cries out, *Abraham! Abraham!* His words made haste, one after another, lest they come too late to relieve Isaac, that lay trembling on his father's knife.

3. It implies the security of the person thus in danger; as if one word would not awaken him. Thus, Christ called to Saul out of heaven, "Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou me?" Acts ix. 4.

So Christ here, *Simon! Simon!* for any, or all of these reasons complexly viewed: for,

(1.) What greater love can be than that which is shewed to the soul? And what love comparable to the love of Christ? It is love infinitely surpassing the love of Jonathan. This moves Christ to double and ingeminate his name, "Simon, Simon; behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat," &c.

(2.) What greater danger than this of Simon, running into the mouth of the roaring lion, without fear or armour? Yea, his own security had stript him naked of his strength: therefore Christ in commiseration of him doubles his name, *Simon, Simon!*

(3.) Security deafens us to counsel, and hardens us to danger; and therefore there is need, sometimes, of wakening ingeminations, *Simon, Simon!* We need sometimes to give hasty intelligence of what danger is a coming, lest the advertisement come too late at another time.

4thly, Another circumstance of the text, that I observe is this, the solemnity of the warning, BEHOLD, "Satan hath desired to have thee," &c. *Behold* is a word like a beacon fired on a hill-top, that betokens some extraordinary thing, calling men's eyes to look to it; or as a trumpet that begets silence and commands attention. Here Christ is the preacher and the crier.

Here we may remark, ministers are called watchmen; and they should watch over the souls of men. Watchmen ought neither to be blind nor dumb; and we whose office it is, should be seers, to look out; and criers, to cry out, when we espy a danger; as good shepherds do over the flock, when they espy the wolf coming, and endeavour to gather them to the fold.

It is our duty, and we must tell you, all places are full of temptations. You tread upon ice; you go among snares. Satan is laying snares for you everywhere. There is a snare in your profits, pleasures, and honours. There is a snare, and temptation in your meat, and drink, and sleep; a snare in your discourse, your communication, and company. Every night's sleep is a representation of death, and, as Satan, the prince of darkness, never sleeps, so you have need, when you sleep, to close your eyes towards heaven, and sleep every night, as Christ died, with a "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit." Every one of your senses is a window to let in temptation, if there be not a watch set upon them. Eve found Satan in an apple; Achan in a wedge of gold;

Gehazi in two talents of gold. Yea, there is a temptation in your good works. When you hear, when you pray, take heed. Good works may be made great temptations to pride of duty ; yea, good ministers may be made great temptations : as was Simon, once and again : “ Blessed is the man that feareth always. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” You need to prepare for evils before they come ; for, when they come, it will be too late to prepare. In plenty, we should think of want ; in health, prepare for sickness ; in a calm, prepare for a storm. But, alas ! when men are most in danger, they are most presumptuous ; so Jonah, in the danger of the storm, is fast asleep ; and will not be wakened, unless he be called upon by name, and again called upon, with a Simon, Simon.

III. I am next to offer some remarks upon the warning itself : “ Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.” On which we offer the following remarks :—

Remark 1. “ There is no temptation of Satan, but our Lord is privy unto.” And, 1. In regard to his omniscieny ; for, “ All things are naked and open unto him ;” as a man anatomized, so all the depths of Satan are naked to him. His eye is like the eye of a well-drawn picture, that is in every corner of the room, and looks you straight, whatever way you view it. 2. In regard of his observing office ; and he is called therefore a Shepherd, a Watchman ; the Watchman of Israel, &c. This is ground of comfort to believers.

Our Lord Jesus is very observant of the devil’s desires. He observes what way the devil goes ; and he never goes to God, but Christ observes him. The devil goes to God sometimes to accuse the saints ; Christ observes that ; sometimes to seek advantage against them ; Christ observes that ; with many other such like designs. But why doth Christ so strictly observe Satan’s designs against the saints ? Why, 1. Christ is interested in his people. 2. He is our Advocate with the Father. 3. He is the friend, Satan the foe. When the devil gets leave to tempt them, yet Christ undertakes to baffle his temptations. O how great is the love of Christ to his children !

Remark 2. “ The devil is an adversary, as his name Satan doth import.” To whom is he an adversary ? Why, he is an adversary to all the creatures of God, and man in particular, and to God’s people in a special way. Why so ? 1. Because of the quarrel in paradise ; enmity placed between them ; and a contrariety of nature.

2. Because he hates God, and consequently the image of God. How long will he be an enemy? He will remain always one. Why so? Because God ties him up: he is a chained adversary. O sirs, be apprehensive of the devil's malice and enmity. Christ requires us to love our enemies; that is, such as are curable; but devils are incurable. Oh! keep out of the devil's reach; and keep out of his ground. Watch against him, as David against Saul. Watch in prayer, in hearing. If he tempt to pride, answer him with a Scripture, such as that, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Whatever be the temptation, repel him with a *Thus saith the Lord*; or, a *Thus it is written*. After the example of our blessed Lord, Matt. iv. 1-11.

Remark 3. "The devil assaults the best of men." What does the devil herein aim at? He aims at two things: 1. His credit: he strikes at the greatest; and if he be foiled, it is the less discredit: if he can overcome them, it is the greater honour; if not, it is the less dishonour. 2. His advantage. By pulling down the pillars of the house, he makes all fall. Thus he pulled down Adam, and then all fell. Thus he would pull down Christ, that he might destroy all. But what doth God aim at in allowing him? Why, he likewise aims at two things: 1. His own glory; that he might be glorified. 2. That the graces of his people may be stronger. Great shaking winds make the trees take better root. Hence, want of temptation is an ill sign.

Again, The devil is most desirous to tempt the best of God's saints. Why? 1. Because the best saints may carry the richest treasures. 2. Because the devil knows that, if he can get an eminent saint down, he will be sure to get down many more with him, as Gal. ii. 11, 12, 13. 3. It is the greatest disgrace to the Scripture. Hence, "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." A child of God may be cast down, though he shall not be cast away.

It is the devil's great and earnest desire of God, that he may tempt. There are times when the devil goes to God, and seeks to have leave to tempt; as, 1. In time of carnal security. 2. In time of spiritual pride. 3. After the soul hath been sealed, and had communion with God. 4. After Christ's approbation of a soul. So Job, chap. i. 1, 8, 9; ii. 3, 7. So Peter, Matt. xvi. 17, 23. Therefore they need to be always keeping their armour about them.

Remark 4. "The devil cannot tempt the saints without God's leave and commission." This is plain, 1. From God's absolute

power over all the world : hence the devils are at his beck, Mark ix. 25. 2. From God's gracious promise, setting bounds and limits to Satan's temptations : " God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape," 1 Cor. x. 13.

Remark 5. " Sifting is all that the devil can do to the children of God." He may trouble and tempt, but he cannot overthrow. The devil, indeed, in his temptations aims at soul and body, and all. But it may perhaps, be inquired, Why does the devil sift and winnow them ? And why can he do no more ? To which we reply, 1. Because they are a people in covenant with God. 2. They are a people whom God loves ; therefore the devil hates them. 3. They are set up for great designs of God in the world : " This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise." 4. Because God hath given all believers to Christ, that he should secure them : He takes care that none of them be lost. See John vi. 39 ; x. 28 ; xvii. 12. Therefore, though the devil may cast down a child of God, yet he cannot keep them down.

Hence see the great love of God to his people. It is not because he does not love them, that they are tempted ; but that he may take occasion the more to shew his delight in them. See also the great care that the Lord Jesus takes of his children, that Satan cannot hurt them, but sift them.

Remark 6. " Christ's prayers are opposite to the devil's prayers." Christ prays for his people's good ; but the devil for their hurt. The devil seeks that our faith may be destroyed ; Christ that our faith fail not. And, though the devil's prayer should be heard sometimes, so as he may get leave to tempt and toss a child of God, yet Christ's prayer is heard always. And hence, though the devil should get the better in a cabinet, yet he shall never win the war ; the victory shall be upon Christ's side ; for, though Satan may seem to vanquish the saints for a while ; yet, as Christ hath spoiled principalities and powers, they shall in him be victorious at last. The devil can never go to God, but Christ prevents him, and goes before him : " I have prayed for thee."

Remark 7. " Neither former sins nor future provocations can hinder Christ's prayer for his children." Peter had formerly tempted Christ ; and, for the present, he is presumptuous ; and, for the future, Christ foresaw how he would foreswear ; yet all this does not hinder Christ's prayer for Peter ; but made him pity Peter the

more, and pray for him the more, instead of casting him off. O the permanency of the love of Christ !

Remark 8. "The children of God ought to make particular improvement of Christ's intercession : 'I have prayed for thee.' " It is not enough to say, Christ intercedes for his saints, his sinning saints on earth ; but his sinful people, while in a sinning world, with their sinful nature cleaving to them, ought to make particular use of Christ's intercession for themselves. Christ says, it is for thee ; and you may say, therefore, it is for me. O ! he loved me ; he laid down his life for me ; he died for me ; he rose for me ; he ascended for me ; and he liveth for ever to make intercession for me.

Remark 9. "The falls of the godly are owing to the failures of faith : an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." By unbelief, they lose sight of the Captain of their salvation ; and then they are discouraged and discomfited. By faith we stand, because by Christ we stand. The many falls, at this day, amongst the saints, argue the many failures of faith. This gives a vast advantage to the enemy. Satan would not get such advantage, if we were strong in the faith giving glory to God.

Remark 10. "If any be established in the faith, and are kept from totall falling ; it is owing to the author and finisher of faith, Christ, who says, 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' " You would loose hold of me quite, might he say, if I did not keep the grip of you. A praying Jesus, by his prayer, takes hold of God, and takes hold of your faith ; and so you are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. Pray, pray then ; but rely upon Christ's prayers.

SERMON LXXII., LXXIII.¹

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon ; behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not ; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."—LUKE xxii. 31, 32.

[The second sermon on this text.]

AFTER what I have formerly said, I propose, at present, only to do these two things.

(1) The following observations and meditations were, most of them, delivered upon the Monday. And though some of the heads here seem to coincide with the former, yet the enlargements are distinct.

I. To offer some observations concerning Satan and his temptations.

II. Some meditations on the whole text.

1. We are to offer some observations concerning Satan and his temptations.

OBSERV. 1. "The tempter is Satan," which signifies "an adversary." His hand is like Ishmael's against every man. O that every man's hand were against him! His name is full of danger and terror: "We wrêstle not against flesh and blood," Eph. vi. 12. Not with Pharoah, or Sisera, or Sennacherib; not against Goliath, or the sons of Anak; but against the devil and his angels. You have a terrible description of Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 4, 7; of his prodigious height, with his helmet of brass, and coat of mail; but yet little David laid him at his length, and overcame him. But Satan is a more terrible enemy, if you consider these following particulars.

1. His nature, as a spirit; and such a one as can see and not be seen; do hurt to others, and suffer none himself.

2. His quality; being of wonderful activity and nimbleness; able to mingle with our fancies, and delude our imaginations, and work deceitfully against the souls of men. He can actuate a body, and make it move and speak: as in the experiment of the witch of Endor, in bringing up Samuel in his mantle. By reason of this spiritual and active quality, a legion of devils were in one man. Evil spirits are able to convey themselves from place to place, as nimbly as thought; and their projects are undiscovered, except by the spiritual watchman.

3. His power. Devils are called powers, Eph. vi. 12, Not infinite, but limited powers; called "The prince of the power of the air;" whose power is conceived to extend to the shaking of the earth; the swallowing up of whole cities; the disturbing the course of the clouds, in causing storms of wind, and thunder, and lightning, when permitted. We read of the strength that the possessed man had, that no man could tame him; and how he broke asunder all his chains and fetters, Mark v. 3, 4; and what power there was in one angel. The same reason is in good and bad angels, for that natural power they have, when armed with God's command and permission. Of Satan's power you read in the first chapter of Job. See also 2 Kings xix. 35, where you will find a hundred and four-

score and five thousand destroyed in one night, by one angel, in the camp of Assyria.

4. His subtilty. His knowledge is much improven by experience: though he cannot know the thoughts of the heart, till they be formed into words or actions; nor foretell things future, except such as follow by order of nature, and such as God hath revealed to him, by using his service for the punishment of the disobedient, whom he gives over to strong delusions to believe lies, 2 Thess. ii. 11. By this subtilty, knowing the several tempers, complexions, and inclinations of men, and how to fit his temptations thereto; God, in his righteous judgment, suffers him to delude and infatuate many.

5. His envy and deadly hatred against mankind: hence called the accuser of the brethren, Rev. xii. 9, 10; the great dragon, the devil, the deceiver of the whole world, the roaring lion, 1 Pet. v. 8. Lightning from heaven; "I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven," Luke x. 18. Smoke from hell represents some of his terrible temptations; but lightning from heaven is what may be more dangerous; or, his appearance as an angel of light. The more glorious, bright, and heaven-like he appears in his attack, the more his hatred and enmity is exercised, and yet covered.

6. His numbers: his name is *Legion*, for he is many; and called principalities and powers, in the plural number. Here are the tempters.

OBSERV. 2. "Satan is a limited enemy: 'Behold, Satan hath desired to have you.'" For all his power and wisdom, natural and experimental, his malice and multitude; yet he is limited and under authority. His power is not absolute, but limited; his actions, not authoritative, but under command and control: he is glad to go to God by petition. Satan, pray observe it, can do nothing against men, but by God's permission: he must first ask leave. Though he be the prince of the air, and the god of this world, Eph. ii. 2. 2 Cor. iv. 4, yet he is but a tributary prince, a *semi-deus*, or a demi-god, as the heathens called some of theirs; not the chief prince, not the great God. For as furious and fiery as he is, God hath his hook in his nose, and his bridle in his jaws, as God said of Sennacherib, 2 Kings xix. 28. We have two eminent examples of this truth.

1. In the case of Job, till he had his life signed from God, he could not touch his body; nay, nor his servants, nor his camels, nor asses. See how expressly God inhibits him from touching his body: "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon him-

self put not forth thine hand," Job i. 12, and then commits his body to him, but reserves his life, "Behold, he is in thine hand, but save his life," Job ii. 6.

2. In the gospel, where a legion of devils become suiters to Christ for leave to enter into the swine, Luke viii. 26, 33; into unclean swine, a fit habitation for unclean spirits; yet into such he dare not enter, but by leave first obtained of Christ. And are ye not better than many swine? ye, to whom Christ is offered? He cannot touch your life; no, not your skin; no, not your swine at your gate; nay, a legion of them together dare not venture without God's warrant.

The devil may, 1. Present the object, as the fisher lays in his bait 2. He may corrupt the organ, and so deceive; as a juggler casts mists before the eyes of his spectators. 3. He may persuade, as a cunning sophist, with feigned arguments. And, 4. He may take advantage of predominant humours in the constitution, as an experienced philosopher. Further, he cannot go to any thing upon us, or within us, without God's permission, and without our free consent. For, till we open the door, he cannot enter. He may knock and intreat, and persuade and promise. The spark is his; but we are the tinder, else it could not kindle. The bait is his, but we must take it, else we cannot be taken. It is our yielding to his temptations, that hides his arrows, and makes them dangerous to us; for, if we consent not, and cast not ourselves in the way of temptation, the sin is upon his score. It is only a punishment to be tempted; but it is a sin to yield to the temptation. Hence,

(1.) This observation reproves many that attribute only to the devil many things whereof they are not able to give a reason, as extraordinary storms in the air, and the like, but presently forget God. Satan, no doubt, can do great and marvellous things; but shall we not remember that Satan is but a hammer in God's hand? Whatsoever the rod be, it is the hand of God that strikes you. Satan had inflicted a heavy evil upon Job, and taken away all that he had; yet Job says, "The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken," Job i. 21. He saith not, The Lord giveth, and the devil taketh away. Satan is but an instrument, chained up till God let him loose; a poor, slavish, tributary, beggarly spirit. He is but the base executioner of God's just vengeance: and it is but our guiltiness and faithlessness that arms his malice against us.

(2.) This observation is full of comfort to poor believers in all

their temptations, that God hath set his bound to Satan, as well as to the sea ; and can rebuke him, as he did the winds and waves, and they obeyed him. It is comfort also, that more are with us than against us ; for our God is stronger than the strong man armed, "Resist the devil, and he will fly from you," for your "God will not suffer you to be tempted above measure." When we fight, the Lord helps ; and when we conquer, he crowns.

(3.) Is it Satan's desire to tempt us ? Then let our desire prevent his desire. He desires to have you, but let it be your desire that he may not have you at his will. So Christ taught you, "Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil : " or, deliver us *in* it. No doubt, your desire and petition will be sooner heard than Satan's ; sooner accepted than his ; because yours tends to good and his to evil. Put your petition and desire in the hand of the great Saviour, who is the favourite of heaven, whom the Father heareth always, and to whom God can deny nothing. Pray continually, that God may not deliver you to the mercy of Satan, which is cruel ; his tender mercies are cruelty ; and his most glorious appearances are deceit and delusion. One would wonder to see Satan at his prayers. The legion of devils besought Christ ; and here they desire. Think not strange that hypocrites can pray, and Pharisees make long prayers ; for here is Satan praying. Yet Satan had rather pray as them : for he prays that he may make a prey of them ; Satan's aim is their end and ruin.

(4.) Is Satan desiring to have you ? Alas ! sirs, let this put you in mind that Christ is desiring to have you. Satan is desiring to have you, that he may destroy you ; but Christ is desiring to have you, that he may save you. There are two suitors, then, about you this day, that have a great desire after you. O sirs, tell me, which of them shall have you ? Which of them will you yield unto ? A praying devil, or a praying Jesus ? The devil is praying to God that he may have you ; and praying you to come to him, and serve him, as the god of this world, and offering you all worldly advantages. Christ is praying to God that he may have you ; and praying you to come to him, and sending us to pray you in his stead, that you may be reconciled to God. O ! come, come to Jesus ; and plead upon his prayer and intercession. Then surely your desire, and not Satan's, shall prevail ; for Christ's desire is heard of God. O ! shall not his desire be heard of you ? If you neglect Christ this day, you give way to the devil's getting his

desire about you. Therefore, O ! come, come ; come to Jesus, and you are safe, though Satan should exert his utmost to obtain you.

OBSERV. " It is the constant endeavour of Satan to way-lay the children of God, that he may spoil and rob them of their graces and comforts." Here we may, 1. Prove the point. 2. Speak of his sifting and winnowing work. 3. Give the reasons thereof. 4. Apply what may be said.

[1.] For proof hereof, see 1 Pet. v. 8, " Be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." The devil is not idle, but walking about ; not harmless, but as a roaring lion : not blind, but seeking ; not to do good, but to devour. Hence Paul gives warning to be armed, and equipped with the whole armour of God. Eph. vi. 11, 18. Satan is an assiduous enemy, Job i. 7 ; ii. 5, still going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it, seeking whom he may devour ; as the great red dragon stood before the woman, to devour her child as soon as it was born, Rev. xii. 4. There is not a child of the church of Zion, but Satan is ready, if he can, to strangle it in the birth, or smother it in the cradle, as the Egyptians did the Israelites' children, and as Herod did the innocents in Bethlehem ; especially if it be a male child, as Rev. xii. 5, of greater gifts, or place, or hopes. He goes up and down like a pack-horse in a market : and if he can spy an opportunity he will be making his assaults. A cheerful spirit, he will tempt to presumption ; a sad dejected spirit to despair ; young men to lust, and old men to covetousness. He has a bait for every fish, as a highway thief has his faces all to deceive.

[2.] I come next to speak of his sifting and winnowing work. He seems to sift as wheat. It is a phrase borrowed from husbandmen, that sift their corn to separate the wheat from the chaff, or the flour from the bran : and, applied to a spiritual sense, God is said sometimes to sift his people ; " For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations like as corn is sifted in a sieve ; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth," Amos ix. 9. And here Satan would be sifting the apostles ; but with a vast difference : for God's end is to take away the dross, the husks, and leave the corn ; but Satan's end is to take away the flour, and leave but the bran. God would purify his people, but Satan would poison and corrupt them.

Now, in sifting there are four things: elevation, agitation, separation, and dejection. So there is a fit resemblance herein to Satan's temptations.

1. In sifting there is elevation, or lifting up. So in temptation there is an uplifting by pride of graces and excellencies. Paul was in danger to be puffed up through abundance of revelations. As the eagle carries up the shell high to throw it down upon some rock, so Satan, when he puffs men up to a conceit of their own goodness, he intends their ruin, and, by flattering them, to tickle them to death.

2. In sifting there is agitation, or shaking the corn together. This shaking of God's people is usually done by threatenings, stripes, imprisonments and persecutions, to vex, and trouble, and dishearten them, as we see clear from Acts xii. 1—24. So the Holy Ghost told Paul, that in every city bonds and afflictions did abide him, and he must abide them, Acts xx. 23.

3. In winnowing there is separation or scattering. This way Satan attempts, by dividing, to rule; and so to dissolve the communion of saints; to drive them to a cave, as Elijah was left alone, and these of whom the world was not worthy: "They wandered about in sheepskins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth," Heb. xi. 37, 38.

4. There is dejection, or casting down upon the earth: as he endeavours to puff up some to pride and presumption, so to deject others to sadness and despair. He labours by any means to make men more remiss in the service of God: either by the sun or by the wind, to make the traveller lay aside his cloak; to enervate our faith; to quench our zeal; to make the anchor of our hope to fail; and some way or other to spoil us of our graces or comforts, and to rob us of our security, and rob God of his glory.

[3.] What are the reasons why Satan is allowed to sift and winnow? We shall assign the following six reasons why he does so.

1. It must be, because we must be tried. As offences must come, and there must be heresies; so, there must be temptations. A good seaman is known in a storm; a good soldier in the day of battle. The seed that is sown among stones may appear fair to the eye, till the sun rise. As fire consumes the hay, but purges the gold; so, temptation discerns the good from the bad, the sound Christian from the hypocrite, the firm from the unstable.

2. To humble us, by letting us know our own strength, and how little we can do, when we are put to it. David said in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved;" but God hid his face, and he was troubled. As the kind nurse lets the forward child take a fall, to make it look to its feet, and prevent a worse danger; so, God takes away his hand, and then we fall by some temptation. But he withdraws himself to make us hold faster, and stick the closer to him.

3. To increase our faith, and patience, and zeal in praying, which would all of them greatly languish without exercise; as water corrupts with standing, and clears with running.

4. To make us know the worth and excellency of grace, that it is more precious than gold that perisheth, 1 Pet. i. 7; and lets us see how rich we are. Thieves break not into barns filled with husks or snares. It is a good religion that men and devils persecute.

5. That God may be glorified in destroying the work of the devil in the issue. A greater revenue of glory redounds to the Lord, by vanquishing and dispossessing the strong man, than there would have done had he made no assaults upon them.

6. That his people may be honoured: for they, by whom temptations are conquered, are sure to be crowned. God suffers his children sometimes to be tempted, knowing they shall come off with honour, and be crowned overcomers of their enemy.

[4.] For application of this point, we may observe these four things.

1. Let none please themselves with this thought, that they were never tempted or assaulted by Satan. Carnal ease is no good evidence of spiritual safety.

2. Let no poor Christian be disquieted or discouraged, because Satan is busy about them. He set upon Christ; and, "Shall not the disciple be as the Master? When the strong man armed keeps the house, all is quiet. The devil rent the child grievously, when he was going out."

3. Let us be always in readiness, with our armour on. Let us be sober, and watchful, and vigilant, that the enemy prevail not successfully against us.

4. In sifting and winnowing times, let us look to Jesus, that our faith fail not, and so the adversary overcome us.

OBSERV. 4. "Satan's temptations are very subtle and delu-

sive." His sieve may be very narrow. His sifting and winnowing time is a time of great and strong delusion. Here I would offer some remarks concerning Satan's delusions.

REMARK 1. "That there are two extremes to be much avoided, namely, the calling the work of the Spirit of God a delusion, and the calling the delusions of Satan the work of God's Spirit." To call the work of God's Spirit a delusion, and to do it knowingly, is a doing despite to the Spirit of God: and again, to call the delusions of Satan the work of God's Spirit, is an ascribing too much to the devil; giving him the place of God.

REMARK 2. "That the devil is God's ape." Christ was evidently demonstrated to be the true Messiah; yet he said there should be false Christs: "Take heed that no man deceive you: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect," Mat. xxiv. 4, 5, 24. There are deep things of God, and also the depths of Satan, that we read of, 1 Cor. ii. 14; Rev. ii. 24.

REMARK 3. "That the delusions of Satan are as large as the operations of the Spirit of God." The devil hath his false apostles, his false comforters, his false light, his false assurance. He is said to fill Ananias's heart, *i. e.*, made his heart audacious and bold, as some explain it. He hath also his false prophecies and foretelling events. The devil told Saul what should befall him. He may know some things to come, by revelation from God, for the punishment of these that shall be seduced. Amongst the Anabaptists in Munster, when a law was made for all to bring their goods to the common stock, the maids could tell, as Peter did of Ananias, how much every man had hid at home of his goods. See Deut. xiii. 1, 2, "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder: and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them: thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet," &c.

REMARK 4. "That Satan accommodates his temptations to the times." The time of the Reformation was a time of the deep delusions of Satan prevailing. The Reformers were reviled, as men concerned about the letter, not the spirit of the gospel, by these that pretended to extraordinary revelations.

Hence they had bitter conflicts, not only with Papists, but with men that pretended to be more enlightened than the Reformers were, and to have high teachings of the Spirit of God, even above the scriptures. These that did adhere to the scripture, and would try the spirits and revelations by it, were called *Literistas et Vocalistas*, "Literists and Vocalists;" men acquainted only with the words and vowels of the scripture, having nothing of the Spirit of God. Luther was inveighed against as having published nothing but *carnale evangelicum*, a *carnal gospel*. Wherever Reformation-light broke out, there these tares came up, whereby great divisions were raised, and the Reformation was made abominable and odious to the world. Such seem to be the attempts of Satan at this day, when the standard of a testimony is lifted up for a covenanted Reformation.¹ The power and policy of hell is at work to bring any such endeavour after Reformation under contempt; which, we are forewarned, Satan may get leave to do, by strong delusions and lying wonders, as in the forecited, Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. Where a false prophet is said to give a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder is supposed to come to pass. But observe there,

1. The devil's design, verse 2, namely, to seduce, saying, "Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them." Thus the present temptation seems to be, let us go

(1) As a key to this, and some similar passages both in this and some subsequent sermons, it may not be improper to observe, that, without doubt, our Author here has his eye upon what was called, The extraordinary Work at Cambuslang, which first commenced, Feb. 18th, 1742, and afterwards diffused itself through several parts of the kingdom, much promoted by Mr. Whitfield's ministrations, and perusing his Journals; and approved by many, both ministers and people, and attested by not a few, as a genuine work, and remarkable down-pouring of the Spirit of God, though alledged by others, to be a delusion of Satan; in regard it was divested of the positive and permanent evidences of a real work of conversion, held forth by the Spirit of God in the scriptures: the subjects of it being strangely agitated by strong convulsions, fearful extortions, loud out-cryings, imaginary sights, visionary representations, great swoonings, foamings, faintings, &c.; which led them off from the righteousness of Christ, without them in the word, to build upon something wrought in them as the ground of their hope; filled them with a vain apprehension that the Spirit was poured down in a remarkable manner upon the church, though going on in a deep course of defection and apostacy; breeding in them lax principles of religion, and an indifferency with respect to all professions; filling them with bitterness of spirit against all who did not approve of the work, though never so eminent in piety and holiness; and begetting in them an utter aversion to our Reformation principles. The event, indeed, greatly confirmed the allegation; many of the most eminent subjects of this work, turned out to be very naughty persons; and the work itself soon entirely evanished.

to some other god, or some other way of worshipping God, or some other form of church-government and discipline, than what we have known and sworn to be founded upon God's word ; let us, after vows, make inquiry, and inquire after some new god, new worship, new government of the church. Why, here is a new prophet risen, giving signs and wonders that come to pass. Here is Satan's design. But,

2. Observe why God permits this. Why, as it may be for hardening a backsliding generation, in his righteous judgment ; so for trying of his people, verse 3, 4, "The Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul ;" whether you will cleave to him and his truth, even when truth is persecuted, reproached, and brought into discredit by Satan's delusions. O then, sirs, with what holiness, humility, and circumspection ought the children of God to walk in such times of temptation and delusion, "That they be not soon shaken in mind, by spirit, or by word, or by letter," as you have the expression ; 2 Thes. ii. 2. We are told, that, "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits," 1 Tim. iv. 1.

REMARK 5. "That the ordinary effects of delusion are "violence and confidence." Violent motions are ordinarily from an evil spirit, hurrying the soul beyond all due bounds and limits, effecting very sudden alterations and strong passions ; whereas, the Spirit of God is more sedate and composed. It is true, the power and efficacy of the Spirit of God is sometimes demonstrated by the appearing of fiery cloven tongues, and by a mighty rushing wind ; but, at another time, appearing in the form of a dove ; demonstrating, that it is such a fire and power, as is consistent with the other graces of meekness and humility, and with holy fear and trembling. Confidence is also an ordinary effect of delusion ; self-confidence, ostentation. The Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove, to shew how meek and humble the operations of the Spirit are in these in whom he dwells. The deluded are usually confident, because the delusions are strong ; because they come by way of judgment, for abusing former light, and not receiving the truth in the love of it. These four hundred false prophets, in Ahab's time, are thought by the learned to have been true prophets at first, and such as were of the company and college of the other prophets ; but, abusing that gift to the pleasing of men, to the seeking of themselves, and siding

and complying with the times, they were justly delivered up of God to such a false way ; and they were hardened like Pharaoh ; hardened of God in their deceitful way, as you see in Zedekiah's impudence, 1 Kings xxii. 24, when he struck Micaiah on the cheek, saying, " Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me, to speak unto thee ?" Spiritual judgments make men secure, and full of self-flattery, and confirm them more to believe a lie.

REMARK 5. " That as the spirits are to be tried by the scripture ; so there are signs and marks, whereby delusions of Satan may be known, and distinguished from the saving operations of the Spirit."

QUEST. When are impressions and impulses evidently delusive ?

ANSW. Beside what is said already, we offer you the following six particulars, for a solution of this important matter.

1. When the impression carries a man out of his sphere, and turns private persons to be public preachers, without being called of God, as was Aaron, Heb. v. 4, in a regular way to the sacred office, and when one is persuaded to that which is good, but without a commission or warrant. Uzziah's holding up the ark was good ; but he had no commission, and therefore was slain.

2. When public devotion is brought in and practised, to the prejudice of our particular callings. God calls men to be diligent in business, as well as fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, Rom. xii. 11. But when one duty excludes another, from time to time, it is delusive work.

3. When people are persuaded to duty unseasonably and unmeasurably. The righteous bringeth forth his fruit in his season, Psal. i. 3, God hath made everything beautiful in his season. The God of order, by his Spirit, puts not a man upon irregular duties. The duty is not from the Spirit of God that is unmeasurable, no more than that which is quite unseasonable. As duty misplaced differs little from sin, if it be not just turned into sin ; so a man is persuaded to duty unmeasurably when he is tempted to such a multitude of duties as to weary out his spirits, and exhaust them, to the ruin even of the body. But he that came to save souls, came not to destroy bodies.

4. When any truth is advanced, in order to make way for error, for one truth to the prejudice of another. Devils may confess Christ and his truths, to serve a turn, Mark i. 24, Acts xvi. 17. It

may be to divide Christ in his offices, and to disparage some other truths. He may allow false prophets to teach some things Christ has commanded, providing men be not taught to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded, as in Matt. xxviii. 20. The devil may possibly extol Christ, as a Prophet, in his doctrine; that he may dethrone him, as a King, in his government, for he cannot endure that Christ should reign. He may suffer the flowers of gospel doctrine to be spread, upon condition he can get the hedge of discipline and government, that should be about God's garden of flowers overthrown; with a design, that the flowers themselves may be trampled on, and ruined in the issue.

5. That which hath no will and inclination to be tried is delusive. Truth seeks the light, and is willing to be searched: "Every one that doth evil, hateth the light: neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved: but he that doth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God," John iii. 20, 21.

6. That which hath a native tendency to promote sin and security is delusion. If it tend to encourage sin and corruption, whether personal or public corruption; and tend to discourage reformation, personal or public reformation, then it is evidently delusion; for, that unholiness cannot be from the Holy Spirit. Thus, these endeavoured to discourage Nehemiah in building the walls of Jerusalem, shewed thereby what a delusive spirit they were of; "My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear," Neh. vi. 14. That cannot be of God, which opposes the work of God, and of reformation. Again, if it tend to lead to security, it is a delusion; "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17. Now, they think they are rich, they want nothing: but the Spirit of God thinks otherwise, and tells them they want all things.¹

REMARK 7. "That God may justly let loose a spirit of error and deulsion." This he may do,

(1) In the above-mentioned extraordinary commotion, which took place at Cambuslang, and some other places in the west of Scotland, all the particulars now mentioned were ingredients in it. Many private persons became public exhorters, praying publicly in the midst of vast crowds of people; multitudes left off business: gave themselves wholly to these matters night and day: and could not endure to be tried.

1. To punish the sin of a visible church in not receiving the truth ; 2 Thess. ii. 11, " And for this cause, (namely, because they received not the love of the truth, ver. 10), God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Psal. lxxxix. 11, 12. " My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me : so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust ; and they walked in their own counsels." I shall not say how far God may punish a church that are corrupt, and will have none of God's counsel, by leaving them to their own counsels ; and, when they reject a testimony for God, by allowing them to receive a lying testimony, and to believe a lie.

2. To glorify himself, and wipe off the reproach of his people, by discovering them ; for, " There must be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest," 1 Cor. xi. 19 ; that they may appear to be men of conscience.

3. That the truth may be cleared by opposition : truth still gained, never lost ground by opposition. The opposition that the Sadducees made to the doctrine of the resurrection, made Christ clear it from some Old Testament scriptures, wherein we would never otherwise have known to have sought it.

4. To purge out practical errors in his own people. When we have low thoughts of the scripture, then he lets loose Deists, that we may conceive the higher value for the word. When low thoughts of the Son of God, then he lets loose Arians to deny his divinity, that we may begin to conceive more highly of Christ. When we have low thoughts and wrong conceptions of the Spirit, in his operations, then he lets loose a delusive spirit, that we may prize and value the gracious and saving operations of the Spirit the more.

REMARK 8. " That special direction is necessary in a time of error and delusion, and in a sifting and winnowing time." For clearing this, I here offer these four things.

1. Take not truth upon trust or report, but drink it from the fountain of holy writ ; otherwise we will err, not knowing the scriptures.

2. Labour to find the truth, in the good thereof, from your experience : " I will never forget thy precepts ; for with them thou hast quickened me," Psalm cxix. 93. You may as well shape a coat for the moon, as fix men in divine truth, that know nothing of the sweetness and savoury relish of divine truth. This, and that, and the other persuasion, is all alike to them.

3. Fortify yourselves against a time of trial : "These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended : they shall put you out of the synagogues ; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service," John xvi. 1, 2.

4. Take heed of that light which cometh in an hour of temptation ; for, though it may be right, yet it needs to be well tried ; because, at such a time, Satan is busy to come in with wild-fire, that misleads the traveller. Hence special keeping is necessary in the hour of temptation, Rev. iii. 10 ; for then we are apt to favour that light that leads to shun the cross, and to side with the times.

When Satan's sieve is very small, people need a very strong faith. If there be a picture of conversion drawn by the devil, as an angel of light, how hard may it be to perceive the depths of Satan ? Think not strange, though Satan should counterfeit conversion : for, I know none of the graces of God's Spirit but he may pretend to work. And we are sure he can cite scripture, as he did to Christ himself, Mat. iv. 3—11.

QUEST. How shall I know a scripture given by Christ, and one given by the Devil ?

ANSW. I shall only here observe, that the word that the devil brings in, tends always to some wicked effect ; either to make the soul secure or desperate ; either to depress it too much to despair, or elevate it too much to presumption. It tends either to disturb and discompose the soul, or else to fill it with false peace and comfort. But it may be still inquired, What if the soul that has been seemingly or really convicted of sin, be afterward comforted by the word ; how may that be known to be of God, or to be of the devil ? To which we reply, We are sure that Satan may give false comfort and joy by words of scripture. The stony-ground hearers received the word with joy, Matt. xiii. 20. But consult the place, in order to find the difference between that joy and the joy of the true believer, that he gets by the word.

1. The seed is said to be received in a stony place. The heart of stone was never made a heart of flesh.

2. "They hear the word, and anon with joy receive it." No mention is here of their receiving Christ in the word. Their sudden joy was suspicious, when let in upon a stony heart, not melted with the rising of the Sun of righteousness, in his glory, upon their souls, giving light and heat ; the light of life, the light of the knowledge

of the glory of God, in the mind and understanding ; giving life and heat to the heart and affections. Sudden joy, without this, is deceitful and delusive.

3. It is said, "They have no root in themselves;" no inward root. True joy is rooted in the inward knowledge of Christ, and Christ revealed in the soul. It is rooted in the faith of the Son of God, "In whom believing we rejoice." It is rooted in Christ the true vine, and built upon the sure foundation.

4. It is said to endure but for a while ; like John's hearers, that rejoiced in his light for a while ; for, "When tribulation and persecution arises, because of the word, by and by they are offended;" they turn enemies and opposites to the persecuted cause of Christ, and have no mind to suffer for any such thing.

These four things discover their joy to be false and delusive. Though it come by the word, yet, when it hath these four defects, that here the Spirit of God speaks of ; then it says, that the word that gives them joy comes not right, but by some evil spirit.

II. We proposed next to offer some Meditations upon the whole text.

Metit. 1. "Our Lord Jesus Christ would not have his children discouraged, though they have a powerful and political enemy to oppose them." For the time of Satan's tempting is the time of Christ's praying. Satan, as described, 1 Pet. v. 8, is,

1. A lion, the strongest of all the beasts : a most powerful enemy.

2. A roaring lion. There are several roarings of the lion of hell : as, when he persuades you that you have sinned against the Holy Ghost ; that you are a reprobate ; that the day of grace is over ; that there is no mercy for you : when he tempts you, as he did Christ, to worship himself ; to kill yourself ; to curse God and blaspheme. When he persuades you that duty is sin, and sin duty. However, Christ hath him in chains : He is the lion of the tribe of Judah. He hath the command of that lion in hell.

3. Satan is a spiritual restless enemy. He never sleeps : if he seems to do so, it is with open eyes. He sees us when we see not him : and being a spirit, he walketh through stone-walls and iron-bars ; no place can resist him.

4. A cruel enemy, "Seeking whom he may devour:" a devourer ; yea, "A murderer from the beginning." Watch most earnestly, after the greatest duty, and the greatest fervency : for there

may be sudden cools after the greatest heats. When the apostles told Christ that the devils were subject to them, then he took them aside to pray. If you obtain mercy, pray ; and watch unto prayer.

Medit. 2. "Satan is a great adversary to all true believers." He makes it his work to divide between the soul and God ; because he knows the great love that is between God and believers, and that they have no such friends as God : therefore he would have them divided. He accuses God to them, and endeavours to fill them with hard and harsh thoughts of God. He accuses them to God ; and therefore he is called the accuser of the brethren. He leaves no stone unturned to draw them from God. Hence no wonder the men of this world, who are influenced by the god of this world, set themselves with such hatred to oppose the children of God, and the cause of God, and the kingdom of Christ, and any testimony for it. That is from the enmity between the serpent and the woman's seed.

Medit. 3. "Satan cannot so much as lift up a finger against a child of God, until he have leave asked and given." God hath him in his chain : not only in the chain of his justice, but in the chain of his providence ; that he cannot go one whit further than he gets leave. This is a part of his torment, that he cannot do what he would. Hence the devil cried out, "What have we to do with thee ? art thou come to torment us before the time ?"—Luke viii. 28. Intimating, it was a torment to them that they could keep possession of these souls no longer. This may be quieting to tempted ones, and such as are under Satan's buffetings, that he can do no more than God lets him. He cannot put one vexatious thought into the soul, further than he gets leave ; nor one blasphemous thought. God hath him in his chain ; and, when he will, he will rebuke him ; and, when he rebukes him, he must come off. Let this support you that commit yourselves to Jesus.

Christ hath a threefold title to dominion over devils. 1. He is their Maker. It is true, as devils, they made themselves ; but, as creatures, he made them. 2. Their conqueror : "He spoiled principalities and powers ; he made a shew of them openly ; not only on the cross, but in his triumphant ascension. 3. Their Judge, John xii. 31. They are his prisoners in chains ; yet not close prisoners, but like malefactors in chains, that go abroad, reserved to the judgment of the great day.

Learn, hence, to whom you owe your safety, that you are not destroyed ; and to whom to fly for the time to come. To whom

should you commend your soul, body, and family, morning and evening? Christ rules in the midst of his enemies, the devil, and his instruments that have the venom of the devil in their heart, and are of their Father the devil. The church and people of God, and the cause of Christ, shall be maintained and preserved though every malignant opposer were a devil. Fear not the devil; otherwise you shew yourself weak in faith; you dishonour Christ; you worship the devil. Resist the devil confidently: for, in Christ, you have overcome him already. Christ's victory was not for his own sake, but for ours. If you are believers, you are delivered already from his ruling power, though not from his tempting power.

Medit. 4. "Satan loves to be vexing these whom he cannot ruin." He desires to sift and shake them, though he knows he cannot prevail: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea: for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time," Rev. xii. 12. It is a great affliction to be under Satan's temptations: they are like thorns in the flesh, very grievous. Therefore when we are freed by the Son of God, we ought to be thankful, saying, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee," Ps. cxvi. 7.

Medit. 5. "God does sometimes hear Satan's desire, and he may get part of it; "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you; but I have prayed for thee." Satan hath prayed; and it is not said, I will free you from his sifting temptations; but, "I have prayed for thee." Thus God gave Satan leave to tempt Job.

QUEST. But how does God give leave to Satan to tempt his children, since he is a Father to them?

ANSW. God does it in a holy way. It is no sin to be tempted, though it is a sin to yield. The evil of a temptation is from the devil and ourselves: the good of it is from God; for God doth it wisely; he knows how to deliver us out of the temptation, and how to bring good out of it.

Again, God does hereby commend himself to us in all his attributes; as, 1. In his love. Though he suffers the evil one to tempt and sift you, he shall never be able to destroy you. 2. He commends to us his truth and faithfulness. God had promised, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent: and what he made good to Christ, he makes good to them: "God is

faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape," &c. 1 Cor. x. 13. 3. He commends his wisdom to us herein ; that, notwithstanding all Satan's temptations and devices, yet he counterplots the enemy, and comforts his people in their tribulation, 2 Cor. i. 4. In this very way that God suffers Satan to bruise our heel, he will break his head.

Again, God suffers it for the believer's own good ; that, by shaking temptations, they may be the more firmly rooted. Their faith is hereby tried.

Hence, do not suddenly entertain suspicious thoughts of God, because he suffers you to be tempted ; nay, he enjoins you to count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations, James i. 2.

Medit. 6. "There is no temptation befalls the Lord's people, that Christ does not foresee, before it come upon us." He knows what is in our heart, and what is in the devil's heart, before it is in act. "Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days," Gen. xlix. 1. If Jacob could, by the Spirit of God, tell his children what should befall them for many ages to come ; then much more can Christ tell Peter beforehand what death he should die, and here also what temptation he should come under, and how far the tempter should prevail. O ! he knows all your temptations, before they come. Nothing can befall you unawares. But Jesus Christ, the Captain of salvation, foresees even all the wiles of the devil, and will preserve you to his heavenly kingdom.

Medit. 7. (From Satan's desire and getting leave to tempt.) "It is not always a sign or token of the love of God to us, to bestow upon us the things that we desire." Satan here desires ; and God gave him, so far, his desire. God may give us our desire, and give it in anger. Ps. lxxviii. 29, 30, 31, "He gave them their desire. But, while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them," &c. Ps. cvi. 15, "He gave them their request ; but sent leanness into their soul." Ps. lxxx. 12, "I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust." We find God gave Israel their wish, Num. xiv. 2. They said, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt ; or, would God we had died in the wilderness ;" and ver. 28, God, in his judgment, takes them at their word : "Their carcases fell there."

Hence God, in love to us, many times withholds from us what

we would have, and what our desire goes out after, and gives us that which is better. God knows, that through the weakness of our faith, and the remainder of our corruption, we are set upon these things that would do us no good.

Medit. 8. "Though Satan may, for a time, shake us in the sieve of temptation; yet it shall not be long; it will be but like the sifting of wheat; a few shakes, and so set down again." Though temptations be grievous, yet they shall be but for a time; and then God will rebuke the enemy: for God's anger is but for a moment. "Fear none of these things, which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days," Rev. ii. 10. We have it limited sometimes to two days. Hos. vi. 2, "After two days will he revive us," &c.; yea, sometimes limited to an hour, Rev. iii. 10. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation:" yea, sometimes limited to a little moment, Isa. lvi. 7, 8. "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," &c. So that thou Satan may have leave for a time to sift and winnow you, it shall be but for a short time: and that upon the accounts following.

1. Because of God's love to his children: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him," Psal. ciii. 13.

2. Because while they are afflicted, he is afflicted, in all their afflictions; "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them," Isa. lxiii. 9.

3. God knows how frail we are, and how weak to bear the assaults of the enemy; and therefore will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear: "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust," Psal. ciii. 14. And "He will not contend for ever, neither be always wroth, lest the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he hath made," Isa. lvii. 14. He knows, that if the rod of affliction and temptation should remain long upon our back, we would put forth our hands to wickedness, Psal. cxxv. 3. God knows, if the temptation should be long, we would be weary and faint; Psal. cxix. 82. "Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me? Psal. cii. 2. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble: incline

thine ear unto me : in the day when I call, answer me speedily." This is encouragement, that though trials be heavy, they shall not be long, at least in their extremity.

4. There is a need be for these temptations for a season, 1 Pet. i. 6, that his people may be stirred up to more earnestness in seeking to God. So it is said of Christ himself, when he was in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, Luke xxii. 44. So does the Psalmist, Psal. lxxxviii. 1, 2. "O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee : let my prayer come before thee ; incline thine ear unto my cry." And when God's children come and cry to him, he cannot but relieve them : as a tender parent, when he hears his child cry, he cannot but look to it, and see what it wants. Thus God, when the children of Israel cry to him ; "I have surely seen the affliction of my people, which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their task-masters : for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them," &c. Exod. iii. 7, 8. They have the advantage of intercessions going up to God for them.

(1.) From their fellow-brethren, pleading with God in a trying time ; they cannot let God alone, and so must be heard, Psal. cii. 13—22.

(2.) From Christ, the great Intercessor with God for the tempted ones. He is always at God's right hand pleading for them, and the Father cannot deny him ; but will hear speedily.

Hence, every one of us should look after our interest in Christ, that we may be among his Simons, whom he will undertake for to God against Satan ; otherwise, how shall we stand ? If the Simons, that belong to Christ, may come into Satan's sieve, what shall become of others ? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear ?"

Hence see the duty of believing, ye that are sometimes assaulted, and perhaps grievously molested by Satan. O sirs, do not cast away your confidence. Be not cast down, as if you were now cast out of God's favour. Though the temptation be smart, it shall not be long : "The vision is for an appointed time ; and it will speak:" therefore, wait with patience. When the trial is most grievous, the deliverance is nearest. O ! how short are your temptations, in regard of what Satan would have, and would be at ! Also, in respect of eternity, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Medit. 9. "However great and grievous Satan's "temptations may be, and however fierce his fiery darts, Christ hath placed a *But* against them, that they shall not prevail altogether." The gates of hell shall not prevail against Zion: "God shall help, and that right early;" particularly,

1. When matters come to an extremity, and their strength be almost quite gone; "For 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," Deut. xxxii. 36.

2. When men and means fail, and the help of these is vain; "Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of men," Psal. cxvi.

12. See Matth. xvii. 16, 17. He remembers us when we are brought low; "I was brought low, and he helped me," Psal. cxvi. 6.

3. When the power of Satan and his instruments has so far prevailed, that now they think they are sure to overcome; then will the Lord come with deliverance. When Pharaoh and his host have Israel hemmed in between them and the Red-sea, then God shews his salvation nearest, when the enemy's hope is highest.

Hence see, this should encourage the faith of God's children under any affliction or temptation. Though they sigh and groan at present, yet they are to live by faith on Christ: for, when we are lowest, and our strength gone, and means fail, and enemies insult, then is God's time to help, and Christ's time to set up his *but* in the way: "BUT I have prayed for thee."

Medit. 10. "Our strength and comfort, in an hour of temptation, lies not in any grace already received, or in what is with us; but in what Christ hath prayed for, and is with him." Your relief lies in what I have prayed for; and, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." The centurion said, Matth. viii. 8. "Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed:" so, when we see the greatness of our own prevailing corruptions, and the smallness of our faith, yet we may take encouragement in this, that Christ hath prayed for us, That, may the believer say, he hath prayed for me, and spoke a word for me: and, if he but speak the word, I shall be healed. So, when the prophet's servant saw a great host, the prophet forbids him to fear; for "There be more with us than against us," 2 Kings vi. 16. Rom. viii. 34. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" So, when Moses was praying for the people of Israel,

when fighting against Amalek, Exod. xvi. 11, 12, and when Aaron and Hur held up his hand, and he prayed then Israel prevailed. Moses, you know, was the typical mediator ; and there was that force and virtue in his prayer, that, while he was praying, the Israelites prevailed : and, O how much power and efficacy is there in the prayer and intercession of Jesus Christ ! One word of Christ can rebuke the devil, and command him to be gone, as Mark xix. 25, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee to come out of him."

Hence see the reason we get not more power over Satan, and our prevailing corruptions within us, or the devil's temptations without us ; even because we look too much to our own strength, and look too little to the strength of Christ's prayer, and to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. We, sometimes, are ready to neglect duties and ordinances ; and, at other times, rely too much on duties and ordinances, and do not live by faith upon Christ Jesus, in the use of means.

Medit. 11. "Satan cannot be more ready with his desires and designs against us, than Jesus Christ is ready in his love and mercy ; and well prepared to undertake for us." "Satan hath desired you, that he may sift you ;" but instantly Christ steps in to pray for us. And there is more power and virtue in Christ's prayer to help us, than there can be in Satan's malice to hurt us. When the people of Israel were to go against Jericho, Joshua v., see how the captain of the Lord's host stood with his drawn sword in his hand, ready to help them, verses 13, 14. Why, his people are his covenanted ones in Christ, and his by donation : they are given to him of the Father, that he should lose none of them. Again, he is their elder brother ; and therefore he cannot endure to see his brethren under the power of the envious one, but will step in for their help.

Hence, our strength lies in Christ his praying and appearing for us. So, when Joshua came to stand before God, Satan was at his right-hand : but then the Lord Jesus prays for him, and rebukes the devil, Zech. iii. 1, 2, Rom. viii. 34. "It is Christ that died : yea rather that is risen again, and maketh intercession for us." There is not one day's temptation but we should be overcome by it, were it not that Christ upholds, as it is said, Mic. v. 5. "This man shall be the peace." Habitual strength, will not do against the grand enemy. He was too strong for Adam in innocency ; and he has manifold advantages more against us : For,

1. Our graces are very weak. Adam, in innocency when entering the lists with Satan, he had a power to have stood: and yet he was overcome.

2. We have a great deal of flesh and corruption; which Adam, in that state, had not. But the prince of this world hath enough in us to side with him. Therefore, we may easily be conquered.

3. Satan can now come within us. He hath this advantage, which he had not of Adam in innocence: therefore, he can soon overcome us, if left to ourselves.

4. The very corruption that remains within us, would be too hard for our graces: and much more, when Satan joins with these corruptions to attack us. Satan is very strong, called, *The strong man*: and how shall we, who are such impotent creatures, deal with such a strong man! He is called the god of this world; how shall we stand before such a god, if we had not the true God upon our side, IMMANUEL; *God with us*? As Satan's name, so his nature, shews him to be strong; he is an angel by nature. How shall we stand out against an angel of darkness, or against an angel of light? For he is both the one really, and the other seemingly.

Why then, see the need of betaking ourselves to Christ. We may be confident in him, though a legion of devils were against us. He can discomfit them with a word, either by his own immediate word, or even by his ministerial word, in the power and strength of Jesus; for the design of the ministry of this gospel is to open men's eyes, and to bring them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. There is not one converted, but hath many devils cast out of him. So that herein lies all our strength, even in flying to Jesus, as Hezekiah did, Isa. xxxviii. 14. "I am oppressed, undertake for me." Go and plead with God in Christ's name, to undertake for you. Alas! sirs, why do we prevail so little over our corruptions and temptations, but because we go not out of ourselves more into Jesus to undertake for us? If you would live by faith on Christ, you should not be so enslaved to your lusts. Give up yourselves wholly to him, and put yourselves under his shelter.

O sirs, be persuaded to set the power of Christ against the power of Satan. I will tell you the nature of the devil's power.

1. All his power is but a derived power. It is but derived from Christ, who can soon cut him short. See Isa. liv. 16. "Behold I have created the waster to destroy—Job xii. 16. The deceiver

and deceived are his." It may be said of the great waster of souls, and the great deceiver of souls, he would not have any power, were it not given him. Thus our Saviour speaks to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power against me, were it not given thee of my Father:" Even so it may be said of Satan's power.

2. As his power is a derived, so it is a conquered power. It is already conquered by Christ, who hath judged the prince of this world.

3. As it is a derived and conquered, so it is a limited power, Job xxxviii. 8,—11. It is a limited power in a double sense :

(1.) It is limited in regard he hath not the power he would gladly have : he would willingly know what is in our heart ; he hath a good guess at what is there ; but he cannot search the heart ; that is God's prerogative. He would incline not only to tempt us, but he would also have power to force us to sin ; but this he hath not : he hath a tempting, but not a compelling power. He desires Christ to cast himself down, but he had no power to cast him down. So, he desires us to cast ourselves down into the mire of sin ; but he hath no power, to force us thereto.

(2.) It is limited in regard he cannot use the power he hath, any further than Christ will suffer him.

4. His power is a subservient power. It is such a power as Christ Jesus will serve himself in ; for Christ will turn Satan's power to God's glory. So, when the incestuous person was to be given up to Satan, it was but for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. v. 5. Therefore, considering what a feeble and tributary power that of Satan is, we need nor fear him. Why, consider the power of Christ : He is the power of God ; and his power is almighty power, engaged for us. We have then no cause to fear the power of Satan, if we will, by faith, depend upon the power of Christ ; and, for your help herein, consider these four things.

1. Ordinarily all our trouble arises from questioning the power of Christ ; "The people among whom I am, are six hundred thousand foot-men, and thou hast said I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month," Num. xi. 21. A probable-like promise, might he say. Thus Martha and Mary, John xi. 32, this was what they stumbled at, "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." As if Jesus had not been as able to raise him when dead, as to heal him while alive. Thou you think many times you do not doubt so

much of his power, as of his willingness ; yet the truth is, this is the great hindrance of our faith, our doubting, and not depending upon the power of God and of Christ, when matters come to a pinch.

(2.) The holy Spirit of God especially calls upon us to attend upon the power of Christ, Heb. vii. 25, "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him," &c. Isa. lxiii. 2, "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. xlv. 22, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else."

(3.) We do not find in Scripture any heroic instance of the faith of God's people, wherein they did not eye the power of God. This was that which supported Abraham's faith, Rom. iv. 20, "He staggered not at the promise, through unbelief ; but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God." Why ? Because "he was fully persuaded, that he who had promised, was able to perform," verse 21. See, in the offering of his son Isaac, what supported him : "He accounted that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead," Heb. xi. 19.

(4.) Our Lord Jesus doth ordinarily so order matters, in his great work towards his people, that they, and all bystanders, may see that it must be the work of his own power : "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead," 2 Cor. i. 9 ; that we might see and acknowledge the mighty power of Christ ; and that hereby we may be encouraged in our faith, to trust in him, though we see never so much weakness and inability in ourselves ; and that we may see, if we be overcome, it is because we go not duly to Christ for strength : for, "He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." In a way of coming to him, we should be able to grapple with our strongest corruptions and temptations. Let us not fear Satan, but fly to him that says, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

Medit. 12. "That whatever grace in us Satan does most envy and invade, that grace Christ Jesus will take most care to strengthen and defend. 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.'" See 1 Thes. iii. 5, "For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest, by some means, the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain." There is no grace that

Satan envies and invades so much as this of faith. This, though not expressed, is naturally included in the words. Our Lord Jesus his care is principally to fortify that part, which Satan does most violently impugn; and that is our faith. The Captain of salvation does wisely defend that fort, which is most fiercely attacked. This is Satan's method. Thus he began with the first Adam, by the means of Eve, to make him not believe God's threatening, Gen. iii. 4. He attempted Adam's faith: for he had faith, whereby he believed all God's truths, revealed or to be revealed. It is past all peradventure; there was in the disposition and preparation of his mind, a potential faith; even to believe the promise of Christ, when it should be manifested unto him; and, as all sin was wrapt up in this one of Adam's disobedience—pride, ambition, gluttony, unthankfulness, &c.—so principally infidelity, as the inlet of all the rest. Thus he attempted David, Psalm cxvi. 11, "I said in my haste, all men are liars," even the prophets of God. Why, now he saw his kingdom deferred, his enemies increased. He thought (but in his haste, not waiting God's leisure) that all men are liars. Thus he set upon our blessed Lord Jesus, Matt. iv. 3, "If thou be the Son of God;" if thou be.

Now, Christ was tempted for our sake, that he might give us, 1. Help, in compassionating that in us, which he had felt in himself: "He suffered, being tempted, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted." 2. Warning, to expect that the enemy will not spare the soldier, that ventured on the Captain. 3. Confidence and hope, that, as he conquered him for us, so he will conquer him by us. 4. Example; that we may be informed how he will assault us, and how we must resist him. His main ordnance is planted against the bulwark of our faith; the point of his sword against the breastplate of righteousness and helmet of salvation, which is our faith and hope. This manifestly appears in all these examples wherein Satan hath prevailed over men; by the inordinate fear of the creature, to make them let go their obedience and obligation to the Creator: as in Abraham, when he told a lie. Infidelity is the true mother of base fear. Hence says Christ to his disciples, "O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye fear?" And so to the ruler of the synagogue, about the enlivening of his daughter, "Fear not, only believe." Faith banishes fear, and makes the righteous bold as a lion; because they know whom they have believed, and that the God whom they serve is able to deliver them.

QUEST. Why does Satan most fiercely assault the faith of a Christian ?

ANSW. 1. Because there is more of the power of God laid out upon this grace, than upon any thing else almost, Eph. i. 29.

2. Satan knows that it is the Spirit of God that works this faith in us ; and he therefore envies it, and opposes the work of the Spirit.

3. He knows that God is most delighted with this grace, and glorified by it ; without which, it is impossible to please him ; and in the exercise whereof he is still pleased.

4. Satan knows, that of all other graces, faith is the strongest to overcome him : therefore we are exhorted, Eph. vi. 16, " Above all, to take to us the shield of faith." And, 1 John v. 4, it is said, " This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith."

On the contrary, there is no sin that does more undo the soul, than unbelief. By our unbelief we blaspheme God, and make him a liar. He hath said, that he will magnify his word above all his name, Psalm cxxxviii. 2. But unbelief discredits his word. Unbelief is the greatest sin, because it is the mother of all sin, Heb. iii. 12, " Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." When once we turn from God, then we lie open to all sin. Therefore Satan, above all graces, envies our faith.

5. Faith is the most uniting grace. It unites the soul to God in Christ ; whereas, unbelief divides the soul from God.

6. As faith furthers good things to us, unbelief keeps outward good things from us. So that the lord, on whose hand the king leaned, that would not believe, he had no benefit by the plenty in Samaria, 2 Kings vii. It was unbelief that hindered Moses from entering into the land of Canaan. Therefore Satan sets himself most against our faith. And, because Satan sets himself so much against our faith, therefore Christ doth most of all take care of our faith. All the whole word of God is written for the encouragement and strengthening of our faith : " These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name," John xx. 31. Hence there is no objection can be made against believing in the Son of God ; but there is an antidote, somewhere in Scripture, to take away these objections. And, again, we may find that these very ways

that Satan takes for the weakening of our faith, our Lord Jesus Christ, by these very means, does strengthen our faith. For example, by these temptations, whereby he thinks to overcome us, by these temptations Christ strengthens our faith, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9; so as we shall see one day, that we could not have been without them. Again, Satan thinks, by exposing us in the world, to hurt us; therefore Christ, by these oppositions, does us good, 1 Cor. i. 5-9.

Hence learn the excellency of faith; although it seems the poorest and weakest grace, the most beggarly of all the graces. Love brings ointment to Christ's head, and repentance tears to wash his feet; but faith gives nothing, and brings nothing to Christ; yet it is designed to a higher office than any other grace: it is the hand that receives Christ, and receives all from him. That can be said of faith, that cannot be said of any other grace. Why, as it justifies, the same thing may be said of faith, and is really attributed to faith, that is attributed to Christ. It is Christ that justifieth, and Christ that saveth; yet, we are said to be justified by faith, and saved by faith; not in opposition to Christ; but to live by faith, is to live by Christ; to be saved by faith, is to be saved only by Christ. Again, in the matter of justification, faith is alone. No other grace is said to justify. Further, observe these six particulars concerning it.

1. Faith is that grace by which we have access to God. It is many times with a poor soul, as it is with a ship that is tossed in a furious tempest, and cannot descry land. Faith is like one getting upon the top of the mast, and telling that he discovers the haven. It brings Christ and the soul together.

2. As it is the grace that brings us to Christ, so it is the grace that keeps Christ and the soul together, and preserves the soul in Christ; ye are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.

3. Faith is the grace that presents us to God, spotless and blameless. Faith receives the righteousness wherein we appear spotless before God, saying, "In the Lord have I righteousness."

4. Faith is the leading and commanding grace. It leads forth all the other graces that are in us. It is that holy centurion, that says to one, "Go, and he goes; to another, Come, and he comes;" for the working of all the graces is according to the measure of faith.

5. Faith is the binding and uniting grace. Love also unites the soul to Christ: but, though it be an uniting grace, the union that love makes is only a moral union, as one heart in two bodies, but the union that faith makes is a mystical union, it makes us spiritually and mystically one with Christ.

6. The excellency of faith lies in this, that it is the one grace that Christ especially enquires after, "Where is your faith?" is the great question. When a storm seems to drive hope, and courage, and all away, the question is, "Where is your faith? If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God. If thou believest; all things are possible to him that believeth." There are two things our Lord is said to wonder at: the one is, he wondered at their unbelief, Mark vi. 6, "He marvelled because of their unbelief." Another is, he marvelled at the centurion's faith. So that it appears, that faith is the only grace that Christ enquires after, and is careful about; therefore it must be a grace that excels all the other graces.

On the contrary, we may hence see the vileness of the sin of unbelief. As faith is the most excellent grace, so unbelief is the most abominable sin. Why,

1. Unbelief is seated in the most noble part of the soul; in the understanding, it is darkness; in the will, rebellion and opposition to God.

2. Unbelief is a seminary of all kind of evil; it lets out the heart to all manner of sin. It is the unbelieving sinner that despises heaven, and mocks at hell.

3. Unbelief is a spiritual self-murder. It is that which shuts out the soul from mercy; and that by rejecting the kindness of God, the Christ of God.

4. See what God speaks of it, 1 John v. 10, "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar," as if there was no notice to be given to what God speaks, no regard to what he says. Hence Christ's greatest care is, to have unbelief dashed, and faith furthered, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

It is owing to the mediation and intercession of Christ, that the faith of disciples, though it may fearfully languish, yet it shall not utterly fail. If you be left to yourself, believer, you will fall; especially in a day of temptation, in a winnowing and sifting time, but you are to expect keeping, by the power of God, and the prayer of Christ. The prayer of Christ is not only general, for all believers,

but for particular believers, "I have prayed for thee," which is an encouragement for us to pray for ourselves, and an engagement upon us to pray for others.

Having hitherto spoken to the premonition; there is next an admonition here given to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." On which I only offer the following meditations:—

Medit. 1. "In sifting times, the faith of disciples, if it do not fail, yet it may languish so far as that they may need a new conversion." We hear of many conversions now-a-days, and would to God they were all true, and not delusive. But here is one mark of that conversion that is but a delusion; if they are so sure about their conversion, as to think they will never need another conversion. I know no converts in scripture but needed, as well as Peter, to be converted again and again. Some have been converted an hundred times.

Medit. 2. "When disciples are a-new converted, they are not converted for themselves only, and for their own good, but for the good and benefit of their brethren, and for the advantage of the church of God, to strengthen them that stand, to prevent their falling, and to restore them that are fallen already, and endeavour their recovery." See the fruit of David's new conversion, Psa. li. 12, 13, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Verse 18, Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem." He hath a concern for the conversion of others, and for the rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Hence, that must be a wrong conversion, that hath no tendency toward the public good, but a tendency to oppose a public Reformation.

We shall now close the whole with a few advices, relating to these sifting and winnowing times.

(1.) See that your faith be such a faith as Satan fights against, and Christ prays for. Saving faith is the eye-sore of hell, but under the care of heaven.

QUEST. How shall I know if my faith be of this sort? Try your faith by these eight following particulars:—

1. Have you ever found an utter impossibility to believe; yea, the power of enmity in your heart against it? Faith is a fruit of

creating power, Eph. i. 19. And you are utter strangers to faith, if you never found a power of darkness and enmity in you, and an utter impossibility to believe. Have you ever found that you could as soon raise your body to the starry firmament, as you could raise up your soul to embrace Christ in the gospel?

2. Is it a faith of the Lord's operation? Hath the Lord carried you forth to believe with a strong hand? Israel had all the power of Egypt to withstand them, but the Lord sent his word, and commanded deliverance. You are, by nature, in an Egypt of spiritual bondage. What hath brought you out? Surely nothing but the Lord himself, the power of God. Can you say, when you concluded that the dry bones would never live, and that you was cut off, the Lord instructed you with a strong hand, and made you to believe, "We pray always for you, that our God would fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power," 2 Thes. i. 11.

3. Do you find the same omnipotent power necessary to draw forth every act of faith, by which at first it was wrought? As no instrument can make itself, so it cannot put itself in tune. As you could not make yourself a believer, so you cannot keep or maintain faith, without a skilful, powerful hand. It is the Lord himself that puts you in tune, otherwise you would continue at a stand for ever, and be as unable to put forth any one act, as you was unable to plant faith. Hence the believer's cry is, "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out, Song iv. 16. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," Psalm li. 10.

4. Try the qualities of your faith, whether it be weak or strong. If it be real and saving, it will be the spring of spiritual motion and action; any thing you enjoy of the influence of grace, you enjoy it in this way. Can you say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I live is by the faith of the Son of God?" True faith is the root of holiness. As the body, without breath, is dead, so is faith without works. It sets the soul upon the mortifying of every sin, and upon the performance of every duty, and the exercising of every grace, and the bearing of every cross the Lord lays upon one's back. True faith breathes in sanctification. This is the element of every believer, whether weak or strong, insomuch that when sin and lusts prevail, or lead them into captivity, they are then out of their element.

5. Saving faith makes everything disappear but Christ, and is swallowed up wholly in Christ. Grace itself disappears; faith itself disappears, as the stars at the rising of the sun. When one comes to a court, if the king be not there, he is taken up with the view of the house, but when the king is upon the throne, then he is taken up wholly with him.

6. Saving faith is the eye-sore of hell. It is a suspicious evidence and black mark, if you enjoy your faith quietly without opposition. When the believer has escaped the enemy by regenerating grace, Satan pursues him to the very gates of heaven, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," 2 Tim. iv. 7.

7. Saving faith is, notwithstanding, improved by these trials. The fire may melt down the vessel: but, while it is in the fire, our gracious Lord sits as a refiner; nothing is lost: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried in the fire, might be found unto praise and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 7.

8. The man seeks to exercise faith in every thing he goes about, and in every duty he performs: to read in faith, to hear in faith; for, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin:" and, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." If the believer can get faith exercised, though it were in a dungeon, he is well, it is like a palace to him: but when otherwise all is wrong.

[2.] A second advice I would give you, relating to these sifting and winnowing times is, Do not cast yourself in the way of temptations: shun all appearance of evil: and do not speak for Satan. Avoid the company of enemies and wicked men; and, "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not," Prov. i. 7. Yea, watch against the snares that may be in the company of the godly in winnowing times. Peter may be a snare to draw away many with the dissimulation of the time, and the temptations of the day.

[3.] Beware of being either Gallios or Gamaliels at this day.

1. No man ought to be of Gallio's temper, that cares for none of these things that belong to the testimony of the day; as if the affairs of the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the house of God were light matters. Satan seems, at this day, to be plotting especially against Christ's government, as if his doctrine might be tolerate, but his government were intolerable, or a trivial and impertinent thing, that no man needs trouble his head about.

Satan seems content that Christ preach, providing he do not reign and rule : knowing his doctrine will not be long uncorrupted, if his government can be overturned. Therefore, men had little need to be Gallios in this matter.

2. Men ought not to be of Gamaliel's temper. He was a grave, learned, and peaceable man, and highly esteemed among the people; a man of great wit and good sense. However, his counsel was crafty and corrupt; he acted the politician. He laid this down for a foundation, That the work was either of God or of man: if of man, it would come to nought; if of God, it could not be overthrown. But what was the tendency of all this? Namely, to judge of religion by events: and, in the meantime, to lie by, and do nothing for the good cause, but just leave it to the providence of God. Thus many are for acting the politician, and remaining neuter, and halting between two opinions: but, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whether thou goest," Eccl. ix. 10. Neglect not present duty.

[4.] Be watchful and armed. Let spiritual watchfulness be joined with the spiritual armour, Eph. vi. 11—18. Let a man be never so well armed, if he be asleep, his armour will do little service.

In a word, would you be safe in a day of temptation? Then endeavour, through grace, to make it sure, that you are interested in Christ's prayers; or, that he is praying for you. Christ prays not for the world, but for these that were given him, John xvii. 9. What a cordial would it be to you, could you take home to yourself what Christ here says to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

QUEST. How shall I be sure he is praying for me?

ANSW. In order to have it made sure to you, consider that word of Christ's prayer, John xvii. 20, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them also, that shall believe, through their word." Christ is praying for all them that do or shall believe through his word, which he calls *their word*: OUR word, that are ministers of the gospel. What word? It is the word of reconciliation, committed to us, That God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. Dost thou believe through this word? It is the word, That Christ was made sin for you, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him. It is the word of Salvation, which

is sent to you, lost sinner ; Dost thou believe through this word ? It is a word of remission to you, guilty sinner, saying, " I will be merciful to your unrighteousness : " Dost thou believe through this word ? O come to Jesus, in the faith of this word. It is a word of liberty, for you that are captives, saying, " The Lord looseth the prisoners : " therefore, " Go forth, ye prisoners of hope, " and believe his word. It is a word of power for the weak, that can do nothing, and have no might to do anything ; a word, saying, " He giveth power to the faint, and to him that hath no might, he increaseth strength. " O may you believe in him, through this word. It is a word of life to the dead soul, saying, " I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. " O will you believe on him through this word ? It is a word of help to you that say, you cannot believe, if it be not a *cannot* of obstinacy, but of impotency, that you would willingly be delivered from. It is a word of help, saying, " I have laid help upon One that is mighty. " O will ye have his helping hand, and believe on him through this word ? This is what he calls *their word* : " I pray for all them that shall believe through *their* word. " And, " Do you now believe ? " Then take home with you the cordial for an hour of temptation, namely, that, though Satan should an hundred times desire to have you, that he may sift you as wheat ; yet Christ is saying to thee, to thee in particular, " I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. " Therefore, though you should meet with a sifting trial or temptation, that may lay you on your back for a little ; yet you shall be recovered and converted again : and, " When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. " Do all the good you can, to your friends and neighbours. Do all the service you can, in your station to immortal souls ; and promoting religion and reformation, personal and national. Beware of Peter's self-confidence, saying, " Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I ; " lest, before the cock crow, you deny him, and turn your back upon him and his cause. Apply to yourself the advertisement and admonition here given to Peter : " Simon, Simon ; Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not ; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. "

SERMON LXXIV.

REDEMPTION BY CHRIST, SHEWN TO BE OF GOD, AS THE FIRST CAUSE, AND TO GOD, AS THE LAST END.¹

“Who of God is made unto us redemption. For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”—1 Cor. i. 30, compared with Rev. v. 9.

THE Lord’s Supper is called the *Eucharist*, which signifies *thanksgiving*. And how can we express our thanksgiving this day, more fitly, when called to commemorate our Redeemer’s dying love, than by joining issue with the singers of the new song in this text, saying, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood?”

At the last sacramental solemnity here, the subject we spoke of was, that “all things are of God,” namely, relating to the new creation especially, and the great work of redemption. In pursuing of this subject, I have, of a long time, been speaking to the first text I read, where the several branches of our salvation are ascribed to God in Christ, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

After I had, from time to time, insisted upon this great subject, “That Christ is a complete Saviour, of God’s making, unto us, while he is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;” I came to inquire, How we are to improve Christ: 1. For wisdom; 2. How for righteousness; 3. How for sanctification; 4. How for redemption. We have spoken to the first three,² by adapting to them several texts of scripture, and treating them as answers to these several questions; and now I come to enter upon the fourth of these questions—namely, How we are to improve Christ for redemption; or as made of God unto us redemption? And the answer at present we offer is, That we are to improve Christ for redemption, by viewing in him to what end, and by what means, we are to be redeemed by him. Both these are here. 1. To what end are we redeemed?

(1) This was the subject of an Action-Sermon, preached immediately before the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, at Dunfermline, on Sabbath, July 11, 1742.

(2) What the author delivered on these branches is not printed.

We are redeemed to God. 2. By what means? By the blood of Christ: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood!"

In which words you may observe these five particulars following.

1. The great privilege here spoken of, namely, Redemption. It is a great word; a bigger word by far than Creation. Devils were created, wicked men were created, but a select number are redeemed. There is a fundamental redemption, which was performed by Christ upon the cross, where he suffered the wrath of God, the pains of hell: There is an actual redemption, when his people reap the benefits of that fundamental one. It is a redemption, first by impetration, or purchase, and then by application; first by price, and then by power.

2. The objects of this redemption, or persons redeemed, *us*: "Thou hast redeemed *us*." Here it may be asked, Who will claim, who do claim, and who may claim this privilege, saying, "Thou hast redeemed *us*?" As to the question, Who will claim it? Why all the elect in due time, will claim it: some benefits of Christ's death accrue to the world; but the elect will be the redeemed ones, and are so. Election, redemption, regeneration, and salvation, are of equal extent. As to that question, Who do claim it? Why, all believers, or all the elect, that are brought to lay hold on Christ by faith; they say upon the matter, "Thou hast redeemed us; and we believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved." As to the question, Who may claim it, upon the warrant of the word, shewing how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and upon the warrant of the gospel-call. To this we reply, All sinners, to whom the gospel comes; they are warranted to come to Christ by faith, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood;" for this is the record they are to receive, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The ground of this faith is no secret thing; but the revealed word.

3. The author of this redemption, Christ: "THOU wast slain;" the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the God-man, the root and offspring of David. The work is the effect of two natures in one Christ concurring; not God alone, nor man alone, but God-man: "Thou hast redeemed us."

4. The end and effect to which they are redeemed: "Thou

hast redeemed us TO GOD ;" to be his sons, his servants, his friends and favourites, his crown and glory ; to enjoy him, to glorify him, to be his peculiar treasure.

5. The means of it : "Thou wast SLAIN," and it is "by thy blood." Why, what is the necessity ? Was it not enough for God to become a man, a creature, to be hungry, and weary, and reproached ? No, says God ; I will never be satisfied for the sins of the human race, nor appeased, till I see my Son lying a sacrifice, bleeding at my feet : "It pleased the Lord to bruise him : without shedding of blood there shall be no remission." Blood I will have for an atonement. Blood is here taken for the whole sufferings of Christ, from the moment of his conception, from his miserable entry into the world, until he breathed his last ; till he cried, "It is finished ;" the whole is included : "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

The former text and this compared, set before us the whole business of our redemption, from the beginning to the end of it : and especially,

1. The original cause and spring of our redemption through Christ, it is of God : "Who of God is made unto us redemption."

2. The meritorious cause or means of it, viz. the death and blood of Christ : "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

3. The final cause, issue, and end of it, namely, *to* God, the fountain whence it came : "Thou hast redeemed us to God." It is *of* God that we are redeemed in Christ, and *to* God that we are redeemed ; OF God he is made unto us redemption, and he was slain, and has redeemed us TO God by his blood.

From the words, as they stand connected, and as we have now explained them, we lay down this one doctrinal proposition.

OBSERV. That the redemption we have by the blood of Christ, being of God as the first cause, is also to God as the last end.

As it is said, Rom. xi. 36, "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen:" so especially all things relating to our redemption are OF him as the beginning, and TO him as the last end. Our redemption by Christ is OF God, and our redemption by Christ is TO God. Thus it is said, 1 Pet. iii. 18, Christ also hath suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

The method we would here lay down for illustrating this doctrinal observation, through divine assistance, shall be the following.

- I. To offer some propositions concerning this redemption.
- II. To shew how it is OF God as the first cause.
- III. How it is TO God, as the last end.
- IV. Make some application of the subject.

I. The first thing proposed was to lay down some propositions concerning this redemption. We shall only offer the four following.

PROPOS. 1. "That till we partake of this redemption we are in bondage and captivity."

1. We are in bondage to the power of sin, and to the punishment thereof: To the power of sin; and hence sins are called chains, and fetters, and bonds; and it is called the law of sin and death: To the punishment of sin; and hence the sinner's heart is full of fear naturally; why, the Philistines are upon us; yea, the devil is upon us; nay, the wrath of God is upon us, and his favour is departed from us: "We are condemned already." Ah! how miserable is the condition of every man by nature! Whatever be his outward privileges, he is the slave of Satan. This spiritual slavery is indeed indiscernible; many, as Leviathan, sport themselves in the waters of sinful pleasures, and think that the only end of their being, not knowing that they are captives.

2. We are captives to the justice of God, to which we owe millions of talents, which cannot be paid till Christ redeem therefrom, by satisfying all the demands of justice.

3. We are captives to the law, as a covenant; the law condemns us; yea, every new-born child is condemned to the fire of hell by the law, till Christ redeem from the curse of the law; for he was condemned in our room, and he could not plead innocence; though he was in himself innocent, yet imputatively guilty, when "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all," the Father had enough to charge him with.

4. We are captives to our own consciences. That bosom-judge tells us, we are enemies to God, vile traitors, and speaks bitter things against us; it is a judge we cannot decline, a witness we cannot cast, an executioner we cannot resist; it tells us we are to be sentenced with devils to hell and damnation, till Christ redeem

from that captivity, slavery, and bondage, by intimating to this deputy, that the Judge is satisfied and appeased with the blood shed at Jerusalem. O sirs, then is the conscience sprinkled with the blood that speaks better things than that of Abel. Why, says conscience, is the great Judge pleased? Then I have no more to say.

5. We are by nature captives to Satan; he leads us captive at his pleasure; we are his servants, he is our master; we are the subjects, he is the king; we are the shop where he works, till Christ redeem from this captivity, and till the God-man bind the strong man and dispossess him.

6. We are captives to divers lusts: one lust is hard enough to serve; but, how hard is it to serve divers! Not only variety, but contrary ones, like so many wild horses drawing us contrary ways. The galley-slave, tugging at the oar night and day, is at perfect freedom when compared to this; redemption from this slavery is a great redemption. The old man is said to be crucified with Christ, Rom. vi. 6. He hath nailed sin to the cross, and slain it legally. Oh! may the believer say, this lust of mine hath not been well nailed, it is yet living and lively: well, but being crucified it shall actually die. But again,

7. We are by nature captives to every creature. We were once masters and lords of the creation, but we are now servants to them; they were once under us, but now they have got above us, and have the command of us; they have power to charm and draw us away from God; every creature hath power to vex us; Christ redeems from this captivity, when he restores to us our primitive dominion over the creatures, which is now to be had in Christ, who hath all power in heaven and in earth.

8. We are captives also to the fear of death. Many are in great bondage all their days through this fear; the prospect of the king of terrors creates a horror in the soul, till Christ redeem from this, by taking away both the sting of death and the terror of it. Our Lord Jesus redeems from these, and from all the effects of sin; he redeems from the curse of the law, "being made a curse for us," he said to God, when he was in flaming wrath, and threatening the sinner's damnation, "On me be thy curse." He redeems from the wrath of God, that omnipotent wrath, that irresistible wrath, that destructive wrath, that righteous wrath, that none can stand before, one drop whereof would destroy thousands of angels. He redeems from distance from God: this is the perfection of misery, to be far

from God, from light, from life, from the centre of happiness. Christ redeems from this, by bringing us near by his blood, that we may have the begun enjoyment of God here, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of God hereafter.

Propos. 2. The second proposition is, "That Christ, and only he, is the Redeemer; 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us;' there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." He only frees us from the power of sin; he brings the quickening Spirit, 1 Cor. xv. 25. As by his Spirit he will raise up our natural body from death to life; so he raises our souls from the death of sin to the life of grace. He only frees us from the punishment of sin; "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is Christ that died," Rom. viii. 1, 33, 34. It was too transcendent a thing for any mere creature to be the Redeemer of the sons of men. The children of Israel were afraid to trust an angel with their conduct into Canaan, Exod. xxxiii.; much more should we have been to trust an angel, or any creature, to make way for our passage to the heavenly Canaan; "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," Heb. vii. 26. It was requisite that the Redeemer should be God-man; he behoved to lay down his life, which he could not have done if he had not been man; he took up his life again, which he could not have done if he had not been God. It was fit that the Redeemer should be the eternal Word; "The Word was made flesh." Thus, 1. He was the personal wisdom of the Father; and how fit was he to reveal the counsels of his love from eternity? 2. He is the middle person of the Godhead; and is it not fit he should mediate between God and man? 3. He is the Son of God; and so fit to bring the adopted sons to glory. 4. He was the Word that made the world; and so the Word that redeems the world, and will for ever be acknowledged, by all the redeemed number, as the only meet help and fit Redeemer for them: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us."

Propos. 3. Another proposition is, "That this redemption is for men: 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us,' out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. 'To us a child is born;' he was made sin for us, he was made a curse for us." There is a three-fold view we are to take of the pronoun *us*.

1. With reference to the divine ordination from eternity, it re-

spects the elect only, of whom Christ says "I lay down my life for my sheep," John x. 15.

2. With reference to saving application of this redemption already made, then the persons that are the objects thereof are believers, whose faith is the fruit of electing and redeeming love ; for, says Christ, "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me, John iv. 48. And as many as were ordained to eternal life shall believe," Acts xiii. 48.

3. With reference to the general indefinite dispensation of the gospel, it respects sinners of all sorts, to whom the gospel comes, because therein all are welcomed to come to and believe in Christ as their Redeemer ; and, in the way of coming and believing in him, to say, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

In respect of eternal destination, the elect only are they who say it certainly, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us." In respect of effectual application, only believers are they who say it materially, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us." And, in respect of the general dispensation of the gospel, all sinners, to whom the gospel comes, have warrant to say it believingly, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us," they are thus warranted by the first command, that requires us "to know and acknowledge God to be the Lord our God and Redeemer," which is explained, 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," and to believe this gospel, which is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15.

Here is room for the faith of all that hear the gospel, the question not being, Are you elect or not? Nay, nor, Are you believers or not? The elect indeed will be partakers, and believers are partakers already, of this redemption, but the question in the gospel dispensation is, Are you sinners or not? and do you need a Saviour and Redeemer? Then, upon the warrant of this word of salvation sent to you, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, you are to receive these good news to yourself. It is not Christ in the decree that you are to look to, while you know not that you are elected ; this is to look too far back, nor is it Christ in the heart, or in possession, you are to look to, while you know not if you be a believer, this is to get too far forward ; but it is Christ in the word, because you are a sinner, and Christ a Saviour held forth to you there, say-

ing, "Look to me and be saved." This is the middle between the two former, and the only way to secure them both, and to say, with particular application, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us."

PROPOS. 4. The fourth proposition I would offer relates to the means, viz., "That this redemption is by death and blood;" "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us by thy blood." He that was slain decreatively, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God from eternity, and is called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, who was slain typically under all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, whereby his death was adumbrated and shadowed forth, was slain actually between two thieves upon mount Calvary, where the sufferings of his life were consummated in these of his death; for, though he was in the form of God, yet he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, where he was wounded for our sins, which were his murderers, the Jews were but executioners. Now, we do not say that the hangman, or executioner, kills a man for theft, or murder, or the like; but rather his theft and murder, they kill him; so here, it was not so much the Jews, or soldiers, that killed the Lord of glory, as our theft and murder; our sins, abominations, and breaches of God's law, which were imputed to him as the Surety, and laid to his charge, who suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might pay the debt we owed to divine justice; and now, not only was his body afflicted, but his soul agonised, when he grappled with all the powers of heaven, earth, and hell. His Father had said, "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow," and the glittering sword of wrath and vengeance was sheathed into his bowels with infinite horror and terror, making his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and breaking, bruising, wounding him for our iniquities. Once over Jerusalem he shed tears of water, but now, upon the rack of justice, he shed tears of blood, "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

This is the scene of blood opened and represented to us in this sacrament, "For, as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come again." The Lord's supper is a lively crucifix, wherein Christ is evidently set forth crucified before us, and shewing us that he was slain, and has redeemed us by his blood. Here is the price of redemption, the precious blood of the Son of God, Acts xx. 28. He purchased the church with his own blood, and whence is this, but (1.) To declare the infiniteness and

immeasurable nature of the love of God, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us," 1 John ii. 16. (2.) To declare the infiniteness of his truth in the law sentence, which required that, "Without the shedding of blood there could be no remission," Heb. ix. 22. (3.) To declare the righteousness of God, and his infinite hatred of sin. God's infinite holiness and hatred against sin, appeared right well in casting angels out of heaven, for once beginning to sin, and Adam out of paradise for one mouthful of fruit, but it is another sort of a display of divine hatred of sin, to see the Son of God, the second Adam, wallowing in his own blood, for our bloody sins. (4.) To declare the power of Jesus Christ, to lay down his life and to take it up again, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father," John x. 18. By this commandment and will of the Father, the scripture was fulfilled, the new covenant confirmed, justice was satisfied, the work of the devil destroyed, sin condemned and taken away, hell vanquished, and heaven purchased. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us by thy blood."

II. We propose next to shew, How this redemption is of God, as the first cause. I need not enlarge upon this, seeing it was the subject I enlarged upon formerly, that "all things are of God," relating to the new creation. Thus "all things are of God," relating to this redemption; why, the Redeemer is of God, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," &c., John iii. 16. His substitution in our room is of God, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," Isa. liii. 9. His suffering in our room is of God, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief," Isa. liii. 10. His assuming our nature, that he might therein give himself a sacrifice for our sins, is of God, and of his sovereign will, "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God. This commandment have I received of my Father," Psalm xl. 6, Heb. x. 7. His being made a curse for us, is of God, "He was made a curse for us," and, "He hath made him to be sin for us," Gal. iii. 13, 2 Cor. v. 21. His furniture and ability, for his work of redemption, is of God, "Behold, my Servant, whom I uphold," Isa. lxii. 1. "Him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 27. His resurrection and exaltation is of God, for "By him we believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be of God," 1 Pet. i. 21. His exhibition

to us by the gospel, is of God, Col. i. 26, 27, Rom. i. 16, 17, and the powerful, saving efficacy of this revelation. It is of God, that he is made not only a Redeemer to us, but the whole of our redemption in the abstract, for so says the text I compared with this, that "of God he is made unto us redemption," our heaven, our happiness, our all. All is owing to God as the first cause.

III. We shall, in the third place, shew, that this redemption is to God, as the last end, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." His redeeming us to God, may be viewed two ways. 1. As it relates to our happiness. 2. As it relates to his honour.

1st, To be redeemed to God may be viewed as it relates to our happiness, which lies in being brought to God; and, as we can never be brought to God, unless we be redeemed to him, both by price and by power; so it is only by Christ that we are redeemed to God, namely, by the price of his blood, and by the power of his Spirit, "I am the way, says Christ, no man cometh to the Father but by me," John xiv. 6. He hath redeemed us to God in all respects.

1. He hath redeemed us to the knowledge of God, for we have the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, only in the face of Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. We do not see God savingly, till we see the Redeemer, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," John xvi. 9. We have lost the view and knowledge of God by our fall, and no guilty sinner can see God to his satisfaction, but in the red glass of the blood of Jesus, who hath redeemed us to God by his blood; that is, to the knowledge of God.

2. He hath redeemed us to the favour of God, and to the peace of God; for, "He alone is our peace, having made peace through the blood of his cross," Col. i. 20. Reconciliation is brought about by the blood of his cross, "You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in our mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh, through death," ver. 21. Hence "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself," and proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

3. He hath redeemed us to the image of God; for, "He gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it," Eph. v. 25; and Titus ii. 14, "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people:"

that he might bring us to God, and to conformity to his image, by bringing us back to the life of God, to the love of God, and to the service of God. We are by nature alienated from the life of God ; but he redeems from death, to the life of God ; from enmity, to the love of God ; and from slavery to sin and Satan, to the service of God. And thus,

4. He hath redeemed us to the enjoyment of God, and to fellowship and communion with him, so as to have possession of him as our God, according to the covenant sealed with the blood of Christ, "I will be thy God ;" and communion with him as such. This enjoyment of God, to which we are redeemed, hath three degrees, inchoative, progressive, and consummative.

The first is initial or inchoative: which is a communion of state, relative and real, the soul being related to Christ, and to God in Christ, as a reconciled God and Father in Christ, and having really the Spirit of Christ in us as a well of water, and a fountain of all grace.

The second degree is progressive enjoyment ; which lies in getting, from time to time, more and more acquaintance with Christ, and with God in him ; more and more nearness and increase of love and likeness to him : hence by him we are said to be brought near to God ; "Ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ," Eph. ii. 13. By him we are said to have access, verse 18, "Through him we have access, by one Spirit, to the Father. Eph. iii. 13, In him we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him." And, Heb. x. 19, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Hence also joy and peace in believing, and joy unspeakable in this enjoyment of God, through the blood of Christ ; "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," Rom. v. 11. And hence also the joy of the Lord is sometimes our strength ; and we go from strength to strength till we appear before the Lord in Zion. And then comes, thirdly, the last degree of the enjoyment of God, that we are redeemed by his own blood ; that is, the consummative enjoyment of him in heaven ; that enjoyment of him that is begun in the remission of sin and the renovation of the nature, and is carried on in the continued communication of the fulness of the Godhead, that is in Christ, unto us, is at last consummated in the full and uninterrupted enjoyment of God in heaven ; where communion with God is no more by faith,

but vision; no more by hope, but fruition; for, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; and shall be like him for we shall see him as he is; and so shall we be ever with the Lord." To this enjoyment of God also we are redeemed by his blood: for, "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 23. And hence heaven is called the purchased possession, Eph. i. 14; and the heavenly singers here, make this the burden of their new song, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us by thy blood."

Thus are we redeemed to the knowledge of God, to the favour of God, to the image of God, and to the enjoyment of God, commenced and advanced graciously here, and consummated gloriously hereafter in his heavenly kingdom. Thus by the blood of Christ we are redeemed to God, to the kingdom of God, in grace and glory and so to God as our chief good and last end, to have the LORD JEHOVAH to be our everlasting light, and life, and happiness, our exceeding great reward, our portion, our all in all.

2dly, His redeeming us to God, may be viewed, not only as it relates thus to our happiness, but as it relates to his glory. He hath redeemed us to God by his blood; that is, redeemed us to the glory of God, in all his glorious perfections, which are displayed more gloriously here than anywhere else. Thus,

1. By his blood we are redeemed to the glory of God's wisdom. O here is the wisdom of God in a mystery, in bringing God and man together in a God-man; in reconciling justice and mercy, and making them kiss each other; and the blood of Christ the cement for joining them together inseparably in our salvation.

2. By this blood we are redeemed to the glory of God's power, which was more displayed in supporting the human nature of Christ, under an infinite load of wrath, than in supporting the pillars of heaven and earth, or creating all things out of nothing. The power of God is here employed, not only in destroying principalities and powers, but here the power of his arm is employed in bearing the power of his wrath: and, "Who knows the power thereof?"

3. By his blood he has redeemed us to the glory of God's holiness, and without prejudice to his holy law, that required perfect obedience, while his eternal Son, in our room, yielded himself obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

4. By his blood we are redeemed to the glory of God's justice. The eternal damnation of all the reprobate world will never illus-

trate the glory of justice, so much as the blood of the Lamb, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness," Rom. iii. 25 ; or, to manifest his justice in punishing sin, and then pardoning sin upon that propitiation.

5. By his blood we are redeemed to God : that is, to the glory of God's mercy and love. O the love of God that shines here ! Rom. v. 8, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." O the glory of the Father's love is great in giving Christ for this end ! How does he here proclaim that he delights in mercy ! And he is so forward to shew mercy to a number of mankind-sinners, that rather than want an opportunity to shew mercy to them, he will make a way through the heart's blood of his dear and well beloved Son !

6. By his blood we are redeemed to the glory of God's truth and faithfulness. The first promise to fallen man was a blessed promise respecting us, yet a bloody promise respecting Christ, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent : yet the serpent should bruise his heel, or that Christ should have his blood shed for our redemption. The church of God of old was big with hopes of the accomplishment of this promise ; they waited long for it. When Christ appeared, and humbled himself to the death of the cross, then was the promise fulfilled : and as this was the greatest instance and indication of the faithfulness of God, that ever was given : so this is an earnest and evidence, that all the gospel-promises shall be accomplished. God hath fulfilled his word, in giving Christ to the death ; then certainly he will fulfil all the other promises of blessing and mercy in the new covenant, which were ratified by his blood. God's truth in the law-threatening of death, and his truth in the gospel-promise of life, were both sealed by his blood.

In a word, by his blood we are redeemed to God : that is, redeemed in a way that brings glory to God in the highest. God designed himself as the last end, his glory as the ultimate end of his redemption ; and now, by the blood of Christ, we are redeemed to God's honour and glory, to God's pleasure and satisfaction, to the joy and content of his heart. It is said of Christ, "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand ; that in him he is well-pleased, and his soul delighted," Isa. xlii. 1. Why, then, by his blood we are redeemed to God, in a way that is to the pleasure and contentment, joy and delight, and satisfaction of God.

Thus the redemption we have by the blood of Christ, being of God, as the first cause, is to God, as the last end. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

IV. The fourth general head I proposed, was, To offer some Inferences for the Application. And passing at present, many inferences relating to the means of our redemption, the death and blood of Christ, which are afterwards to be set before us, under the sacramental elements, I confine myself to these inferences that relate especially to the great source, and to the great resource of this redemption through Christ, the great spring, and the great issue of it; the great cause, and the great end of it.

Is it so then, That the redemption we have, through the blood of Christ, being *of* God, as the first cause, is likewise *to* God, as the last end? Hence,

I. See and admire the antiquity and perpetuity of our redemption and religion in Christ. This wonderful transaction, in time, is nothing else than a display of what from all eternity was of God, and, to all eternity, will be to God. We are this day to commemorate God's ancient and endless love, whereof he hath made a display in Christ the Redeemer, that was slain, and has redeemed us to God by his blood.

O sirs, see the high source of our redemption; it is *of* God, from eternity, before the foundation of the world. There are four things we read of, relating to this redemption, that are said to be before the world was.

(1.) We read of a choice that God made before the world: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy," Eph. i. 14.

(2.) We read of a promise he made before the world: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began," Titus i. 2.

(3.) We read of grace given us in Christ, before the world: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," Tit. i. 9.

(4.) We read of glory ordained for us before the world: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory," i. Cor. ii. 7. This whole redemption in Christ is an ancient business; all was of God before the world was: see John xvii. 5, 24.

See also here the last resource of this redemption, or the great ocean into which it runs ; as it is of God from eternity, so it is to God through eternity. As the springs of water come from the sea, and return to it, so here, the whole of redemption is of God and to him : hence, when the mystery of redemption shall be finished, it is said, " The kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, that God may appear to be all in all," 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. Not that Christ will cease to be king ; nay, the Father hath said to him, " Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ;" but in respect of the distinct administration of the kingdom which will be, (though now we speak but as babes, ignorantly, of what will then appear gloriously) it will then appear to be such as will shew that Christ, though as he is the Christ, was the great mean and ordinance of God, for our redemption ; yet God was the all in all of it, even the great original, and the great end : " Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God."

2. Hence see the wonderful constitution of the person of Christ the Redeemer, who was slain, and has redeemed us to God. O what a mysterious person is here ! Christ indeed is God ; essentially one God with the Father and the Spirit ; personally he is God the Son ; and as God, he is the first cause and the last end, equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost ; but as Christ, he is neither God only, nor man only, but GOD-MAN ; the person that stands between God and man ; the middle person by whom we come to God, and are redeemed to God. Christ, as God, says, " I and my Father are one," even when he had said in the preceding verse, " My Father is greater than all," John x. 29, 30, yet " I and my Father are one ;" but again, Christ, as man, says, " My Father is greater than I," John xiv. 28. And though, as Mediator, he is the Father's servant, yet being, as Mediator, God as well as man, GOD-MAN, his name is called ALPHA and OMEGA, the *beginning* and the *end* ; and the Father wills all the angels of God to worship him ; and all men to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ; for, " He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him," John v. 23. And hence, here in the text, he is the subject of the new song, and the object of the worship, and praise of the redeemed : " Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Our Redeemer, therefore, is the wonderful IMMANUEL, God-man. If he had not been man, he could not have been slain, and redeemed us by his blood ; if he had not

been God, he could not have redeemed us to God ; our redemption could not have been of God, as the first cause ; and to God, as the last end, if it had not been through God, as the means ; for all things that are of him, and to him, are also through him Rom. xi. 36, " Of him, and to him, and through him, are all things."

3. Hence see the reason, why the Man Christ Jesus, ascribed all the glory of his redeeming work unto God. He speaks of himself as the Sent of God, more than thirty times, in that one gospel according to John. He speaks of his doing the work of him that sent him, and seeking the glory of him that sent him. Part of his prayer to the Father is, That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, John xvii. 8, 21. Saving faith looks to Christ as the Sent of God. He speaks of his dying, and laying down his life, as a commandment he received from his Father, and his having finished the work the Father gave him to do. He speaks of God, as his God and Father, whose will he came to accomplish : " Lo, I come ; I delight to do thy will, O my God. Heb. x. 10, By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." By this will we are redeemed ; it is by the will of God we are redeemed to God by the blood of Christ. The whole work of redemption flows from an act of God's will ; and hence the covenant of grace and promise, sealed with the blood of Christ, runs in so many of God's *I wills* ; " I WILL sprinkle you with clean water," &c. " I WILL take away the heart of stone ; I WILL be your God ; I WILL put my spirit within you," Ezek. xxxvi. 25-30, *q. d.* It is my will, that such and such a goodly number of mankind sinners be brought to me ; and, by the blood of the covenant, redeemed to me. Well, says Christ, " Thy will be done ;" even when it came to the bloody part of the bargain : " Not my will, but thine be done ;" and AMEN, says faith, in the day of power, " Thy will be done."

4. Hence see, that it is too narrow a view of redeeming work, to see only that Christ was slain, to save and redeem us by his blood, if, through the prospect of faith, we look not to the farthest end of this redemption, namely, that he has redeemed us to God. Your redemption signifies nothing, if it do not land you in God and his glory ; in vain hath Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, if be not to bring you to God. Many presume they are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and that Christ died for them, but bewray the

narrowness and naughtiness of their faith, by not considering from what, and to what Christ hath redeemed his people, whom he redeems by price and power; he redeems from Satan unto God; and so they are said to be brought from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. They are redeemed from the world to God; Gal. i. 4, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, and our Father." They are redeemed from men to God. Rev. xiv. 4, "Redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb;" hence they are not of the world, John xv. 19. Though they be *in* the world, yet they are not *of* it, but rather witnesses against an evil world; and therefore, the world hates them, as it did Christ, John vii. 7. The redeemed of the Lord are redeemed from a vain conversation to God, and to a conversation in heaven; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, "Redeemed not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ." But, alas! many speak of Christ as their Saviour and Redeemer, but yet walk as if they were redeemed to the devil, and redeemed to sin, redeemed to the world, and to their lusts, and delivered to work abomination, Jer. vii. 8-11. Or, as if they were redeemed to themselves, to be their own lords: "Ye are not your own, says the apostle, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's," 1 Cor. vi. 20. They that are redeemed by the blood of Christ, are redeemed to God, to walk humbly with God here, and to walk with him in white hereafter, and so to shew forth his glory for ever: "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise," Isa. xliii. 21.

5. Hence see a test and proof of true religion, true conversion, and a true work of God, namely, it is such as is of God, as the first cause; to God, as the last end; and through Christ, as exhibited in the gospel, and his death and blood, as the means. It is said in Scripture, "Some return, but not to the Most High;" they are converted, but not to God; and surely that religion never came from God, that led not to God. We hear of a strange work spreading far and near, and it is called a work of God. How shall we know, if it is a work of God, or a delusion of the devil? Here is a touch stone by which it may be tried: let them assert never so confidently, that they are converted to Christ: yet, if they are not

converted through Christ to God, it is a delusion; it is a false Christ they are taken up with, if he do not bring them to God, to the love of God, to the fear of God, to the law and testimony of God, to all things whatsoever that are commanded of God. If the spirit that is prevailing, to the conversion of many, convert them to the hatred of the cause of God, and the testimony of the time: convert them to a toleration of all the corruptions and defections of the day, as if there ought to be no witnessing-work against these: convert them to an opposition of a covenanted work of Reformation, and any appearance for it, and so to an involving of the whole land in perjury; converting them to a dislike of any truth of God, relating either to the doctrine, worship, discipline, or government he hath appointed in his house: If this be the case, then so many conversions, so many delusions of Satan are taking place; for the true Christ redeems us to God by his blood; and true conversion converts men to the knowledge of God, to the image of God, and to all the ways, and ordinances, and institutions of God; and it is a false conversion that draws men off from any of the ways of God: and may all the Lord's people be delivered from any such conversions!

Here also we may see a test and trial of all the graces and operations of the Spirit, if they be true or false.—The knowledge of Christ may here be tried: the knowledge of Christ would not save you, did not the knowledge of him lead you to the knowledge of God; the knowledge of Christ does not terminate on Christ himself, but is the Midsman and way to bring us to the knowledge of the Father: "I am the way, says Christ; no man cometh to the Father but by me; and he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," John xiv. 6, 9.—True faith may be here tried: for true faith in Christ, as it is of God, or of divine operation, so it will not terminate on Christ himself, but upon God in and through him; for,

(1) A short account of the rise and nature of this strange and supposed wonderful work of God was narrated above. The great instrument and principal promoter of this work, (viz. Mr. Whitfield,) being neither a member, nor of the Church of Scotland, but of the Episcopalian denominations, laboured, with all the artifice he was master of, to disseminate Latitudinarian tenets wherever he went, in order that his personal ministrations might be more acceptable to the people, and his designs more effectually accomplished. These sentiments being drunk in by many, especially by the giddy multitude, so filled them with a virulent acidity of spirit against the espousers of a Testimony for truth, that they evidenced and expressed their resentment in a very unchristian manner: and the very name of a Testimony for our attained to Reformation was galling to them.

"By him we believe in God," 1 Pet. i. 21.—Love to Christ, if it be true love, and of God as its original, it will terminate upon God as the ultimate end and object of it; hence the true knowledge of Christ is a knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6.—True joy in the Lord Jesus, terminates in God; hence we joy in God, through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement, Rom. 5 11.

Here is a test of all true experimental religion. True experience leads a man to rest upon no internal feeling of Christ within him: the true Spirit testifies of Christ in the word; and, if Christ be in you by his Spirit, he will bring you out of yourself, and of all confidence in the flesh, and out of all confidence in internal feelings, and impulses, and impressions, and will land you in God alone. True experience, like the true Christ, brings no man unto himself; no, by no means: he brings us to God, and redeems us to God.

6. Hence see the duty of all lost and undone sinners, that have lost their way to God, and have lost the knowledge of God, the favour of God, the image of God, and the enjoyment of God, viz. to accept of a Redeemer, that is come from God to give himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, to redeem us to God by his heart's blood. You are called to accept of a complete redemption that God brings to you, in order to bring you to God; to God, your chief end; to God, your chief happiness. Here the treasures of God's grace are opened fully and freely to you that have nothing; only come, and welcome: you that are fools, come and get the wisdom that is of God; you that are guilty, come and get a righteousness that is of God; you that are unholy, come and get a sanctification that is of God; you that are unhappy and miserable, come and get a redemption that is of God. Christ is made of God to you all these things, which includes every thing else you need. Here the weak may get strength, the blind may get sight, the diseased may get health, the dead may get life, the leper may be cleansed, the Ethiopian may be beautified, the captive may be liberate, bankrupts may get their debt paid; only come to, and accept of the Redeemer that is come from God to redeem you to God, and sent of God to bring you to God. You cannot come to God, because you are weak; and you dare not come, because you are worthless; but, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain:" and as God sent him once to be a sacrifice to redeem you to God; so he has sent him now as an usher to bring you to God, that you may

come to God by him as the way, by him as the guide and the leader. No matter how great, how atrocious your sins have been hitherto; though you had all the sins of Manasseh, Mary Magdalene or Saul the persecutor and blasphemer; yea, all the sins of these that were murderers of the Lord of glory; he who hath redeemed us to God by his blood, by his blood that cleanses from all sin, he has come here in his Father's name, who hath sent him clothed with his vesture dipt in blood, that by him ye may have redemption through his blood, even the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace, Eph. i. 7. O sirs, do you know him when you hear of him? for, faith, and acquaintance with him, come by hearing. Do you know him in his bloody robes? And is it not a robe of grace, grace reigning through righteousness and blood to eternal life? Will you accept of him who is thus come from God to bring you to God?

“But, say you, will he accept of me, who want faith and repentance, and such conditions requisite to bring me to God?” Alas! what is this? Behold the malignity of a legal spirit, that rises up against the gospel of the grace of God. What! would you have a faith or a repentance to be a Redeemer to you, instead of Christ, to redeem you to God? Would you have faith to be a Christ to redeem you, or repentance to be a Christ to bring you to God? Would you have a Christ within you in your heart, to the disparagement of Christ without you, and revealed to you in the word? Alas! this legal dream flows from the power of the first temptation, “Ye shall be as gods.” God only is the first cause and the last end of this whole business of redemption; but ye would be as gods, to be the first cause yourself; you would have something wrought by you, or wrought in you, to be the first cause of your own salvation, that God may lose the glory of the work. But O proud sinner, come down from the height of your desired deity; you are yet desiring to be as God, but come down to God's foot, and acknowledge him to be God, and be content that he only be the first cause, and the last end, and that Christ be the all in all of your redemption to God. True faith cannot bring itself to God, but only welcomes the Christ of God to bring it to God. Here, O sinner, you have nothing to do, nothing to make; God has made all to your hand; Christ is made of God to you redemption; he is made of God a Redeemer by price, to redeem you to God; and a Redeemer by power, to bring you to God. How love you this bargain? Do you accept of it?

O sirs, what shall I say? Is there any soul here that would not choose to be swallowed up for ever in this ravishing mystery of God? Christ, the Redeemer, is the brightness of the Father's glory by whose blood you are redeemed to God; that is, both to the God of glory, and to the glory of God: to the God of glory, that you may be glorified for ever in him; and to the glory of God, that God may be glorified for ever in you. O sirs, this redemption through the blood of Christ, is a redemption of God, as the first cause; and a redemption to God, as the last end; and therefore a redemption to be valued, as made of God to you for your everlasting happiness, and made of God to himself for his everlasting honour: therefore, as ye would not trample on the blood of Christ, and as you would regard your own everlasting happiness, which is a great matter, and God's everlasting glory, which is infinitely greater; come, come to this blessed Redeemer, and welcome a redemption made of God to redeem you to God, and to his highest honour and greatest glory. And I will tell you good news, if your heart welcome this Redeemer in his bloody vesture, for this reason, because he comes from God to bring you to God; and welcome this redemption for this reason, because it is a redemption made and ordained of God, to redeem you to God; then you may be assured that God the Father welcomes you into his everlasting bosom, because his only begotten Son, which is in his bosom, is accepted as God's Sent to you; therefore, says Christ, with a doubled AMEN, a doubled assurance, John v. 24. "Verily, verily, he that heareth my word, and believed on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life."

Thus I have been endeavouring to shew you concerning the great stream of redemption, coloured red with the Redeemer's blood, whence it comes and whither it goes; that as the Redeemer himself came from God, and is gone again to God his Father, so this great red-flowing stream hath its rise from God, as the fountain; and its recourse to God, as the end. And if any here be so enamoured with this method of salvation, that they would be glad to have their souls, this moment, carried, by the strength of this stream of redeeming blood, in to God as their everlasting God and glory, then their everlasting life is begun, and they begin to dwell where God and Christ dwell. Where is that? Why, God dwells in Christ, and Christ dwells in God, John xiv. 11. "Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.

God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" and Christ is in God, and your everlasting life there with him, and in him, Col. iii. 3. "Your life is hid with Christ in God;" and therefore you have ground to expect communion with God in Christ, at his table of grace here below, and at his table of glory above. Go, therefore, to his table, O believing soul, singing and saying, "Salvation to our God that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb." Let your song to God be to him as the first cause and the last end of this great work of redemption in Christ, who of God is made unto us complete redemption; and let your song to the Lamb be the new song of the redeemed here, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

SERMON LXXV.

THE TRUE CHRIST, NO NEW CHRIST.¹

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."—Heb xiii. 8.

MY friends, we live in changeable times, amidst this changeable world. Many, now-a-days, are tempted to change their mind and manners, to change their principles and practice, from better to worse; and the changes amongst many ministers and professors are very strange and alarming. Outward changes are passing over us all every day. Yesterday is gone, and we will never see it again; this day is going. Where shall we get an unchangeable ground to build upon, and to take rest to our souls in, amidst all changes both of our outward lot and inward frame? Why, here it is: "Christ, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever."

The words may be considered, 1. In themselves. 2. In their connection.

If you view them in themselves, you have therein a description of our glorious Redeemer, who is here described, (1.) In his office, he is Jesus, a Saviour. (2.) In his unction, he is Christ, the Anointed, and appointed to this saving work. (3.) In his identity

(1) This sermon was preached on Monday, August 9, 1742, after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Abbots-hall.

and immutability, he is *the same*: and this sameness of Christ is described under a threefold period, past, present, and to come: 1. The same yesterday; 2. The same to-day; 3. The same for ever. Of which more afterwards.

Again, if we view these words in their connection, we find indeed there is no particle of connection or relation in this text, to direct us to the dependance of it upon that which goes before or follows; yet the very subject matter of it evidently shews, that it hath a fit reference both to the verse before and to the following. In the former verse, the Hebrews are directed to follow the faith of their spiritual guides which had been before them; and this verse lays down a forcible reason to move them thereunto, and the reason is taken from the object of their faith, namely, Christ, who remains still the same object of faith; and therefore it behoves those that survive the believers now gone to glory, to follow that same faith, which objectively is, "Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." In the following verse we are dehorted from following diverse and strange doctrines; and a strong reason to enforce that dehortation is laid down in this verse, namely, That Jesus Christ, who is the foundation and substance of all sound doctrine, continues always the same, so as they have no cause to be carried about with diverse and strange doctrines. I propose, then, to consider this text, not only in itself, but in its connection; and shall endeavour to explain it, in the prosecution of this doctrine.

OBSERV. That it is always necessary, especially in shaking times, wherein faith is endangered by new and strange doctrines, to know and believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The view of Christ's immutability in himself, and in his truth, without variation, will influence Christian stability in the faith, without wavering. It is a proper mean of stability in the faith, in shaking times, to consider that "Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." You may read some parallel Scriptures for confirming and establishing your faith of this doctrine. See what a time it was with the Psalmist, Ps. cii. 8, 9, 10, "Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me, are sworn against me. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thine indignation and thy wrath;

for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down." Then see what consideration he is led to, ver. 12, 13, "But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance unto all generations. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come." Verses 25-28, "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." To this purpose, see Isa. li. 7, 8. See also Lam. v. 16-19. Again, how is John comforted and supported in the time of his banishment, and in the prospect of perilous times coming upon the church, but with this name of Christ in other words; Rev. i. 8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

The method I propose for handling this subject, through divine aid, is the following:—

- I. We would shew the import of this immutable sameness and identity that is ascribed unto Christ here; or, what is imported in his being the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.
- II. Inquire wherein, or in what respects, he is the same.
- III. Speak of the necessity of knowing this, especially in shaking times, wherein the faith of many is endangered by new and strange doctrines; or, why it is necessary, then especially, to know and believe that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.
- IV. Make application of the whole subject.

I. As to the import of this name here given to Christ, which is also, to the same purpose, given him, Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. Here, in the text, you have three distinctions of time, wherein Christ is said to be the same, viz. *yesterday*, *to-day*, and *for ever*.

1. The same yesterday. This word is sometimes taken properly, for the day immediately before; as when it is said, John iv. 52, "Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him;" and Acts vii. 28, "Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?"

Sometimes figuratively, for the time past, whether it consists of many days or years, as when it is said, Micah ii. 8, "Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy." OF LATE, in the margin it is *yesterday*; that is, some time ago. Sometimes it signifies of old, whether as to time or eternity; thus, Isa. xxx. 33, "Tophet is ordained of old;" in the margin it is *yesterday*. Hence he is the same yesterday. Under this may be comprised all the time wherein Christ stayed upon earth; all the time from his incarnation till that present time wherein the apostle wrote; all the time wherein Christ was typified in the Mosaical rites, to that wherein these were abolished; all the time that hath past from the first promise made of Christ, Gen. iii. 14; all the time from the beginning of the world to this day, yea, and eternity itself, as it consists in the expression of *from everlasting*; for, Micah v. 2, "His goings forth were of old, from everlasting." Prov. viii. 23, "I was set up from everlasting."

2. The same to-day. This is the next distinction, and signifies the present time, to distinguish it from the former times. Thus yesterday may signify former times, before Christ was exhibited in the flesh; and to-day, the time since his incarnation; for the word *to-day* is not always strictly meant of a set day, consisting of twelve or twenty-four hours, but may have a long date; as when the Psalmist had said, Ps. cxv. 7, "To-day if ye will hear his voice." The apostle, who lived about a thousand years after him, applies that to his own times, Heb. iii. 13, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day." Christ is the same yesterday, under the Old-Testament, and the same to-day in the New-Testament dispensation; the same from the beginning to his incarnation, and the same from thence to the end of the world; and so,

3. The same for ever; that is, even in the largest sense, from everlasting to everlasting he is the same. "His throne is for ever and ever; and of his dominion there is no end." Change of time, past, present, and to come, makes no change in him; for he is the same. Thus Christ is here set out, as in Rev. i. 4, "Which is, and which was, and which is to come."

4. To each of these relates this sameness and identity. The word rendered *the same*, signifies *he himself*; and implies, that he is ever himself, without any alteration or change, pointing out his immutability. There is no tautology or vain repetition in these words, though each of them point at his immutability; for, his being *the same yesterday*, points out his eternity before time; *the same*

for ever, points out his perpetuity to everlasting. Christ, who is the good old way, is also the new and living way, and will always be the way of the redeemed.

His eternal deity is here pointed out, being not only, as God, without beginning and without end, but also without possession: "Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." What is that but just "I am that I am;" yesterday *I am*: "Before Abraham was I am." I am yesterday, I am to-day, I am for ever; intimating a perpetual continuing to be the same. Thus Isa. xli. 4, "I the Lord the first, and with the last, I am he;" or, as some translate it, "I am the same;" for it is the same word, both in the Hebrew and the Greek, that is there translated *he*, and here translated *the same*; see James i. 17, "With whom there is no variable-ness, nor shadow of turning;" no shew or appearance of alteration.

II. The second thing proposed was, To shew wherein he is the same. And,

1. He is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever, in respect of his divine essence; for, "From everlasting to everlasting he is God," Ps. xc. 2. See Heb. i. 11, 12, "They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

2. He is the same immutably in his counsels. We read, Heb. vi. 17, of the immutability of his counsel. Ps. xxxiii. 10, "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought; he maketh the devices of the heathen of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Prov. xix. 21, "There are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

3. He is the same in his attributes. Ps. cxviii. 1, "His mercy endures for ever." Ps. cxvii. 2, "His truth endures for ever." Thus his love is everlasting love, Jer. xxxi. 3, and "His righteousness endures for ever," Ps. cxi. 3. And so it may be said of all his other attributes and properties.

4. He is the same in his word, Isa. xl. 6, compared with 1 Pet. i. 25, "All flesh is grass," &c. but "The word of the Lord endures for ever." This is manifest both in the law, "Not one tittle shall fail," Luke xvi. 17, and in the gospel, which is therefore called the everlasting gospel, Rev. xiv. 6.

5. He is the same in his bonds, whereby he binds himself to us

in the new covenant. As the covenant is an everlasting covenant, so these bonds of his promise and oath are unalterable, inviolable, and immutable, called the two immutable things, by which it is impossible for him to lie, Heb. vi. 18.

6. He is the same for ever in his divine personality. Indeed, "the Word was made flesh," John i. 14, and he took on him our nature, which he did in the fulness of time, Gal. iv. 4, and he made himself of no reputation, or brought himself to nothing, Phil. ii. 6, 7; therefore immutability, attributed to Christ, is properly meant of his divine nature, which was nowise altered by assuming the human nature; for he became man, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; so as he remained in his divine nature, when he was incarnate, the very same he was before, without addition, diminution, or alteration, yet, even in regard of his human nature, being raised from the dead, he dies no more, Rom. vi. 6, "He continues for ever, and ever lives," Heb. vii. 25, and "He lives for evermore," Rev. i. 18. And hence,

7. He is the same for ever, in his Mediatorship and in his mediatorial offices. In his prophetic office he is stiled an everlasting light, to instruct and direct his people, Isa. lx. 17, 20. In his priestly office he is called a Priest for ever, Psalm cx. 4, and it is said, "He ever lives to make intercession, and it is called an unchangeable priesthood. In his kingly office he is the same for ever, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," Heb. i. 8. As King, he shall reign for ever and ever, and, "There shall be no end of his kingdom, Luke i. 33. The government is on his shoulders," Isaiah ix. 6.

8. He is always the same in the merit, virtue, and efficacy of what he did and suffered for our redemption. In this respect he is called the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. The virtue of his blood was the same before it was shed for the remission of the sins of believers of old, as it is since it was shed. Hence he is the same object of faith, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. John iii. 14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. Verse 15, That whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. Verse 16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." He ever was, is, and will be, the same mean of salvation, "There is no other name given under heaven, among men,

whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus," Acts iv. 12. He ever was, is, and will be, the same foundation to his church, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11.

9. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, in the identity and sameness of the faith of all true believers in all ages. Abraham's faith was such a faith as that of Christians is, and their faith such a faith as his was, see Rom iv. 12, and Gal. iii. 7, 8. And, being the same in respect of his people's faith in him who is the Head, that body of his people, whereof he is the Head, must continue for ever. If the Head is for ever, the body must be for ever; and on this ground it is that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, Matt. xvi. 18.

10. He is always the same in his truth, in opposition to all error, and diverse or strange doctrines. This seems especially to be here intended, as appears by the preceding and succeeding contexts: "Follow their faith who were your guides," says the text before, "Be not carried about with diverse and strange doctrines," say the following words. The doctrine of faith is still the same, and therefore diversity and strangeness of doctrine is opposed to the identity and sameness of Christ, whose truth is still the same in all respects. 1. It hath still the same centre, Jesus Christ, in whom all the lines meet, John xvi. 6. 2. It hath still the same worth and value, so as they that buy the truth may never sell it. 3. It hath still the same nature. Truth is still truth, and cannot be a lie. 4. It hath still the same sound, which is sweet and joyful, and "Blessed are the people that hear the joyful sound." 5. It hath still the same virtue when known, namely, to set at liberty, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." 6. It hath still the same relation to God, who is the God of truth; to Christ, who is the Way and the Truth; and to the Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth. 7. It hath still the same end and tendency, to declare, when it is asserted, the glory of the God of truth, and to shew forth his perfections. 8. It hath still the same immutable duration in Christ, who is the truth, and who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

III. The third head proposed, is to speak of the necessity of knowing and believing this, that "Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," at all times, when faith is endangered by diverse and strange doctrines. Here I would shew, 1. The necessity of it at all times. 2. The special necessity of it at such a shaking time.

1st, The necessity of knowing and believing this at all times, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And,

1. It is necessary for distinguishing Christ from all creatures, and from all idols of the nations, and from all false Gods and false Christs. Thus, Isa. xli. 4, he is distinguished from all such by this name, "I the Lord, the first, and with the last, I am he," and Isa. xliv. 6, "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God."

2. It is always necessary for evidencing Christ to be the true God, Mal. iii. 6, "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye the sons of Jacob are not consumed." To be the eternal and unchangeable God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and so for shewing his blood to be of infinite value, as being the blood of God, so as we may have boldness in all our approaches to the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

3. It is necessary for strengthening our faith in all his divine properties, promises, and former works. In the view of this immutable name, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," we may say, as Psal. xc. 1, "Thou, Lord, hast been our dwelling-place in all generations," why? "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." We may, in the view of this, assure ourselves, that all the promises are in him Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God, because he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We may hence learn contentment, since he hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." So that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what men shall do unto me," Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

4. It is necessary for instructing us in the special use of God's former dealings with men, namely, in the like good ways of the Lord, to expect the like blessings, and in the like evil ways, to expect the like judgments, because the Lord is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is ever of the same mind. What in former times was right in his eyes, and acceptable to him, is still so. Thus, Rom. iv. 23, 24, "Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe in him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." What formerly offended him, and provoked his wrath, doth so still, 1 Cor. x. 15, 22.

5. It is necessary for assuring us of his continual and perpetual care of his church, Mat. xxviii. 20. He hath said, "Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world," and he will make it good, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It may assure us also of the church's continuance; his church is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, Matt. xvi. 18. There is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel.

6. It is necessary for encouraging us at all times against all attempts of enemies, present and to come. Why, God hath said of him, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool, Psalm cx. 1. He will break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, Psal. ii. 9. In vain do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. In vain do they set themselves, and take counsel together against the Lord and his Anointed," &c. Enemies present, and enemies to come, shall be dashed in due time; for he is still present, and still to come, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

2dly, I would shew the necessity of knowing and believing this, especially in shaking times, wherein diverse and strange doctrines appear. Why the need of taking a view of Christ, as the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, in such a time, may be evident in the following respects:—

1. By viewing that Christ is immutably the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. In times of error and delusion we come to see the difference between truth and error, truth and deceit; for, whenever Christ is discerned in this name, we are brought to understand sound and saving doctrine, from that which is unsound, new, and strange; in regard, as "Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," so truth is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is one entire system, and cannot be divided, one part of it from another, at any time; whereas diverse doctrines, spoken of verse 9, may be known by their diversity, or dividing of one piece of truth from another, to be unsound, unsafe, and unlike to Christ, who is always the same. In time of error and delusion, then, a view of Christ, as immutably the same, is needful for making the truth evident, as a quite different thing from that which is new, strange, and uncouth.

2. A view of Christ, as immutably the same, is needful, at such seasons, for establishing in the faith of the truth and continuing in

the faith, grounded and settled, and not being moved away from the hope of the gospel, Col. i. 2, 3, by whatever shaking wind ; for a view of Christ, as the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and of his truth, as still the same, as ever it was, this natively moves the believing soul to have the same love to truth as ever, the same esteem of the truth as ever, the same delight in the truth as ever, and the same zeal and concern for the truth as ever ; because Christ, and his truth, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

3. A view of Christ, as immutably the same, is needful, in such a time, for correcting our inconstancy, our levity in departing from the truth, and not cleaving to it, but being easily seduced and drawn aside, like those whom the apostle calls children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, Eph. iv. 14. A view of Christ, and his truth, as immutably the same, tends to correct this ; for this levity then appears to be an affronting of the truth of Christ, as if it were not the same ; an affronting of Christ, as if he were not the same Christ that he was ; and an affronting of ourselves as changeable creatures, unlike to him, who is invariably the same.

4. The view of Christ, and his truth, as immutably the same, is needful, in such a season, for shewing the falsehood and damnable tendency of new and strange doctrine ; for if God, and Christ, and truth, be still the same, then a new and strange God, is a false God ; a new and strange Christ, is a false Christ ; a new and strange doctrine, is a false doctrine. A God that we had not yesterday, is a false God ; a Christ that we had not yesterday, is a false Christ. " Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; " therefore a Christ that was not yesterday, as well as to-day, is a false Christ. A doctrine that was not to be found in our Bible, nor taught us in the word formerly, is a false doctrine. Hence the apostle exhorts, Col. ii. 7, " To be rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the faith, as we have been taught." The damnable nature of such doctrine you may see, 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, " But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction : and many shall follow their pernicious ways : by reason of whom, the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." There is no false doctrine broached, nor delusive spirit appearing, but, according to that prophecy, it will find many favourers, followers, and enter-

tainers thereof. This made Paul to say, when he saw the levity and inconstancy of people, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that hath called you, to another gospel. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, &c. Having begun in the Spirit, are you made perfect in the flesh?" There is in seducers, a bewitching diabolical spirit, that makes them restless in leading others into destruction with them; so the Scribes and Pharisees compassed sea and land to make proselytes: they were blind leaders of the blind: though they were blind, yet they would be leaders. Now, a view of Christ, and his truth, as immutably the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is needful, for shewing the damnable nature of these new and strange doctrines, which are doctrines of devils, directly opposite to the true Christ, who is the only Saviour and Deliverer; whereas every new and false Christ, is a seducer and destroyer of immortal souls.

5. The view of the immutability of Christ, and his truth, as one and the same always, shews that diverse doctrines must be delusive, though men are apt to be carried about therewith; for, whereas the doctrine of truth is one, and clear, and firm, and stable, the doctrines of men and devils are not one, but divers, various, ambiguous, deceitful, inconstant, and unstable, and even inconsistent with one another. Man being full of vain inventions, there is no certain rule to be found but in God's word; hence we are called to try the spirits, whether they be of God; and for this end we need to pray for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, without which we may be soon drawn into one or other of these diverse doctrines.

6. The view of the immutability of Christ, and his truth, is needful for shewing, that new and strange doctrine must be delusive. Things are called strange that are not usual, or that have not been heard of before; but in the church of God, and amongst God's people, that is called strange which is not grounded on God's word; for the word of God is that upon which the church of God grounds all her doctrine, and acknowledges none for sound, but that which is contained therein, founded thereon, and raised therefrom. Thus the fire, that Nadab and Abihu offered before the Lord, is called strange fire, because it had no warrant from God's word. Thus the doctrines the apostle here warns the Hebrews against, under the name of strange doctrine, are such as have no warrant from the word of God, and which the church of God had neither acknowledged nor received.

Now, the immutability of the truth being known, makes it evident, how all diverse and strange doctrines, doth impeach some divine truth or other ; how the broachers of them ruin immortal souls, and bring upon themselves swift destruction ; for Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is here set in opposition to diverse and strange doctrines, intimating, that men cannot be saved in any religion, as some dream ; for if Christ and his unchangeable truth be rejected, and diverse and strange doctrines be embraced, damnation, instead of salvation, will be the end, however right they may reckon their new way : "There is a way that seemeth right to a man : but the end thereof are the ways of death," Prov. xiv. 12.

IV. The Fourth thing proposed was the application.

Is Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? Hence see,

1. The great disconformity between CHRIST and us ; he is still the same, but we are still changing and varying. We see, Hos. vi. 4, how God complains of us, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away." But what is the way to be fixed in the faith, and fixed in the love of Christ? Even to know and believe how fixed, and firm, and immutable he is. The ground of faith is unchangeable ; but the rise and spring of our unbelieving doubts, and jealousies, and waverings, is our apprehending, upon every turn of the wheel of providence, as if Christ were another thing than he was ; as if he were changed in his love, as we are in our outward frame, and he in his outward dispensations.

2. Hence see the root of error in principle, about Christ in his kingdom and government. As the Sadducees erred about the resurrection, not knowing the power of God ; so many in our day err about the kingdom and government of Christ in Zion, not knowing the scriptures, nor the immutability of Christ, that his throne is for ever and ever, and that his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation, Dan. iv. 34. But men are apt to think him changeable like themselves, and so think his government in Zion is arbitrary and ambulatory. Hence Christ as a King, is treated with contempt and mockery. Men put a crown of thorns still yet upon his head, instead of a crown of glory and honour ; a reed into his hand, instead of a sceptre.

3. Hence see the excellency and extent of the object of faith. The true Christ is so glorious and excellent, that he cannot be seen

but by that faith which is of divine operation. They that see the true Christ (and, O sirs, try your faith by this), they see one who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Oh! what delusive sights of Christ do many now see! They see a beautiful and glorious person presented to their imagination, or to their bodily eye.¹ What a devil, instead of Christ, is this! But, true faith is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for. The faith that sees Christ truly, sees both what is past and present, and to come; a Christ yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

4. Hence see the picture of a false Christ. Every new Christ that was not seen in the Bible yesterday, is a false Christ. New and strange sorts of convictions are to be suspected. If, instead of convictions, we hear of convulsions, bitter outcries, frights, faintings, and foamings, how delusive is the work! New and strange conversions are to be suspected. If, instead of conversions, we hear of sudden consolations by voices, visions, revelations, impulses, and impressions, what delusive work is this! If they are not Bible convictions, Bible-conversions, and such as the saints of God of old and of late, have experienced according to the scriptures, then they bear the image of a false Christ; for the true Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." His word is an immutable rule whereby to try the spirits; therefore, "To the law and to the

(1) We had occasion formerly to lay open what our author here, and in what follows, alludes unto. By the time this sermon was preached, the matter was become serious; the noise of it had spread abroad, both far and near. The promoters and opposers of this work, had taken the field; and if human testimonies and popular approbation, were admitted sufficient evidences to support a supernatural work of the Spirit, this doubtless would have been a genuine work of God. A human work needs to be supported by a human testimony; but a divine work carries its own evidence along with it, and requires nothing less than a divine testimony. Mighty stretches were made by the promoters of this extraordinary work, to prove its authenticity; Narratives of its extraordinary quality were given; attestations of its genuine nature were published, &c. And in defending the bodily agitations, and visionary representations, with which this work was attended, the favourers of it were left to vent, and afterwards to defend, some very strange positions; such as, "That we cannot think upon anything invisible, without some degree of imagination; that images of spiritual things must be represented to our fancy; that we can have no thought of God or Christ, without some degree of imagination; that imaginary ideas of Christ, as man, are consistent with faith, &c." If the reader incline to see these, and many other absurd propositions refuted, and the whole nature of this work laid fully open, and the arguments adduced to support it, unhinged, he may consult Mr. Fisher's Review of that extraordinary work, and our Author's elaborate Treatise, entitled, *Faith no Fancy; or, A Treatise of Mental Images.*

testimony, if they speak not according to this, it is because there is no light in them." His word is the same that it was, his Spirit is the same, and his work, upon all that are effectually called, is still the same substantially, because he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Therefore, work of a different kind shews forth but a false Christ.

5. Hence see, if it be so needful to know and believe this immutability of Christ, especially in shaking times, when faith is endangered by new and false doctrine, what need there is, at this very day, to be established in the faith of this truth, That Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. At this day the faith of many is endangered, and diverse and strange doctrines are appearing on the field. Many errors have been broached in our day, such as those of Ariens, Deists, Arminians, Socinians, Pelagians, &c. But never, I think, did Satan appear as an angel of light, so evidently, as in a delusive spirit that is now spreading through the land. But whatever glories shew and appearance of religion it makes, if it can be proved, that the language and tendency of it is, "Let us go after other gods," Deut. xiii. 2; if it lead people to diverse and strange doctrines, and to a new and strange God, a new and strange Christ, that ye have never heard of in the Bible, then the delusion and diabolical tendency of it may appear; so as all ought to beware of being carried about with such strange doctrines, that stand so directly opposite to him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Here, according to the view I have of that matter, I shall shew you in eight or ten particulars, what another God, and what another Christ is appearing in the delusive spirit of this time (brought in by the instrumentality of the foreigner,¹ of whom we had once some grounds for very favourable thoughts and expectations, till we understood him more fully, and found him in several respects, a stranger to our God, and setting up another God.) Why?

(1.) Our God is, according to Psalm cxxvi. 3, a God that hath done great things for us, and particularly by calling us to and working for us, a glorious work of reformation; bringing us out of anti-christian Babylon, and helping us to make a happy secession from the church of Rome; for the defence of which glorious reformation, we now own our secession from such as are razing it. But the

(1.) The person intended here, can be no other than Mr. Whitfield, who was the principal promoter of this strange work,

delusive spirit of the times leads people to another God, a new God, that is calling us off from this reformation-work, and all contending of witnessing for it, and would have it tumbled down as a Babel-building.

(2.) Our God is a God that invested Christ with the government of the church, that hath put the government upon his shoulders, and anointed him King in Zion, Psalm ii. 6; and made him head of the body, the church visible on earth, as well as invisible. But the new god, that now appears, is a god that robs Christ of his government in the visible church, and seeks to destroy the ancient order and discipline thereof. But, with relation to this,

(3.) Our God is a God that planted a hedge about his vineyard, Isa. v. 2. and fenced it with a hedge of government, and walls of discipline. But the new god, that appears in the strange doctrine that is spreading, is for pulling down the hedge. The present delusive spirit is the instrument of God's wrath against a barren apostate church, by which God is saying, as verse 5. "And now, go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedges thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the walls thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste," &c. God says this wrathfully, in his indignation; but the delusive spirit says it doctrinally, and by way of approbation, making the sin of such as pull down these hedges, to be but a small matter, and what the Lord's people have little reason to be concerned about, being none of their sins, or among the least of them, as some express it. Whereas, every deeply awakened and humbled soul will see, and suspect itself to be the Achan that troubles the camp, and provokes God to leave ministers and judicatories to spoil his vineyard.

(4.) Our God is a God that calls us, Song ii. 41, to "Take the foxes, (the great ones, and even) the little foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." To take and try those that say they are apostles, and are not, and to find them liars, Rev. ii. 2: to refute and reject them: a God that says, "A heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." But the new and different god, that the strange doctrine of the times brings in, is a god that cries up a boundless toleration of all sects, and a liberty of conscience to, and communion with all sorts of heretics, especially if they have but the denomination of Christians.

(5.) Our God is a God that hates covenant-breaking and

perjury ; and who, after he hath published to us his covenant of grace and mercy, warrants us to shew our gratitude unto him by a covenant of duty and service, whether personal or natural. If a person vow his service to the Lord, as David did, saying, "I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." God hates his breaking of that vow, saying, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." If a church or nation vow and swear that they will serve the Lord, and cleave unto him, as Israel did, Deut. xxix. 12, 24, 25. God hates apostasy from such a solemn profession, and threatens a sword to avenge the quarrel of his covenant. But it is a new and a strange God that seeks to have the most solemn covenants broken, and thinks nothing of involving the land in national perjury : but if our God be the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, he is the same God that he was this time hundred years, when he signified his acceptance in our covenanting-days, by a remarkable out-pouring of his Spirit, and the same Spirit will not seal contraries.

(6.) Our Lord, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, leads his people that are converted, to an espousing of, and an establishment in the present truth, 2 Pet. i. 12 ; and to the keeping the word of his patience, and the testimony of the time ; and to an opposition to the defections and corruptions of the times : see Rev. ii. 10, 2 John ver. 8, 10, 11. But we hear the new and strange way, that the delusive spirit of the times leads the converts unto, is even the greatest aversion from, and opposition to the testimony of the time : and to that which hath been the word of Christ's patience, given to us in this land since our reforming days. A vile reproach is indeed cast upon us, as if we would allow none to be true converts, but those that follow us : nor nothing to be the work of God, but what is wrought amongst us ; nor none to be true Christians but such as join in with (what they call) our Testimony. Meantime, I know no Testimony we have, but what is for and in favours of that work of Reformation, which the Lord's people in Scotland have this hundred years been calling the work of God, and if this present work, which is called also the work of God, be standing in opposition to that work of God, then surely we may say, that old work and this new work cannot both be the work of God.

(7.) Our God and Christ, that we have been acquainted with by the word, leads us to discountenance those ministers who run without being sent, and that are evidently erroneous ; he calls us to

beware of their leaven, and to cease from hearing them, Prov. xix. 27 ; and to mark them that bear down the work of God, and carry on the defections of the day, and walk disorderly. But the false spirit of the day leads people to favour and own them as much, if not more, than even those that are contending for the faith.

(8.) The true Christ is a Christ whose voice was not heard in the streets in a noisy manner, and whose kingdom comes not with observation, outward show, or ostentation. But the new Christ now upon the field, is with such a noise, that all the supposed convictions and conversions are instantly known and noised abroad, as if some outward motion were among the true marks of inward conviction ; and as if heart-conversion to God were become as visible and evident to men, in a moment, as different postures and gestures of the body are to the eyes of men. Alas ! what delusions are these, if this be the case !

(9.) The true Christ is he that comes in the still, calm voice of the gospel, which alone is the power of God to salvation and conversion, while therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith, Rom. i. 16, 17. But the new Christ, the false Christ of our day, appears, as it were in a whirlwind, driving poor people out of their wits and senses, beating down their bodies with pains and convulsions, distempers, and distractions, and then sounding into their ears some sudden comfort ; for he that, as an angel of darkness, frightened and terrified them, can as soon, as an angel of light, flatter and befool them, even with false-applied scriptures, to cheer up their spirits, and cherish their delusive assurance that all is well.

(10.) The true God is a God of order. The true Spirit of Christ is an orderly Spirit, teaching us by his sent servants, and saying " How can they preach, except they be sent ?" Rom. x. 15. But the new God, the new Christ, the new Spirit that is spreading, stirs up private persons ; yea, even young boys, to preach, exhort, and expound scripture publicly, and so to prostitute the sacred office of the ministry ; and, so far as the devil gets leave, would make void and unnecessary that regular call and ministerial mission that God hath appointed in his word, declaring, that no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron, Heb. v. 4.

Other particulars might be added ; but these are sufficient to shew, that the delusive spirit, that is now-a-days going abroad, and

spreading through the whole land, is leading people to another God, another Christ, than we or our fathers worshipped, and not the same God and the same Christ that we and they learned from the scriptures to worship and serve. The temptations of the day lead men, they say, to Christ; but it is to another Christ, or else (which is blasphemy to suppose) to think that Christ was another thing than he was, another person, another Saviour, another sort of a Lord and King than he was of old. But the best antidote against such false Christs, and strange doctrines, is the faith of our text, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." People have need therefore to continue in the faith they have been taught, Col. ii. 7, and to remember the advice Paul gives to Timothy, 2 Tim. iii. 12, 13, 14, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; but continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, and knowing of whom thou hast learned them." And the advice given, 2 John ver. 8, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought;" or, as it may be read, "which ye have gained."

6. Hence see, in the sixth place, how valuable the truth ought to be unto us, since the view of Christ, as the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is given us as an antidote against all error, and against being carried about with diverse and strange doctrines. When we are like children running here and there, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, and carried about therewith, we forget that Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We ought to be established in the faith of the truth, in the faith of all scripture truth, because "The word of the Lord endures for ever." But, more particularly,

(1.) In the faith of the present truth. The present truth in the apostle's time, was the truth of Christ's being come in the flesh! for that was the truth then most controverted; and if a man brought not that truth along with him, he was reckoned a deceiver and Anti-Christ, even though he should have preached never so many excellent truths, that were not then controverted, 2 John ver. 7, 10, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: this is a deceiver and an antichrist. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." The present truth, in our time, is the truth that is opposed and contro-

verted in our time: if a man be not faithful to that, he will never be faithful in his generation; yea, if a man come and preach never so many excellent truths, that are not controverted, he is but a deceiver and an antichrist, if he bring not the present truth, that the devil and the world are contradicting and opposing: but if, instead of bringing the present truth, such as that of Christ's headship and government in Zion, he shall bring the very opposite, and be a contradicter and opposer of the present truth, then we are to look upon him as an antichrist and a deceiver, with a witness.

(2.) We ought to be established in the faith of the least truth, if anything can be called little truth; the smallest we can think of is an invaluable treasure. Little truths are like the little pinnings of a wall, they are as necessary as the great stones; for take away the little pinnings, and you loose and dissolve the whole building. There is a close connection between every truth; they are linked and chained together; and you cannot loose one link, but you break the whole chain. They who are not zealously concerned for the least truth, will have no zeal for any truth at all; if they be unfaithful in a little, they will be unfaithful in much.

7. If Christ and his truth be the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; then see how highly reprobable they are, that are not the same men they were, with reference to all the present truths of the times. Some that have made as splendid a profession of cleaving to all the reformation-principles of this church, that we in this land are solemnly sworn to maintain, they are not now of the same mind: they have not the same sentiments, the same profession, the same favour to the truth, that they had. Why, what can be the reason? It may be said, That either they have gone out from us, because they were not of us, 1 John ii. 19; or, they have forgotten that "Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The devil hath put another Bible in their hand, and so another Christ in their head. But let old truths, sirs, be highly valued, and not thrown aside for new appearances: for, the good old way is the new and living way; and the old and new way is the everlasting way. What was truth formerly, is truth presently, and will be truth perpetually; for, "Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." But let none be stumbled at the truth, though they should see tall cedars falling into error; for, "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that, in the latter days, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils," 1 Tim. iv. 1. Therefore

be not soon shaken in your minds, by whatever spirit, word, or letter.

8. If Christ be still the same, then the followers of Christ should study a sameness among themselves, such as is recommended and enjoined, 1 Cor. i. 10, Phil. ii. 2, iv. 2. There ought to be an identity and sameness amongst all the friends of that Jesus, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Why, all true believers have the same spiritual meat and drink; for "they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ," 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. They have all the same Spirit, and the same anointing that teaches all things. There are diversities of gifts, and degrees of graces, but the same Spirit; and they are said to have all the same Spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13; and should, as members of Christ, have the same care one of another.

9. If Christ be the same to-day, as well as yesterday, the same presently as he was formerly; then let him be your present choice, your present portion, your present help in trouble, your present resting-place; and see your present duty towards him, to glorify him on earth, by witnessing for him, and confessing him before the world. Why hath he had witnesses for his name in all ages, and some at this day, and will have some in generations to come? Because he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. O sirs, study you to be standing witnesses for this immutable Jesus.

10. If he be the same for ever, as well as yesterday and to-day, then see ground for faith and hope for the future. O what ground of comfort is here to believers, against all future changes, that Christ is unchangeably the same. You may not only look back, believer, and reflect upon such and such a Bethel-visit he made you: whatever changes have befallen you since that time, yet you may be sure he is the God of Bethel; he is the same at your worst, that you found him at your best: but you may look forward and be sure that he will be the same for ever. And as there is no alteration in Christ's heart or disposition in heaven, from what he had upon earth; Eph. iv. 10, "He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things," so his mind will be for ever the same. Fear not future events, whatever is to come. His name is, "Which was, and is, and is to come." Is death to come? so is Christ. Is judgment to come? so is Christ. Is eternity to come? so is Christ. Happy to all eternity

is the believer in Christ ; for, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The promises of the covenant stand fast in him, who is always the same. It was made in him before the world, and will be established for ever.

11. See matter of dread and terror to all the despisers of Christ, and his cause and truth. He that is the same for ever, in his promise to believers, is the same for ever in his threatening to unbelievers. He that is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, hath said, "He that believeth not shall be damned. Behold, ye despisers, wonder and perish." The same Jesus that died at Jerusalem, and is published in this gospel, is to come again to judgment : "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up unto heaven ? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts i. 11. His immutable word of truth hath certified your everlasting ruin. The irrevocable sentence will pass against you, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And the wrath of the eternal God, and the immutable Jesus, will not be for a day, but wrath, like himself, the same for ever.

12. Hence see an evidence of true and saving faith. It is a faith of the same sort with the faith of the redeemed in former ages ; the same with the faith of those that are away to glory, "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation," say the words immediately preceding our text. It is a faith that follows the footsteps of the flock ; a faith that looks to Jesus as still the same, and finds him invariably the same, whenever it renews its acting upon him : though sometimes he may shut the door upon you, for your trial, or chastisement, or humiliation ; yet, whenever he opens the door, and lets you in to him, you find him always the same Jesus ; and that his word is the same, his love the same, his covenant the same, his promises the same, his blood the same, in its virtue and efficacy ; his righteousness aye the same for your acceptance ; his fulness constantly the same for your supply ; his sweetness perpetually the same to endear your heart to him ; his brightness always the same to display the glory of God. And here is the relief that faith gives amidst all fears and faintings : "He is God and changes not ; therefore you are not consumed." He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Is this the faith you have ? Indeed the more you live by faith upon his immutability, the more immutable and immoveable

will you be, "They that trust in the Lord shall be like mount Zion, that cannot be removed, but abideth for ever." It is a firm faith that stands here.

In a word, here is a foundation for the faith and hope of all the sinners who hear this gospel, and would be saved from the wrath of him that lives for ever and ever, and would wish to be blessed and happy in him for ever. O come to him before you go away from this place. He is the best match, for time and eternity, that ever you heard tell of, and every word in the text is an argument and encouragement to come to him.

1. He is a Jesus, a Saviour, to save you from your sins, and from the wrath to come he is able to save you. And this name Jesus imports an answer to all objections you can make by unbelief, your sinfulness, guiltiness, deadness, stupidity, or be what it will that troubles you, if you would be saved from all these evils, a Jesus is offered to you. O sirs, will you have him?

2. Consider he is Christ, anointed of God to save, having his Father's commission; he comes in his Father's name and authority, "Him hath God the Father sealed."

3. He is Jesus Christ the same, he is immutable and unchangeable. Many changes pass over you, and many sinful changes always to the worse, and the last change, by death, is at hand. Would you be secured in an unchangeable Saviour, fixed upon a rock that is immutable? O sirs, here it is!

4. He is the same yesterday, the same from eternity, being set up from everlasting, the same from the beginning of time; the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; the same Jesus that was promised immediately after the fall, the same Jesus that, in the fulness of time, assumed our nature, and was made of a woman, made under the law; the same Jesus Christ that died at Jerusalem, and rose again, and ascended to heaven; the same Jesus that was the object of the faith of all the Old or New Testament saints that are now in glory, and have believed in him to everlasting life, and therefore the fit object of your faith.

5. He is not only the same yesterday, but the same to-day, and therefore, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." His days are endless, but you have no day but this to reckon upon; yea, not an hour but this, that you know of; nay, not a moment, not a now, but this present now, "Now is the accepted time." Yesterday is gone for ever from you, and this day is going,

“Ye know not what a day may bring forth.” But since he is the same as he was yesterday, and you will not be the same to-morrow that you are to-day; you will neither be in the same place, nor in the same case, nor have the same offer; it may be, therefore, now or never must you close with him.

6. Consider he is the same for ever, and, therefore, if you receive him to-day, you shall enjoy him for ever. You shall find him an everlasting Father, and an unalterable friend. He will be the same to you that he hath been, and will be to all that ever came to him. He will be your everlasting righteousness, everlasting strength, everlasting light, everlasting life, and everlasting all. Neither death, judgment, nor eternity, will make a change upon him. No change in your lot or frame afterwards shall ever make him alter his mind, or his love towards you. You will be happy for ever, because he is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” May the Lord draw you to him!

SERMON LXXVI.

FAITHFULNESS UNTO DEATH, CROWNED WITH ETERNAL LIFE.¹

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. ii. 10.

THESE words are a part of the epistle written from heaven to the church of Smyrna; wherein Christ forewarns and forearms her, against further troubles, besides what are mentioned in the preceding verse, and exhorts her not to fear, but to be faithful.

More particularly, in the verse we have these four things observable. 1. A general warning about approaching trouble, and things they were to suffer. 2. A particular description of what they were to suffer, “Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days.” 3.

(1) At what time, or in what place, this sermon was preached, cannot be positively ascertained, nothing being marked relative thereto in the Author's notes. However, from several passages in the discourse itself, we learn that it was delivered in the year 1742; and a person of undoubted veracity assures us it was at Orwel, on Monday after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there.

Their duty, not to fear, but to be faithful. 4. The ample encouragement here promised, "I will give thee a crown of life."

1st, A general warning about trouble, called, "These things they were to suffer." What troubles the church of Smyrna were under before, you may see from verse 9, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich, and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." But more trials were yet abiding her. Hence learn, the sufferings of God's people are not soon brought to an end; but, when they have drunk deep in one cup of God's affliction, they have more to drink; change of crosses is sometimes all their refreshment, as it was with Job, chap. i., when one messenger backed another; so with David, Psal. xlii., when deep called unto deep, therefore, lay not your account to want troubles as long as you are in this world, and see that your troubles be indeed sufferings, and that affliction and an ill conscience meet not together. Hence also learn, Christ foreknows all his people's trials, what they shall suffer; therefore he forewarns them, and provides a remedy; hence he has chambers provided, till the indignation be overpast, Isa. xxvi. 20; he has a place, even in the wilderness provided for the woman, Rev. xii. 6. He can make the earth help her, verse 16; yea, he can make the enemies friendly, Jer. xv. 11, "The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to intreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction."

2dly, You have a particular description of their trouble. And here there are five things. 1. The notification or certification of it, Behold, 2. The instrument of it, Satan. 3. The subject of it, Some of you. 4. The kind of it, namely, Imprisonment, "He shall cast some of you into prison." 5. The end and design of it, That ye may be tried.

1. The intimation or notification of it, with a Behold, shewing that it was a certain and serious matter. Hence learn, the particular trials of God's people ought to be observed, and all the particular circumstances of their trial should be noticed; because every circumstance thereof, relating either to the instrument, time, place, kind, and continuance, are ordered of the Lord; and we ought to behold God therein, "Is there evil in the city, and I have not done it, saith the Lord?" We ought to observe every circumstance, both of mercies and crosses that the Lord orders, "Whoso is wise, and

will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

2. The instrument of it, the devil. Crosses, when sinfully inflicted, by the hands of men, Satan has the chief hand therein; for, he acts in other instruments, "He works in the children of disobedience," and especially in the matter of persecution. Satan tempts them, in a special manner, as he tempted Judas; the armies against the Lamb are raised by the devil. If there be any here that oppose and persecute God's people, they may look upon themselves as driven by the devil, and acted by Satan, and, Ah! what a shame it is to be the devil's slaves and drudges? If you knew, you would think shame of your employment; the Lord's people need think no shame of their sufferings, it is Satan that opposes them.

3. The subject of the trial, the party-suffering; Some of you. Observe, The Lord does not call forth all his people equally to suffer, nor will he tell them in particular, who are to suffer, whether they be the persons or not; for, he can make a warning, relating to some, to be useful to all; that none may think the storm will miss them, and that all may resolve and lay their account with trials. The Lord has the choosing of such as are to suffer for him; and he will choose these that are fittest; and these who think they are most unfit, he can choose them, and fit them too.

4. The kind of the trouble; it is called Imprisonment, by which is to be understood, all the sufferings they were to meet with at that time. Observe, That among other trials of God's people, imprisonment, or restraint of liberty, is a very sore trial; therefore, let us learn to make better use of our liberty, lest, like David, you be sent to the wilderness, and be deprived of gospel-liberty and privileges; and lest it be matter of a sad challenge, that you made no better use of liberties when you enjoyed them.

5. The end of the sufferings, that ye may be tried; that faith, and other graces, may be tried, 1 Pet. i. 7. Hence learn, the Lord disposes his people's sufferings to his own ends. Though Satan has a chief hand in them, yet the Lord over-rules all as he sees fit; he makes the wrath of men and devils to praise him. Thus he over-ruled Joseph's sufferings to the good of his brethren; and Paul's sufferings to the furtherance of the gospel. Therefore, never look what troubles threaten, but look to God who can bring good out of them, and can make darkness light, and death life; if you were thus looking to God, great trouble would give

little annoyance. Hence also learn, That trials are sent to the Lord's people to make proof of their graces ; therefore, look on trials as occasions to evidence your graces. There are two furnaces of a believer's graces for trying them : the one is examination ; the other is affliction ; if the first be neglected, the Lord will set up the other.

6. The continuance of the trouble, you shall have it ten days ; importing a short time. Hence learn, That the afflictions of God's children are bounded and limited of the Lord ; Israel must come out of Egypt when the time of their bondage is expired. God is at the helm in the time of the storm ; and we may sleep quiet, because he awakes. Again, we may here observe, how the Spirit of God would have us counting the time of trouble, not by years, nor by months, but by days. They are called sometimes but an hour, sometimes but a short moment. Art thou under a cross ? Reckon it but from day to day ; and that will make a long trouble seem short. Time is but days ; and days hours ; and hours moments ; and how small is that when compared with the eternal crown of glory. Make not your time eternity ; but, be numbering your days, and applying your hearts unto wisdom.

3dly, The next thing in the words is, the duty, namely, fear not, but *be faithful*. Where we may observe two things,

1. What we should *not* do, namely, fear not : " Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer." Hence learn that slavish fear is to be avoided by all these that would stand up for Christ. Many a call is given to the children of God not to fear : " Fear not, little flock ; fear not, worm Jacob, for I am with thee ;" and accordingly, many of the saints have got above all their fears, saying, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me : Wherefore should I fear in the day of evil, even when the iniquity of my heels may compass me about : None of these things move me," said Paul, speaking of his sufferings : he got above all fears. Slavish fear has three great evils in it.

(1.) It apprehends crosses and hardships, even where there is none in reality : " Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass ? And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath 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 ?" Isa. li. 12, 13.

(2.) When troubles are real, it magnifies them, and points them out in the most disheartening and discouraging colours imaginable. This makes the cross terrible, when fear gets leave to paint it in the blackest colour ; whereas, when faith looks upon the cross, it extenuates and says, they are light afflictions ; they are but for a moment, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

(3.) This fears slays a man first, and then the last trouble will kill him outright. The devil sends faithless fear first and foremost, and then brings up his army. No trouble has been found to be deadly to God's people till first slavish fear has killed, wounded, and weakened them. Therefore, our Lord cautions against this killing enemy, slavish fear : " Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Thus we have a hint at what we should *not* do.

2. What we should do, *viz.* Be faithful : " Fear not, but be faithful." From the connexion between these two we may learn.

(1.) That slavish fear is to be checked and guarded against in evil times, because it has great influence to draw us from our duty. If we would be faithful, we need to be aware of faithless fears, Heb. xii. 12, 13. A frightened man is already halting and may be soon turned out of the way. Satan makes men first to fear, and then to be unfaithful ; and hence faithless fear of trouble and danger, in the good way of the Lord, usually ends in apostasy. Therefore, we need to be aware of it as an enemy to all duty.

(2.) Learn, that in the discharge of our duty, and in the whole course of a Christian, there is no greater burden lies upon him, than just to be in the way of duty. Thus Christ here advertises his people, saying, There are sufferings coming upon you ; but take you no other thought or care upon you, but only how to be faithful and upright ; for, as to the troubles and sufferings, how they shall be ordered to right ends, and what shall be the kind, and measure, and degree, and length, or duration of them, trouble not yourselves therewith, but leave all that to me : I will take the care and burden of all that ; and I put no other burden upon you, but just that you wait faithfully upon me, as he says to the church of Thyatira here, ver. 24, 25, " I will put upon you no other burden ; but that which you have already, hold fast till I come." We have nothing to fear, if we be but helped to be faithful ; whatever we are ready to fear, it is God's part to take care of that, but it is our part to study what is our present duty. But, alas ! we are ready to take God's part upon us, like the sons of Zeruiah, we are ready to take too much up-

on us, by our sinful fears and cares about events and sufferings, and so to assume a sovereignty to ourselves. But, indeed, to sit down on his throne would soon undo us; the burden would soon break our backs: but God enjoins us to be careful for nothing, but cast all our cares on him who careth for us. And we put ourselves to much needless trouble, if we take the burden of care upon our own backs, which we ought to cast upon the Lord, and which alone belongs to him to bear; who allows us to take no other care, no other burden upon us, but how, through his grace, to be faithful in his service, and faithful unto death.

4thly, The fourth general in the words is the encouragement, viz., “I will give thee a crown of life.” This is annexed especially to the duty of faithfulness in Christ Jesus: it is annexed to it in a way of free grace, reigning through the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

In which words we have these four things observable, 1. The duty enjoined, namely, to be *faithful*. 2. The term how long, viz. *unto death*. 3. The glorious issue of this fidelity, namely, the *crown of life*. 4. The gracious conveyance of this crown: I WILL GIVE it thee; “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

I shall endeavour a short explication of these in the prosecution of the following doctrine.

OBSERV. That to these who are faithful unto death, Christ is to give a crown of life.

The observation is much the same with the words of the text; and, in speaking to it, I propose to do only these three things.

- I. To explain the proposition.
- II. To confirm the truth of the doctrine.
- III. To make application of the whole subject.

I. We are to offer something for explication. And here are four things to be inquired into.

1. What it is to be faithful. 2. What is imported in being faithful unto death. 3. What we are to understand by the crown of life. 4. What by Christ's giving it.

1st, What is it to be faithful? We find fidelity is a duty much commended in Scripture, and frequently called for at his

people's hands ; and it is of the free mercy of God that any are enabled to it. Paul speaks of himself, 1 Cor. vii. 25, as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. It was the Lord's commendation of Moses, that he was faithful in all his house, Numb. xii. 7. The perfection of this faithfulness was to be found, indeed, only in Christ, who was faithful to him who appointed him, Heb. iii. 2, even as Moses, (a type of Christ,) was faithful in all his house. I shall mention four things required unto faithfulness.

1. It is necessary to make a man faithful that he have much faith in God ; for, the same word that is rendered faithful, is also rendered a believing man, John xx. 27, "Be not faithless but believing." It is the same word with this in the text here, called faithful, Eph. i. 4, "To the faithful in Christ Jesus ;" that is, to the believing people in Christ Jesus ; and indeed, without faith in Christ, there is no faithfulness to God. He that would be faithful in doing and suffering, has great need of much faith in God. See, to this purpose, 1 Tim. iv. 10, "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God." The doing and suffering Christian, that is faithful both in his active and passive obedience, is he that trusts in the living God. An unbeliever may have morality, but hath no fidelity : and hence is that sweet conjunction of holding faith, and a good conscience, 1 Tim. i. 19. A good conscience will stand on no other ground but that of true faith ; and true faith will lie upon no other bed but a good conscience. Hence,

2. It is requisite to make a man faithful, that he has goodness ; therefore, as faith and faithfulness are conjoined, so goodness and faithfulness : "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," Matt. xxv. 21. And, I think, the goodness here respects the state and condition ; and faithfulness respects the way and conversation ; for, when God calls people to be judged, he first judges every man according to his state, and then every man according to his work : they are first judged according to their state, whether they be good trees in Christ, before they be judged according to their works, whether they have brought forth fruit ; and, no doubt, if they be good as to their state in Christ, they will be faithful and fruitful, according to their measure. The procedure of the Judge at the last day, is, first to judge men according to their state, before ever any word be said about their works ; for, the sheep are to be set on the right hand, and the goats on the left, before any sentence be

passed, or any verdict given about their actions : that is, it is first judged whether they be good or bad, in a good or bad state, in the first or second Adam, under the covenant of works or of grace : and, to the faithful in Christ, their goodness will be proclaimed, because of their union to Christ ; and their faithfulness will evidence it.

3. It is requisite to make a man faithful, that he has wisdom ; “ Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season ? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find so doing.” Matth. xxiv. 45, 46. This is not only requisite in ministers, their dispensing the bread of life ; but also in people, that they be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves : and we are to understand the times, and what Israel ought to do ; this is the wisdom that is from above : and therefore, if any man lack this wisdom, let him ask it of God, for it must come from the Lord immediately, James 1. 7. “ Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things, 2 Tim. ii. 7. The wise are the faithful.

4. It is requisite to make a man faithful, that he be trusty. And this trustiness has a respect to three things, viz. both to what is spoken by him, and what is committed to him, and to whom he is concerned with.

[1.] To what is spoken by him, or to what he says, The trusty man, is one whose words we may depend upon, and that verifies his words by his deeds ; and, as in religion, the faithful man is he that makes good by his practice, what he says by profession ; and, on the contrary, they are unfaithful that are not as good as their word, like these, Titus i. 16, who profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. Thus the apostle Paul taxes the Galatians, that they were not so good as their word, Gal. iv. 14, 15.

[2.] Trustiness has a respect to what is committed to a man. He is a trusty man that keeps that which is committed unto him, or what he is intrusted with ; so, in a spiritual sense, he is a faithful man who keeps what God has intrusted him with.

QUEST. What is that wherewith believers are intrusted, and wherein they must be faithful ?

There are these four things I name.

(1.) The truths of God, and the purity of religion ; that is the common salvation the apostle Jude speaks of, ver. 3, and that good

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; the apostle Paul speaks of, 2 Tim. i. 14, "And that good thing which was committed to thee, by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us." Ver. 13, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a trust committed not only to ministers, but to all God's people;" Phil. i. 27, "Stand ye fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel." This is what our Lord speaks of to several of the seven churches here: "Hold fast till I come. Hold fast what thou hast, that no man take thy crown." This is one great thing, for which we must be accountable, and wherein we must be faithful.

(2.) To every Christian there is committed a certain measure of gifts and graces; to some one talent, to some two, to some five, Matth. xxv. 15. Now the man that is faithful, occupies with them to the utmost; lays not up his talent in a napkin; and through grace, lets not the coal die out; but stirs up the fire, of his gifts and graces, as Paul exhorts Timothy; by employing all to the glory of God, while he lives in this world.

(3.) To every one is committed a place and employment in the world, and particular stations and relations therein. Now, the faithful man is one that employs the power and privilege of his calling for God's honour; and so he is a faithful magistrate, a faithful minister, a faithful head or member of a family, behaving himself wisely, and walking within his house with a perfect heart, as David, Psalm ci. 2. He is faithful in every relation.

(4.) To every one is committed a time and opportunity; a particular season, and day that he is called to improve: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." And he is a faithful man that redeems the time, and improves the time of his visitation; that numbers his days, and applies his heart into wisdom; that in this their day, know the things that belong to their peace; that understand the times, and what Israel ought to do; that takes the opportunity of the present time, to witness for the present truth. Many, in our day, are slipping that opportunity; and therefore God is leaving them to be carried down with the stream of the corruptions and defections of the time. Their apostasy is open; and it goes on to such a height as would never have been expected; nay, once a day they would have thought, "Am I a dog, that I should do such things?" But apostasy wants but a beginning; and it usually begins with unfaithfulness, in neglecting the day, the time, the opportunity of appearing for God and his cause.

[3.] The faithful man is trusty to all whom he is concerned with : you see to what he is faithful ; and now the question is, To whom he is faithful ? To this the answer is also fourfold : He is faithful to God, to man, to himself, and to all the generations of his concern.

(1.) To God ; having his heart right with God, in opposition to the way of hypocrites, spoken of, Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37, that flattered him with their mouth, and lied to him with their tongue ; for their heart was not right with him. Set a wicked man, or hypocrite to prayer, he would ask these things which he would not thank God to give him ; his tongue will say, Give, and his heart will say, No : like Augustine, before his conversion, he confessed he would have prayed, when his heart was saying, *Non adhuc Domine*, "Not yet, Lord." But the faithful soul is one that deals ingenuously with God.

(2.) He is faithful to man : not subjecting himself to fleshly interest ; not moved from the way of God, by the fears or flatteries of men ; not joining with them in a course of sin, wickedness, or defection ; not running with them to the same excess of riot ; not openly joining with them, nor tacitly approving of them ; but giving a plain testimony against their sinful ways, according to that law of the Lord, Lev. xix. 17. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart ; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him : " or, as it is in the margin, "That thou bear not sin for him."

(3.) He is faithful to himself ; to his light, to his conscience : herein doth he exercise himself, to keep a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men, Acts xxiv. 16. Endeavouring to have the testimony of conscience, spoken of, 2 Cor. i. 12. He is an unfaithful man that crosses the light of his own conscience, as many have done at this day, and God has given them up to side with all the dreadful defections, and awful delusions of the day, according to that threatening, Psal. lxxxix. 11, 12, "But my people would not hearken unto my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust : and they walked in their own counsels." The faithful man is so faithful to himself, that he searches and tries himself, and loves to be searched and tried by God himself, Psal. xxvi. 2, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me ; try my reins and my heart." Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if

there be any other wicked way in me." The man suspects himself, because he knows the deceitfulness of his own heart, and is jealous of his own heart; and therefore ready, with the first, to cry, "Master, is it I?" He judges himself, condemns himself; and though he condemns sin in all men, and is grieved to see sin in others: and is willing to witness against the sins of the time he lives in; yet he is more severe against himself, and his own sin, than he is against others and their sins: hence abstinence from sin will not suffice him, without hatred; nor hatred, without mortification.

(4.) He is faithful to all the generations of his concern; I mean to the generations past, present, and to come. He is faithful to the past generations of his predecessors and forefathers; if they have transmitted to us any good thing, and given us any good examples, conveyed to us any notable treasures, such as the pure doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church; sound Confessions of Faith: the faithful man knows he cannot be faithful to his forefathers if these be not faithfully kept. If any of you have had parents, now in the dust, who gave you good examples, counsels, and instructions, if you now neglect these, you cannot be faithful to your parents that are gone. The faithful man studies to be faithful to the present generation, and to the present truth that is controverted in his day, that he may glorify God, in his day; and, by his example, excite others about him, his family, and neighbourhood: such faithfulness we see how it is commended in Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19, "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the ways of the Lord, and do justice and judgment." The faithful man studies thus to be faithful to the generation to come, by transmitting to them a faithful testimony for God and his truth. See this exemplified, Psal. lxxviii. 3, 8. A faithful man may thus be a blessing to posterity.

2dly, What is imported in being *faithful unto death*? Here is the perseverance in this duty that we are called to: and upon this there are these four things I would observe, as imported in it.

1. That it would contribute much to make us faithful and steady in the Lord's way, to be in the view of death and mortality; therefore says the spirit of God, Deut. xxxii. 29, "O that they were wise! that they understood this! that they would consider their latter end!" What makes many so unfaithful in their life? Even because they are so unthoughtful of their death: they cannot think of exposing themselves to any losses, crosses, or hazards and

inconveniences for religion's sake ; hoping they will live so long and so long in this world, not considering their latter end, and how near it may be at hand ; and consequently what need there is to make a faithful improvement of a short life.

2. That there is no other term-day of the faithfulness of God's people, but the day of death ; Matt. xxiv. 12, " He that endures to the end shall be saved." Rev. ii. 25, " Hold fast till I come." Luke xix. 13, " Occupy till I come ;" till I come by death, and release thee. Hence it is, that no victory obtained in our life-time, releases us from the task of faithfulness ; Eph. vi. 13, 14, " Having done all, stand ;" in the margin, " Having overcome all, stand." Having slain one enemy, you must engage with another ; the warfare is not accomplished till the day of death.

3. That death is the upshot and conclusion of the believer's work and warfare amongst enemies ; after death there is no enemy. Hence the time of Christ's coming is called the time of refreshing, Acts iii. 19 ; a time of cooling ; their hot war never cools till then ; but then they may look over their shoulders, and laugh at all their enemies ; " Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Then will the saint lay down his arms, and put on his crown ; he will lay down his sword, and take up his sceptre, saying, Farewell faith, and welcome vision ; farewell hope, and welcome fruition ; farewell sorrow and sighing, and welcome joy and singing, &c. Bless God there is a term day of trouble coming ; you are promising yourself an out-get this day and that day ; but here is a term day that will not fail you.

4. It imports, that we should be constant and faithful, though death were laid in the way of our duty and fidelity ; and, indeed, a faithful man, that knows the work of God's service, and the value of his truth, will quit his life before he quit his fidelity ; and that for two reasons.

(1.) Because, in the cause of God, and in the course of faithfulness, a man's losses turn out advantages ; and all the advantages that are got by unfaithfulness, turn to losses ; if a man would gain his life, he must lose it, Matt. x. 39. There was never a surer way for a man to gain his life, than to lose it for faithfulness to Christ.

(2.) Because a faithful man finds the Lord's favour better than life ; for, " In his favour is life," Ps. xxx. 5. " Thy loving-kindness is better than life," Ps. lxxiii. 3. Put God's favour, with death itself, in the one hand, and God's wrath, with life, in the other, the

faithful man will soon know what to choose, and will say, Lord, there is no choice, there is no comparison. Ye that close with Christ, may see what you are, through grace, to resolve upon, even to be faithful unto death ; and to lay down all, yea, and life itself, for his service. And death itself should be resolved upon, rather than be unfaithful ; then how patiently should you bear any thing that he sends less than death. Thus the apostle says, Heb. xii. 4, " You have not yet resisted unto blood ;" you might have had greater burdens ; therefore bear the less more patiently. Many are peevish and fretful under public and necessary burdens ; but what if Christ came and sought your life ? Would you then be faithful unto death ? If he should seek all your worldly accommodations, your houses, lands, and possessions ? Would you then suffer joyfully the spoiling of your goods ? So much for a hint about being faithful unto death.

3dly, The next thing to be explained is the crown of life. What are we to understand by this ? We find eternal life and happiness is elsewhere called a crown of life, James i. 12, " Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." It is called a crown, as it is a gracious reward of the faithful man ; in allusion to the custom of the times, when a crown was given to wrestlers and runners, as a badge and garland of honour. Here we may notice some things imported in the words, and then some reasons why it is called a crown.

1. There are these two things may be observed as imported in the words.

(1.) That they that would be faithful, ought to look to eternity, and a crown of glory. No doubt, the faithful have encouragement, even here by the way ; but the grand encouragements are a-coming : " For, if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most miserable," says the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 9. Moses had an eye to the recompense of reward ; and Paul had a look to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ ; and all believers have Christ in them the hope of glory. Some believers take it ill that they have not so much comfort here as they would wish, when yet the hope of glory is set before them, and not made use of.

(2.) That eternal life is a sufficient up-making of all the difficulties the faithful can meet with here in the Lord's way ; all their sufferings and hardships are well made up with a crown : whatever losses they sustain here, yet, when they land in heaven, they will

be no losers ; it will be no grief of heart to them then to remember that they came through great tribulation, and that they were helped to be faithful unto death ; while they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, they have reason to glory in tribulation, Rom. v. 2, 3. But,

2. Why is it called a crown of life ? To this we reply, in the following particulars :—

(1.) It is a crown of life, in respect of faithfulness unto death they are called to ; intimating the encouragement allowed to them ; that, though called to lay down their life, yet they are so far from being losers, that they but change a life of sorrow for a life of joy ; and rivers of tears, for rivers of pleasure for evermore. Perhaps some saints will scarcely get a sight of heaven while in this world, but rather of hell, and of enemies, and devils, and corruptions ; and looking much upon sin, they hardly know till they be within the gates of the New Jerusalem.

(2.) It is called a crown, because it is an honour put upon the faithful man. The wrestlers and runners of old, as I said, had badges of honour put upon their heads ; so the faithful will be crowned with glory and honour. Faith, however weak, will be found to praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. i. 7. Here they sit many times with the dogs, as it were, content with the crumb ; but then they will be set upon the throne with Christ, Rev. iii. 31.

(3.) It is a crown in respect of the plenty of all good that is to be enjoyed there : “Thou crownest the year with thy goodness ;” that is, thou makest it abound with fruitfulness ; and this is most agreeable to the heavenly blessings ; for, there is fulness of joy there, Ps. xvi. 11, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Plenty, without want, and rest, without weariness, is there : the joy does not enter into them only, as here ; but they enter into the joy of their Lord, and have communion with God in his joy.

(4.) It is a crown of life in respect of safety ; for it guards the man from all trouble ; Ps. v. 12, “With favour wilt thou compass him [*Heb. crown him*], as with a shield.” God’s favour, even in this life, guards the saints from danger ; so that the blast of the terrible one is but as a storm against a stone wall ; but when he gets this crown of life upon his head, there shall not be any enemies left to annoy him ; his head will be crowned and lifted above all his enemies.

(5.) In a word, it is called a crown of life, for its preciousness

and dignity, splendour and glory, duration and permanence. It is a kingdom, a palace, a throne, a sceptre, and an inheritance, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," like the earthly crown of mortal kings, princes, and potentates.

4thly, The last thing to be explained on this first general head, is the manner of the conveyance of it: "*I will give thee a crown of life.*" And here four things may be observed.

1. The party conveying, or the person conferring this blessedness, in the pronoun *I*: "*I will give.*" Christ, who is the purchaser, is also the dispenser and giver of the crown; this power he has as Mediator: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him," John xvii. 2.

2. The party to whom the conveyance is made, "*I will give thee* ; Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give *thee*," namely, the faithful person. And here you are to observe the difference between the promises of the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace; in the covenant of works, the promise was not made to the worker, but to the work, and to the worker because of his works; for works was the condition; but in the covenant of grace, the promise is not made to the work, but to the worker, and that not for his work, but because he is in Christ, and his work is the evidence thereof; for example, in that promise, Rom. viii. 13, "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live;" here the promise is not made to the work of mortification, but to the mortified person; and that not because of his mortification, but because he is in Christ; and his mortification, through the Spirit, is an evidence thereof. Thus, here, the promise of the crown of life is not made to the work of faithfulness, but to the faithful person; and that not because of his faithfulness, but because he is faithful in Christ; or, because he is united to Christ; and his faithfulness is an evidence of his union to Christ, to whom all the promises are primarily made, and in whom they are all Yea and Amen. Christ's work, his righteousness, being the only condition of the covenant, to which all the promises are made.

3. Hence here you have the manner of the conveyance, namely, by free gift: *I will give thee a crown of life;*" according to Rom. vi. 23, "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And it must needs be by free gift, because there is nothing in the creature that can deserve it. That God, who

conveys faith and faithfulness to the soul, might, in justice, at the same instant, convey that soul to hell; the grace whereby we are faithful is free grace; and so the gift of the crown must be by free grace also, "It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The more faithful we are to God, through his grace, the more do we run in his debt, who gives grace to be faithful, and how can the new debt, still running up, merit a crown? Therefore it must be freely given. The crown of glory is a crown of mercy, Psal. ciii. 4, "He crowneth us with loving-kindness, and tender mercies. Not unto us, not unto us," or to our faithfulness, "but to thy name be glory," will be the song of the redeemed.

4. Hence observe the sovereign reason of the conveyance, namely, his will and pleasure, "I will give thee a crown of life." And O how does the Father's will and the Son's harmonize, in giving the crown? "Fear not, little flock, says Christ, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," and it is Christ's will expressed to the Father, John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." By this I am conducted,

II. To the second general head proposed, which was, the confirmation of the doctrine, viz., That to these who are faithful unto death, Christ is to give a crown of life.

Here I might do these two things, first, show that it is so, and secondly, why it is so.

1st, That it is so, appears from the words of the text, to which agree many other promises, Matt. xxiv. 13, "He that endures to the end, shall be saved." The faithful unto death are the overcomers, and more than conquerors, through Christ; and you will see every epistle to the seven churches of Asia conclude with a promise to such, of a crown of life, under various names and denominations, Rev. ii. 7, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, &c. Verse 17, To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and will give him a white stone, and a new name, &c. Chap. iii. 12, Him that overcometh I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Verse 21, To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne," &c.

2dly, Why will he give the crown of life? Why, he will give a crown of life to them who are faithful unto death. Beside

the sovereign reason I have mentioned, on the following accounts :—

1. He will give them a crown of life, because he has promised so to do, as here, to all that continue faithful in their day, see also, Luke xxii. 28, 29, “Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptation, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father hath appointed unto me.”

2. Because he has purchased it to them, as well as the grace of faithfulness, the glory that follows is also purchased ; therefore is heaven called the purchased possession, Eph. i. 14. The crown of life is the price of blood.

3. They shall have the crown, because they are his children ; they are born of God ; and being children, they are heirs, heirs with God, and joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. Among men, the first-born only are heirs, but all God’s children are heirs of a crown and kingdom.

4. To them who are faithful unto death he will give a crown of life, because he is their God. This is the great reason why he will give them a crown of eternal life, because he who is the true God, and eternal life, is their God, Heb. xi. 16. It is said of the faithful under the Old Testament, “They desired a better country, that is, an heavenly ; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city.” Therefore, when God is ours, eternal life is ours, he will not be called our God for nothing.

5. To the faithful unto death he will give a crown of life, because they are the members of his body, “who is the head of the body, the church,” and the head being crowned with glory and honour, so must the members be, so must his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all, Eph. i. 23. They have the honour to make Christ mystical, perfect, and complete ; and he, as the head, is gone away to heaven, to prepare a place for them, John xiv. 2 ; and sends down his Spirit to prepare them for it. Though now they are despised and rejected ; yet, a little while, and they shall shine glorious in Christ’s glory, for “He will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe,” 2 Thes. i. 10.

6. To them who are faithful unto death he will give a crown of life, because it is suitable that it should be so, not only suitable to the promise and purchase I have spoken of, and suitable to their relation to him, and his relation to them, but suitable to their desires, and he hears the desire of the humble. It is suitable to

their labour and pain; for God hath said, their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. It is suitable to their hope and expectation, "The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." It is suitable to their prayers, they pray for the crown, and he is the hearer of prayer. It is suitable to their needs and wants; they are weary with fighting, and they need rest; therefore, "There remains a rest for the people of God." So much for the confirmation of the doctrine, by scripture and reason.

III. The third general head proposed, was, The application. Is it so, that our Lord Jesus Christ will give a crown of life only to those that are faithful unto death.

1. Hence see the reason of all zealous appearances of God's children in all ages; and the reason of their stedfast contendings and earnest essays, to witness for the honour of God and his truth; for which essays the world has in every age condemned faithful ministers and people, and shamefully reproached them; why, they know that their Lord was in earnest, calling them to be faithful even unto death; and hence their care was not to please men, but to please him that called them to be faithful; therefore, they undervalued the reproach of men, and endured as seeing him who is invisible.

2. See hence, that few will get the crown of life, because few are faithful. These cannot be faithful that are destitute of faith, and strangers to Christ; that are ignorant of him, and disobedient to the call of the gospel; against such, Christ will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them, because they know not God, nor obey the gospel. These that are unfaithful can have no ground of hope for the crown of life. O the misery of the unfaithful, the unbelieving, and ungodly! However prosperous they are now, in time, they are doomed with the unfaithful servant, into utter darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, Matt. xxv. 30.

3. Hence see the happiness of the faithful, for to them shall be given a crown of life. Here it may be inquired, Who are the faithful? To this we reply, All that are in Christ, by the grace of faith; and that abide in him, by the life of faith; they that hold the head, and so hold fast the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, they that believe in him with the heart, and confess him with the mouth, "These shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony." Some will think we reckon them all faithful

that are on our side, and of our party in the present secession. Indeed, I am far from thinking all of that name will be found faithful; but they that do not appear for Christ in a day of trial, nor cleave to his persecuted cause, surely they are not faithful in their day. But these that honestly keep the word of Christ's patience, however reproached and persecuted; they are happy, though they be under the cross, for they are in the way to the crown.

4. Hence see the necessity of faithfulness, since none shall have the crown of life but the faithful; the command of Christ makes it necessary in point of duty, "Be thou faithful," the promise makes it necessary in point of interest and advantage, "I will give thee the crown of life;" we expect God will be true to his word of promise, and, in the faith thereof, we ought to be true to our trust. The Jews speak of two great depositums, or sacred trusts, God has committed to the sons of men, namely, the lamp that is within us, the soul; and the lamp without us, the law; comprehending the divine mysteries. We are called to hold fast the truth; to hold fast the form of sound words, 2 Tim. i. 13; the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of his house; to be faithful in defending and contending for the faith, Jude, verse 3. Ministers and people both are called to this work, especially when these concerns of God's glory are at stake, and endangered by the corruptions and defection of their time. True, a carnal and careless generation of professors reckon such a desire to endeavour to be thus faithful, nothing but madmen, as Christ himself was said to be beside himself; they are reckoned men of contention, fire-brands, pests, and troublers of Israel; men that turn the world upside down. But, alas! how are many, who have refused to witness for God, and faithfully to adhere to our reformation principles, left in the righteous judgment of God, to disclaim all confessions and standards of doctrine, besides the holy scriptures, as human compositions. Some, that were friendly to our covenanted reformation formerly, turning their backs upon it, saying, "They are for no covenants, no confessions, no "standards but the Bible," like the first Independents in Germany, that were for burning all books but the Bible, and actually gathered all they could get, and set them in a flame, pretending to make that the only rule, and then interpreting the scriptures as they pleased. Even so, the indepen-

dent spirit of the age are for discarding all confessions :¹ but who are so ignorant as not to know, that all who bear the name of Christians will subscribe to the words of the scriptures ; Papists, Socinians, Arminians, Arians, Deists, will do so ; each of them, in the meanwhile taking the words, and so juggling with God and the world, in a sense agreeable to their own sentiments, though contrary to the common sense and understanding of men ; contrary to the phraseology of scripture, and the analogy of faith ? Thus Hymeneus and Phyletus would have subscribed the scripture-words, concerning the resurrection, meaning, at the same time, that it was past already. How much does all this show the necessity of faithfulness !

5. Hence see, the necessity of perseverance, or of being faithful unto death. It is not enough to begin well, and hold out a little ; the crown of life is promised to them that are faithful to the death ; they that endure to the end, shall be saved. The command is peremptory, "Hold fast till I come." We need therefore not only grace to be faithful, but grace to abide so, and to stand fast in the faith, looking to ourselves, that we lose not these things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward," 2 John, ver. 8, Hence,

6. See the evil and danger of apostacy, and of unfaithfulness : "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38. Alas ! how little pleasure has God in the present generation, that have drawn so far back from him, and from their solemn vows and covenants, wherein they swore allegiance to him : How has he, in his hot displeasure, hardened them, and given them up to be deluded ? How is Scotland like to be a company of desperate atheists, forgetting God, and calling the proud happy ? Most people think that these are the wisest folks that comply best with the corruptions of the day, and follow the present times. How is God sweeping this generation, as with a besom ! I remember a word

(1) Independent principles were making considerable progress at this time. This spirit of independency had been first attempted and introduced by Mr. John Glas, minister at Tealing, and Mr. Francis Archibald, minister at Guthrie, about the year 1728. They found fault with our Confession of Faith and Formula ; impugned the obligation of our Covenants ; affirmed there was no warrant for national Churches ; maintained they had a right to ordain their own pastors, &c. For their adherence to these and the like tenets, they were both suspended, and afterwards deposed. Notwithstanding, their opinions were secretly favoured by several ministers, and openly espoused by numbers of people ; and to this day they still subsist.

Mr. John Welwood had in one of his sermons, "God, says he, will have Scotland swept; and will have it turned upside down, ere it be a dish for his service." He will have a generation of professors, who have not been ingenuous and even down for him, hurled out of the way, as well as a malignant party. How is the Lord, I say, sifting the present generation, as in a sieve, and discovering the naughtiness of many, who were once eminent professors, who now want, in these trying times, only to sleep in a sound skin, but are not for taking the kingdom of heaven by violence, nor for fighting their way to it, but dreaming of ease and outward liberty, as if they were to live here eternally, never minding death? But we will not be long here: let us be faithful for God unto death.

7. Hence see how reproveable these are, and how dreadful their case is, who, instead of being faithful themselves, are enemies, and persecutors of these who are studying to be faithful, and direct opposers of them: and instead of siding with the faithful in times of defection, stand in the opposite side, as it is said, Obadiah 10—13, where Edom is charged with the sin of "Standing on the other side, looking on his brother, and laying hands upon his substance." Many a heavy charge will God have against many in this generation, for their violent opposition to, and persecuting the cause of truth, when a testimony was lifted up for it. God will have somewhat against them; he will say to some, "You have sided with the corruptions of the times; when the question was, Who is on the Lord's side; you stood upon the other side." To others he will say, "You did not redeem the time, nor take the opportunity that was put in your hands to witness for me." To others he will say, "You persecuted my servants, and thrust them from their kirks, and houses, and livelihoods, and thought you did God service." To others he will say, "You made apostacy from your sacred covenants, and solemn engagements, to be for me and my truth. You said and made a confederacy with the enemy, and was yourself an enemy to my cause; and a plain testimony for it was tormenting to you." To others he will say, "You pretended that you were enemies only to the wrong way and manner of testifying for my cause and interest; but I saw the enmity that you bare to the very cause itself." To others he will say, "You turned my Father's house to a den of thieves and robbers, and you were partakers with them; you were reseters and receivers of these thieves and robbers, who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession."

To others he will say, "You came to sacramental occasions, and communion sermons, just to catch and mock, jeer and sneer; but, Behold ye despisers, wonder and perish. I will laugh at your calamities, and mock when your fear cometh." Many a heavy charge will he bring forth against an unfaithful generation.

8. Hence see the duty of all, who would be honoured with a crown of life, namely, To be faithful unto death. Let me exhort you then, 1. To be faithful. 2. To be faithful unto death.

[1.] To be faithful. And there are these following inducements to it I would offer you.

(1.) Faithfulness is what all the children of God may, through grace, attain, in whatever station; though you cannot be perfect here, yet you may be faithful and upright: though you be not so far dignified as others, in gifts and graces, and have not five talents; yet you may, through grace, be faithful in improving the two you have: and so the woman said, "Though I cannot dispute for Christ yet I can burn for him." So, though you cannot do much for Christ, yet you may be accounted faithful, who are ready to suffer for him. Though you cannot act for him in such a public manner, in such a public station as others, yet you may be faithful in private; yea, and be in a secret chamber, when it is not to exclude your confessing Christ before the world, as you have opportunity. We cannot expect a perfect church on earth, but we should seek to be members of a pure and faithful church, aiming at perfection, and owning her imperfections: and faithfully acknowledging all things that are wrong; but, I think, you will own we should beware of that church that is so unfaithful, as neither to confess nor forsake. However, here, I say, it is a great encouragement to faithfulness, that, through grace, you may be faithful in whatever station, even the lowest: and be as far forward, in fidelity, as the greatest.

(2.) A second encouragement is, That a man may be faithful unto God, though he be not successful. It will not be inquired of a minister in his labour, or a Christian in his endeavours, what success he has had; but what fidelity he has used; therefore Christ says not, Well done, successful servant; but, Good and faithful servant. You may take an instance of this, both in the public, and in your bosom. In the public; it is said, Isa. xlix. 4, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for naught; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." Again, in your bosom; it will not be inquired, what success you have had,

and what speed you have come in your conflict against sin and Satan : but, art thou aiming at faithfulness in the holy war? Psal. xviii. 21, "I have kept the ways of the Lord." Well, how proves he that? Indeed, he durst not say, "I have not departed from my God;" but he could venture to say, "I have not wickedly departed from my God."

(3.) The next encouragement is, Faithfulness is the way to increase : the talent that is occupied shall grow. Many do not grow in grace, because they do not improve it; "Then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning : and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth," Hos. vi. 3.

(4.) A fourth encouragement is, It is the greatest honour can be put upon you, and the greatest mercy you can find, to get leave to be faithful; it is said of Paul, he obtained mercy to be faithful, 1 Cor. vii. 25. If you considered, that to be faithful, is a privilege, and a great mercy, you would go cheerfully to work : but when you believe the command to be faithful in this or that duty, as upon Pharaoh's task-masters, saying, with heaviness, "It must be done;" and not with cheerfulness, It shall be done, through grace; why, then your service is but legal, not evangelical : forced and not free as if you were under the law, and not under grace. But if you looked upon faithfulness as a mercy, a privilege, and honour, as David did, when he got leave to offer to the house of the Lord, then you would say with him, 1 Chron. xxix. 14, "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things are of thee; and of thine own have we given thee."

(5.) A fifth encouragement we offer is, That though you should have few neighbours in this unfaithful generation, yet the fewer they are, that are faithful in their day, the more honourable mention will be made of them; "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy," Rev. iii. 4. And though the whole generation about them should ruin themselves, with their infidelity and apostacy, yet God will take care of them and theirs, that study faithfulness, and endeavour to put honour upon God in their day; "The Lord said to Noah, Come thou and all thine house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation," Gen. vii. 1.

(6.) The next encouragement we present you with, is this,

You that aim at fidelity, though you should have never so many unfaithful neighbours about you, yet you have a faithful God to deal with. What encouragement is it to be a faithful servant, that you have a faithful Master? 1 Cor. i. 9, "God is faithful, by whom you are called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." And chap. x. 13, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able," &c, "1 Thes. 5, 24, "Faithful is he that called you, who also will do it." And 2 Thes. iii. 3, where the apostle, speaking of the need of being delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, "For all men have not faith," it follows, "But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil.—1 John i. 9. If we confess our sins, (namely over the head of the sacrifice, "The blood of Christ, that cleanses from all sin," God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" as oft as the faithfulness of God is spoken of in scripture, so often you are invited to take encouragement from it. You may say, "Lord thou hast called me to such a work and warfare;" and the Lord will say, "I am faithful that hath called you, and also will do it." Likewise his word is a faithful word, a faithful saying; and Christ is a merciful and faithful High-priest, the true and faithful witness, Rev. xix. 11. His name in capital letters, is called, FAITHFUL and TRUE. You need not fear to venture on difficulties in his service; for he that has called you is faithful and true. I would next exhort you,

[2.] To be faithful unto death; that is, to perseverance and constancy: for which end I offer you the following directions.

(1.) Look not only to your work, but to your encouragement; yea, look first to your encouragement and privilege, and next to your work; for you are not now called to do and live; but to live and do. Look to the life, strength, and righteousness, fulness and furniture you have in Christ; and then up and be doing, with the psalmist, "I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only," Psalm lxxi. 16. If you look only to the burdensome work, the hard task, it will break your back, and break your heart, and damp your courage before ever you begin. Therefore,

(2.) If you would be faithful unto death, quit your own strength, and even all the strength of grace received formerly, or presently, and be not strong in that, but in the grace that is in Christ, 1 Tim. ii. 1; in the grace that is in the fountain, running

out to you in the promises. The children of God, never lost their feet, when they thought themselves in hazard, and were diffident of themselves; but when God was good to them, and they thought their mountain stood strong, this brought in a slip and a fall. If thou goest through the wilderness, it must be leaning upon thy Beloved.

(3.) If you will be faithful unto death, and to the end, take notice, with thankfulness, of the steps God has led you through the wilderness already, saying, as it is, 1 Sam. vii. 12, "Hitherto has the Lord helped us;" and hitherto has the Lord helped me. Some of you have already met with many crosses, and God has carried you through; and yet when you look to the cross before your hand, the fear of that makes you forget what he has done: but, O! bless him for what he has done already, in that so many crosses are fairly over your head: and, "Now is your salvation nearer than when you first believed." Therefore hope in him, that he who has delivered, and does deliver, will yet deliver, and help you.

(4.) Maintain the relish of the sweetness of your course in the good way of the Lord, "If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3. Some, indeed, may be carried on to perseverance, through much bitterness, because of divine desertion; but you would labour to taste and see that God is good; and how at times, he is even drawing you with the bands of love, when you are seeking him. Have you not found sometimes a smell of his ointment on the lock of the door, sweetly drawing you after him?

(5.) Would you be constant to death? Then consider the loss and disadvantage of inconstancy; if you persevere not, you are in greater danger than before; "It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment, 2 Pet. ii. 21.—Where is the blessedness you spake of? Gal. iv. 15.—Are you so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?" Gal. iii. 3. Had you a sense of God's favour when you kept his way? And will you now throw it away in an hour of temptation?

(6.) Would you be faithful to death? Then lay hold upon, and plead the promise of perseverance: Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." In the strength of that promise go on, go on; and remember it is but a little farther you have to continue going on. It is but a short while you have to be faithful; it is but unto death; and that is but for a

day ; because, for any thing you know, to-morrow may end your course ; in regard you know not what a day may bring forth.

(7.) But last of all, consider the crowning encouragement in the text, "I will give thee a crown of life ;" though you should be now losers, yet you shall be gainers hereafter ; though now you are in a way of suffering, yet you are in the way to glory : if you be truly faithful, and faithful unto death, you are going, as Christ did, by the way of the cross to the crown. See Luke xxiv. 26, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and then to enter into his glory ?" And ought you not to follow his steps ? If so, you are sure of the crown. And, what sort of a crown is it ? It is a crown of life : a crown of righteousness ; a crown of glory, that fadeth not away, 1 Pet. v. 4 : it cannot be taken away either by deceit or violence. It is a crown incorruptable, that will never either wear or decay. And it will be but a little while and you will be possessed of it : "Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come:" a little while will ease you of all your burdens, and bring you to glory. Your afflictions are but light and inconsiderable, in comparison of this heavy crown ; the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. Therefore, as you would desire to be crowned after death, endeavour to be faithful unto death. Think what a folly it is to begin and enter upon the way of the Lord, and then to go back ; "Jesus said, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God," Luke ix. 62. And is there not the same reason for continuing with Christ, and cleaving to his truth and cause, as there was for joining with Christ at first ? Is there not as much beauty in Christ now as before ? Is not his name and truth as precious still as ever it was ? Is not Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ? Are not his promises the same as they were ? And is there not as much furniture and fulness in Christ, as ever there were ? Is he changed from what he was, because you see many of this generation changed from what they were ? O sirs, turn not your backs upon him : you that are his disciples, tell me, Will you also go away with the multitude, that are turning off from their most solemn engagements to him ? Will you halt, for fear you have not ability to go on ? Is there not as much grace and strength in Christ, to bring you on with him, as ever there was to bring you in to him ? O then, hear him saying, "Come with me from Lebanon."

Consider, likewise, if you be not faithful unto death, you lose

all that you have done ; you lose the fruit of your profession ; you lose all your pains, and prayers, and fightings formerly ; you give the greatest wound to religion ; you bring up an ill report upon the Lord's way ; and, by your apostacy, you wound and weaken the hearts of the faithful, and you harden the hearts of the wicked and graceless generation, and strength their hands : yea, if you wickedly depart from the ways of the Lord, under whatever pretence, you shew yourself unfaithful, and declare you was never truly of the number of the faithful : for, you go out from them, because you were never of them, 1 John ii 19. And you fall under the weight of God's eternal displeasure ; Heb x. 24. "Now, the just shall live by faith ; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." The weight of God's hand is heavy upon his own people, on account of their partial departure from him, Psa. lxxxix. 30—32. O then, how dreadfully heavy shall the weight of God's wrath be for ever to wicked apostates ! They that depart now from the truth of God, the God of truth will charge them to depart from him at the great day, and doom them to eternal misery !

Now is the time you are called to appear for God faithfully, in a day wherein truth and the friends thereof are persecuted and opposed, reproached and reviled ; in such a dark day you had much need to shine as lights. See the practice of David, cxix. 137. "Many are my persecutors and mine enemies ; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies." In a declining time, when many are turning from the truth, and drinking in error and delusion, shewing hatred and spite against any zealous appearance or faithful testimony for the truth ; tormented with it, and embittered and enraged against it ; then especially it is God that charges us from heaven not to decline ; Duet. xxviii. 14. "Thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after their gods." Though you should be broken in the place of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death, yet must we not forget the name of our God, nor stretch out our hands unto a strange god ; for, "Shall not God search this out ? for he knows the secrets of the heart," Psalm xliv. 19, 20, 21. And though, for his sake, we should be killed all day, and counted as sheep for the slaughter ; yet then we ought especially not to decline, if we would have the testimony of God and conscience, though the world calls us fools. See the testimony God gives to Pergamus, Rev. ii. 13.

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." To be faithful in cleaving to the Lord in such a wicked place, and under such discouragements, has a mark of honour upon it. Men's oppression and opposition, and hell and earth's raging against the work of the Lord, will be no excuse, at the great day, for any man to decline from the testimony of God. Alas! many carry now-a-days, as if they thought a little worldly conveniency, a well paid stipend, or an estate, was better than the prospect of a crown of life, at the end of the day; but, alas! what is outward ease and liberty, with a racking conscience? It is true, many blindfold their conscience, by thinking they can keep in with God and the world both: with the God of heaven, and the god of this world both; which is as possible as to join measures with an apostate church, and yet keep a good conscience, and think they do God service. Hence some rack their inventions how to find out faults and blemishes in a faithful testimony at the present time; and how to find out excuses and apologies for an apostate persecuting church, and for holding close communion with them; but, "Shall not God search this out; for he understands heart secrets?" It is not enough we be reckoned faithful some time of our lives; but, happy they that are faithful unto death!

I shall now close, and shut up what I have said with a few advices. There are first some things we should beware of, and next some things that we should be careful of, if we would be faithful unto death.

1st, There are some things that we should be aware of, if we would be faithful unto death

1. We should beware of the world, and the love of the world; for, "They that will be rich," by whatever means, "they fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts," 2 Tim. ii. 4. The love of the world is the spring of much defection, which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, 1 Tim. iv. 9, "All these things will I give thee," was Satan's utmost offer to our Lord Jesus; but, as he has disputed it, with a "Get thee behind me, Satan," so will all his faithful followers, when it comes in competition with Christ and his cause. They are not the fools to throw away the world at random; but they would

be great fools if they preferred it to that which is of more worth than a thousand worlds ; and, so is every grain weight of precious truth, relating either to the doctrine, worship, discipline, or government of God's house. It was an honourable reproach one of the great men of the church of Rome passed upon Luther, "That German beast," says he, "cares not for gold."

2. Beware of making nothing of Christ's little things ; for his small things are great things, and the neglecting of them is a matter of great moment, Matt. v. 19, "He that breaks one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." On the other hand, beware of thinking nothing of the world's little things ; I mean, of thinking little of some sins. The greatest sins and apostasies have been little beginnings ; and the devil and the world say, Why, "here is but a little and a light thing, you need not fear." But these little beginnings may be like the needle, which, though it makes but a small hole, brings a long thread after it.

3. Beware of carnal company ; for, "the companions of fools shall be destroyed." The company of some carnal and unfaithful professors will soon tend to cool your zeal for God ; and especially the company of those who have been of reputation for piety, and now are noted for apostacy. Their example and influence may do more harm than an hundred others that are openly graceless ; because, harm by these that are of most reputation for religion, is not so much seen or suspected, but they are more dangerous ; just like rocks in the sea, that are only covered with water, on which vessels may be broken to pieces, before ever they be aware of them.

4. Beware of all the good new ways, which tend to lead you out of the good old way, which you ought to seek after, Jer. vi. 16. By the good new way, I mean these that are extolled for goodness, and yet are delusive and destructive, while Satan therein is transforming himself to an angel of light ; and, under a mask of more than ordinary religion, and the appearance of a good new work of conversion, seeking to raze and undermine the good old work of reformation, and to knock down all essays to witness for it ; but it will be found there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel.

In a word, beware, and take heed, brethren, "Lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God," Heb. iii. 12. This is the root of all apostacy and unfaithful-

ness. O be afraid, lest, by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus, 2 Cor. xi. 3.

2dly, In order to be faithful unto death, there are these things you should be careful of,

1. Study to receive the love and power of the truth, to which you are called to cleave faithfully unto death; for want of this, many otherwise more learned and eminent than you, are given up to strong delusions, to believe a lie, 2 Thess. x. 11. O study to learn the truth as it is in Jesus; and not only to have a head knowledge of it, but a heart love to it. Some that have seemed pillars in the church have not only fallen in days of trial, but led others away in apostacy, by which the faith of some have been overthrown, and the faith of others much shaken; while yet saints, of the lowest stations, have been faithful witnesses and martyrs for the truth, while they had, in their hearts, what others have only had in their heads.

2. Study to cleave to the truths of God that are most attacked and assaulted by the enemies in your time, and so to be established in the present truth, 2 Peter i. 12. Otherwise, you cannot contend for the faith in your day, if you stand not up for the truth that is opposed in your time.

3. Study, in order to be faithful unto death, to hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, 1 Tim. i. 19, which some, having put away, concerning the faith, have made shipwreck; for, if a man make a gap in his conscience, by sinning against light, and act unfaithfully, especially in public matters, that relate to the declarative glory of God, if it be not speedily healed by the application of Christ's blood, it is hard to tell where it may land. The gap that is once opened that way, may let in a devil of apostacy from the faith; and then a devil of enmity against the faithful; and then a devil of open persecution of them; and, alas! it is too evident, that such devils have entered and taken possession of many of this generation.

4. To name no more particulars, study to have from the Author and Finisher of faith a fulness of faith; for, I think, faithfulness just imports a fulness of faith; the more faith the more faithfulness. Endeavour to be much in the prayer of faith, for the Spirit of faith and the life of faith; you cannot be faithful unto death, unless you live and die in the faith; and to live a life of

faith is to live a life of diffidence in yourself, and of humble confidence in the Lord, trusting in him at all times, and pouring out your heart before him, believing the promises and resting upon a promising God for furniture to qualify and enable you to be faithful unto death. Your promising God is a giving God in Christ, and what does he give? "He gives grace and glory," Psal. lxxxiv. 11. What is that? He gives grace to be faithful, and then he gives the crown of life. In this covenant of grace both the work and the reward is freely given, upon the price of Christ's blood, fully paid down upon the cross; and, upon this ground, grace to be faithful is as freely given now, as the crown of life is freely given hereafter. Therefore, live by faith, and depend upon a promising and giving God both for grace to be faithful unto death, and for the crown of life at the close of the day.

I might speak a word now to you that are in a state of sin and unbelief. You that are in a state of nature and unbelief, and consequently of unfaithfulness, know, if you remain in that state, what is awaiting you; not a crown of life, but the wages of your sin, which is eternal death; you must die in your sins, and die under God's everlasting wrath. You remain unfaithful in your duty, unfaithful in your day; and, if you be unfaithful unto death, he will give you a cup of wrath; the unfaithful servant is to be cast out into the lake of fire, the place of utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But if you would yet be among the faithful in Christ, then you must get in to Christ; therefore, in order to your being capable of faithfulness, let me exhort you to faith, or believing, for this is the way also, and the first step to the crown of life, "He that believeth hath everlasting life." O then, sirs, come to our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and hear his voice to you, saying, "Come unto me," Matt. xi. 28, "Look unto me," Isaiah xlv. 22.

QUEST. Who is he that is saying, "Come to me," and "Look to me?"

ANSW. Even he that gives you so many of his names and designations in these epistles to the seven churches of Asia. It is he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, Rev. ii. 1; and is the minister above all ministers; we cannot say, Come to us, but to our Master, who says, "Come to me." It is he that is the first and the last, verse 8, that was dead and is alive; even he that is Alpha and Omega. It is he that has the sharp sword with two

edges, whose word is like a sharp two edged sword ; that hath both a cutting and a quickening edge, to be a savour of life or death ; it is he that says, "Come to me." It is he that has eyes like a flame of fire, and has feet like fine brass ; pointing out the omniscience of his eyes, and stability of his ways and counsels ; it is he that says, "Come to me." It is he that has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars : that has all the gifts and graces of the Spirit to give out as he pleaseth. It is he that is holy and true ; he that hath the key of David, that openeth and none shutteth, and shutteth and none can open : that has the opening of the gates both of hell and heaven ; that is able both to damn and to save : it is he that says, "Come to me." It is he that is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God, the author both of the old and new creation ; he that can create faith, and turn grace, in his word, to grace in your heart. He it is that is saying, "Come to me, look to me : Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters ; come to me, without money and without price."

Why, say you, "I am not faithful ; I am not yet qualified with faith and faithfulness ; therefore I should not come yet, till I be better qualified." Why, man, do you think to have faith or faithfulness either, before you come to Christ for them : he is the author of both ; and because you have nothing, you are invited to come to Christ for all that you want. If you stay away from the market of free grace, till the day you have a price in your hand, or till the day that you have faith and faithfulness to bring with you, you will come too late ; you will come the day after the market, and the door will be shut upon you. Therefore, Come, poor soul : come just now, as you are ; for, "Now is the accepted time ; now is the day of salvation." Now, now, he is saying, "Come to me, look to me, believe on me : " though you have been never such a desperate sinner heretofore, and though you be this moment a dead sinner, with a heart as dead as a stone within you : yet, "Hear, and your soul shall live : " hear who is speaking to you, and saying, "Come to me ; I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." O look to the God of all power and grace that he may put power in his word ; he that says, *Be thou faithful*, is the God that said in the first creation, "Be thou fruitful and multiply ;" and as he said, he hath made it come to pass to this day ; so he here says, as the author of the new creation, *Be thou faithful*. O say you, "AMEN, be it so, Lord ; turn the

grace that is in thy word, to the grace in my heart and life." And for this end, O dear soul, hear and consider who it is that is speaking to you from heaven, and calling you first to faith, and then to faithfulness; even he that hath both to give, and that is more willing to be a giver than you are to be a receiver: put not the gift and the giver both from you, saying, It is not to me he is speaking; yea, it is to you, man; you, woman; it is to thee in particular; to young and old. Well, what is he saying? Why, would you know what I would have you to do? "This is the work of God that ye believe;" therefore, come to me; come to me to do all for you: and would you know what I would have you to be? *Be thou faithful*, even thou, and thou, and thou; "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*"

May the Lord enable you to answer his call: this is his will; therefore, say thou, "Thy will be done."

SERMON LXXVII.

THE BUILDER'S ARMOUR; OR, THE WORK AND WARFARE OF SPIRITUAL BUILDERS.¹

"For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded."
—Neh. iv. 18.

THESE that have been solemnly giving up themselves to God in Christ, as his friends and followers, have a twofold work lying upon their hand, which they ought to be daily employed in, through the grace and strength of the Lord Jesus Christ; one is a building which they are concerned to have carried on, Jude, ver. 20, "Building up themselves in their most holy faith;" another is, a battle, which they are concerned to fight under the banner of the Captain of salvation: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses," 1 Tim. vi. 12. Somewhat relating both to this building and this battle is represented here to us.

In the words which I have just now read, we have an account how the Jews in Nehemiah's time carried on the work of rebuilding

(1) This sermon was preached at Stirling, on Monday, June 31, 1743, after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there.

the walls of Jerusalem, that were gone to ruin, as you see, chap. i. 3, "And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province, are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire." And chap. ii. 17, 18, "Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire; come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God, which was upon me, as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me; and they said, Let us rise up and build; so they strengthened their hands for this good work." Their work behoved to be carried on with a warfare against surrounding enemies: see chap. ii. 10, "When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly, that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." And chap. iv. 1, 2, 3, "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews; and he spake before his brethren, and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt? Now, Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone-wall." Ver. 6, 7, 8, "So we built the wall, and all the wall was joined together, unto the half thereof; for the people had a mind to work. But it came to pass, that when Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites and Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together, to come and fight against it and hinder it." And ver. 11, 13, "And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. Therefore set I in the lower places, behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows." They were obliged to be ready for the building and the battle both at once; see verse 17, "Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon:" "For," says the text, "the builders, every one had his sword girded upon his side, and so builded."

Now, the manner wherein they carried on that work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, in the literal sense, when they were ruinous, was typical of the way and manner wherein the spiritual building is to be carried on, whether it relate to the work of grace in the hearts of particular believers, or the work of reformation in the church. There is no repairing of that work, when ruinous, without opposition from enemies without and within, filled with the fury of earth and hell against the work ; therefore, builders must be ready for fighting ; every builder must have his sword girded by his side, and so build. The observation I deduce from the text is the following :—

DOCT. “ That spiritual builders need to be spiritual soldiers.”

As we have the spiritual banquet and the spiritual battle joined together, Song ii. 4, “ He brought me to the banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love ;” his banner for war : So here, we have the building and the battle put together ; the trowel in the one hand, as it were, and the sword in the other. God’s people are called both to work and war at once. It is true, God is the worker of all their work in and for them ; and as for the war, the battle is the Lord’s : but, as this is the greatest encouragement to work out the work of our salvation with fear and trembling ; because it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do : so it is the greatest encouragement imaginable to building work, that Christ is the Master-builder, who alone builds the temple, and shall bear the glory ; so also to warfare, that he is the Captain of salvation, that fights for us, in whom we are to be strong. Therefore it is in the name and strength of this great Builder and glorious Captain, that spiritual builders must be spiritual soldiers.

The method we propose, for handling this subject, is the following :—

- I. We would speak a little of the spiritual builders.
- II. Concerning the spiritual soldiers.
- III. Offer some reasons why spiritual builders need also to be spiritual soldiers, still ready for war.
- IV. Deduce some inferences for the application.

I. We would speak a little concerning the spiritual builders. And here I would offer the following account of them.

1. Every spiritual builder is one that is acquainted with the great Master-builder, and has come to learn the trade with him ; he has, in a manner, bound himself apprentice to learn this art of building up himself in his most holy faith, even from him who is the chief Builder, that is, God : " For every house is built by some man, but he that built all things is God," Heb. iii. 4 ; and all that are taught this art are taught of God ; " It is written in the prophets, they shall be all taught of God," John vi. 45. The spiritual builder, then, is one that has heard and learned of the Father. They are such as have either served, or are still serving their apprenticeship to this great Master of the work, and seeking to be more and more taught of him.

2. The spiritual builder is somewhat acquainted with the preparation of fit and proper materials for the building, such as are spoken of, 1 Cor. iii. 12 ; not wood, hay, and stubble, and trash ; but gold, silver, and precious stones ; such as the golden graces of the Spirit, the silver promises of the covenant, and the precious stones, the precious blessings of the everlasting gospel. There is no building without materials of that sort ; and the builders with these materials are not only ministers, who are superior in office, and yet under-builders, when compared with the great Master-builder, Christ ; but private Christians are inferior builders ; for, " Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is ;" what sort of materials he builds withal.

3. The spiritual builder is himself a part of the building : " We are labourers together with God," says the apostle : " Ye are God's building," 1 Cor. iii. 9. " To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house," 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5, called, " An habitation of God, through the Spirit," Eph. ii. 22.

4. The spiritual builder is concerned to have the rubbish removed, the old building overturned, in order to the new work he has on hand, Isa. xl. 3, 4. Such preparation we read of, chap. lxii. 10, " Go through, go through the gates, prepare you the way of the people ; cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people." Men must be unbottomed from the covenant of works, and all hope of life by the law, in order to their new building upon the new-covenant ground. Hence,

5. The spiritual builder is concerned to dig deep, that he and

his building may stand the firmer ; to dig deep by conviction and humiliation into his sinful and miserable state, deep into his wants and plagues, and into a sense of the wrath of God, ready to pursue him for his sin ; otherwise he has no due sense of his need of Christ, and salvation through him ; therefore the builder seeks and earnestly entreats the Spirit to come by his convincing work, John xvi. 8 ; and make him dig deep into the heart, that is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, Jer. xvii. 9. The building is heart-work ; the heart-evils must be discovered, and the builder must be concerned to dig deep, that he may build high ; I mean, to be deeply humbled under the mighty hand of God, that he may be exalted in due time. The lower the foundation, the stronger will be the superstructure. Hence,

6. The spiritual builder is one that is in a spiritual manner concerned about and occupied in laying a good foundation, and having himself built upon it. The only foundation is Christ ; for, "Another foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iii. 11. Christ is the foundation that God has already laid : "Thus saith the Lord God, behold I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation ; he that believeth shall not make haste," Isa. xxviii. 16, compared with Rom. ix. 33, and x. 11, and 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7, 8. Therefore the builder's work or business is not to do any thing that was never done, or to lay a foundation that was never before laid ; but to believe and assent to what God has done, and appropriate that foundation to himself that God has laid for him, who has laid our help upon one that is mighty. He is occupied in laying his help where God has laid it ; he builds upon no other foundation but Christ, as he is the way, the truth, and the life : and so he is the foundation in all respects ; personally, as the way ; doctrinally, as the truth ; and efficaciously, as he is the life ; he is the foundation in his person, as the way ; in his doctrine, as the truth ; and in his Spirit, as the life.

QUEST. What is to be done in laying the foundation ?

ANSW. Nay, rather you may ask, What is to be undone ? What is a man to do for Christ ? Indeed, to be undone is the thing to be done : for this is a self-outing, self-emptying work. He that lays a foundation needs not raise a scaffold for working ; nay, as I said, he digs down, for the foundation is not laid upon any part of the building ; and all must be levelled to the ground before a new

foundation is laid ; even so, he that lays Christ to the foundation of all his faith, hope, and comfort, needs not, yea, must not, build a scaffold of his own works and righteousness. The foundation is not laid upon any part of the building ; on the contrary, all must be pulled down ; yea, all must be counted loss and dung for Christ : " What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ ; yea, and I count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," Phil. iii. 7, 8.

7. The spiritual builder is one who, having thus laid the good foundation, and himself upon it, studies to make daily progress upon that foundation, by adding one stone to another, one grace to another, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7 ; and joining them all close to, and upon, the foundation, and close to one another ; cementing them all together as with mortar, and gradually advancing and growing in grace, and the knowledge of Christ. See, to this purpose, Eph. ii. 20, " And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." And verse 21, " In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord." And Col. ii. 7, " As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him ; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught." See Jude, ver. 20. This progressive work includes a cleaving more close to the foundation, and living by faith upon Christ, and so going from strength to strength, from faith to faith. It includes a closer union and a closer association of the members of Christ, as lively stones joined together in Christ and in the truth, all " holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God," Col. ii. 19. To unite in a way, not holding the head, is to carry on a vain building in the air, separate from the foundation ; an imaginary work.

8. The spiritual builder carries on his work according to the right rule ; he has his line and plummet, and acts according to the strictest regularity, and by the most exact square. What is the rule ? Even the word of God, the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, are the only rule : " 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. " They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them," Luke xvi. 29. " And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, and upon the

Israel of God," Gal. vi. 16. There are some builders at this day, who make other things their rule ; some make ministers their rule ; right or wrong they will follow them, saying, God forgive our teachers, if they mislead us ; we know no better. But, as the holy man Rutherford says, "If our light (speaking of ministers in his day), if the minister's light be all your scripture, the Lord pity you ; I would not give a farthing for your faith ; for our light (says he) sits many times door-neighbour with the fat world ; and the world poisons light." Some make the Spirit their rule ; particularly such as fall into the quakerish enthusiastical way. It is a delusive work, wherein the Spirit, who is the ruler, is put in place of the word of God, which is the rule : Hence some make motions, feelings, impressions, influences, the rule of judging that the work with them is a right work, and the rule of judging that the witnessing work of the day, among our hands, is a wrong work, which is at best a setting the Spirit of God against the word of God. No wonder than a delusive influence may be thus abused ; for men may be under a divine influence, and yet under a delusion, when they make that influence their rule. Job's friends were under a divine influence in what they spoke ; but they made that their rule of judging that Job was an hypocrite, and so were under a delusion, which God afterwards discovered. Some, again, make the word their rule, and a good, sufficient, excellent rule, but not the only rule ; thus they speak and write, who savour of a deistical spirit, making the light of nature and reason a rule, as well as the light of the word. But the true spiritual builder makes the word his only rule. But I proceed to,

II. The next thing proposed, viz. To give some account of the spiritual soldier. It is said, "Every builder had his sword girded by his side : " every builder here was a soldier ; and to be a soldier, in a spiritual sense,

1. Supposes the person has enlisted with the Captain of salvation, Christ Jesus, and is acquaint with him. You are not soldiers, nor can you possibly be reckoned such, who have not taken on, or come to Christ, both as the Master-builder, to build with you, and for you, and, as the Lord, mighty in battle, to fight for you.

2. The spiritual builder is one who is brought to the field of battle, which is just the field where they build ; the place of building is the place of battle. The soldier no sooner begins to build, but he must begin to fight the good fight of faith.

3. The spiritual builder is one who has put on the whole armour of God, spoken of, Eph. vi. 11-18 ; that is, the various graces of the Spirit, that are so many weapons of war against the devil, the world, and the flesh. But,

4. The spiritual warrior is one who dares not trust to the received grace of God, but to the God of grace ; he does not depend upon the armour of God, but upon the God of armour ; being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ; strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

But I shall speak a little of the spiritual warrior as here represented and exemplified in the text: where you may observe, 1. The weapon they are said to have, namely, the sword. 2. Their readiness to make use of it while building ; "every builder had his sword girded by his side, and so builded."

1st, The weapon mentioned is the sword ; and the sword of the spiritual warrior is no other, than that you read of, Eph. vi. 17, "The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." I think it is remarkable, it is not the Spirit himself that is the sword, but his word is the sword. As the word is the only rule for building, so the same word is the only rule for fighting. As the Spirit is the ruler, not the rule ; so the Spirit is the fighter, not the weapon. We are to try the spirits by the word, not the word by the Spirit and his motions or influences ; these are various and changeable, enduring but a little while ; but "The word of the Lord endureth for ever." Indeed, the Spirit makes the word plain and powerful, and then the word makes the Spirit and his work plain and evident to be his. True and false spirits are to be tried by the word : this is the sword that the Captain himself girds withal ; "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty," Psalm xlv. 3 : and thus girded, he goes forth conquering and to conquer. This also is the sword wherewith his soldiers are girded.

The word may be compared to a sword on many accounts. The sword is a sharp weapon : so is the word compared to a sharp two-edged sword, Heb. iv. 12, "The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." A sword is both a defensive and offensive weapon ; so is the word for defending against Satan's assaults, and making the enemy fly ; with this Christ defeats the devil, saying, "It is written." A sword is a

bright, glittering weapon : the word of God is like a clear glancing sword ; it is "A light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn," 2 Pet. i. 15. A sword must be good proven metal ; so, "The word of the Lord is a tried word," Psalm xviii. 30. The words of the Lord are pure words ; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, Psalm xii. 6. A sword must be drawn out of the scabbard ere it do execution, and pointed towards the enemy, to push at him ; so the word must be opened by the Spirit, otherwise it is a sealed book, a sword not drawn. The sword of the Spirit must be drawn by the Spirit, and applied ; then will his arrows be sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under him, Psalm xlv. 5. In a word, a sword must be managed by a fit hand ; and the hand must have strength to play and push with the sword : even so the word in the hand of faith must be managed by the strength of Jehovah, by the power of the Spirit ; otherwise our leviathan lusts will laugh at the shaking of our spear ; we must be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.

But as the word is fitly comparable to a sword, so it is called the sword of the Spirit fitly ; for, 1. It is the Spirit that made the sword : the word is indited by him ; for, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2. It is the Spirit that burnishes and brightens the sword, making it clear, to be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths. 3. It is the Spirit that points the sword, and makes the word sharper than a two-edged sword. 4. It is the Spirit that draws the sword, and that wields and manages it whenever it does any execution, and makes it powerful ; "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." 5. It is the Spirit that puts the sword, the word, into our mouths and hearts ; Prov. i. 22, 23, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge ? Turn you at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." Isa. lix. 21, "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my 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." 6. It is the Spirit that makes the sword of the word to be spirit and life ; John vi. 63, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." It is the Spirit that turns grace in the word to grace in the heart,

by making the spirit and life ; for "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life," 2 Cor. vi. 3. Here, then, is the sword of the Spirit, the weapon of the spiritual builder. But now,

2ndly, Here is their readiness to make use of it while building, "Every man had his sword girded by his side, and so builded ;" where four things may be observed.

1. Every worker here is a warrior ; every builder had a sword, none are exempted from the war, that were engaged in the work of building ; so in the spiritual warfare every one that puts his hand to the building, must put his hand to the sword, and resolve to fight upon the wall that he builds, to fight the good fight of faith.

2. Observe, that every builder had his sword, his own sword ; even so in the spiritual warfare, every true builder has his sword, making the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, his own sword. They take to them this armour of God, as David said, Psalm cxix. 3, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever." They take the word that Christ gives them, John xvii. 14, "I have given them thy word." Here we may say, the spiritual mason's word is the sword ; "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:" and every builder that intends to have the pillars of the temple he builds upon to be called JACHIN and BOAZ, *stability* and *strength*, he has the word of promise, that he uses as his own : "Remember, Lord, the word on which thou hast caused me to hope." Hence,

3. Every builder had his sword girded by his side, girded and bound, that it might not be lost ; so every spiritual warrior has the sword of the word applied, cleaving to him as a girdle, and he binding it, as it were, to his side, to his heart ; "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee," by yielding to the enemy, when I have this sword to resist him.

4. Observe, "Every builder had his sword girded by his side (or his loins, as in the margin), and so builded."

Here, again, are several things instructive, with reference to the spiritual builder and soldier both. Why, here is the closest application of the sword, "Every one had his sword girded by his loins, his sword by his side ;" so the word must be closely applied ; hence, says the apostle, "Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you," Col. iii. 16. Here is their prudence, girding up the sword, that it might not hinder them in their work : we are not to make such use of the word as to hinder our work, but to lay it up in our hearts, so as to practise it in our lives. And again, here is their

diligence in their present work ; when they were not just at war fighting, they were at work building. God gives his people sometimes a little breathing and interval of rest from the pitched battle, like the silence that was in heaven about half an hour, Rev. viii. 1 ; but when they are not just fighting with the foe, they are called to be building at the wall. Finally, here is their readiness for the war, as well as diligence in their work, not knowing how soon they might be assaulted ; “ Every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded.” Thus in building we should be ready for battle ; still armed, still watching, still wearing the sword of the Spirit, ready to draw upon the enemy, and lash the foe that would hinder the building of the wall, and interrupt our progress in the work of God. So much for a short account of the spiritual soldier, from this text.

III. We proposed, in the third place, to offer some reasons, why the spiritual builder needs to be a spiritual soldier. Why,

1. Because this spiritual building has many enemies, and is very grievous to enemies ; it is opposed by all the power of earth and hell ; “ The heathen rage against it, and the people imagine a vain thing ; the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers of church and state take counsel together against the Lord and his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us,” Psalm ii. 1, 2, 3. The upbuilding of any soul in the most holy faith is the eye-sore of hell ; and the building up of the wall of Jerusalem, or any attempt to repair the ruins of the church, in the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, is grievous and tormenting to them that dwell upon the earth. Thus the building of the wall of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's days ; see how grievous and vexing it was to enemies, that Nehemiah was come to put hand to this work : read Neh. ii. 10, “ When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobia the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly, that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.” That work which is exceeding gladdening to the godly, the well-wishers of Jerusalem, and the rebuilding the desolations thereof, is exceeding grievous to the enemy ; as the building goes up, the enemies go mad ; therefore, every builder needs to be a soldier, ready for war.

2. Because the enemy is very powerful and politic ; very strong and subtile, very wicked and malicious, full of hatred and indignation against the building and builders : see how they discovered themselves in Nehemiah's time, when he set about the

work, chap. ii. 19, "But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshom the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?" They that were builders of the wall were charged as enemies to the government, derided and laughed to scorn, chap. iv. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 11. Their opposers were also subtle and politic; see chap. vi., how they practised by craft, seeking to do Nehemiah a mischief, ver. 2; how they practised by rumours and false reports, ver. 6-10; and also by false and feigned prophecies, ver. 12, 13, 14. When enemies are so many, so powerful and politic, so wicked and malicious, surely the builders have need every one of a sword girded by his side.

3. Spiritual builders need to be ready for war, because they build in an enemy's country, as long as they are about this building work on earth. As on earth Christ rules in the midst of his enemies, so his faithful servants and people build in the midst of their enemies. This earthly region is the devil's walk, where he is going to and fro, and walking up and down, Job i. 7. While they build in such a place, where they are surrounded with the devil, and instruments of the devil; yea, not only with the wickedness of the wicked and unregenerate world, but the remaining wickedness of the godly, alas! what need have builders to be still ready armed.

4. The spiritual builders need to have their sword girded on their side, and so to build, because they build in the enemy's eye, in the enemy's sight and presence; he that covers a table for his people in the presence of their enemies, calls them also to build and bear witness for him in the presence of their foes; for which they are looked upon as signs and wonders; but as they expect that he will not be ashamed of them at the last day, so they are not ashamed of him before the world of men and devils, nor ashamed of their building work. See how boldly Nehemiah sets about the work in the face of his enemies, that laughed him to scorn, chap. ii. 20, "Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven he will prosper us, therefore we his servants will arise and build; but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem." However, their building in the enemy's presence makes the enemy rage the more, and therefore they need to be ready armed when they build.

5. Spiritual builders need to be spiritual soldiers, ready for war, because the enemy is ready to break down the building as fast as we can build it up, unless we be still ready, with our sword

girded by our side, to resist them. Satan stands at our right hand, ready to resist us in the work of God, and is always watching to overthrow the building of grace; therefore we need to be always on our guard, watching and ready, "Looking to ourselves, that we lose not what we have gained," 2 John, ver. 8; "Holding fast what we have, that no man take our crown," Rev. iii. 11.

6. Every builder should have his sword girded by his side, and so build, because every builder has the enemy as near and close by his side as he can have his sword girded by it; enemies without and within, enemies within the house, within the heart, within the building, within the wall, as well as without. Nehemiah had even the nobles of Judah with him, that kept a correspondence with the enemies. As we wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but also with principalities and powers, &c.; so we have enemies within, that keep correspondence with enemies without, and need therefore to be still ready, still armed, for fighting with a sword; offensive to attack the enemy, and defensive, to defend themselves, and defend the building. So much shall suffice for the reasons of the doctrine.

IV. The Fourth head proposed is, To make application of the subject. If it be so, that spiritual builders need to be spiritual soldiers and warriors, with their sword girded by their side, and so building, hence see,

1. That the exercise of true religion is no idle business; it is both a building and a fighting. Though believers are not now under a covenant of works, to work for life, or do and live, that covenant is perfectly fulfilled for them by their glorious head; yet under the covenant of grace, and under the influence of the grace of the covenant, there is a work of faith and labour of love they are called to, 2 Thes. i. 3; and it is such a work and labour as may take up all their time, and allow no time for an idle hour. They have work for both their hands, as here in the context it is said of the builders, in respect of their throng of work and war at once, that "Every one with one hand wrought at the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

2. Hence see, that Christians have little need to be cowards; nay, they ought to be courageous. They have a two-fold trade upon their hand, particularly when they live to see the desolations of Zion; they have a work and a warfare to accomplish, a building and a battle; and their warfare is never accomplished till the building be completed. As long as there is a stone of the building to

lay, there will be a stir and mighty combination to oppose it, and to make the work cease : therefore, they that put their hand to the building work little need to be of a cowardly disposition. We find cowards are cursed that go not forth to the work and to the war when the enemy comes in like a flood, and the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against them, and calls his people to come under his standard, Judges v. 23, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord ; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." God calls every inhabitant of Zion to be a builder when it is ruinous, and every builder to have a sword girded by his side ; yea, he curses every loiterer that puts not his hand heartily to the work, and every faint-hearted coward that dares not draw his sword against the enemy ; "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully (or *negligently*, as in the margin) ; and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood." Many of this generation do not know or consider what heavy curses they are drawing upon their own heads, for their carelessness in the work, and cowardice in the war they should be engaged in. Again,

3. Hence see, since true Israelites, or the true born children of Zion, when the walls thereof are ruinous, are still building at the wall, or battling with the enemy, then they cannot be true born children of Zion, who profess only to build up themselves in faith and holiness, but reckon they have no concern to build up the walls of Jerusalem ; they profess they should be occupied about a personal reformation, but to appear for public reformation is what they look upon as none of their business. What shall we think of these that pretend now-a-days to be converts, and yet are converted to a hatred of public church reformation ; and whose conversion is a screen to cover, and mask to hide, all the public defections and corruptions of the time, as if there were no need of any testimony or witnessing work against them ? Alas ! though some who have testified against such corruptions, and hellish and dreadful conversions, are charged with blasphemy, as if they were appearing against the work of the Holy Ghost, yet may not that charge be justly retorted ? For what blasphemy against the Holy Ghost were it to ascribe that work to him, whereby so many persons are converted to perjury and covenant breaking with the great God ; converted to apostacy from, and opposition to the most solemn obligations to God that ever a church or nation were under. To call this a work of the Spirit of God is

one of the greatest affronts done to the Holy Ghost imaginable ; it looks like doing despite to the Spirit of God, to make him the author of that work, that leads people to have a despite at the glorious work of reformation he wrought for us, and at all that witness for it ; or if they pretend to pray for them, it is I am well informed, as if they would pray for the enemies of God and his glory. These that are converted to open apostacy, it is easy to see that they are not God's converts, but the devil's.

4. Hence see, since spiritual builders must be spiritual soldiers, with their sword girded by their side ; then here is one reason why the spiritual building of the work of grace in the heart, or of the work of reformation in the church, goes slowly on ; why, the opposition is great, and indeed builders, whether they be in a more private or public station, must lay their account with opposition from all quarters under heaven. The Christian who puts to his hand to build up himself in the most holy faith, and to build up the walls of Jerusalem, by joining in an honest witnessing work, he may lay his account with reproach, calumny, hatred, persecution, and ill treatment, in the world. If people intend to side with the times, and fall in with the way of the world, the world cannot hate them ; but if they will testify against a wicked world, or a corrupt church, then they may expect the world's fury, such as Christ himself met with, John vii. 7, "The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil." Christ was the chief Builder, and he built by bearing witness to the truth, and testifying against the evil of the world, and the corruptions of the Jewish church ; but he was hated for his pains, and not only hated, but persecuted to death. All that have been builders under him, they have been hated and reproached also. Elijah was a builder, but he is called a troubler of Israel ; Jeremiah, a man of contention ; Paul, a mover of sedition ; the apostles, a set of men that turned the world upside down ; the builders here, in the text, were represented as rebels against the government, "Will you rebel against the king ?" So, if any in our day put hand to building work, they will be reckoned enemies to church and state, and schismatics ; but, though departing from corruptions and corrupters in a church be a commanded duty, yet Satan always labours to put odious names upon real duty, and to bury the truth of God under the rubbish of vile reproach and strange aspersions. However, the opposition from enemies, by violence and deceit, is one of the reasons

why the building goes on slowly, and meets with many interruptions.

5. If spiritual builders must be soldiers, with their sword girded by their side, then we are not to think strange, if building times should be troublous times; it is said, Dan. ix. 25, "The wall shall be built, even in troublous times." God carries on his work even in such times, because it is most suitable to his name, as a present help in time of trouble; because it is most surprising to his friends, and confounding to his enemies; also, because it is most for the glory of his name, his wisdom, power, mercy, and truth; and because the building then appears the more to be the Lord's work, when opposed by earth and hell; and because the building appears more remarkable and conspicuous. He gets the praise of his work that is carried on in troublous times; and he gives his people occasion both to sing of mercy and judgment: and when the wall is built, even in troublous times, when it is least expected, he thus encourages the faith of his people, in the worst of times, that they may trust in him at all times. Let none be discouraged from building for fear of trouble, and troublous times; for then, says the Lord, the wall shall be built.

6. Hence we may learn, that it is not strange if reforming times be also contending times. Whenever any begin to repair the wall that is ruinous, then they begin to contend for the faith, and to be valiant for the truth, and to set themselves against the devil and the world, and to face their fury. When Christ appeared to lay the foundation of the New Testament church, he says, Matt. x. 34, "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am not come to send peace, but a sword." He came not to send peace on earth, but a sword; and to set men at variance one with another. Though his work was to preach peace, and purchase peace, and give peace, yet, meeting with the malice of men and devils, his work occasioned war, dispeace, and disturbance; therefore, he warns his people not to be offended at the confusions and contentions that his coming would occasion. When he appears in his providence to repair or rebuild his house, it must necessarily occasion such variances as our Lord speaks of: hence the carnal world blames the builder of the wall for all the dispeace and disorder that then falls out. Some will say, O such a set of men, that profess so and so for reformation, they have raised up much division and contention! While yet it is only the devil and his instruments opposing the work

among their hands. The building cannot be essayed, but a battle must be expected ; and the more beautiful the building is designed, the more bloody the battle may be looked for. Indeed, we have not yet resisted unto blood, and know not but bloody times may be coming. It is a common distich,

*Sanguine fundata est ecclesia, sanguine crevit
Sanguine succrevit, sanguine finis erit.*

That is to say, "The church of Christ is founded upon blood, built up with blood, rebuilt and repaired with blood, and finished with blood." "A bloody husband hast thou been to me," said Zipporah to Moses ; a bloody bride hath the church been to Christ : what with the blood of Christ, the blood of enemies, the blood of martyrs, she is become red in her apparel, like her glorious Head and Husband.

7. Hence see, that it is an honourable work and employment that our Lord calls all his followers to, namely, to be builders under him, and both to work his work and to wear his sword at the same time ; to be workers and warriors for God ; every honourable worker will work with the King's sword at their side, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This is the honour of all the saints, that are helped to be faithful to their sovereign King Jesus, to work at his building, and fight his battles. It is not below the nobles of the earth to be employed in building and fighting for God. David, though a king, says, Ps. cxxxii. 4, 5, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." You see how much it was in his heart to build a house for the Lord, 2 Sam. vii. 2 ; and how he was approved therein, ver. 5-17 ; but many reckon it a dishonourable work to build God's temple, in a spiritual sense, or to fall a-building the ruined walls of his church, and especially the nobles in our day ; how like are they to the nobles of Judah in the days of Nehemiah ! for it is said of them, Neh. iii. 5, speaking of the names and order of them that built the wall, and particularly of the Tekoites, that they repaired, but their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord. And we are told, chap. vi. 17, how secret intelligence past between the enemies and the nobles of Judah ; instead of building, they kept correspondence with the enemies of the work. Alas ! how is this exemplified in the nobles of our land. Instead of putting hand to repair a ruined work of refor-

mation, how are they rather confederate with the enemies of it! But, as it did not discourage Nehemiah, that the nobles were none of the builders, the work went on for all that; so it should not be discouraging to them who aim at the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall, that they have not the countenance of nobles and gentry. God stirred up the nobles of this land indeed to reformation-work, a hundred years ago; but though now they should lie by, yet God can carry on his work without them: it is an encouraging word you have, Zeph. iii. 12, 16, 17, 18, "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack: the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee to whom the reproach of it was a burden." The work is honourable, though these that are both devout and honourable should be stirred up against it, as Acts xiii. 50. The warfare is honourable, though Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, yea, and the children of Lot with them, should be confederate against it, Psalm lxxxiii. 5-8.

8. Hence see the mark and character of the true and faithful children of Zion, when the concerns of Zion call for it, they are every one builders, and every builder has his sword girded by his side, and so builds. There is a twofold building and battling they are called to, and concerned in; the one is habitual, and the other occasional.

(1.) The habitual daily building they are employed in, is their building up themselves in their most holy faith, by endeavouring to be more and more rooted and built up in Christ; and this building is also still carried on with sword in hand; for they must fight every bit of ground on which they build, having not only flesh and blood, but principalities and powers to wrestle against. This building and battle is personal and habitual; continual work and warfare, that all true Israelites are engaged in.

(2.) The occasional building and battle they are concerned in, is at certain times and periods, wherein the enemy rages furiously and ruins the walls of the building; and especially when Zion is in adversity, and Jerusalem in ruins: when the carved work of the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church is broken

down, as with hammers and axes, then are all true believers called to be builders, or burden-bearers, Neh. iv. 10, and to be soldiers or helpers in the holy war; if not by handling their arms, as warriors, yet by holding them as servants, as it is said, ver. 16, some held the spears, the shields, the bows, and the habergeons; every one, according to his station, associating with these that are engaged in the building and the battle, and contributing to their assistance in the work and warfare. They may be said to bear arms really, that bear witness faithfully and honestly, in a day of defection and apostasy, when a testimony for God, and against error and corruption, is on the field.

As this is the mark and character, then, of all the true and faithful children of Zion, that they are engaged in this two-folk work and warfare; so there is this peculiar in their conduct therein, that they have no confidence in themselves, nor in their works; their whole confidence is in the Lord, without whom they can neither build nor fight to any purpose or advantage: they know, that "unless the Lord build the city, the builders build in vain;" and that it is Christ himself that must build the temple, and bear the glory: they know also, that unless the Lord fight for them, they can do nothing but fall or fly before the enemy; for "The battle is the Lord's." Therefore, when they go to work, their language is, with David, Ps. lxxi. 16, "I will go in the strength of the Lord; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only;" and when they go forth to war, they dare not trust in their sword or bow; but their language is with David, when going forth against Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 45, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." You may try if you have the mark and character of the true and faithful children of Zion.

9. Hence see both matter of conviction to enemies, and comfort to the friends of Zion. On the one hand, this doctrine speaks conviction to enemies: if all the true and faithful children of Zion are spiritual builders, and spiritual soldiers, then it may reach conviction to these that profess to be true Israelites, true Christians, and yet know nothing of this work, of being builders with sword in hand; but, instead of being builders, are destroyers of the work; who, instead of being up-builders of the wall of Jerusalem, are down-breakers thereof. Well, sirs, but Jerusalem will prove a

burdensome stone to such, Zech. xii. 2, 3. It speaks conviction to those who have been builders, but now are deserters of the work, of whom God says, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own way, Prov. xiv. 14. I hate the work of them that turn aside," Ps. ci. 3. See Ps. cxxv. 5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel." It speaks conviction and terror to these that are traitors, who betray the builders; perhaps the society we are concerned in, have had such in our bosom, that now have gone out from us, because they were not of us,¹ but they that betray the cause of Christ, betray Christ himself, and will make but a poor hand of it in the issue. It speaks conviction to these that profess to build, but without a sword, and would be builders but not soldiers; but in vain do they think to obtain the kingdom of heaven, without taking it by violence; nay, "It suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Will they ever raise buildings that will reach up to heaven, and yet lay by their sword, lay by their Bible, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God? There is no fighting against the devil and his instruments, but by the word of truth, the gospel weapons of warfare, that are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. The Deists of our day, who allow not the scriptures to be the only rule of faith and practice, the only sword of the Spirit, they are not church-builders; they may be church-rulers, but are truly church-ruiners; Christ will fight against them with the sword of his mouth, Rev. ii. 16, for they are against the word of the Lord, and the word of the Lord is against them. Again, it speaks conviction and terror to these that profess to be soldiers, and yet are not builders; but as none can be spiritual builders who are not spiritual soldiers, so none can be spiritual soldiers who are not builders; yet some profess to be soldiers; they pretend to take the sword of the word in their hand, and gird it by their side, and the sword of power and church authority, but, instead of building, they draw the sword against the builders, instead of drawing it against

(1) It is probable Mr. Thomas Nairn is the person our Author here has his eye upon; he having about five months before this (viz., Feb. 3d, 1743) given in his dissent and secession from the Associate Presbytery, in regard he had espoused Anti-government principles, which he has likewise since relinquished. If the reader inclines to see this affair laid open, he may consult "Answers by the Associate Presbytery to his reasons of dissent."

the enemies.¹ This is the case, when church judicatories abuse the authority of Christ in his word gave to his church, by drawing that sword in his name, against his friends, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word, your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified ; but he shall appear to your glory, and they shall be ashamed," Isa. lxvi. 5. But to all such enemies to the building of the walls of Jerusalem, and opposers of the work and oppressors of the builders, may be applied these words you have, Jer. l. 24, "I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware, thou art found and also caught, because thou hast striven against the Lord. Verse 33, 34, Thus saith the Lord, The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together, and all that took them captives held them fast, they refused to let them go ; their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name, he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet to the inhabitants of Babylon."

But, on the other hand, this doctrine speaks comfort to the true friends of Zion, and true builders therein, with their sword girded by their side. As there is a heavy curse denounced against these that will not work the Lord's work, nor fight his battles, Jer. xlviii. 10 ; so there are blessings that God has promised to be upon the head of builders. See Hag. ii. 18, 19, "Consider now from this day and upward, that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid. From this day will I bless you." Whenever a man begins honestly to build, upon the foundation Jesus Christ, were it from this day, then saith the Lord, "From this day will I bless you." Blessings are also pronounced upon the head of these that gird their sword by their side and so build ; and upon honest fighters of the good fight of faith, for "To them is laid up a crown of righteousness." The fair-fighters shall be conquerors, and the conquerors shall be crowned, "Be faithful to the death, and I will give thee the crown of life." Every fair stroke you give your lusts and spiritual enemies with the sword of the Spirit drawn against them, is a token, that, though like Gad, a troop may overcome you, yet you shall overcome at the last. And how many blessings are

(1) This was remarkably verified in the prosecution raised against the Associate Brethren, and carried on by the respective Church judicatories with so much keenness, when Venters and Propagators of pernicious errors were either passed by or inadequately censured.

heaped upon the heads of overcomers, you may see by the epilogue of every epistle to the seven churches of Asia, recorded in Rev. ii. iii. Here is encouragement both to the work and to the war.

10. And lastly, Hence see the duty of all the people of God, who desire to be blessed and favoured of him, and to show themselves his friends and followers at this day, namely, to imitate the builders here in a spiritual way, that every builder have his sword girded by his side, and so build. You ought all to be thus employed. But many here are not yet in a spiritual state, capable for being spiritual builders, and spiritual soldiers, yet in a state of nature, strangers to the state of grace, and union to Christ. Therefore, I would first tender an exhortation to you, and then offer a few advices.

In the first place, I would exhort you to come to Christ, the sure foundation, that you may be capable to be builders upon it; and to come to him as the Captain of salvation, and enlist with him, that you may be capable to fight under his banner. While you are out of Christ, you are but destroying yourselves, instead of building up yourselves in the most holy faith, fighting against God, instead of fighting the good fight of faith. O come, sirs, come to Christ, and do not remain enemies to God and to your own salvation! A whole Trinity calls you to be reconciled to God; the Father says, Come, "It is his commandment, that you believe in the name of his Son," the Son says, Come; "Whosoever will, let him come," the Holy Ghost says, Come, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Your circumstances say, Come; you are guilty, O come and get righteousness; you are weak, O come and get strength; your wants say, Come, come and get them all supplied; your heart plagues say, Come and get healing; death says, Come, that the sting of death may be taken away; judgment says, Come, that you may be able to stand in judgment; eternity says, Come, that you may be happy to all eternity. Come and build upon the sure foundation; come and fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. But now,

In the second place, I would offer a few advices to you, who, having come to God in Christ, would desire to be honest builders and faithful soldiers, in a spiritual sense.

(1.) I would advise you to be students of the times, the proper time for building and fighting, that you may apply yourselves to the duty of the times. Though these duties are called for at all

times, yet there are some special times, wherein we ought to be employed, in a special manner. It is given as the character of the sons of Issachar, 1 Chron. xii. 32, that they were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." The want of this seems to be what our Lord reproves, Matt. xvi. 3, "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Intimating that they who are wholly ignorant of the signs of the times are hypocrites; they have skill and knowledge in things that are natural, but are wilfully ignorant of spiritual things, not knowing, in their day, the things that belong to their peace; such hypocrisy is like to end in apostacy, for they that do not know or consider the times, and the duty of the time, are in the utmost danger of being taken in the snare of the time, like these spoken of, Eccl. ix. 12, "For man also knoweth not his time; as fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon him." This is one of the reasons why our time just now abounds with such hypocrites and apostates, that are caught in the snares of the times, not knowing or considering, that if ever there was a time for building or fighting, these times we live in are building times, and fighting times, and proper times for working and witnessing. But, alas! the hypocritical generation we live among have been, for more than half a century of years, saying, with the people mentioned, Hagai i. 2, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built," to whom the Lord says, verse 4, 5, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways." So say I, consider your ways, and consider the times.

(2.) A second advice I offer is, to consider likewise the case of the walls of Jerusalem, where you are called to build: see if the call and command of God do not concern you in a spiritual way, as it concerned Israel of old, Jer. li. 50, "Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still, remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind." How applicable is this call to our times, wherein the sword of the Lord is drawn, and wherein he has opened his armoury, and brought forth the weapons of his indignation, in the heaviest of spiritual judgments, worse than sword, famine, and pestilence, even the sword of God's wrath in awful delusions of Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light,

and putting on the mask of religion and holiness ! This sword of the Lord has killed many souls that seemed to be alive ; it has killed their zeal for God and his cause, killed their concern for public church reformation, and for the rebuilding of the ruined walls of our Jerusalem : but, you that have escaped the sword of dreadful delusion, sent to punish a generation of apostates, that refuse to remember their solemn covenant with God, stand not still, haste to fly out of Babylon : if the body, with which you have been formerly incorporate, be become a Babylon in a spiritual and scriptural sense, a Babylon for defection, apostacy, and corruption ; a Babylon for persecution of, and opposition to, the covenanted doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of Christ's house : " Remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind ;" while you mind the Lord, mind Jerusalem, and the ruinous walls thereof ; you that have escaped the sword that is destroying reformation-work, and is busy killing the witnesses for it : if you truly remember the Lord, Jerusalem will come to your mind. Let them deceive and delude themselves who will, that pretend to remember the Lord, and yet forget Jerusalem and her ruinous walls ; yet you that are honest builders, when you remember the Lord, it is not possible but Jerusalem will come into your mind : the more ruinous it is, the more will you remember it, so as to take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof, till the Lord arise, and have mercy on Zion ; for he has promised to appear in his glory and build up Zion. And happy are they, that through grace are honest workers with him.

(3.) Another advice I give is, beware of flying when God is calling you to fight, as well as to build. " Should such a man as I fly ?" said Nehemiah, chap. vi. 11. When Sanballat was practising by craft, by false reports, and by false prophecies, to terrify him and to fright him from his work ; no, says he ; " Should such a man as I fly ?" Enemies are still at work to hinder the spiritual building, either by violence or deceit ; but as the Lord has promised to redeem the soul of his people from deceit and violence, Psalm lxxii. 14 ; so they are not to be frightened from the work by the lies, calumnies, false prophets, or false reports and reproaches, that enemies raise against them ; for God promises to take their part, Jer. l. 34, " Their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name ; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet to the inhabitants of Babylon," by whom his people were oppressed, ver. 33. And see what he says to the

enemies, Jer. xlviii. 27, "Was not Israel a derision unto thee?" And what says he of enemies, ver. 29, 30, "We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart. I know his wrath, saith the Lord; it shall not be so; his lies shall not effect it."

(4.) I would advise you further, to beware of corresponding with the enemies of the work, whether in a secret or open way. It contributed much to weaken the hands of Nehemiah, and the builders with him, that secret intelligence passed between the enemies and the nobles of Judah, while many letters passed between Tobiah and them, Neh. vi. 17. When Israel was called to go out of Babylon, and betake themselves to the building work, they were called also to touch no unclean thing, Isa. liii. 11. This call the apostle adapts to his times, 2 Cor. vi. 17, "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." It is dangerous to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; it is dangerous to strengthen the hands of the enemies, and weaken the hand of the builders: see how God observes this; "I have seen in the prophets at Jerusalem an horrible thing, they strengthen the hands of evil doers," Jer. xxiii. 14. These indeed were false prophets, mockers of the true prophets, as we see from ver. 33, and downwards of that chapter. But if a true saint should be so far left, as to correspond with and strengthen the hands of the enemies, God's fatherly wrath will go forth against him: though he cannot, being a child of God, become a child of wrath, yet he may be a child under wrath. You have a remarkable instance of this in good Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xix. 2, "And Jehu the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." It is next to impossible to have fellowship with some societies, and not be involved in the common guilt with them, and exposed to the judgments that are coming upon them. If Lot had not obeyed the command of hasting out of Sodom he had perished in the fire. If Noah had not, at God's command, made the ark, and run into it, he had perished in the water with the rest of the world. If we partake with wicked enemies in their sins, we may expect to partake with them in their judgments. See Rev. xviii. 4; Eph. v. 6, 7.

(5.) A fifth advice I would give you is, Know your great assistant, both in the work and in the war, namely, the Spirit of God,

Zech. iv. 6, "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, (by whom the temple was to be rebuilt), Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Whatever mountains of difficulty were in the way, yet by this great assistant the work was to be carried on and completed: "Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it," ver. 33. Christ is our Zerubbabel; it is he, "even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory," Zech. vi. 13. And spiritual builders are to know, that it is not by power, nor by might, but by his Spirit, the work is to be carried on. Therefore, know your great assistant, the Spirit of Christ, and endeavour to be well acquaint with, and to depend upon his assistance. It is taken for granted, that all true believers, or spiritual builders, know and are acquaint with him, though the rest of the world are not. He is called, John xiv. 17, "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you." It is here taken for granted; therefore I may say to you, believers, ye know him, and his inhabitation in you. How do I know that, say you? Why, he is in you as a well of water, springing up to everlasting life: this is the water that Christ gives, John iv. 14; yea, the well itself is in you: and how do you know a spring-well, but by the bubbling up of the water? Even so, you know him by his gracious operations, particularly by his testifying work; "He shall testify of me," says Christ: by his glorifying work; "He shall glorify me," or shew my glory. You may know him by his awakening work; for which you pray, saying, "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south, blow upon my garden." You may know him by his quickening and strengthening work; quickening you to pray, or pour out your hearts before God; and strengthening you to wrestle with God for the blessing; and to wrestle against sin, as in an agony sometimes. You may know him by his humbling, sanctifying, sealing, and comforting work: "After ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise." Thus you may know him by his assisting work. O know your assistant, in the spiritual work and war. Pray for the Spirit; and depend upon his assistance, without whom you can do nothing.

(6.) I would advise you further, Let the word of God, and not

the Spirit, be your only rule for the building, and sword for battle; for, "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God," Eph. vi. 17. And the word of God is the only rule to direct us, how we may glorify God, by building up ourselves in the most holy faith: "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Let not, therefore, the feelings and motions of the Spirit be your rule, or your sword; the sword of the Spirit is not the Spirit himself, but the word of God. The law and testimony of God; the revelation of his will, in the scriptures; and the doctrine of his grace, in the gospel; these are the weapons of our warfare, mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds. The gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation, 2 Cor. x. 5, Rom. i. 16. In pure believing, spiritual building, and fighting the good fight of faith, the true Spirit of Christ makes the soul build upon nothing else but the word, and so to build its faith and hope upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone, Eph. ii. 20. Faith may be confirmed afterwards by the feeling and sealing of the Spirit, as I formerly said, "After ye believed ye were sealed;" but in nothing does the power of the Spirit more exert itself, in the day of believing, than in bringing the soul to be denied to all internal feelings, and to reject all other grounds of faith, than what are laid down in the word. So many and dangerous are the delusive operations of evil spirits on the hearts of men, at this day, that we need to be fenced against the enthusiasm that prevails, and to ground our faith allenarly upon God's word. "Faith cometh by hearing," and not by feeling; it comes by hearing what the Spirit saith unto the churches, and not by feeling what he works upon the heart: though he works there, yet true heart-work brings the word to the heart, and the heart to the word. The false quakerish spirit leads people to a Christ within them, in their hearts; in whom feeling, they rejoice with a joy unwarrantable, and full of delusion: but the true Spirit of Christ leads the hearts wherein he works, to a Christ without them in the word; "In whom believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. Therefore I say again, true heart-work brings the word to the heart, and the heart to the word: and true spiritual builders and fighters stand upon that word, as the ground upon which they build and fight; and they build by that word as their rule, and fight with that word as their sword: "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God."

(7.) I would advise you again, that you beware of every thing that may endanger the spiritual work and spiritual warfare. Here I will lay before you some things very dangerous, which you should beware of.

1. It is dangerous to mistake a sleeping enemy for a slain one, or a sleeping lust for a slain or mortified one; for if sin be not mortified by the Spirit, the sleeping lust, the sleeping enemy, when awake, may soon mar and hinder the building. Again,

2. It is dangerous to sleep upon the wall where you build, or to give way to spiritual sloth. Let a man be never so well armed, yet if he be asleep, or in a sound nap upon the bed of sloth, he is an easy prey to the enemy; therefore, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

3. It is dangerous to watch but one half hour, and think you may sleep safely the other half. The Philistines are upon you, if ye let down your watch, though you be never so strict and spiritual for a little while. Again,

4. It is dangerous to dally with the enemy, and give any little bit of ground to him. A half look towards a distant idol may bring on a broad look, and a broad look may renew an old acquaintance with the lust that was subdued, and "lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin," James i. 14, 15.

5. It is dangerous to consult with flesh and blood, or to be conducted in your work and warfare by the rule of carnal policy; this made the chief priests and Pharisees consult the death and destruction of the great Master builder, "What do we? this man doth many miracles; if we let him alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation," John ii. 47, 48. The measures they thought would raise and preserve them, did ruin them and their established church too. Carnal politicians, instead of being up-builders of the church, are down-breakers of it; destroyers of the building, and the builders too; they pull down their house about their ears, and leave it desolate, as these rulers in the Jewish church did.

6. It is dangerous, in your spiritual building, and spiritual work that concerns your soul, to give God no more service than what you think is his due, and what you allow him at his set times of devotion, whether secret or social; if he get not many a stolen look between hands, the devil and the world will steal away your heart from him. It is dangerous, whenever duty is over, to think

then your heart is at liberty to turn where it pleases ; it needs to be bridled with many a look to heaven, by ejaculatory prayer in company, and in the interval of duty ; otherwise, when you return to duty, you may find it a difficult matter to bring back your heart to your work, from the mountains where it has been wandering. Again,

7. It is dangerous to keep no guard upon the back of a victory, no watch upon the back of a manifestation ; whereas the greatest danger may be upon the back of the greatest victory, or the sweetest manifestation ; for Satan, if he can, will seek to throw you down from the pinnacle of the temple.

8. In a word, it is dangerous to yield to the enemy in any the least point of truth ; for, by tempting you to pull out any small pinnings of the building, he aims at the loosing and dissolving the whole fabric. If we love the Lord our God with all our heart, we will regard every thing, and all things whatsoever he has commanded. Some are reckoned too nice and scrupulous that will not yield in some small matters ; but we see the best of God's servants in scripture, and the most eminent builders, have been such as the world would call the most nice and scrupulous. What think you of Moses, that would not part with a hoof ? What think you of Mordecai, that would not yield in the bow of a knee ? Of Daniel that would not yield even in the shutting of a window ? And of Paul, who would not yield for an hour ? He would not give place to the false apostles no not for an hour. If the word of God be our rule, we will regard every thing that has his authority stamped upon it, however small the world may reckon it. Some pretend a great regard for what they call fundamental points, but as to other things, such as the discipline and government of the church, they can easily dispense with these, however much the honour of God be concerned therein ; though yet they would be very ill-pleased to want the least compliment of their worldly honour and dignity, or the smallest penny of their worldly gain and commodity. Though some things may be called fundamentals intrinsically, as absolutely necessary to salvation ; yet the smallest matters of revealed truth are also fundamental authoritatively, and as necessary to be regarded, by virtue of the divine authority as the former. Baptism, for example, is not absolutely necessary to salvation ; this we assert against the Church of Rome ; yet the contempt and neglect of it, when it can be obtained, is damnable because of God's authority interposed. To disregard and despise the smallest matters in religion, which are

necessary to be received and maintained, if not for themselves, yet for the authority of God speaking in the scriptures, bring as certain a curse and condemnation, as ignorance and error do in matters that are in themselves more essential and substantial. Will it ever justify the apostates of our day, that they say they still cleave to these things of God that are of greatest concern to salvation, while they know how much his glory is concerned in other things, and that the contempt of his authority in the smallest things is damnable? Our Lord says, Matt. v. 19, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." If men will call any of these things of God small things, yet what will this distinction avail them? Will they ever be absolved for their regard to the greatest, when condemned for their neglect and contempt of the smallest things of God? True builders are directed, Ezra vii. 23, "Whosoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done for the house of the God of heaven; for, why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?"

(8.) The last advice I offer is, Never attempt to build without your sword; let every builder have his sword girded by his side, and so build. As there is no fighting, so there is no building to any advantage, without the sword of the Spirit; therefore take it to you, Eph. vi. 16, 17. He who enjoins you to take the shield of faith, says also, "Take the sword of the Spirit." Christ is our armoury and magazine for military provision; and this piece of armour among the rest he has to give, and wills you to take. He gives you his sword, his word, John xvii. 14. Therefore take what he gives, he gives you his word of grace and promise, even great and precious promises, and every promise believed is a sword drawn against the enemy, and matter fit for building with. Search the scriptures, and hide the word in your heart, and thus gird the sword by your side. He gives you his word, saying, Take this sword of mine; it is better for you than the sword of Goliath; there is none like it. You may build with this sword, and build to purpose; you may fight with this sword, and fight to advantage. Satan flies before you, and enemies may be driven away with it. This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith of this word; all the saints overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, Rev. xii. 11. Never go about any part of your building work without your sword; never pray without your sword;

you may wrestle with God himself with the word of promise in your hand, in your heart; and while you wrestle with God, pleading his promise, and prevail, then you win the day against the enemy. Thus shall you be furnished for your daily work and war, your daily building and battle; and, O sirs, may this text be spiritually verified in all the communicants in Stirling. "The builders every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded."

SERMON LXXVIII.

WITNESSES CITED FOR GOD; AND ALL THEIR WITNESSING WORK
SUMMED UP IN THIS ONE POINT, VIZ., THEIR ATTESTING
THAT HE IS GOD.¹

"Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God."—ISAIAH xliii. 12.

We are professing to be a witnessing congregation. It would be our mercy if we all knew what we are called to bear witness unto. A communion time is a special witnessing time, wherein the Lord calls his people to bear witness to his Being, and his being a God in Christ, to bear witness that he is a God of grace and mercy in Christ, to bear witness to his goodness in the doing and suffering of Christ for us; and wherein God is calling us forth to, and setting us upon this work to be his witnesses, saying, "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God."

When the people of Israel were led aside into idolatry, and when strange gods, idols of the nations, were brought among them, assuming the throne of God, and claiming equal honour and homage with him, the great God condescends to call forth a number of his people to bear witness to his omnipotency, and to his being the only true God, to bear witness that he, and he only, is God, God the Saviour, in the 11th verse, "I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour. Ver. 12, I have declared, and have saved, and

(1) This sermon was preached immediately before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Dunfermline, July 17th, 1743. To which is subjoined, A Discourse on the same subject, delivered at the conclusion of the solemnity. We are told in the first edition of the sermon, that the Author's notes were lost, and that it was gathered from the short-hand characters of some who wrote it down as it was delivered. On this account, probably, it is neither so complete, nor appears with such advantage as it would have done had it been copied from the original.

I have shewed when there was no strange god among you." Are you not, might the Lord say, eye and ear-witnesses how I have declared myself, how I have saved you, how I have shewed my glory amongst you, even when there was no strange god among you? Therefore, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God."

In which words we have these three things observable, 1. The most honourable work that any can be called unto, viz., to be God's witnesses. 2. Here is the most honourable and glorious truth that any can be called to witness unto, namely, the truth of all truths, that GOD is GOD; *That I am Gad*. 3. Here is the most notable call and authority by which any can be called forth unto this honourable office. It is the great God that says it, and by his saying it, he makes them his witnesses; "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God."

Without taking up time further, the subject I proceed to speak upon is the following doctrine, namely:—

That the whole witnessing work of the Lord's people is summed up and comprehended in this one point, their being witnesses that he is God; or, their attesting that he is God. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God."

We have here God, the great God, who needs no testimony from any of his creatures, appealing to his people, and appealing to them three times in this and the following chapter, Isa. xliii. 10, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen;" not only you that are my people, and you my servant the prophet, but also my righteous Servant Jesus Christ, whom I have chosen; Jesus Christ, the chief of God's servants, is called here to bear witness to this truth, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord; and my Servant whom I have chosen." Another time you have it mentioned in chap. xlv. 8. "Fear ye not, neither be afraid; have not I told thee from the time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me?" And here it is again said in the text a third time, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God."

In the prosecuting of this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, we propose to do the following things:—

I. To premise some things for clearing this doctrine.

- II. To shew how it is, or by what means we are to be God's witnesses ; and how his people are his witnesses.
- III. We would speak a little of the import of these words, "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God."
- IV. We would demonstrate and prove that the whole witnessing work of the Lord's people is summed up and comprehended in this one, their witnessing That he is God.
- V. Deduce some inferences for the application.

I. As to the first of these general heads. There are some things I would shortly premise for clearing of the doctrine. And,

1. We premise, "That the great God has seen fit to call a court, to which he cites and summons all his people to bear testimony for him and his truth, and to witness particularly to this, That he is God." God may be said to have called a court for this purpose, when he brings a people to be his professing people ; when he forms them into a visible church, professing his name, and calls them his people, that were not his people, Rom. ix. 25.

2. We premise, "That God is both Judge and Witness present in this court, to see who is there, to mark down all that compare to witness for him." He marks down who are his witnesses : and who refuse to witness for him that he is God : for "He is not a God afar off ; he searcheth Jerusalem as with lighted candles.

3. I premise, "That there are competitors with the great God, who do pretend unto that headship and sovereignty which belongs only to God." Not only the idols of the nations, that are nothing but dumb and dead idols, but also every thing that is set up in the room of God. Ever since the human race did depart from the living and true God, they have been setting up other gods. The world is become their god ; and the god of this world has always been assuming the throne of God : yea, every man is setting up himself for his god, ever since that original temptation prevailed, "Ye shall be as gods," Gen. iii. 5. And therefore I remark,

4. "That the great question that is to be discussed at this witnessing court, is Just this, Who is God ? and whether God be God, or any other thing ought to be acknowledged as God ?" It comes, I say, to that question of Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 21, "How long will ye halt between two opinions ? If the Lord be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him." And if the Lord alone, if JEHOVAH only, be God, then it is he only that you are to be wit-

nesses for: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God." Again,

5. I premise, "That there are many, yea, the most part of the children of men, that refuse to be witnesses unto this matter, That he is God." They will not receive his testimony concerning himself that he only is God; and therefore they will not give their testimony unto him that he is God. Such is the degenerate state of mankind, so far are they departed from God, that they will not so much as acknowledge that he is God; they say upon the matter that the devil is God, for his works they do; that the world is their God, for they give it the throne of their hearts; or themselves their God, self having the throne. Whatever they do in shew, or in profession, or with their mouths, yet they practically refuse to acknowledge that God is God, or to witness for him: "They profess to know God, but in works deny him."

6. I premise, "That God is pleased to recover some of the race of Adam from this universal idolatry, from this natural atheism, and to shew his glory to them, so as that he can commit unto them the deciding of this question, Whether the Lord is God? He can intrust them with it, and employ them, and boast of them as his witnesses, saying, "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God." It is true, there are some that are believers in Christ by profession, to whom Christ cannot commit the deciding of this question, and to whom he will not commit himself. We read of some that believed in him, to whom he did not commit himself, because he knew all men; and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man, John ii. 23, 24. Indeed, many profess to be believers in Christ, unto whom Christ will not commit the deciding of this question, Whether he is God or no? Such is the blasphemous spirit of the time, this question could scarcely get fair play sometime before the judicatories, whether Christ was God; or whether one that denied the supreme deity of Christ was to be deposed or excommunicate; yea, or no? Again,

7. Another thing I premise is this, "That although the great God stands in no need of man's testimony, yet he is pleased for his own declarative glory, to adduce many witnesses to prove that he is God; and particularly some are select and special ones." There are two sorts of witnesses for God. There are passive and active witnesses. On the one hand, the passive witnesses are many; yea, they are innumerable. All the inanimate creatures, sun, moon, and stars, are witnesses that he is God: "The heavens declare the glory

of God, and the firmament sheweth his hand-work." Psalm xix.

1. Sensative and vegetative creatures they are witnesses to the being of God. Even heathens have observed, that God was to be seen in every herb of the field,

Presentemque refert quælibet herba Deum.

God is to be seen in all the works of his hands. In the rational world some are passive witnesses for God, that yet are active witnesses against him. The devil and the wicked world are witnesses against God actively; and yet, whether they will or not, they are passive witnesses for him that he is God; for God gets glory upon them. The Lord is many times known by the judgment he executes on them, known in his power and justice, as it is said of Pharaoh; "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth," Rom. ix. 17. Their wickedness, and God's vengeance following it, witness that he is a true God in his threatenings. In this respect God has many, yea, innumerable passive witnesses in the rational world, that are yet active witnesses against him, and will not directly witness that he is God. But there are some whom God creates for his glory, and forms for himself, whom he makes his willing subjects and his active witnesses, to bear witness directly in open court, as it were, that he is God: and of these he speaks here; "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God." And therefore,

8. I premise, "That God claims a special relation to those whom he thus calls forth to be his faithful and honest witnesses: 'Ye are MY witnesses that I am God.'" This imports both his relation to them as their God; and their relation to him as his witnesses: ye bear witness that I am the Lord your God. And, indeed, his calling them to be his witnesses, makes them so. He makes them his witnesses, just by saying, Ye are so: *Ye are my witnesses*. As he calls them his people that were not his people; so he calls them to be his witnesses that were not his witnesses; for he calls things that are not, as though they were. He manifests forth his glory to them, and then says, "Ye are my witnesses that I am God."

9. I further premise, "That the special work of God's people, after they are effectually called, is witnessing-work; and the matter of their testimony, is God's being and attributes." All the duties they are called to, are but branches of this one duty of witnessing for God, and of knowing and acknowledging that he is God, and

their God; for this leads them to worship and glorify him accordingly.

10. I premise, "That there are special times wherein God calls forth his witnesses to attest that he is God; and particularly times wherein strange gods appear on the field: "I have declared and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you;" therefore, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God." He calls them forth to it, when there are strangers to compete with him, and when he is denied in his Godhead; when he is denied in any of his truths, any of his names, any of his attributes and perfections, for then he is denied to be God. So his witnesses are called forth, to attest, at such a time, that he is God.

II. The second thing I proposed was, To shew how, and by what means they are his witnesses. How are they to witness for him? His people are called to do so,

1. By believing with the heart; for, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," Rom. x. 10. Faith in God, as he is a God in Christ, is a notable way of witnessing, and it is the root of all right witnessing; namely, by setting to our seal that God is true. If we receive his testimony concerning himself, and concerning his Christ, then we witness that he is God, that he is the true God. By unbelief we bear false witness against God, and make him a liar, and so deny him to be God; but by faith we set to our seal that God is true.

2. They are to witness also, by confessing him with the mouth: "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 10. We believe with the heart, and then confess with the mouth. And thus here we are called to confess God to God himself, and then to the world; to acknowledge God first to himself, as the Psalmist, when he said, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my God." We are to acknowledge God even unto God, and then to acknowledge him before the world; to confess and not to be ashamed of him: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven," Matt. x. 32, 33.

3. We are to witness that he is God, by a holy practice, a holy life and conversation; by religious duties and attendance on God in ordinances; holiness in our family religion: "I will walk before my house, says the Psalmist, with a perfect heart:" holiness in

social religion, in keeping society with other of God's witnesses in Christian converse and communication: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name," Mal. iii. 16. And holiness in the whole of our walk and conversation. We are to witness for God by a gospel-conversation, and such as shall adorn, before the world, the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

4. We are called to witness for God, sometimes even with our handwriting; giving up our names, as it were, to the Lord, is sometimes called for, as a notable way of witnessing for God, and against the enemies of his glory. I remember a word you have in Isaiah xxx. 8, "Now go, write it before them in a table; and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever." This is a way of witnessing that God sometimes calls to, Is. xlv. 5, after that promise, verse 3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground," &c. it follows, verse 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob: and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

5. We are called to be his witnesses sometimes by suffering for him and his truth: "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me." We are to follow Christ, who endured the cross, and despised the shame; we are to follow him without the camp, bearing his reproach; and thus to witness for him by suffering: "For, if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him." When truth falls in the street, it is an honour to fall in with it; for they that will fall with it, shall rise with it. We are not to be ashamed, but to account it all joy, when we are brought to tribulation for the cause of Christ.

6. We are to witness by dying, as well as suffering; even by dying in the faith, and dying in the Lord: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13. "All these died in faith," Heb. xi. 13. This is one of the noblest ways of witnessing, especially if it be not only a dying in the faith, but dying for the faith, in a way of witnessing thereunto, as the proto-martyr Stephen, the first witness for Christ in this manner. But,

III. We go on to the third thing, viz. To inquire into the import of this expression, "Ye are my witnesses that I am God."

1st, As to this character, "Ye are my witnesses," it takes in and imports these two things:

1. As if the Lord should say, Ye, in a particular manner, are these whom I have created for my glory, as it is, verse 7, "I have created him for my glory." So it is in verse 21, "This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise." "Ye are my witnesses;" I have separated you from the rest of the world. Observe the phraseology: he says, *Ye are*, in the present time, it is spoken of in the present tense; the present time, a fit time for witnessing. The interest of truth, and of my glory, calls for it; and it is dangerous to neglect the opportunity of witnessing for God.

"Ye are my witnesses;" that is, Ye are upon my side, upon the side of truth, and for me. When others are against me, "Ye are my witnesses. Ye are my acquaintances: I know you and you know me. Ye are my advocates on earth, as I am yours in heaven: ye plead my cause. Ye are my remembrancers, as it is said in the close of the chapter, "Put me in remembrance. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence;" the words are, "Ye that are his remembrancers. Ye that are my witnesses." Ye are my followers, when others forsake me. Ye are my confidants and trusty friends, whom I may credit to bear my testimony, and whom I can entrust with this question to be decided in open court by you, That I am God. But again,

2dly, As to their testimony, "That I am God." O what a great matter is here, that they are called to attest! "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God." O what is that? Who can tell what it is? They witness, That he is God, that he is what he is. Ye are my witnesses, that I am what I am; my witnesses that I am a Spirit infinite, eternal, unchangeable, in being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Ye are my witnesses that I am Being itself; that I am wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and faithfulness itself. O! ye are my witnesses, that I am God all-sufficient: that I am all in all. It is a bearing witness to all things relating to the Deity: that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Ghost is God; and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God. "O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God;" that I am a God in Christ, God the Saviour that is here spoken of; "Besides me there is no Saviour." Ye are my witnesses that I am God in Christ; that God is in Christ federally; for, he has made a covenant with his Chosen; that God is in Christ fully; for, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead:" that God is in Christ graciously, reconciling the

world to himself : that God is in Christ gloriously, shewing forth all his glory, the glory of all his perfections : that God is in Christ immutably ; for he says, “ I am the Lord, and change not ; ” and that God is in Christ perpetually, because he declares, “ This is my rest, here will I stay.” God dwells in Christ, and he is in Christ delightful and merciful : “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. It pleased the Lord to bruise him.” It pleased the Lord to raise him ; it pleased the Lord to glorify him : “ 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.”

Men and angels will never be able to tell what is imported in this, “ Ye are my witnesses, that I am God ; ” that I am God, in the revelation that I have made of myself in the word. I need go no further than his name. In this chapter, verse 1, “ Now, thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob ; and that formed thee, O Israel : fear not : for I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.” “ Ye are my witnesses, that I am God,” in that sweet word that follows, “ 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.” What think ye of God in such a word as this ? “ Ye are my witnesses, that I am God,” according to that word, verse 3, “ For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour ; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia, and Seba for thee.” Again, that he is God, according to the revelation he makes of himself, (not to read all the chapter) verse 15, “ I am the Lord, your holy One ; the Creator of Israel, your King.” Verse 16, “ Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters.” Verse 17, “ Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army, and the power : they shall lie down together, they shall not rise : they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.” Verse 18, “ Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.” A God that says, verse 19, “ Behold, I will do a new thing ; now it shall bring forth ; shall ye not know it ? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.” Verse 20, “ The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls : because I gave waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.” Verse 21, “ This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my

praise." Is there not much of God to be seen here, sirs? Again, what think you of this account of God, as a promising and pardoning God in Christ, that you have, ver. 25, after it is said, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities;" yet it follows, to the wonder of men and angels, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Ver. 26, "Put me in remembrance," put me in mind of this name, of this word. "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God," in all the revelations that I have made of my name in the word. Ye are my witnesses, that I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow; that I am the God that brought you to the foot of mount Sinai, and discovered my awful, terrible majesty to you; that I am a consuming fire out of Christ; that I am the God that brought you to mount Zion, and shewed you the glory of my grace; that I am the God that brought you out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and set your feet upon a rock. Many times ye are my witnesses, that I am the God that brought you to the wilderness and there spake comfortably to you. Witness, that I am "JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord your righteousness;" that I am "JEHOVAH-NISSI, the Lord your banner;" that I am "JEHOVAH-ROPHI, the Lord that healeth you;" that I am "JEHOVAH-JIREH, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen—the Lord will provide." Ye are my witnesses, that I am the God that heareth prayer, and that I am your God; that I am not only what I am, but that I am the Lord your God, according to my covenant, "Thy God, and the God of thy seed," if thou art a parent. You are to be witnesses that I am God, even thy God, and the God of thy seed, and to witness it by believing, and laying hold on my covenant, and the entail of it. Ye are witnesses that I am God in all the providences that are past and do pass over your head; that I have fed you all your life long, and led and clothed you. Ye are my witnesses that I am God, that I am Scotland's covenanted God, hitherto maintaining a banner for the truth, and a testimony for my name. Ye are my witnesses, that I am the God of ordinances, that sometimes have met with you there; ye sat down under my shadow, and my fruit was sweet unto your taste: that I am God, a promising God, and a God that calls you to witness for me. When at a communion table, the sacramental feast, ye are to be witnesses, that I am an incarnate God; that I in Christ am become meat and drink for you; "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;"

that I have finished the work of redemption, paid the price of it, and satisfied justice to the full ; and that I am your Saviour, your Redeemer : that I am God in Christ, and so a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and open to you. "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God." But as I said, it is impossible to speak all that is imported here, "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God." I shall speak a word,

IV. To the fourth thing I proposed, namely, To prove that the whole of the witnessing work of the Lord's people, is comprehended in this, their attesting and witnessing that he is God. This is plain if you consider these four things :

1. That the sum of all duties lies in this witnessing that he is God. No duty whatsoever can be rightly performed without carrying in it an acknowledgment of, or witnessing to this, that he is God. This is the sum of all duties when we own and acknowledge that God hath commanded so and so, and have a respect to all God's commandments ; and do whatsoever he calls us to do, upon the account of the authority of God. Then we are practically witnessing that he is God.

2. The sum of all sin lies in refusing to witness that he is God. All sin is summarily comprehended in this refusal. It is a practical denying that he is God the Lawgiver, and a bearing false witness against God. Every transgression of the law of God is a trampling upon God and his authority, a denying our obligation to God as our God ; and either an implicit or express denying that he is God. All sin is comprehended therein.

3. The sum of all truth we are called to witness for, is imported in this truth, that he is God. This is the radical and comprehensive truth, that hath all truths in the bosom of it. We will find every truth of God comprehended in this, "that he is God." For example, The truth relating to the election of some from eternity is summed up in this, that God is the sovereign Elector. The truth relating to redemption is summed up in this, that he is the God Redeemer. The truth relating to our reconciliation with God is summed up in this, that he is God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. The whole truth relating to justification is comprehended in this, that he is the Lord our righteousness, God the justifier, that set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sin, that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. The truth relating

to sanctification is summed up in this, that he is God, the holy God, the sanctifier. All truths of the Bible and of the glorious gospel centre in this. This is the substance and sum, and the all of them, that he is God: "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God."

4. The sum of all the errors that we are called to witness against lies in this, not witnessing that he is God. I say, they are all summed up in this, the denying that he is God. Every error is a denying of God, and the refusing to witness against any error is a refusing to witness that he is God, for every error in principle or practice is so far a denying of God; therefore it is said of some, "They profess to know God, but in works do deny him," while they live an ungodly life. Evil works are just a denying of God, or a denying that he is God. And all errors in principle are also summed up in this, a denying of God, or saying, with the fool in his heart, "There is no God." And to embrace any error is just to deny God, or some attribute of God, and some part of his name. To deny the truth of God is to deny the God of truth. The root and spring of every error is the same with that of the error of the Sadducees, to whom Christ said, "Ye err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Every error flows from ignorance of God and the word of God. As the first command requires us to know God, so it forbids to deny God; intimating, that a not knowing God is a denying him. Arminians deny the grace of God, Legalists deny and darken the gospel of God. Corruption in doctrine is a denying and destroying the truth and veracity of God; corruption in worship is a denying the purity and spirituality of God; corruption in discipline is a denying and discrediting the power and authority of God, as a just corrector of the disorders of his family; corruption in government is a denying the dominion and sovereignty of God in Zion, as the great ruler in Jacob, to the ends of the earth. Christ's name and his government are put together, Isa. ix. 6, "The government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." To pretend to give him his name, and yet to rob him of his government in the visible church, is to separate what God hath joined, and hath made inseparable, without sacrilege. It is true, some now-a-days make discipline and government small things, as being neither essential nor fundamental; but, if they be not so in themselves, they are so much so, by virtue of the authority of God stamped upon them, that

contempt thereof, when once made known and attained, is as damnable as is ignorance of, and error in fundamentals. In a word, every error, every corruption in the church of God is a denying of some letter of God's name; denying of some word of God, and of some thing whereby he makes himself known; and not to witness against the errors and corruptions of the time wherein we live, it is just a refusing to witness for God, or to be witnesses that he is God. The witnessing work, then, of God's people, is summed up and comprehended in this, their being witnesses that he is God.

V. We proceed, now, to make some application. Is it so, that this is the sum of our witnessing work, to witness that he is God, to what he is, and what he hath revealed himself to be in his word? Then, by way of information,

1. Hence see what an honourable work it is to be called forth to witness for God. It is a great honour and dignity. And whatever truth of God we are called to witness for, it can be no trifle you are employed about, for it is summed up in this, and carries in it a testimony, That he is; and God reckons himself concerned, his very being is concerned in any faithful testimony that is lifted up for his truth and name. And they that are his witnesses have this testimony; he intimates it to themselves; therefore he says, "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God."

2. Hence see the nature of sin, it is a saying upon the matter, "There is no God." Every sin and error strikes at God, and denies that is God. The malignity of sinners is such, they witness against God. They are so far atheists, that will not join in, but rather oppose any faithful witnessing work; they will not bear witness that he is God. The devil hath so far blinded the world as to make them practically assert there is no God, or none but the god of this world, who had blinded the minds of them that believe not, so as they will not set to their seal, that God is true, or that God is God. Oh! how degenerate is the human race from the happy state in which they were first created, that there is none to bear witness for their Creator among them! None saying in earnest, "Where is God my Maker?" till, by a new creation, he form a number of witnesses for himself, to shew forth his praise, and create them for his glory, Isa. xliii. 7.

3. Hence see the nature of faith: it is a giving God a testimonial, as it were, a bearing witness that he is what he is; it is a witnessing that he is what he hath said in the word he is; it is a

witnessing what he is in himself, what he is in Christ, what he is in the Spirit, what he is to Zion, what he is to them in the promise. Your faith of the law is a believing that he is a terrible God out of Christ; that in the law he is a God dishonoured by our sin, a God threatening wrath and damnation against all sinners, and against you in particular. Your faith of the gospel is a believing what he is in Christ, a God reconciled in Christ, a God calling you to be reconciled to him, because he is pacified in Christ towards you for all that you have done; a God calling you to return to him, and come in to his bosom, and to be his witnesses, first before God and conscience, that he is a God of peace; and then before the world, by confessing him with your mouth, and making your light shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify God: therefore,

4. Hence see the duty of the day. Why, what are we called to? Sirs, when the enemies are saying, "Where is your God?"—when there comes to be, as it were, competitors with our God, the God of glory—when there are, as it were, different-like Gods upon the field—when their God leads them one way, and our God leads us another way, why, sir, how shall it be known whether the God whom we worship is God? Why, it seems to be brought to a question, as it was once, 1 Kings xviii. 21, "How long will ye halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, then follow him: But if Baal, then follow him." Why, sir, we need to inquire at this day, when there seem to be strange gods, and strange principles, strange delusions, strange apostacies from our reformation work; we need to put it to a trial, and see whether Baal be God, or if the Lord is God. What way shall we try it, say you? You are to try it two ways: 1. By what is past. 2. By what is present.

(1.) By what is past. See what the Lord says in the text here, Isa. xliii. 12, "I have declared, I have shewed, I have saved, when there was no strange God among you." O let us inquire, sir, hath not God shewed himself in Scotland unto our reforming forefathers, which carried on a work of reformation in a way of solemn covenanting with God? Did he not declare when there was not such strange gods as there are now? Did he not save, did he not shew his glory, did he not declare his name, did he not manifest himself, so as to pour out of his Spirit from on high at times in remarkable ways? But to come yet nearer home, hath not God declared his name, and saved his people, by giving sweet experience

of his powerful presence among us, even in our day, particularly on solemn sacramental occasions? Hath not the Lord sometimes shewed himself and discovered his glory in the sanctuary, even here, before there were any such strange gods, such strange principles and opinions, such strange novelties, distractions, and delusions, as now take place? Hath he not shewed himself? I remember, that at the first communion in Dunfermline, after the Lord brought me in his holy providence to this place, he led me to speak on the back of it, in the evening, on that word, "The name of the city from that day shall be JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, the Lord is there," Ezek xlvi. 35. Although many here were not then born, yet there are many people witnesses to attest, that from time to time, from sacrament to sacrament, God hath been pleased to shew forth something of his glory: he saved, he shewed himself, he declared his name, before there were any such strange gods amongst you; therefore, ye are his witnesses that he is God, that he is the God of Bethel; that he is the same God, the same immutable God. Whatever changes are now taking place, whatever strange appearances there are on the field, yet know that he is God. "Ye are my witnesses that I am God."

(2.) By what respects the present time. May it not be said, "Ye are my witnesses?" What way shall it be known at present? I shall allude to a word said, 1 Kings xviii. 24, "Call ye, says Elijah, upon the name of your gods, and I will call upon the name of the Lord: and the God that answers by fire, let him be God." Let us meditate a little upon this, "The God that answers by fire from heaven, let him be God." It may be supposed that many of the strange gods answered by strange fire, by wild fire; I say, there seems to be some very strange fire amongst Baal's priests, Baal's prophets here, that had strange effects on them, as ye see, verse 28, "And they cried aloud, and cut themselves, after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them." Why, there was a fire, the fire of hell in their bosom; their god, it seems, was a cruel god, he had no mercy on their souls or bodies. Yea, you know it is possible for Satan to transform himself into an angel of light; and when he is transformed into an angel of light, his light may also have heat accompanying it: the heat of strong fancy and imagination. How then shall we know what is the fire of God, the fire of the Lord, fire from heaven? I think, we may further allude unto this history, and examine into the matter, particularly in these four respects.

[1.] Then, fire from heaven is that which comes in the way of acknowledging of God, as the covenanted God of our forefathers ; for, as you see it in Elijah's prayer here, ver. 36, " Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day, that thou art God in Israel." Here he acknowledges God as the covenanted God of their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The fire then that comes not this way, but rather in a way of rejecting and abandoning our forefathers' covenanted God, this seems plainly to be strange fire.

[2.] The fire from heaven, it is of such a nature, as it burns up all things that are combustibile about our sacrifices. It burns up all things about our services, that we are ready to gaze on and trust in. What was the effect of the fire from heaven ? Verse 38, " Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." It left nothing but the sacrifices to be trusted unto ; it left nothing to be seen but God, the invisible God. It seems to be strange fire that does not burn up the sacrifices, that does not lick up the water, but leaves something to be gazed on, and removes the proper object of faith ; and that makes the object of it the same with the object of sense and imagination ; something visible to the eye, something perceptible to the imagination. The fire that does not burn all these things, is strange fire. The fire from heaven burns up all, that there may be nothing to be a ground of faith, but the great, the invisible God ; for, true faith is a seeing him that is invisible.

[3.] Fire from heaven is such fire as inflames men with zeal, witnessing zeal for God. It makes them acknowledge that the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is God ; verse 39, " And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces ; and they say, The Lord, he is God ; the Lord, he is God." And true fire from heaven makes people fall a witnessing for God, as the people here did for God, the God of their forefathers, that was in covenant with them. To be sure, it appears to be strange fire that doth not lead people to witness for God, but rather leads people away from witnessing for our covenanted God, who is Scotland's covenanted God and King, and is rather ashamed of that name, and want to bury it.

[4.] The fire from heaven, it fires them with zeal against the false prophets ; verse 20, " And Elijah said unto them, Take the

prophets of Baal, let none of them escape ; and they took them ; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there." And whatever was peculiar and extraordinary in this case, I am not to insist on ; only, it plainly shews us, that true fire from heaven fills people with zeal for God, and against all the enemies of God, as enemies of his glory ; against false prophets and false teachers ; against all corruptions and corrupters. Then it must be strange fire in our day that fills people with zeal against these that are witnessing for God, and for the reformation-work, and that makes people cordially embrace and bear with all the intruders and the corruptions, and all the boars and foxes that are in God's vineyard, with all the thieves and robbers there ; and that leads people to a countenancing of them, strengthening of their hands, instead of witnessing against them. This strange fire that is burning here and there through the land, what is it but the fire of hell mixed with the fire of God's wrath, against an apostate generation ! And if God be saying to us this day, " Ye are my witnesses, that I am God," let us witness for our covenanted God that he is God, that he is King, and that he is our God.

But I would apply the subject next in a word by way of examination. Try and examine yourselves whether or not you be fit for witnessing openly at a communion-table that he is God ; whether you be of those who are true, faithful, honest witnesses for him, of whom he says, " Ye are my witnesses, that I am God." How shall we know it ? Why, if you be true witnesses for him, then,

1. Ye are witnesses against yourselves. You are surely witnesses against your own sins ; witnesses before God, and content to be witnesses before the world, with reference to your sinfulness. O you are witnesses that your heart and nature are corrupt : " That your hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. xvii. 9 ; that your hearts are hearts full of wickedness ; that your hearts are a hell full of devils, full of all abominations ; that you are sinners, the chief of sinners. If you are witnesses for God, you are witnesses against yourselves, and all your sins and abominations, and are loathing yourselves.

2. If ye are true witnesses for God, then you will be ready to witness for every truth of God, and against every error, and every thing that tends to dishonour the name of God, that tends to the denying that he is God, in whatever revelation he makes of his name : " Thou holdest fast my name," Rev. ii. 13.

3. If ye are witnesses that he is God, your faith and hope will rest and depend on this leading truth, this truth of all truths, this centre of all truths, "That he is God;" I say, your faith will terminate and rest upon God, the object of faith. He is not the object of fancy or imagination. The object of faith is God, the eternal, invisible God in Christ. It is but a delusive faith, if your faith does not terminate on God. The object of faith is not Christ, but as he is the Christ of God; and it looks to God in Christ. It is not the word, but as it is the word of God. It is not the promise, but as it is the promise of God; Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God. The object of faith is not the blood of Christ, but as it is the blood of God. It is not the righteousness of Christ, but as it is the righteousness of God. Faith looks to God, and rests upon a God. The faith and hope of a true believer terminates and rests itself upon this, "That he is God;" hopes for eternal life in him, and from him, because he is God, 1 John v. 11. And if God be giving you his testimony this day, saying, "Ye are my witnesses," then you will be giving him your testimonial, saying, He is God; he is "IMMANUEL, God with us; JEHOVAH, our righteousness."

4. Your witnessing for God will be a practical witnessing; endeavouring, in your conversation, by your profession, by your walk, to glorify God before the world; "Let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ: stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind, striving together for the hope of the gospel," Phil. i. 27.

In a word, if you be witnesses for God, you will have the witness in you; for "He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself," 1 John v. 10. You have the Spirit of Christ in you; and, indeed, when the Spirit of Christ is in a man, it leads him to a dependence on Christ without him; on Christ in a word, and upon a God in Christ, and to witness *that he is God*.

I shall now close with a word of exhortation. O sirs, let these that never were witnesses to this great truth, that *God is God*, that the *Lord is God*, O let them bear witness *that he is God*, by coming to Christ, and believing in him; this is to witness, and the leading way of witnessing that he is God; 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." John vi. 40, "This is the will of God, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." And God gives testimony for Christ, that he is God, "The true God, and eternal life;" 1 John v. 11, "This is the record,

that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." As we are called this day to believe in the Son of God, so to believe in God and to attest that God is true; for he that hath received God's testimony concerning Christ hath set to his seal that God is true.

Why, sirs, if you believe in Jesus, that is the great thing that you are called to, in order to witness for God. If you believe in him, then you witness that God is a God of infinite wisdom, providing well for his glory and your good; that he is a God of infinite power, that supported Christ under the load of infinite wrath, enabling him to satisfy infinite justice, and enabling him to destroy principalities and powers, and conquer death; you will witness that God is a God of infinite holiness, and see the glory thereof in Christ's obedience unto death: by believing you will see that he is a God of infinite justice, that he is the infinitely just God. This is to be seen most clearly in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, offered up of himself to the satisfaction of justice. O how justice shone in the man Christ Jesus, when upon the cross, between heaven and earth, deserted of God, the heavens darkened above him, and the earth trembling below him, and he bearing the whole load of wrath, that would have pressed us down for ever and ever! O, you will be witnesses that he is an infinitely just God. And also, by believing, you will witness he is the true and faithful God; you will set to your seal to his truth, believing that he is truth, and that his truth is sealed by the blood of Christ; and that he, in and by death, satisfied all the threatenings of the law, and sealed all the promises of the gospel at once, and so cleared the truth of God in both. In a word, you will witness that God is a merciful God, by believing in Christ. You will be a witness to the grace of God, as it reigns through the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life.

Well, by believing in Christ, you come to bear witness to this truth, that he is God, that he is a God of all glorious attributes and perfections. By rejecting Christ, not coming to him, not believing in him, you deny God, you make God a liar instead of being a God of truth, you make God an impotent deity instead of being a God of power, you make him a cruel tyrant instead of being a God of mercy; you deny all the attributes of God by refusing to come to our Lord Jesus Christ. You deny God and you make yourself God. O, sirs, by unbelief you make God no God, you make him

nothing at all, and you make yourselves God and yourselves all; but by faith in Jesus, you will make yourselves nothing, and God to be what he is, "All and in all;" and unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Tell me, O sinner, can you receive the record of God concerning his name? "What is his name?" He hath a name bearing relation to you, his name is "the Lord thy God." He not only says in the covenant of promise what he will be—I will *be thy God*; but he tells what he is to you, "I am the Lord thy God." O, sirs, are you able to receive this? May the Lord make you able this day to receive it on the bare word of God, and to drink in this name, *that he is God*, and that he is *the Lord* THY GOD? Why does he say, "I am the LORD THY GOD?" Why *yours*? Even because he is "IMMANUEL, God with us;" God with you, God with me; your God, and my God. How may we give God such a name, or define him after this manner, by his relation thus to us? Because we may define him as he defines himself. Here we are called to witness what he calls himself. He calls himself, The Lord our God, "I am the Lord thy God." Here the whole of his name, bearing a relation both to himself and us; what he is in himself, and what he is to us, "I am the Lord thy God." The Lord JEHOVAH has mixed our name and his own together. This is the good news of the glorious gospel that comes to us, "I am the Lord thy God." We dare not give him another name, because, as he thus defines himself, so the SON of his bosom defines him this way; when he ascended to heaven he said, "I ascend, to my Father and your Father; to my God and your God." He left his Father's name behind him; he is my Father and your Father, he is my God and your God; "I am the Lord thy God." It is true, it is a general name that belongs indefinitely to all the visible church; but if it be received by the hearing of faith, then it infers a peculiar privilege, and your special interest in him as your God for ever and ever. Can you therefore receive this name of God when he says, "I am the Lord thy God?" God knows best how to define himself. Is it the worse for us that he mixes our name in with his; that he puts us in his name, as he is a God in Christ, saying, "I am the Lord thy God?" His name is, I AM THAT I AM; and as sure as *I am*, so sure I am *thy God*. *I am that I am*, says he; I am thy God, and thy assurance of faith, and of my being *thy God*, is to be founded on the faith of my being what *I am*. As sure as *I am God*, thou may depend upon it, "I am the Lord thy God."

O, sirs, can you take this name? Can you take it to you upon his bare word? Whatever you are, whatever wicked nature you have, and however greatly you have offended this God, yet when he comes to you this day, with his name and proclamation, "I am the Lord thy God;" I am JEHOVAH thy God, because I am IMMANUEL; he is IMMANUEL, *God with us*; a God for us, and a God to us; a God to save us, a God to bless us, a God to be a heaven and happiness to us through all eternity. O, what think you of this name of God? Tell me, O sinner, can you gladly receive this name? "Know you the Lord, that he is God? Not we, but he us made;" not we, but he us saves; not we, but he is God. "Ye shall be as Gods," was the first temptation; the power of it is never broke till you can say, "Not we, but he is God." It is he that is God, and he is *the Lord our God*.

O, poor soul, are you gladly welcoming this name of God? Are you receiving and embracing it? Are you glad that God comes to you with such a name as this? Do you receive, and believe, and take it on God's word, *that he is God*, and being *God*, he is *the Lord thy God*? Why, then, he is taking you for his witnesses this day; and he is glad to have your testimonial, in the midst of this atheistical age, when so many are denying God, making themselves and other things to be gods. He is calling you to witness for his name, and if you answer his call, he is marking your name in Zion; for, "When God writes the people, and counts that this man and that man was born there," he records their names as witnesses for him, saying, "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God."

A DISCOURSE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SOLEMNITY.

SEEING, on this occasion, you have been hearing what God says to you in these words, "Ye are my witnesses, that I am God;" it may perhaps be inquired, 1. Why, and upon what considerations are you to witness? 2. In what cases? 3. How, and by what means, and in what manner may you do so?

1st, Why, and upon what considerations are we to witness?

1. The command of God should sway us. We are commanded

to hold fast the form of sound words, 1 Tim. i. 13; to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, Heb. iv. 14, and x. 23. "Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," 2 Tim. i. 7, 8.

2. You are called to this duty, because it is for the honour of God that we be witnesses for him that he is God; and for the honour of the Lord Jesus, that we be witnesses that he is God. God has sworn, that to him every knee shall bow. By honest and faithful witnessing for him, we bow and pay homage to him.

3. You are called to this, because it is commendable God not only commands, but commends this duty. We find the church of Pergamos commended for this; "Thou holdest fast my name," Rev. ii. 13, It was commendable in Paul the apostle, that he had fought the good fight of faith. It was commendable in John, that he confessed the Lord Jesus, and denied not, but confessed that he was the Christ. It was commendable in the church, that they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, Rev. xii. 11.

4. You are called to it by the example of our Lord Jesus, who witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate: when he asked, "Art thou a king?" Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king, To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth," John xviii. 37. Again,

5. You are called to it from the consideration of the great advantage of being his witnesses. O sirs, what great advantage is it? Why, I shall inform you of several advantages thereof.

(1.) They who are true witnesses for God and his truth, they are honoured of God. As they are not ashamed of him, so he is not ashamed of them. The witnesses spoken of, Heb. xi., it is said of them, "God is not ashamed to be called their God," verse 16. He owns them; and is not this an advantage?

(2.) He strengthens them. This he did to Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17, "At my first answer, no man stood with me; but all men forsook me: Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." And is it not a great advantage likewise to his witnesses,

(3.) That he puts honour on them, even before the world? Indeed, they are the most hated persons in the world; "Ye shall be hated of men, for my name's sake." Yet the Lord orders matters so, that they are honoured not only by God, but sometimes by men

also: "Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed," 2 Sam. ii. 30. Again,

(4.) The advantage of it lies in this, that they come to be preserved in a day of temptation; Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation," Rev. iii. 10. How comes it that many have fallen in the hour of temptation at this day? They have been careless about, and have not made conscience to keep the word of Christ's patience. Again,

(5.) It is an advantage to these that are his witnesses, that they are admitted to communion with him. The more they witness and declare with the apostle, 1 John i. 1, "That which they have seen and heard, and handled of the world of life;" the more communion they have with God; for, after this witnessing for the Lord it immediately follows, verse 3, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Again,

(6.) Honest witnessing for Christ gives evidence that they are of God. We read, 1 John iv. 3, "Whosoever confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh [together with all the truths that relate to, depend upon, and are necessarily connected with it, he gives evidence that he], is of God."

(7.) It is a great advantage to ourselves, and, I may add, to others also; for, honest witnessing may excite others to embrace the truth, and confirm other witnesses therein: whereas, not confessing the truth may be stumbling to the godly, as Peter's dissimulation was, Gal. i. 13.

6. Another reason or motive for encouraging to witness for God, is the great disadvantages of not witnessing. I will tell you three disadvantages of not witnessing for the Lord.

(1.) It tends to bring on temporal judgments. We read, Jer. ix. 9, after it was said, verse 3, "They are not valiant for the truth upon the earth;" it is added, "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Alas! what vengeance from heaven is awaiting this generation, that will not witness for God, but rather stand up against him and his cause, particularly his covenanted cause, in this nation!

(2.) Another disadvantage is, that as it brings on temporal, so it likewise procures spiritual judgments. When people receive not the truth in love, God justly gives them up to strong delusions to believe a lie, 2 Thes. ii. 11. And these who do not witness, they expose themselves to apostacy. God may justly leave them to par-

tial apostacy, as Peter, who denied his master ; or total apostacy, as the Jews, who were rejected from being the people of God. Another spiritual judgment is, that it brings sore anguish and terror to the consciences of those who refuse to witness for God in their day, There is a word, 1 Tim. vi. 10, " For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." In the margin it is " They have been *seduced* from the faith." People who have voluntarily erred from the faith, or been seduced by the snares of the time from it, they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

(3.) Refusing to witness for God, brings eternal wrath, the wrath of God upon them who continue to reject the testimony of God, and to neglect to witness that he is God, in the several relations he makes of himself to them in his word : " If any man draw back, says God, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38. " The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways, Prov. xiv. 14. If we deny him, he will also deny us, 1 Tim. ii. 12. As for such as turn aside after their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity, Psalm cxxv. 5. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels, Mark vii. 38. No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God, Luke ix. 62. Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," Matthew x. 33.

7. Another motive may be drawn from Christ's appearing for us in heaven ; therefore we should be his witnesses on earth. Thus the apostle argues, Heb. iv. 14, " Seeing then that we have a great High priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." See Heb. x. 23, " Let us hold fast in the profession of our faith without wavering

8. Another motive is, the preciousness of the truths of God we are called to witness for. What is the great thing you are called to witness ? Even to witness *that he is God* ; to be witnesses for the truth of God, and the God of truth. Every truth is a part of God's name, and of his word ; and though there are many precious truths yet they are all one thing in God. Our God cannot be divided ; therefore, by your refusing to witness for God, in any of the precious

truths which he has held out to us in his word, you refuse to witness "That he is God," in this revelation of his name. Every truth is a precious pearl of the Mediator's crown.

2dly, In what cases are we to witness? I shall only say a few words upon it. We are sometimes called to witness publicly, if God should call us before courts, as in the case of the apostles; and sometimes more privately, perhaps to particular persons, to give every one a reason of the hope that is in you; sometimes called in company to defend the truths of God, and his name, when blasphemed by others; and to do what we can to witness for God. We should endeavour every one to have that for our motto, the apostle speaks of himself, "I am set for the defence of the gospel." This should be our motto also, "I am set for the defence of the name of my God," because we are his witnesses that he is God.

There are two or three cases especially wherein we are called to witness for him; namely,

1. In times of defection. The neglect of this was complained of, Jer. ix. 3, "They were not valiant for the truth upon the earth." When many of Christ's disciples went back, and walked no more with him: "Then said he to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" John vi. 66, 67. When there are defections from the truth, or any strange errors, or strange apostacies, or strange principles taking place, then we are called to cleave to, and witness for the truth.

2. In times of doubting. John bore witness to the truth, when the Jews were not come the length of denying, but in a suspense about the coming of Christ, John iii. 33. When some of the Lord's children may be in a doubt about such and such a truth, then we are called to witness. Our Lord Jesus says, John v. 33, that John did bear witness of him; and it was in a time wherein many were doubting about the truth. We ought to witness for the truth, in order to the fortifying of the faith of those who are ready to waver.

3. We are called to witness, particularly in a day of temptations. When there are many snares and temptations to lead us away from the Lord and from the truth, then it is a time of testifying and witnessing. Our Lord gives us an example of this: whenever Peter began to tempt him to that which was contrary to his name and truth, and glorious design, he says, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Why, can a saint be a Satan? Yes, when he tempts to any strange principles, and to desert the cause of God; then we may

say to a saint, "Get thee behind me, Satan." In times of temptation we are called to witness for him.

4. In times of persecution, when the cause of Christ is a persecuted cause. You see Peter and John, Acts iv. 8, 12, when they were imprisoned and persecuted, how readily did they witness at such a time before their judges? They told them, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner," verse 11. When prohibited to preach in Christ's name they undauntedly reply, "Whether we should obey God or man, judge ye," verse 19, 20.

5. In a word, a time when there is few to witness is a time we are called particularly to witness for God. I remember the apostle Paul, 2 Tim. i. 15, after he had said, verse 8, "Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," then he adds, "All these in Asia have turned away from me," therefore do not ye turn away, "Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord."

3dly, The next question was to inquire, "How, or by what means, and in what manner, are we to be his witnesses?"

[1.] By what means. Would you be honest witnesses for God, and witnesses that he is God? I would advise you,

1. To seek the lively faith, the rooted faith of all the truths ye are called to witness for, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," Rom. x, 10. And as David said, Psal. cxvi. 10, "I believe, therefore I have spoken," so let this be your way, I believe, therefore I speak; I believe, and therefore witness. I close by faith with such a truth, and therefore witness. Seek to be established in the faith of the truth.

2. Call in the help of the Spirit of God, and make use of the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, for the defence of the truth, for it is your safety to cleave to the cause of Christ, whatever be the consequence; let no event be your rule, but let the word of God be your rule. Remember the warning Christ hath given you, John xvi. 1, and 33, compared, "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended." Christ warns them of what they might expect, that so they might not be discouraged when trials for the truth come on. Well, "These things have I spoken to you; they shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service." And verse 33, "These things have I spoken to you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation."

Again, call in the help of the Spirit of God, for furniture in order to witnessing work. What furniture? Even that which is treasured up in the glorious Head. In Christ the Head, it is to be forthcoming for the members. Christ is anointed with the Spirit above measure, "I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles," Isa. xlii. 1. It is that Spirit that is promised to all his members, Isa. lix. 21, "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my 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, from henceforth and for ever." Therefore, O sirs, call in the help of the Spirit. And,

[2.] As to the manner of witnessing. O sirs, seek of the Lord to help you to witness in the following manner: namely, to witness for the truth fully; for all truth, without minching any of the truths of God; and to witness freely, without constraint or compulsion; to witness openly, without shame; and to witness boldly, without fear, and with holy courage; also to witness meekly, without pride. It is said, 1 Peter iii. 15, that we are to give the reasons of the hope within us with meekness and fear; in the margin it is, "with meekness and reverence." O sirs, have a regard and reverence to all these truths ye are called to witness for. Remember, God is in every truth; and when you witness for any truth, you witness for God. Therefore, see that your witnessing be done with reverence and godly fear. Reverence every truth of God. See that your witnessing be a humble witnessing. O how humbly did John the Baptist witness for Christ, when he witnessed for him, and said, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to unloose!" We ought to witness uprightly, without hypocrisy; and out of love to Christ, and zeal for the glory of God, the credit of his cause, and the honour of his truth. Again, O endeavour to witness joyfully; be not disheartened, whatever trials you come under; witness, I say, joyfully. It is said, Acts. v. 41, "They rejoiced that they were thought worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ." We ought also to witness innocently, without giving offence, or any just occasion to any to speak evil of us. Again, you should witness constantly, without fainting or giving over, till we have finished our testimony, "He that endureth to the end, shall be saved. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." Lastly, O endeavour to witness dependently, without confidence in the flesh, depending on

the grace of Christ. Though you had as much grace as the apostle Peter, yet, if you depend not on the Lord Jesus, you will, with Peter, deny him, "Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice. Endeavour to witness dependently on the grace that is in Jesus Christ; otherwise, who knows how soon you may, as it were, be thrown on your back with the temptations of the times, that have carried so many down the stream. Think what a trial the poor apostles were brought unto when Jesus was crucified and laid in the grave; there was no appearance of him as yet, and they began to say, "We thought it was he that should have redeemed Israel," Luke xxiv. 21. They began thus to doubt of the great truth they seemed to be established in; this fundamental truth.

'This is the time wherein precious truths, and some truths wherein you thought yourselves established, and laid up in your mind, as beyond debate, are now turned controverted points, and debatable questions. Who would have thought that it would have been debated in Scotland, that our solemn covenanted work of Reformation was the word of God; and that these covenants were binding and obligatory upon posterity? Who would have thought that it would have been debated in Scotland, that Christ, the King of Zion, hath a fixed government in his visible church? Some great truths, both relating to the doctrine and government of Christ, come now-a-days to be disputed. Therefore, I say, there is need of close dependence, that you may exonerate yourselves by honest testimony. Now, consider how you will exonerate yourselves at the hand of God and of Christ, who lays no other burden upon you than this, "Hold fast till I come," Rev. ii. 25. How shall you be exonerated at the hand of men; at the hand of your witnessing forefathers, who transmitted truth pure to us, at the expense of their blood, and of whom many travailed night and day to get the work of Reformation brought to the scripture pattern; to get Confessions of Faith adapted and conform to the scripture purity? How shall we be exonerated at their hands, if we in this generation be transmitting nothing to posterity but lumber and trash, instead of precious truth? How shall we be exonerated at the hand of the present generation, or our children and posterity after us? What will we answer for betraying the trust of reformation-principles and treasures, which God, by our forefathers, left at our door? If we be not faithful witnesses for God and his truth, and if we leave nothing to our seed and offspring but counterfeits instead of gold; poisonous

errors instead of wholesome food. Covenant-breaking Scotland never thinks upon this ! But,

I shall just close with a word particularly to the people of this congregation. There may be some here of Dunfermline people, that, with many others, have turned their backs on witnessing work, and have fallen in with the defections of the day, the delusions of the time, and the intrusions of the place. I think the Lord is saying to them as the prophet Ezekiel, chap. ii. 4, "They are impudent children and stiff hearted ; I do send thee to them, thou shalt say to them, Thus saith the Lord God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house) yet they shall know that there hath been a prophet among them." So I may say to many in Dunfermline, Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, yet they shall know that there hath been a witness among them ; I mean, not one witness, the poor man that hath been so long dispensing the word amongst them ; but manifold witnesses that God hath against them ; they shall know that God hath a manifold witness among them ; and God hath been setting up a multitude of witnesses at this occasion against many in Dunfermline ; a witness against all profane drunkards, whoremongers, Sabbath breakers ; a witness against every unbelieving hypocrite and legalist ; a witness against every backslider, that have turned their backs upon Christ and upon his cause ; a witness against every Demas, who hath forsaken us, having loved the present world ; a witness against every Judas, who betrays the Son of God with a kiss, and betrays the cause of Christ ; a witness against all and every Elder in Dunfermline, who have deserted their office, and turned their back on the cause that they solemnly engaged in ; a witness against every intruder in the parish or presbytery of Dunfermline, that have not entered in by the door of the chief Shepherd, opened in the everlasting gospel ; a witness against every man and woman in Dunfermline who have no regard to the Testimony and Warnings I have particularly given, at several times, and read before them, and have allowed to be published, that none may pretend ignorance.¹ God, I say, hath been setting up witnesses against

(1) To unfold this affair a little to the Reader, which our Author here speaks so warmly and affectedly about, it may not be improper to observe, That the General Assembly, 1740, having passed the sentence of Deposition against eight Ministers, of whom our Author was one, for their faithfully testifying against the prevailing corruptions of the time, and their stedfast adherence to our Reformation principles,

all such. Why, whom is he adducing witnesses? Not only the poor man that hath been left so long in the ministry here, but all his brethren associate with him; not only the people of this place, that cleave still to the lawful minister that God hath continued with them, but also God is saying with reference to Dunfermline, I will bring in among them witnesses against them, witnesses from their neighbours, from all parishes round about Dunfermline, that shall witness when many in the parish of Dunfermline are going out, rejecting the testimony of the day, and the witnessing work of the day. I will bring into it others from parishes about, to be witnesses in Dunfermline, against Dunfermline, for their apostacy and rebellion against the Lord. And what if the Lord be calling us to say, as in another case the apostle said to the Jews, Acts xiii. 46, "It was necessary that the gospel should be first preached unto you;" but in regard, and as far as you reckon yourselves unworthy of eternal life: lo, we turn to the Gentiles: Even so, it was necessary that the gospel should be preached to you in Dunfermline, and preached by us to you these thirty and two years; and now that the ministry, at last, should be accompanied with a testimony for all the truths that are deserted by the generation: it was necessary that this should be done; and if you reckon yourselves unworthy of it, know it, that lo we turn to another congregation; and turn, as it were, away from the old congregation of Dunfermline, to a witnessing congregation there, that shall witness for God, against all the perfidious, treacherous persons in Dunfermline, that have disregarded all the warnings of God. Consider therefore what you are doing; how many witnesses God has been adducing against you. Consider there are two or three thousand that have come to the table of the Lord at this occasion; some of them, and we hope a good part of them, honest witnesses for God; but they are all, by their profession, witnesses against these that have turned their backs on us and our ministry: they are all pro-

several of the inhabitants of Dunfermline, on this occasion deserted the ministrations of their lawful pastor. The Presbytery of Dunfermline, in order to implement the sentence of the supreme Judicatory, appointed his pulpit to be supplied. This induced our author at sundry times, to emit three different WARNINGS to his congregation. The first on Sabbath, June 6, 1742, when Mr. Hardie at Culross, first took possession thereof. The second was read August 22d, said year, when the Presbytery, in concurrence with some in the parish had taken some steps towards calling a minister in his room. The third on Sabbath, May 1st, 1743, when intimation was made of the admission of one to be minister in his place, on Thursday thereafter.

fessed witnesses against such ; and all that are witnesses now, will be brought forth as witnesses against you at the last day, unless you return and repent, and unless the Lord arise, in his infinite favour, in and through Jesus Christ, and have mercy on you. Therefore, O poor soul, seek that this occasion may not be lost ; that you may not perish, and be involved, not only in the guilt of your own sins, but also in the public guilt of the sins of the generation wherein you live. O that you would go to God alone, and cry to him, that there may be some saving good done to your soul by this solemnity, that it may not be produced as a witness against you ! O sirs, be restless till you be brought among the number of God's true and honest witnesses, whom he will make honourable mention of, saying, "Ye are my witnesses that I am God."

SERMON LXXIX.

COVENANTED GRACE FOR COVENANTING WORK.¹

"Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and keep his statutes, and his commandments and his judgments ; and to hearken unto his voice ; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments."—Deut. xxvi. 17, 18.

THE solemnity of this very day hath been great and remarkable, and somewhat exactly parallel to it you have in these words. From the preceding verse, God by his servant Moses, binds all duties of obedience to his commands, upon this people of Israel, by a three-fold argument. The first is drawn from the authority of God, ver. 19. They were not the commands of Moses, but of God : infinite Wisdom framed them, and the power of the King of kings made them binding to them ; "This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes," &c. The second argument is drawn from his being their covenanted God, ver. 17, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day, to be thy God," &c. A third argument is drawn from their being his covenanted people, ver. 18,

(1) This Sermon was preached at Stirling, December 28th, 1743, in the evening of that day, on which the Associate Presbytery did with uplifted hands, solemnly renew the National Covenants.

“And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people,” &c. Here he covenants to make them his peculiar people, his obedient people, that they should keep all his commandments; and farther, verse 19, to make them a high people, and to make them high above all nations which he had made, in praise, and in name, and in honour: and make them a holy people; “That thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken.” But I confine myself especially to the verses first read.

I know the way wherein some go to work, in commenting upon this, and such like texts, as if there were but one mutual covenant between God and them here spoken of; whereof their part was a promise and oath of obedience; and God’s part, a promise, that upon that condition he would do so and so for them; and thus turning it to a covenant of works, with stipulation and re-stipulation. But “We have not so learned Christ,” nor the truth as it is in him, as to conceive it in this manner; it was a gross view of it, this way, that made the most part of that Israel of God, so soon to break all their engagements; they made a covenant of duty with God, without taking hold on God’s covenant of grace, exhibit to them; and hence they so perfidiously brake their covenant: and therefore, when God returned to them, he put them in mind of his covenant which they had forgotten, and put a difference between that covenant of theirs and his covenant; “Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant in the days of thy youth, and thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed;” and I will do so and so for thee, but not by thy covenant, Ezek. xvi. 60, 61. Whatever peculiar privileges, and temporal blessings, were promised to Israel of old, yet they being all typical of spiritual blessings, and the heavenly Canaan; and however dark this legal Old Testament dispensation was, yet it was a covenant of grace they were under: and hence they were under a special obligation to serve and obey him in a covenant of duty.

In the words, then, you have more generally, these three things.

1st, Their covenant of duty and service to God, wherein they avouch him to be their God, and engage to walk in his ways, &c.

2dly, The foundation and ground of this their covenant of duty, and the grand encouragement they had to enter into it, namely, God’s covenant of grace and promise, wherein he avouches them to be his; and promises to make them a holy and happy people: and

happy would they all have been for ever, if they all had taken hold of this covenant of promise. But though a promise was left to them, yet many of them entered not into the earthly Canaan, nor to the heavenly either, because of their unbelief, Heb. iii. 19. They were not all Israel that were of Israel. They were all avouched to be God's people in an external federal way, as they were a visible church in general; but there was only a small remnant that were his people, in a special, internal, spiritual and distinguished sense, as being true believers, who laid hold on his covenant of grace, in order to their being capable to stand to their covenant of duty, and so shew themselves to be his dutiful and peculiar people: however, the outward dispensation of the covenant of promise respected them all equally, that they might build their engagement to duty, upon this foundation of God's covenant of grace, wherein alone their furniture for all duty was provided.

3dly, You have in the words the solemnity of this twofold transaction, relating to their covenant of duty, and God's covenant of grace, as the ground and encouragement of it: and the solemnity appears.

1. In the manner wherein they assert their covenant of duty, and God asserts his covenant of grace; it is by a solemn avouching: they openly own, acknowledge, and confess him to be their God; and he openly owns, acknowledges, and confesses them to be his people.

2. There is a solemnity in the particularity of this twofold transaction: they are led to deal with God by their covenant, and God with them by his covenant, in such a particular way, that they act in a body as one man, acting and transacting with that One only, the living and true God; but with him as a promising God in Christ, covenanting with Christ, leading them to take hold of that covenant, every one in particular for himself, that they may be capable to devote themselves to him, and serve him. Hence the words are, "Thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God, and the Lord hath avouched thee to be his people."

3. There is a solemnity in the universality of the matter engaged unto in this twofold engagement; they engage to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice: and, in order hereunto, God in his covenant engages, by his promise, to make them his, to make them holy, to make them happy, to do all their work in them and for them.

4. There is a solemnity in the date of this double engagement, *this day* ; intimating that a remark is to be put upon the time wherein such a solemn thing is transacted ; therefore, in the preceding verse, together with this text, *this day* is three times mentioned : "THIS DAY the Lord thy God hath commanded thee ; THIS DAY thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God ; and THIS DAY the Lord hath avouched thee to be his people."

Moses took instruments upon it ; and dates his instruments, that *this day* it was done ; so we, in the afternoon of this day, before all that were witnesses to this work, in the former part of the day, do hereupon take instruments, that this day we have avouched the Lord to be our God, and to walk in his ways ; and this day the Lord, by his presence, we hope, and countenance in the work, hath avouched us to be his servants, and of the number of his peculiar people, by engaging, in his covenant of grace and promise, to be our God, and to help us to keep all his judgments, and to do them with all our hearts, and with all our souls. This is the alone ground and foundation upon which we have come under any such engagement to him.

The date of the time *this day*, applied here, both to his engagement, in the covenant of grace, and our engagement in the covenant of duty, points out the necessary connexion between these two ; or the absolute necessity of his engaging for us, in order to our engaging to him ; and though his engagement is last mentioned in the text, yet it is the first intended ; for, though it is ordinary in scripture, that the duty is sometimes first named, and then the means and motives afterwards ; yet, surely in the order of nature, the means and motives to the duty are first considered, and then the duty practised accordingly. Hence, Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return to the Lord, for he will abundantly pardon." Here the motive is last mentioned, but yet it is the first thing intended and viewed by the returning sinner, in order to excite him to a compliance with the exhortation, and induce him to return. Thus, Isa. xlv. 22, "Return to me, for I have redeemed thee," the motive and argument comes last, "I have redeemed thee," yet it is first in view ; for redeeming love believed, influences the gospel return : "Return to me, for I have redeemed thee."

Thus the ground and foundation of our solemn engagement is God's engaging first in a covenant of grace to us through Christ ;

and though this be last here mentioned, it is the first in order of nature and time both, as being the spring and fountain of the former; and if we who are ministers, have been honestly avouching the Lord this day to be our God, and to serve him, it is an evidence that he hath been before-hand with us, avouching us to be his servants, and engaging by promise for us; and, therefore, in accommodation of this subject to the present circumstance, the doctrine I observe from the text, is the following :—

DOCT. That God's solemn engagement in Christ unto us, by a covenant of grace and promise, lays us under the strongest obligation, both to come under, and to be faithful to our solemn engagements unto him, in a covenant of gratitude and duty.

By our solemn engagements, I understand our avouching the Lord to be our God, and that we will walk in his ways, &c. By God's solemn engagements, I understand his avouching us to be of his peculiar people; and promising to enable us to keep all his commandments, and to make us holy and happy; and because, by these arguments drawn from God's being Israel's covenanted God, and hence their being his covenanted people, Moses binds all the duties of obedience to God's commands upon them; therefore, I say, that this is a strong argument and encouragement to be firm and faithful to our engagements.

I hope I need not stand upon the confirmation of the truth of it; the Preface to the Ten Commandments teacheth us this doctrine: "That because God is the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments." We are bound to avouch him, to know and acknowledge him to be the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer; we are bound to serve and obey him, which is much the same with this doctrine I am upon.

In speaking to it, through divine assistance, following the order of the text, I would essay these things :—

- I. Touch a little at the engagement of a covenanted people here, their avouching God.
- II. At the engagement of a covenanted God, his avouching them.
- III. Touch at the solemnity of these engagements, both of his and theirs.

- IV. Prove the doctrine by scripture and reason, That God's solemn engagement in Christ unto us, by a covenant of grace and promise, brings us under the strongest obligation, both to come under, and be faithful unto our solemn engagements to him, in a covenant of gratitude and duty.
- V. To make some application of the whole subject.

1. We are to speak of the engagement of a covenanted people; they are expressed in the first verse of the text, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God." Where we may observe,

1st, The nature of this engagement; it is an avouching, that is, a solemn confessing and acknowledging the name of God, according to that word, Psalm cxlvii. 22,

The Lord praise, O Jernsalem;
Zion, thy God confess.

And it is confessing him with the mouth, flowing from a believing in him with the heart, "For with the heart men believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 10.

2dly, Observe the matter of this engagement, which consists of two general points.

[1.] A solemn profession of faith, or of laying hold upon God's covenant of grace; that is, an avouching the Lord to be thy God. The foundation of this claim we have to him as our God, is not only the command of God, saying, "Thou shalt have no other God before me," and thereby requiring us to "know and acknowledge him to be the Lord our God and Redeemer," but also his promise, saying in his covenant, "I will be thy God," and a declaration of his name, saying, "I am the Lord thy God." This is his name, and when we take hold of this name, we not only acknowledge his sovereignty over us, as *THE* Lord; but also his propriety in us, as *OUR* God; otherwise we tear asunder, and rend to pieces his name, which is the Lord thy God; by which he declares upon the matter, As sure as I am the Lord, so sure am I thy God. Here is the great name of this covenanting God in Christ, We have no other warrant, but one and the same, to acknowledge his sovereignty over us, as *the* Lord; and to acknowledge his relation to us, as *our* God. And shall we confess the one part of his name, and not the other? Or rather, shall we acknowledge the most awful, and reject the most amiable part of it? Wo would be to us for ever, if he be *the* Lord,

and not *our* God! But our everlasting welfare lies in this, that he is the Lord our God; his name is, "I am that I am," and when he explains this name to us, he says, "I am the Lord thy God." O solid everlasting foundation, for the assurance of faith! As sure as I AM, so sure "I am the Lord thy God."

Now, here is the chief and leading matter of our engagement, our taking hold of God's covenant of grace, or of God as our covenanted God in Christ, and avouching him to be our God; and so to be our righteousness and our strength; our righteousness, that we may stand justified in him, as Jehovah, our righteousness; and our strength, that we may be sanctified in him, and have ability and furniture for our work and warfare from him. And so our avouching the Lord to be our God, is also a saying, "We will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, and his only," Psal. lxxi. 16. Hence,

[2.] The next general, in the matter of the engagement, is a solemn profession of obedience, or a resolution, in the name and strength of this our God, "To walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice." Here is a five-fold expression of what may be supposed to be one and the same thing, but yet under distinct considerations; and so,

1. To walk in his ways, or an engagement to do so, may import, a regard to his laws, as they are the beaten path, wherein he wills all his people continually to go on by a progressive motion; and the ways wherein alone they can expect to meet with him, and enjoy his company and fellowship.

2. An engagement to keep his statutes, may import a regard to his laws, as they are statute and ordained in the court of heaven, to be a standing and established rule of faith and practice unto us.

3. An engagement to keep his commandments may import a regard to the same laws of God, as they have a stamp of divine authority on them; we engage to regard them, as they have engraven upon them the authority of a commanding God.

4. An engagement to keep his judgments may import a regard to the same laws, as they are the result of infinite wisdom, or as they have engraven upon them the image of God, as a God of judgment, or whose understanding is infinite. And whereas these are all spoke of in the plural number, namely, *ways, statutes, commandments, and judgments*, it imports an engagement and resolution to

observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded, Matt. xxviii. 28, without reckoning any thing too little or small, that hath his authority stamped upon it, for "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, Matt. v. 19. It imports, then, a regard to whatsoever truth God hath revealed, or duty he hath enjoined, in his holy word, which principally teaches us "what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of us."

5. An encouragement to hearken to his voice, as in the text, may import, a regard to the same statutes, commandments, and judgments, as they are the voice of God from heaven to us upon earth, which is called, "The more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto the shining light in a dark place," 2 Pet. i. 19. A more sure word than any other voice from heaven; yea, more sure than that voice that came from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt. iii. 17. To hearken to his voice may also import, a due regard to the voice of God, as in his word, so in his providence, explained by, and in an agreeableness to his word, the "only direct rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him." Hence we are to hear and regard the voice of God in all his dispensations; in his mercies, with thankfulness; and in his judgments, with reverence. We are called to hearken to him both in his word and rod: "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Micah vi. 9.

In a word, these expressions import a resolution to cleave to all the ordinances he hath established among them; for, "He gave his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; he dealt not so with any nation," Ps. cxvii. 19, 20.

Thus it includes a solemn engagement to adhere to all the degrees of reformation once attained to; and so of the same kind with that which we this day have been called unto.

II. The second thing proposed is, To touch a little at the engagement of our covenanting God in Christ, by a covenant of grace, which is the ground and foundation of this foresaid covenant of duty. This is expressed in the second verse of the text; and, "The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee," &c. Here let me observe also the nature and matter of this engagement.

1st, The nature of it: it is his avouching; and that is his solemn confessing and acknowledging us to be his peculiar people; which we are to conceive of in a way agreeable to the glorious majesty of God we have to do with, who, since our fall in Adam, the first covenant-head, cannot transact with us immediately, but in a new covenant-head, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ, who was given to be the covenant of the people, and in whom the covenant of grace stands fast. God could not promise to be our God, or to make us his people, but upon honourable terms; terms consistent with his infinite dignity; terms vindicating the honour of God's holiness, declared in the precepts of the law that we broke, and satisfying the justice of God, declared in the threatening of the law that we incurred; and because God, in a consistency with his declared purpose, could not engage to be any thing to us, but a consuming fire to destroy us, except upon these honourable terms; therefore he sent his eternal Son, according to the eternal concert between the Father and him, to assume our nature, and come into our law-room, to be the Lord our righteousness; and his engagement to do and suffer in our room, is previous, not only to any engagement of ours, in a covenant of duty and gratitude, but previous to God's engagement to be a God to us, or to make us his people; and Christ having both come under and fulfilling his engagements, with his whole heart and soul, saying, "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God," &c. See how the great God notified this to the world, sometimes with a Behold: "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold," Isa. xl. 1; sometimes with a Who is this? Jer. xxx. 21, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord." And, as the product of this engagement of Christ in our room, God not only came under a new engagement to Christ, and a new relation to him, to be his God and Father, upon this new-covenant footing, Psal. lxxxix. 26, but also under a new engagement and relation to us in him, as our God and Father in him, John xx. 17; and therefore it immediately follows, in the forecited Jer. xxx. 22, "You shall be my people, and I will be your God." And hence,

2dly, The matter of this engagement, in and through Christ Jesus, is,

1. To make us his people, or to avouch, confess, and acknowledge us as his peculiar people, as he hath promised us in Christ Jesus, "In whom all the promises of God are Yea and Amen, to the glory of God," and the promise, "You shall be my people," neces-

sarily imports the other, "I will be your God;" for, our relation to him, as his people, presupposes his relation to us as our God in Christ. God appropriating us to himself, and we appropriating God to ourselves, he publicly owns us to be his, and we publicly own him to be ours. His acknowledgment of us to be his peculiar people, imports, that as we are not our own, but his, so we are honoured with peculiar privileges; to be the people of his peculiar choice; being set apart for himself; the people of his peculiar delight: his delight is with the sons of men; the people of his peculiar desire: "He shall greatly desire thy beauty;" the people of his peculiar pleasure: "For the Lord takes pleasure in his people;" they are the people of his peculiar pasture; he feeds them among the lilies. In a word, to be his friends, his favourites, his jewels, his crown, his glory: "I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory."

2. The matter of his engagement in Christ unto us, in a covenant of promise, is to make us a holy people. This is both the end and design of his covenant of grace and promise; and it is the end and design of his bringing us under a covenant of duty and gratitude, that we should keep all his commandments. This is expressly promised in his covenant of grace: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 27. And though we are bound no farther to do, than he hath bound himself by promise to enable, (whence we go forth depending only upon the grace and strength of our promising God) yet, for exciting us to our duty, and strengthening our hands therein, God hath called us to vow, and pay our vows to him; and so there is, upon the matter, a superadded obligation lying upon us, by our covenant of gratitude and duty; which, though it binds us to nothing but what we were materially, antecedently, or authoritatively bound to before, by the word of God, yet, corroboratively, it strengthens the obligation with the solemnity of an oath; upon which instruments are taken, such a day and date, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day, and the Lord hath avouched thee this day." Hence,

III. The third thing I proposed to touch a little at, was, The solemnity of these engagements: both of ours in a covenant of gratitude, and of his, in a covenant of grace.

1. The solemnity of the people's engagement. Here I shall only observe, as in the explication, there is a solemnity in the way

and manner of their covenanting ; it is in a way of open avowing and avouching the Lord to be their God. There is a solemnity in the particularity of their appropriating God to themselves : “ Thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God—*thy* God.” There is a solemnity in the universality of the engagement : it relates to all things imported in keeping his statutes, commandments, judgments, and hearkening to his voice, as already explained. And there is a solemnity in the day and date of the instruments taken upon the whole : “ *This day* thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God, and to serve him.”

2. The solemnity of God’s engagement here, in a covenant of grace, is equally great. There is a solemnity in the way and manner of his engagement ; it is in a way of open avowing and avouching his relation to, and propriety in them. There is a solemnity in the particularity of the choice he openly makes of them, as his peculiar people. There is a solemnity in the universality of the promise in Christ Jesus unto them, as it respects all things that he calls them to engage unto, namely, the keeping of all his commandments. In Christ, our justifying head, they are all kept already as a covenant, and kept perfectly ; he hath finished the work the Father gave him to do ; but in him, as our sanctifying head, we are called to keep them gratefully and obediently ; not as a rule of justification and acceptance (for, “ We are accepted only in the Beloved,”) but as a rule of sanctification and obedience ; and, for this end, he hath promised his grace to be sufficient for us ; his strength to be made perfect in our weakness ; and his promise in the gospel extends to all things commanded in the law as our duty. And lastly, there is a solemnity in the day and date of God’s engagement to and for them, upon which also instruments are taken by Moses, the typical Mediator between God and Israel ; even so by Jesus Christ, our true Mediator between God and us, may I say, instruments are taken, that God’s covenant of grace, for our behoof, is dated the same day, the same time with our covenant of gratitude with him ; and it is well for us that these go hand in hand together, which leads me,

IV. To the fourth thing proposed, which is to shew, “ That God’s solemn engagement in Christ unto us, in his covenant of grace, lays us under the strongest obligation, both to come under and to be faithful to our solemn engagements to him in our covenant of duty.” For clearing and evincing this, let it be considered,

[1.] We are by nature without God in the world, and highly guilty before God, through the breach and violation of the covenant of works ; and, having broken our credit, God cannot trust us, nor enter immediately into any covenant again with us, nor suffer us to enter immediately into any covenant with him, but only in and through a Surety : therefore, the covenant is not made with us immediately, but with Christ : “ I have made a covenant with my Chosen,” Ps. lxxxix. 3. We were never proper parties in that covenant, nor could ever subscribe to it as parties ; but only as consenters in a day of power. Therefore, God’s covenant of grace is a thing quite distinct from, and yet the ground and foundation of our covenant of gratitude and duty towards him, that hath provided such a well furnished new covenant head for us.

[2.] Consider, we are by nature without strength, having lost our God, we have lost our strength and ability to do any service acceptable to God ; therefore, in vain would we promise and swear to serve him in a covenant of duty, if he had not first given his word and oath in a covenant of grace, that he would be our God and our strength, who gives power to the faint, and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength.

[3.] Consider, that God exhibiting himself to us in a covenant of grace and promise, lays us under a manifold obligation both to come under and to be faithful to our solemn engagements, in a covenant of gratitude and duty towards him.

1. Gratitude itself obliges us to promise ourselves to him that hath promised himself to us ; solemnly to avouch ourselves to be his who solemnly avouches himself to be ours. How should he regard our fits and starts at his service, if we would not resolve, through his grace, to be his fixed, settled, and engaged servants ? As in gratitude, so,

2. In point of ingenuity ; we can do no less, since he hath the best right to us ; if he hath loved us, and given himself for us, we ought to love him, and give ourselves to him. Also,

3. In point of equity ; it is requisite, seeing he hath such a right to us, and shews such mercy on us, that we come under engagements to him again. “ I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service,” Rom. xii. 1. It is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, Luke ii. 22, that Joseph and Mary, “ when the days of her purification, according to the law of

Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord." Was our IMMANUEL presented to God in our room! And is it not equal that we, through his grace, present ourselves to him? Again,

4. In point of evidence, for shewing that we are interested in the covenant of grace; and for shewing the sincerity of our faith in it, and love to the Mediator of it, and concern for his glory, we are obliged to give ourselves to him in a covenant of gratitude; for, "Grace shall be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," Eph. vi. 34. Further,

5. In point of honour done to God, and for glorifying him on earth, and before the world, we are obliged openly to avouch him that avouches us; "Zion, thy God confess." And as we ought to glorify God by making, so by keeping covenant with him; but still we are to beware of confounding his covenant of grace with our covenant of duty, by thinking the former is broken when the latter is broken. Finally,

6. In point of interest; the covenant of grace promises unspeakable advantage to them that are faithful engagers in a covenant of gratitude, and in a way of taking hold of his covenant; for to such there is a promise, Isa. lvi. 7, "Them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar." There is nothing more pleasant and acceptable unto God; for, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?" It is spoken of Christ, the great and first engager, whose solemn engagement in a covenant of grace God declares his acceptance of, with a *Who is this?* But then it takes in all the faithful engagers, who come in at his back, and declares their faith and love by a covenant of gratitude and duty. But then,

[4.] Consider, that everything in and about a covenant of grace binds and obliges us to a covenant of gratitude, and to stand faithfully to it.

1. The order of the covenant binds us; it is well-ordered in all things, and this is one part of the order of it, that duty follows upon privileges. The order of the covenant of works was indeed first doing, and then life and advantage by it; but the covenant of grace promises life and salvation, God in all his fulness to be ours; and then follow all the duties of gratitude.

2. We are bound to gratitude and duty by the God of the co-

venant; the first leading promise of it, is of God himself. "I will be thy God," therefore thou shalt be mine.

3. We are bound thus by the Mediator of the covenant; he is the Surety, the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Covenant; and it stands fast in him, that we may stand fast to him.

4. We are bound by the Spirit of the covenant; he is promised in these words, Isa. xlv. 3, "I will pour water upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." For what end? Why, then it is said, "They shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses. Then shall one say, I am the Lord's, and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

We are bound by all the promises of the covenant; therefore it is said, "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

6. We are bound by all the blessings of the covenant; light, life, liberty, strength, and comfort, are blessings thereof, to be bestowed for this very end, that we may be in case to glorify God by a solemn dedication of ourselves and our service to him. See 1 Pet. ii. 9, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him that hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Again,

7. The blood of the covenant is binding blood; it was sealed with the blood of the Lamb of God; it is justice-satisfying and sin-pardoning blood; and when this blood is sprinkled on the conscience, it is cementing blood for binding us to God, and to grateful acknowledgment of him.

8. The oath of the covenant is a binding oath; God sware to Christ and said, "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David; his seed shall endure for ever," Psalm lxxxix. 35, 36. It is an oath to him relating unto us, and binding us to swear allegiance of gratitude and grateful service to him that hath interposed his oath in our behalf.

9. The holiness of the covenant is a binding thing; God hath commanded his holy covenant, and one of the great ends and designs of it is, that his peculiar people might have this name written upon them, in letters legible to all the world, "Holiness to the Lord." See Jer. xxxii. 4; Ezek. xvi. 18, 19, 20. Finally,

10. The perpetuity and immutability of the covenant of grace is a binding thing ; it stands always stedfast and immoveable, and therefore obliges us to be stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and in the duties of gratitude towards him, who is the Lord and changes not, and is faithful to his promise to us, and therefore we are bound to be faithful to our promise to him.

In a word, his grace binds us to gratitude, and his love should constrain us to his service.

V. The fifth thing proposed was, To make some application of the subject. Many inferences might be deduced from this doctrine.

1. We may see the danger of every legal method of covenanting with God, whereby people come under a covenant of duty, and solemn engagements to serve God, and resting upon their vow, promise, resolution, and covenant ; while yet they were never acquainted with, nor laid hold upon God's covenant of grace. No wonder that their building falls to the ground, when it is not erected upon this sure foundation. It is possible some serious persons make a covenant with God, and think they do it with all their heart, and in the strength of promised grace ; but then their dependence is more upon their covenant they made with God than upon the covenant made with Christ, more upon their promises to God than upon God's promise to them through Christ ; and so, upon every failure, they plunge themselves into a mire of discouragement, disorder, and confusion. Legal ways of covenanting have been the ruin of many souls ; as the old covenant of works is a broken covenant, so all legal covenants, influenced by the old legal spirit, will be broken covenants ; they are a bed too short for any to stretch himself upon, and a covering too narrow to wrap himself in. Again,

2. Hence we may see the kindness of God to these covenanted lands, in that, though they have broken and forgotten their covenants of duty to God, yet God hath not broken nor forgotten his covenant of grace towards them, but hath graciously reserved a remnant in the land to bear witness for God, that he is yet our covenanted God. No doubt, when this time hundred years, these lands came under a Solemn League and Covenant, and this land came under National Covenants also, avouching the Lord to be their God, many went about that work only in a legal way, and in a formal, carnal way, depending upon their covenant and solemn engagement, and so came of it ; it hath been broken and burnt, laughed at and

ridiculed, and buried in the grave of oblivion; for which God is threatening a sword to avenge the quarrel of it. However, we have reason to think that there was a number of honest covenanters, who, when they avouched the Lord to be their God, and promised obedience to him, did it in the faith of his avouching them to be his people, and in a way of trusting to his covenant of grace and promise, and not to their own covenant and engagement: therefore, however we and our fathers have sinned, and forgotten our covenant of duty to God, yet God hath not forgotten his covenant of grace and mercy; and therefore hath this very day set up a number of living witnesses, openly to profess their remembrance of his covenant of grace, and openly to renew our covenant of duty. And though this our covenant, that we have through grace begun to renew, should prove also, in process of time, to be again a broken covenant, by us or our posterity, and we should forget that we have avouched him to be our God; yet, in so far as we are helped, we hope to go about this work in a dependence upon, and on the warrant of God's covenant of promise to be forth-coming for us; we may therefore take it as a token for good, that whatever be the effects, God will remember his covenant of grace and mercy towards us and this land, and that he will not forget that he hath avouched us to be his covenanted people.

But, leaving other inferences, I come to close with an address to two sorts of persons before me, namely, 1. To those who have this day been avouching the Lord to be their God. 2. To all that have been witnesses.

1st, I would address myself, in a few words, to my dear and reverend brethren, including myself among them, however unfit I am for such a task; yet since you have put this exercise upon me, I presume to put you and myself in mind of three things.¹ 1. Let us consider what we have been doing this day. 2. What God hath been doing this day. 3. What is incumbent upon us from this day while we live.

1. My dear brethren, What have we been doing? We have been avouching the Lord this day to be our God, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and to hearken to his voice.

We have professed this day, that we will have no more ado with idols; that we will have no other God but the living and true

(1) During this Address to the Brethren, they all rose up and stood till it was over.

God ; that this world, and the god of this world, and the lusts of the world, shall never be our gods ; but only the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and upon this profession, we have taken instruments before God, men and angels, that this day we have done it.

We have professed that we have parted with our self-righteousness, and closed with Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, and esteem our own righteousness as dung ; that we have taken hold of God's covenant of grace, and of the mediator of it, as our only strength, our only Saviour and salvation ; whereupon we have taken instruments that this day we have done it.

We have professed that we have gifted ourselves and our all to the Lord, and have taken the Lord Jehovah for our all, in time and through eternity, and thereupon have taken instruments that this day we have done it.

We have professed that we will walk with God in a way of duty towards God and man, that we will not live in the neglect of any known duty, nor in the commission of any known sin ; but, through grace, keep ALL God's statutes, commandments, and judgments, and hearken to the voice of God ; that we will be faithful in our ministerial work, and walk exemplary before our people, as he goats before the flock ; and hereupon we have taken instruments that this day we have done it.

We have professed that we, according as it is given to us of grace, will suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, if we be called to it, and that we will be content, not only to be bound, reproached, persecuted, and imprisoned, but even to die for him ; and when our name and honour, and Christ's come in competition, we will be content that our honour be laid in the dust, that his honour may be advanced, and his name exalted ; and hereupon we have taken instruments that this day we have made this profession.

We have professed that we are willing to be instruments in his hands, to lift up the crown royal of our IMMANUEL, that hath been so long profaned upon the ground, and instruments of reviving his long-buried work of reformation ; and that, through his grace, we will appear more and more for him, and his oppressed cause, truth, and heritage, notwithstanding of whatever oppositions are laid in the way, and that we shall be in nothing terrified by our adversaries ; and hereupon instruments are taken in heaven and earth, that this day we have done it.

But that we be not discouraged, and disheartened in such great work, let us consider,

2. What God hath been doing this day, and that he is as solemnly engaged for us as we are for him, for "the Lord hath avouched us this day to be his peculiar people; as he hath promised us, and that we should keep all his commandments." Our being led and determined to make such a confession and acknowledgment, and avouching of him this day, is a proof and evidence that he hath been here making a solemn confession, acknowledgment, and avouchment of us.

He hath confessed, professed, and acknowledged, that he is our God, which is presupposed to his avouching us to be his people or servants; and this he hath done in the declaration of his name, "I am the Lord thy God," and in the publication of his covenant, "I will be thy God;" whereupon, by his allowance, I hope we have taken instruments, that this day he hath done it.

He hath professed and acknowledged, that we are his peculiar servants, whom he hath called forth to serve him in very peculiar circumstances; and that therefore, for our peculiar work, he will give us peculiar aid; that he will not let us go a warfare at our own expense; but that his grace shall be sufficient for us; and hereupon we take instruments, that this day he has done it. Again,

In his avouching us to be his, according as he hath promised to us in his covenant of grace, he hath professed and acknowledged that he will be surety for us for good, and be forthcoming for all that we have engaged to in our covenant of duty and gratitude, knowing that without him we can do nothing. And that only by him strengthening us, we can do all things; therefore he hath promised that his strength shall be made perfect in our weakness; whereupon, by faith in his promise, we take instruments that this day he hath done it. Again,

He hath, by avouching of us, confessed and acknowledged, that it is his will we should and his promise we should keep all his commandments; he hath not extended or enlarged the obligations of duty upon us, without extending and enlarging the encouragement and furniture for it; for, when he declares this is his will, saying, "This is the will of God, even our sanctification," he says also, 'This is his work, "I am the Lord that sanctifieth you, and that worketh in you both to will and to do: I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes;" and hereupon, I hope, we are

taking instruments in his own hand, which is the best hand, that this day he hath done it, by avouching us to be his. Again,

By avouching us to be his, as he hath promised to us in his covenant of grace, he hath confessed and acknowledged, that he will make all his promises good, according to all our necessities. If, in his providence, he says, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep among wolves;" in his promise he says, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." If his call to us is, "Go and teach all nations," his promise is also, "Lo I am with you always, to the end of the world;" and hereupon we take instruments, that this day he hath done it.

In a word, God hath come under a bond and engagement to us this day, and his bond is, in another sort, more firm than ours; his is the bond of an everlasting covenant, but ours is a mutable covenant, lasting no farther than as it hath a relation to his covenant of promise, and is maintained by it. We may break our covenant with him, but he cannot break his covenant with us. He hath infinitely more to lose than we, if he should break his word; for his honour is engaged, his name and glory is at the stake; and what will he not do for his great name? Therefore, if we have taken instruments upon his covenanted engagement and avouchment this day, he will never allow us to withdraw our instruments, but allow us to plead it at his heavenly court, his throne of grace, from this day and forward. Therefore I would, in a word, shew,

3. What is incumbent upon us from this day and forward. I sum up all in one advice. If we would be faithful to our solemn engagement this day, let us live by the faith of God's solemn engagement this day; for his engagement to us in a covenant of grace, is the ground of our engagement to him in a covenant of gratitude; therefore, let us never depend upon our own solemn engagement this day, but upon God's solemn engagement to us this day, in his covenant of promise.

From this day let us depend upon his covenanted Spirit, his promised Spirit; for, by the power of his Spirit, the work is begun and must be carried on: "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," Zech. iv. 6. Let us rest on his word, that said, "I will send the Comforter," John xvi. 7.

From this day let us depend upon his covenanted counsel and conduct; for he hath said, "I will lead the blind in ways they know not, and in paths which they have not trode," Isa. xl. 16. Let us

trust in him, that he will guide us by his counsel, and afterwards receive us to glory. We have many proofs of his making darkness light before us, and crooked things straight; let us therefore still hope in his word.

From this day let us depend upon his covenanting presence; that when we go through fire or water he will be with us, Isa. xliii. 2, and bring us through fire and water to a wealthy land. Let us bless him that hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. Many will be against us, but if God be with us, and for us, no matter who can be against us, Rom. viii. 31.

From this day let us depend upon his covenanted blessing; for he hath said, "From this day will I bless you," Hag. ii. 19. From what day was it? Why, in the first chapter, God complained of that generation, that they still put off temple-building work, saying, "The time is not come to build the Lord's house;" just like this generation, that have been saying more than fifty years, It is not time to renew our Solemn Covenants, or revive a Reformation-work; but God stirred up a remnant in the days of Haggai, who laid the foundation of the house of the Lord. And now, says the prophet, Consider, from this day; and again, Consider, from this day, verse 15, 18, 19, and a third time, Consider, from this day, even "From this day will I bless you:" from this day men may curse you; but "From this day will I bless you." Let this encourage us to faithfulness against all discouragements from without. We may depend upon his promised blessing in life and death: "His blessing maketh rich;" and hath more unsearchable riches comprehended in it, than men or angels can tell. It may encourage us to follow him, whithersoever he goeth; and to be faithful to our engagement; for in this way his blessing will follow us, through death and the grave, to the glorious appearance of our Master in the clouds of heaven: "For, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away," 1 Pet. v. 4. In this faith let us stand fast, depending upon him that hath said, "From this day will I bless you."

So far, I hope, my dear brethren will allow this address to them.

3dly, I would address myself in a short word to all that have been witnesses to the solemnity of this day: some of you are friends to this work, and some of you are enemies.

(1.) To you that are friends, I have two words to offer, if you be indeed the friends of Christ and his cause; friends to a covenanted work of Reformation.

1. From what you have seen and heard this day, you may take witnesses and take instruments, that God is yet the covenanted God of Scotland ; though a covenanted people have departed from him, yet our covenanted God hath not quite departed from us. We forgot our covenant of duty, but God hath not forgot his covenant of mercy ; and therefore hath mercifully revived his work in the midst of the years. Before the year 1643 was at an end, God brought these lands under a solemn League and Covenant, besides our National Covenants at other times ; but these have been broken, burnt, and buried, and trampled upon ; yet now, before the year 1743, is at an end, God hath begun to set up a memorial of that reformation work that was carried on by a solemn covenanting, from time to time : and therefore take instruments, from this day and date, that he hath not left himself without a witness, and that he will yet return and leave a blessing behind him, and repair all the breaches that have been made upon the carved work of his house, the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof ; and that he will yet be as the dew unto Israel : and make us revive as the corn, and grow as the lily, and cast forth our root as Lebanon.

2. From what you have seen and heard this day, and at this time, you may learn, that, when God's call to this covenanting work shall come to your door, you need not be afraid to avouch him solemnly to be your God ; for, he will not be behind you, but will avouch you as solemnly to be his people. If you take hold of his covenant of grace, you need not fear to enter into a covenant of gratitude and duty ; for the grace of his covenant will carry you through all the duties of your covenant : he will not be a day behind you ; for the day that you avouch him, that day will he avouch you ; yea, his avouching of you goes foremost, for he hath prefaced his commands with it, " I am the Lord thy God." But when he calls us to such solemn work, he delays his open avouching of us, till once we have openly avouched him. Think it not enough, that your hearts have joined in this work with us this day ; for though it is well, if your hearts have closed with God's covenant of grace, and you have devoted yourselves to him in a covenant of gratitude, if it be only between God and you, this may be your safety : but is there not something farther incumbent on you, for reaching the end of God's declarative glory, when that hath been so much darkened in this day ? It must come to an open avouching of God, if we would glorify him before the world, or confess him before men, in the hope of being confessed by him in the great day. When God

appears in his glory, and builds up Zion, and hears the prayer of the destitute, and looses his prisoners; what end does God propose by all this? See it, Psalm cii. 21. It is,

That they in Zion may declare,
The Lord's most holy name;
And publish in Jerusalem
The praises of the same.

Therefore, let us pray for the accomplishment of that word, Zeph. iii. 6, "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, and serve him with one consent." But,

(2.) I would next address myself to you who are enemies, and have no good will to such work as this, of avouching the Lord to be your God. I have a word to say to you; and it is in short a very awful one. You hate to come under engagements to serve the Lord; and, sure I am, you are not serving such a good master as he is. You are serving the God of this world, and rejecting our God and master. Our Master is a Saviour, but your master is a destroyer; ours is a Redeemer, but yours is a murderer; your carnal mind is enmity against God, and against the work of God, and the city of God; but know, that "God will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered against it," Zech. xii. 3. You that hate to be engaged for God and his cause, what if I must tell you that God is engaged against you? He is engaged by promise to Christ, "That he will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him," Psalm lxxxix. 23. Yea, I must tell you, that since this is a solemn instrumenting day, we must take instruments against you, if you remain slighers and rejecters of our Lord Jesus Christ, and refuse to pay allegiance to Zion's King. We hereupon take instruments against you, that *this day* we have been avouching him to be our God, and promising, through his grace, to serve him; and *this day* you have been rejecting him, and are resolving to continue in the service of the devil, the world, and your lusts. Alas! how dreadful is your case, if God be taking instruments against you, saying *This day* you have rejected ME, and *this day* I have rejected YOU; your souls abhor ME, and my soul abhors you! If this be his farewell word to you, then I will tell you what will be the last word that ever you will hear him say, even, "Depart from me, ye cursed, to everlasting fire, pre-

pared for the devil and his angels!" In that *great day*, you must answer for what you have seen and heard *this day*, by the recognition of conscience. Then *this day* will be a witness against you on *that day*: and we who are professing to be witnesses for God, must be witnesses against you, that we avouched him, and you avoided, and turned your back upon him.

But since it is not yet come to the last day with you; nor is God come yet to his last word, so long as the day of grace lasts; therefore hearken you this day to his word of grace; for, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." We make, in our Master's name, an offer of him to you; yea, he makes an offer of himself, saying, "Whosoever will, let him come." O sirs, "Will you go with this Man, who is IMMANUEL, God with us, and God for us?" We have avouched him *this day* to be our God, and you have as good right and warrant to avouch him to be yours, as ever you had; and though you should not do it with the outward solemnity of your hands lifted up to him, at this time, yet we call you, in his great name, to do it with the inward solemnity of your hearts lifted up to him; for he hath come down to you in a declaration of his new-covenant name, as well as to us, saying, "I am the Lord thy God." He speaks to you not only authoritatively, saying, "I am the Lord," but most affectionately, as a Saviour, "I am *THY* God."

Well, sirs, will you not this day avouch him, and avow and acknowledge him to be the Lord your God and Redeemer? Does he claim relation to you, and will you claim none to him? This is the day that the Lord hath made for giving you this offer, and every day is not an avouching day, every day is not a covenanting day. O sirs, you never saw such a day, and perhaps never will! Let not this day be lost; let not the evening of this day be lost; but when God is yet saying, Come, come to me, "I am the Lord thy God." O take him at his word, saying, "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

May the Spirit of power accompany the call, and make it effectual, that instruments may be taken upon it in your behalf, as ours, That this day we have avouched the Lord to be our God, and this day he hath avouched us to be his peculiar people, formed for himself, to shew forth his praise.